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Volume 5 No 4 Spring 2008

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EDITORIAL

This issue commemorates the remarkable Congregational historian, Geoffrey Nuttall (1911–95) who died last July, and to that end we welcome to our pages the contribution of Eamon Duffy, professor of the history of Christianity at Cambridge University and fellow of Magdalene College. Ever a devout Christian, Geoffrey's life and interests offered a summary of the staggering breadth of culture which might be found in twentieth century Congregationalism and which, increasingly as the century drew to its close, he came to embody. The consideration of twentieth century Congregationalism included here owes much to him. In addition Robert Pope, in a review article, offers an appreciation of the theologian, Colin Gunton, who was a long-time friend to many of our CHS members.

Even a cursory glance at our reviews section—and the reviews and books deserve far more than cursory treatment—will reveal that our reviews editor, and our several distinguished reviewers, have been busy. The subjects of the books themselves reflect the range of interests of our members.

NEWS AND VIEWS

The death of a notable Lancashire Congregationalist was reported in *The Baptist Times* in October 2007. The modest and cheerful Agnes Wallace Graham, who died aged 97 years, was a member of Urmston Congregational Church when it united with the local Baptist fellowship to become Greenfield Church, of which she became a deacon. Her devout Christian faith informed her lifelong commitment to a wide variety of social and voluntary work in greater Manchester. She was awarded the MBE for her services to the Citizens Advice Bureau, having been on the local management committee well into her 80s. She also had worked selflessly for Talking Newspapers for the Blind, for Meals on Wheels, and for the Women's Royal Voluntary Service.

It is with sadness that we record the recent death of our CHS member and a keen contributor to our pages, Adrian Stanley, who was a member of Highbury Congregational Church, Cheltenham. Adrian gained immensely from his schooldays at Mill Hill and fondly recalled the formative influence of its headmaster, Dr John Whale. Sadly another CHS member, Eric Fretten, the former pastor of Lammas Street Congregational Church, Carmarthen, and earlier still a highly ranked officer in the Metropolitan Police, has also recently died. Both will be missed.

CHAPEL TOUR

Our dedicated group of chapel explorers assembled at Oystermouth Castle on the Gower peninsula, near Swansea, in May 2007. Although having no known Congregational associations, the castle is still a formidable medieval fortress, a remarkable historic site and a superb meeting place, although the constant wind and rain, whipping into our faces from the Atlantic made for a typically wet south Welsh day. The weather did not improve but thankfully stood in marked contrast to the welcomes we received in the chapels we visited.

Close to the castle we made our first stop in nearby Newton Road. Over the door cut into the stone was the inscription 'Tabernacle Congregational Chapel'. It is now Tabernacle United Reformed Church, Mumbles, though hardly changed both to the eye of the visitor and in the hearts of the members. We entered a simple chapel building, dating from 1831, with a gallery on three sides and the pulpit placed centrally on the fourth. In the rear of the gallery the original pews remained, although elsewhere they had been removed. On one side of the gallery was a working scale model of the former Swansea—Mumbles railway, complete with authentic looking tramcars. The original full scale version was sadly closed many years ago, though fondly remembered by locals. The model has been put on display in the chapel as a tourist attraction, something the original could have been if it had only been retained.

We then travelled the short distance uphill to the unassuming Paraclete Congregational Church (affiliated to the Congregational Federation), occupying a prominent position at a crossroads in Newton itself. The two chapel buildings are of comparable size and clearly the fellowships share, not only a common history and traditions, but also a respect and friendship for each other. Paraclete, boasts the earlier foundation date of 1818, yet like its close companion, traces its beginnings to the evangelism of the early nineteenth century. It also remembers Frances Ridley Havergal who lived in nearby Caswell and led a Bible study group at Paraclete. This was despite the distinctly Anglican commitment of her evangelicalism. Several of the church members were there to greet us and share tea and biscuits with us before we went our separate ways.

Peter Young

Books for Congregationalists

Manual of Congregational Principles by RW Dale,
Visible Saints: The Congregational Way 1640–1660 by Geoffrey F. Nuttall
Studies in English Dissent by Geoffrey F. Nuttall
Christian Fellowship or The Church Members Guide by John Angell James
Quinta Press, Meadow View, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 7RN 01691 778659
E-mail info@quintapress.com; web-site: www.quintapress.com

A FRIENDSHIP IN LETTERS

I first met Geoffrey Nuttall in 1975, in the year after my taking up a lectureship in ecclesiastical history at King's College, London. I was twenty-seven, married and already the father of two children. I was also a practising Roman Catholic. My research interests at that time were in the English seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and Geoffrey, nearing the end of his career as lecturer and librarian at New College, London, then itself in process of dissolution, was the only other teacher in the University of London offering courses on the religion of the period. Collaboration in teaching and examination quickly warmed into a somewhat unlikely friendship between a young Irish Roman Catholic in his first teaching post, and this austere sexagenarian historian of Protestant non-conformity. I was (and remained) in awe of Geoffrey's meticulous scholarship, and was intrigued by his apparently contradictory and somewhat unpredictable mixture of asperity and warmth. He was pleased and touched by the respectful attention of a younger and more extrovert scholar. And in fact, our different denominational allegiances proved a bond rather than a barrier. Geoffrey, for all his radical Protestantism, loved the poetry of Dante and had entered deeply into Dante's imaginative and spiritual world. One of the historians he most admired was the Benedictine, Dom David Knowles, and he loved and had written about Roman Catholic as well as Protestant martyrs and confessors. He had always regarded the Anglicanism of King's with ironic detachment, if not actual suspicion, and he was intrigued by the presence in the department of theology there of my own rather different form of non-conformity: as he wrote early in our acquaintance, "it is a new experience for me to be with some one at King's to whom faith and devotion are so vital". In fact, he had other good friends and admirers at King's, and to Geoffrey's delighted surprise, King's offered him a temporary academic home after New College closed, electing him to a fellowship in 1977, "which I regard as an ecclesiastical distinction", he wrote wonderingly to me, "of a kind conferred on the Archbishops, the Dean of Westminster *et al hujus generis* [what would my grandmother have said?]". A visiting professorship the same year necessitated regular visits to the Strand, and I offered him the use of my college room as his base. There, at Dr Williams's Library, and in occasional working lunches with him at the Penn Club to discuss teaching and research, our acquaintance rapidly warmed into a friendship which would endure for more than thirty years. Yet despite this growing personal affection, and for all his sympathies with great Catholic souls like Dante or Thomas More, my religion was and would remain an issue for him. He certainly never pulled punches in his disapproval of

anything that struck him as smacking of the grosser side of "popery". An invitation to the King's College carol service in December 1977, for example, elicited a characteristic train of reflection.

> "My dislike of carol services (despite my "moving" memories of year after year attending my own students'…) is complex: I think the attitude to the Nativity stories encourages people to think that the rest of the Gospels, *also*, consists only of "fairy stories"; I think there is much sentimentality *or* secular bonhomie at the expense of genuine wonder and reverence; I dislike the attention directed to the BVM; I disapprove the whole busyness and mad rush which Christmas becomes as a matter of course, for every parson; and I regard the development [even Friends meeting now, often have carols, and at the [Hampstead Garden] Suburb Free Church we are to have a crib for the first time] as one of the many forms of an undesirable and uncritical reversion to (R.C.) type." But he added, disarmingly, "Still, love me none the less, I pray; we are both concerned for 'living religion'".

These reservations about the Christmas stories signalled real complexities in Geoffrey's own beliefs. Many years later, in an exchange about the resurrection, he told me that he had abandoned belief in the literal truth of the virgin birth at a very early age, another reason for his distrust of "excessive" emphasis on the infancy narratives. It is perhaps relevant here that he had sat at the feet of Bultmann in Marburg in the late 1930s, though he certainly had not warmed to Bultmann personally, recalling more than once with disapproval that the great demythologiser had been the only teacher in the faculty of theology who invariably began his lectures with the Hitler salute.

But if he was wary of my Catholicism, he warmed to my "non-conformity". He shared often with me his own deep unease about the compromises of the principles of Independency which he believed that institutional union with Presbyterianism involved in the formation of the United Reformed Church, from which he was to begin with a public dissentient. In May 1979, characteristically, he rejoiced that "all is not lost, even in the URC": an invitation to speak at a united service at St Albans had provided him with a platform to "hold forth" on "the history and heritage of Congregationalism", when, as he declared, he had felt free

> "to speak of freedom, voluntarism, voluntaryism, the willing sort, eager, with their faces thitherward, the venture of faith, independence to be more dependent on Christ; of tolerance springing not from indifference, adiaphorism or scepticism, but from respect for personality as well as truth, still longing to share, convince, convert, "but for things of the mind we look for no conclusion but that of light and reason"; and of the little flock, gathered church, congregation of the simple, earnest, not always well-educated, often only lay people, seeking and believing they might discover the will of the Lord, agreeing, promising, covenanting with Him and with one another, and sometimes even in so doing permitting a measure of recorded dissent, so be it Jesus was Lord. Some of this was only implicit in what I said! But I enjoyed letting myself go".

This ardent outpouring ended with a characteristic return to earth, with an evocation of the scene in Hampstead Garden Suburb, where he lived:

> "I write in the garden, with one robin feeding another and a suburb mower purring not far off, but must go in and take some tea up".

In 1979 I was appointed to a lectureship in Cambridge. Geoffrey, himself in the midst of 'clearing, clearing, clearing" as he and Mary prepared to leave London for a retirement home on the Cadbury estate at Bourneville in Birmingham, was delighted for me. The news of my election to a college fellowship even elicited from him a touchingly proprietorial quotation from the older Wesley.

> "Well! You are, or are about to be,…a fellow of Magdalene…How grand that is—'My son John is Fellow of Lincoln'"—

and a characteristic correction reminding me of the Cambridge spelling of "Magdalene" :

> "(you remembered to put the final e the first time, but forgot it twice thereafter, which won't do at all at all)"

He took a good deal of pleasure in my move.

> "I often speak of you, usually in the terms "He's loving it in Cambridge…". Indeed, I love you being there, to an extent that goes further than I expected to compensate for you not being here".

But he was also concerned that a friendship which had by now become important to both of us might wither with distance:

> "whether we shall continue much by correspondence I doubt….It will be sensible for me to "let you go", not grasping, but grateful for these years in which we have been able to run side by side".

An element in this concern was certainly the fact that it was for *Cambridge* I was settled. An Oxford man through and through, for all his Puritanism, he feared that the other place might have a chilling and narrowing effect on my religious sympathies:

> "I think Cambridge, in its intense cool rationalism/intellectualism is likely to affect someone with as 'sympathetic' a temperament as yours".

In the event, our separate moves from London led to an intensification of our friendship, now necessarily conducted largely by post. On January 1st, 1980, newly settled in Birmingham, he wrote that

> "My first setting of pen to paper this New Year shall be to you, to thank you for your responsive friendship, (and to thank God for sending you to me, as simple piety might express it, to bring hopefulness and delight into what might have been somewhat melancholy years)".

He took a close interest in our house-hunting and settlement, and sent detailed bulletins about his own. Everything in Bourneville, he reported "has gone swimmingly (is that a period locution, like going for a spin?)". Retirement,

he reported, was "like being on perpetual holiday", the only drawback being that the food provided in the communal dining room was "*not quite enough* as a rule". He had reduced his library to 200 carefully chosen books, though that count did not include his treasured India-paper set of the eleventh edition of Encyclopedia Britannica, his densely annotated set of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (now in Dr Williams's Library), and an array of bibles and dictionaries in many languages. His "vita nuova", he reported, included "some consecutive leisurely bible-study, an hour a day on a verse a day", starting with Isaiah ch 35. This edifying routine would ultimately give way to a slow and ruminative reading of Aeschylus and, later, Herodotus: but in 1981 the shift from the bible to pagan Greek literature triggered some characteristically searching reflections on the relation between secular and sacred inspiration.

> "In my nightly re-reading of the Agamemnon last thing in bed, as I have meant to do since the end of Hons Mods, one of the things which has struck me—along with the beauty of the poetry, which cleanses my mind of the trivialities and anxieties of the day, and assures me of a good night's rest, as I suppose reading the Bible, rather, would do, and ought to do—is the frequent similarities with, or reminders of, passages or vocabulary in scripture—I am not sure what to make of this: how much turns on underlying elements of identity in genuinely religious and poetic writers of very separated cultures, how much the consciousness of it is superficial or artificial, and merely in the eye, and memory, of a sensitive reader…."

And so he intended to spend his evenings during their forthcoming summer holiday in Cumbria "musing and mulling over Agamemnon and the Greek NT".

The more leisurely pace of a friendship by correspondence elicited many confidences. His closest friendship at Oxford, and perhaps the most treasured friendship in all his long life of many friendships, was with the historian Sir Richard Southern, his contemporary at Balliol. In February 1981 Southern lectured in Cambridge, and my report of the event drew this reminiscence:

> "But what a pity you didn't go up to Dick and introduce yourself! We were, in fact, 'thrown together' in the sense that we sat next each other at the Fresher's Dinner, but…the persisting wonder to me is that it was he who, on the whole, took the initiative, not only in 'educating' me (carrying me off to London for lectures by G G Coulton, R H Wilenski et al.; playing Debussy on his gramophone, reading J B Bury's "Cleopatra's Nose" aloud in a butter-cup field; cycling to see sculptures in Oxfordshire Churches) but in our "digging" together ("I never had any other idea", he said, when I shyly suggested it). …Dazzling indeed, and I fear with some readiness to be indulgent (as, again you say, he always teases me, esp. for not drinking)—how could such a stiff, intolerant Noncon. have appealed to him? Have I told you that his letters to me of those years are safely preserved at DWL? "You say I have influenced you but your influence is in every line of my letter" (how sweetly serious!). Surely one of my major but

> unacknowledged claims to fame! He married a widow, as I did, but has 2 children, whereas I have none."

His letters were often reminiscent: like John Henry Newman (whose portrait was one of the small cluster he kept in his study) he was endlessly fascinated by his own intellectual and emotional development, constantly returning to reminiscences of his earlier life. At New Year of 1982, with his wife Mary in hospital after the distressing stroke from which she would die later that year, he reported that he had coped with Christmas not only by his ongoing reading of Aeschylus, but by working his way steadily through back numbers of the Congregational/URC Historical Society Transactions,

> "with an interest that surprised me in my own persistent contributions, the contents of which I had often forgotten, and with an inclination to exclaim "who *is* this Geoffrey Nuttall, who writes so calmly, judiciously and authoritatively, as if he knows everything, or thinks he does".

Despite the bereavement which robbed him of a beloved companion in retirement, Geoffrey relaxed into the community at Bourneville, where his friends soon included a Roman Catholic widow whom he accompanied from time to time to Catholic services:

> "I am escorting Mrs Hutchings tomorrow to a Latin Mass in honour of the Sacred Heart, at 3.00 pm. (Had I known earlier that there will be a snooker final on television during the afternoon, I might not have suggested this"!)

Such courtesies did nothing to erode his principles, however. In November 1983 he reported that

> "On Sunday after Meeting I paid a courtesy call at *your* church almost opposite: the Poles were just going in for their weekly service—there's 'one world" for you, I thought, but when I emerged I looked back, and up, and saw "Ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia", and the collision of the historical and geographical (and cultural and theological) particularism of it with my universalist, "catholick" perceptions, made me shiver a little".

Widowhood in fact liberated him to travel as he pleased, and he became a regular visitor to Cambridge, taking a close interest in my growing family, following the progress of my writing and teaching, on one occasion even spending a week helping me as an unpaid research assistant, as I struggled to prepare a conference paper against a fast-approaching deadline. These visits were elaborately prepared and eagerly looked forward to, and he came always with notes extracted from gazetteers, reference-books and his own astonishing memory, and a carefully worked out agenda of things to be seen, topics to be discussed. He was delighted when I learned to drive, and his visits could include day-long forays westwards into Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire, east and north into the fens or the Norfolk marshland. Before one such visit in 1984 he wrote

> "It will really be a great achievement if I see Wisbech *tandem tamen*. We might

> go by Ely and Littleport and return by March and Chatteris…We could arrange to have tea at Chatteris with my old nurse (92 and blind but very much alive still), which would give her, as well as myself, a pleasure we rarely get, though I have been there twice….and she came to hear me lecture on Pilgrim's Progress at Westminster College—all since we found each other again eleven years ago, 56 years after we parted when I was 6!….Returning we should pass through Guyhirn, which comes into the Church Book of Isleham…which…I have just reviewed…the Church founded there by David Culy…is now represented by Zion Baptist Chapel, Wisbech, for which we must also look out".

These visits did a great deal to cement our friendship, involving him with my growing family (the children were fascinated by his characteristically austere breakfasts of DRY muesli or Weetabix with no milk or moisture of any kind!) and allowing our shared interests and intuitions room to grow. He often recalled one occasion in particular when, waiting in the early morning mist on Cambridge station, we had whiled the time away by singing verses from favourite eighteenth-century hymns. He was impressed by my familiarity with some of the more arcane examples, tickled by our shared disregard for the wonder of other travellers.

> "To have you singing beside me was one of the best things in the weekend…Mary did not like hymns, they made her cry. I used to say this is what made her a Quaker".

In 1985 however a cloud arose to trouble the friendship. I was becoming more active in the affairs of my own church, had recently been involved in the establishment of the Catholic Theological Association, and, after much heart-searching, had accepted an invitation to join the board of the Catholic Truth Society, then rethinking its role in the more ecumenical climate after Vatican II. I had done this mainly because I was concerned about the gulf I perceived between academic theology and the life of the Church at large. Geoffrey watched these developments with growing concern, and raised them with me when I visited him at Bourneville in September 1985, where the news that I was going on from my visit to him to a board meeting of the CTS "went to my heart like a dagger, that it did". He followed up my visit with a troubled letter. The visit had seemed less happy than usual, he wrote

> "because we talked less of Puritanism and the 17th century, where we kindle and draw together, and more of theology and the 20th century, where we understand things differently and are pulled apart. Because you have shown such powers of sympathetic understanding and appreciation of Baxter, Bunyan and Fox and of penetration to the religious dynamic at the heart of Puritanism, as well as because of my affectionate admiration of you more generally, I do in return make a genuine effort to reach, through you, to a deeper understanding of what is good and true in Roman Catholicism, and I have been helped in this by your appearing to maintain, at certain points, a markedly independent stance over against the Church and its teaching, practice and authority".

But he feared now that "you seem to have taken a big step…towards centrist authority and the current institution": our conversations on theological matters

> "left me unconvinced and dissatisfied, and even unhappy at having to listen to what, even when expounded with your winsome persuasiveness seems to me a burdensome load, and a suffocating imprisonment of superstition…I stand rather with the Reformers who *broke* with it".

I have not kept a copy of my reply, but it evidently reassured him:

> "*Thank* you for writing back at once, at length, and so sweetly…You get, understandingly, to the heart of things in every paragraph! So be assured, all is well, and though, perhaps at one level, I ought not to have sent you my "troubled" letter, it, and what it has called forth, has mercifully only resulted in our understanding each other more deeply—including the tangle of conviction-conception- prejudice and of gratitude-loyalty-criticism and of mystery-coherence-exclusion; and including your perception that the emotion responsible for the harsher or more exaggerated expressions in my letter was a coldness at the heart lest, through a lack of frankness and consequent misunderstanding, I lose you".

And he explained that

> "in a sense, CTS has been a two-edged sword at the heart of my love-hate attitude towards R-Cism since schooldays: your apologia for doing this I'm well accustomed to hearing from Mary (*mutatis mutandis*) eg "how shall we ever get a better atmosphere in the movement unless those of us who believe in gentleness and reconciliation stay in it?"

One of the things which helped reassure him that year was an address I had given as part of a university mission led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, an autobiographical account of how I had lost and recovered my faith after the death of an elderly friend. He was much moved by the address, which he felt "aligns you with the fundamental evangelical experience", and made a point of lending or reading it to friends, like the elderly Quaker lady to whom he regularly read once a week.

> "I wasn't sure what L**** R******** would make of it, she is a well-concerned and active Friend, but Lancashire and a spinster, and not so much a rationaliser as lacking in imagination, and still supposing all RCs have to believe what the priest tells them to believe. Also, she is a poor sleeper and often nods off under my soporific voice! I shouldn't have minded much if she had, since I wanted to hear how it sounded myself, but she didn't (or only very briefly)"!

Puzzlement as to why a bereavement should have so unsettled me led him into confidences about his own worst bereavement, the loss of his mother when he was 19, and then this insight into his own inner life:

> "I suppose what was *there* to keep me afloat (and which you perhaps lacked?) was the sense *ek* paidos of the "Divine presence" (the last words of Matthew, which were on my nursery mantelpiece, and were the text of my first sermon), and of "the reality of Heaven". Perhaps also, (because, I judge, I was physically more delicate than you) the Puritanism of my upbringing collided with less

> *Baalism* than the Jansenism of yours did! I doubt if you were ever afraid of being happy, as I was? Whether from the Puritan sense that we should have "weaned affections", so as to avoid the sensuality which is idolatry, or from a more pagan fear of *nemesis*; or if you needed Jenny [my wife] as I needed Mary ("why are you so full of fears?") to bid you take life easy: you already had Yeats. So I suppose, when death came close to you, it came later, and caught you when you were welcoming life with both arms in a way I never did".

Looking back through his letters, I am struck how much of himself he put into every one, however short: notes from his reading, snippets of Greek (and sometimes extended copies of his favourite NT passages), German, French, the Italian of Dante, (rarely Latin, curiously), quotations from Bunyan, Milton, accounts of other friends and extracts from correspondence, hints to improve my own work, notes and extracts he thought might appeal or instruct, passages of criticism (often devastatingly frank), and always, those asides and flashes of personal reminiscence which showed how seamlessly woven together for him were all the stages of his long journey through life. A typical aside from a letter written during one of his annual summer stays in Oberhofen in Switzerland, for example, reveals that while there he had

> " reread Carlyle's Cromwell, in the 3 vol Everyman edition *given me by the manager of the Colwyn Bay laundry when I was a boy*".

Rereading our correspondence for this tribute, I am saddened by its notable diminishment during the last ten years of his life. The death of my parents-in-law in the mid 1990s meant I had less occasion to visit the Midlands, (they had been based in Worcester). Trips to Bourneville squeezed into the interstices of an increasingly hectic professional life became altogether more formidable undertakings: his growing frailty meant he was less willing to make the sometimes unpredictable cross-country railway journey to Cambridge. My research interests moved away from his beloved seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to the late Middle Ages and the Reformation: Geoffrey continued to read and comment on everything I wrote, and took delight in its impact, (he specially rejoiced when I was awarded a Doctorate of Divinity in 1994, his own Oxford DD being his most cherished distinction; "No-one can take that away from you", he told me). But he had less expert input to offer, and inevitably he felt less engaged. There were still shared interests and endeavour, and a succession of my graduate students, mostly American, working on Puritan topics found their way to Bourneville: to all he was unfailingly helpful, to some he became an intellectual grandfather, mentoring them as he had once mentored me. But slowly, contact became occasional rather than constant.

But if the rereading of these letters has brought its burden of regret, it has also brought home afresh to me how much I owed, and still owe, to him, over those thirty precious years of friendship. That friendship was one of the most important and formative of my life. He was to me, as to many others, a support,

a standard, an example. I loved him for his absolute honesty, for his ardent affection, for the bench-mark of integrity and unremittingly high standards he set, a great scholar who was also a great Christian, and a great heart. Early on in our friendship I had turned up unexpectedly at a public lecture he gave in London, and he wrote afterwards "I hope you saw my eyes light up when I had the surprise of seeing you were there!" And that is how I remember him, the biscuit-dry manner and austere reserve blazing into open affection as those remarkable eyes flashed in delighted recognition. Cardinal Newman chose for his motto the phrase "*Cor ad cor loquitur*"—"heart speaks to heart": in his letters, the heart of Geoffrey Nuttall speaks to mine still.

Eamon Duffy

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HE WANTS NOT FRIENDS THAT HATH THY LOVE: CONGREGATIONALIST AND FRIEND[1]

The death on July 24th, 2007, of Geoffrey Fillingham Nuttall, aged 95, the leading authority on the beginnings of religious Independency in England and Wales, is a blow to scholarship, to his many friends, and to Congregationalism. Although Geoffrey's lifelong love for Congregationalism was unquestionable, he had attended the Quaker Bootham School in York, married a Friend, Mary Powley (neé Preston), and wrote much on Quakerism, as well as on the early Baptists. In 1972 he had huge reservations about the United Reformed Church and, having reluctantly joined it, he later confided to a Unitarian friend and to others that he wished he had not. In the early 1970s he had doubted whether the continuing Congregational groupings could survive and certainly he would have been ill at ease in a body which in its early years needed to be combative to defend its existence. His instincts were pacifist and he fully shared the Christian pacifism of his wife and their Quaker friends. His scholarship would have set him apart from most in the Congregational Federation and, indeed he had taught and distrusted some leaders of the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, while most of his former students were swept into the URC. Yet he was to discover friends in both the CF and EFCC.

When he preached at Trinity Congregational Church, Brixton, in the mid-1970s, he chose Richard Baxter's fine hymn—He wants not friends that hath thy love—especially referring to the verse,

> As for my friends they are not lost;
> The several vessels of my fleet,
> Though parted now, by tempests tost,
> Shall safely in the haven meet.

He then pointed out that, although Baxter referred here to the division of the churches after 1662, it might well stand for the parting of the Congregational churches after 1972. Like Baxter, one of his Puritan heroes since boyhood, Geoffrey's Christian faith stood for friendship, reconciliation and the spirit of forgiving love.

Given Geoffrey's ease with languages—learning Welsh and Dutch that he might better understand the history of Protestant nations, studying Latin and Greek at Oxford, and being fluent in German and Italian—he was totally at home with Erasmus and Dante. In addition he had Jesuit friends and freely

1 An earlier version of this paper was published in *The Congregationalist* November 2007.

acknowledged his debt to David Knowles, the Catholic historian of medieval religious orders in England. Nuttall was born on 8 November 1911, into an English Congregational family in Colwyn Bay. He always regarded himself as English and was amused to find that he had been claimed as Welsh in modern works of reference emanating from the principality! His father, a doctor of medicine, had intended to serve overseas with the London Missionary Society but, after a death in the family, knew that duty demanded he should stay in this country. Geoffrey delighted in the Congregational affiliations on both sides of his family, boasting eight ministers among his forebears, and from early childhood his only desire was to be a Congregational minister. After reading Greats at Balliol, and gaining a third class degree (he partially explained this by his involvement in P S Allen's translation of the letters of Erasmus from Latin but, in later life, did not act as if any explanation were needed), he trained for the ministry at Mansfield College, Oxford. In the 1930s that college was reeling from rows between its new principal, Nathaniel Micklem, and other teachers and the college council. His friendship with Micklem's predecessor, W B Selbie, rendered him suspect to some in the Congregational Union, especially once Micklem's disciples, like John Huxtable, had come to the fore.

From an early age Geoffrey frequently visited Germany, spending a year in Marburg, and recalling vividly his arrival in 1938 when Nazi flags and Union Jacks were being waved enthusiastically as his train pulled into the station—for Neville Chamberlain, during the Munich crisis. Although a lifelong pacifist, as minister of Warminster Congregational Church 1938–43, where he is still remembered, he befriended some officers from the nearby army camps. He recalled counselling some and giving talks to the troops. Like some ministers in the Congregational tradition, he refused to have hands laid upon him at a formal ordination, considering such procedures ritualistic and non-Congregational. He wrote his Oxford DD thesis whilst a research fellow at the Quaker Woodbrooke College, Birmingham, where he also met his future wife, then a young widow (she died in 1982). He was only the second Nonconformist awarded an Oxford DD—published as *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*. In 1945 he became tutor in church history at New College, London, helping to train Congregational ministers. There he stayed until retirement in 1977, although it is widely recognised that his authoritative scholarship deserved a university chair and that the failure of English academia so to reward him is a serious condemnation of its decision-making. Even his hope to return to Mansfield College to teach church history was frustrated. At New College, London, he taught Hebrew and New Testament Greek, as well as church history, while also serving as college librarian. He was to catalogue over 12,000 volumes from its pre-1850 collections. John Huxtable's surprising appointment as New College principal in 1953 was potentially awkward for both men but to their credit they

overcame any personal difficulties. On his eventual retirement in the 1970s, King's College, London, made him a fellow and visiting professor.

Geoffrey proudly regarded himself as a Separatist and recognised only a few others as his fellows in that respect. He wrote on: *The Reality of Heaven*, Philip Doddridge, *Visible Saints: The Congregational Way 1640–1660*, *The Welsh Saints 1640–1660*, Richard Baxter, Howel Harris, George Fox, James Nayler, Erasmus, George Whitefield, Milton's churchmanship, and *Christian Pacifism in History*. He was to serve for fifty years as a trustee of Dr Williams's Trust and, in 1977, he oversaw the transfer to that library in Gordon Square, London, of the bulk of the New College collection, over 15,000 works, when the college closed. Wider recognition at last came when he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1991, a distinction which gave him and his friends great pleasure.

Geoffrey understood the church's essential unity differently from many contemporaries, especially from those who led the Congregational Union in the 1960s and early 1970s. He believed that to be a Christian only love for Christ is necessary. He was aghast at the stubborn refusal of the United Reformed Church to permit those churches which over the years wished to leave that body to do so. "Why should any Christian denomination wish to retain a church which sincerely wanted to leave?" he would ask baffled visitors. His formidable presence in a lecture theatre frightened academics of stature, as Tudur Jones confessed, and in recent years his frail, bent body, leaning on a younger friend's arm, at ministers' gatherings, and his thin, reedy voice reminding others of who he was, still served to intimidate former students, among them URC synod moderators. He drank strong, dark, sweetened Italian coffee, spread marmalade on his toast at breakfast, and thus rendered his books sticky, of which he would complain without realising the fault was his own. His dry, ascetic manner and his acute mind rendered him a formidable critic. As Patrick Collinson, regius professor of modern history at Cambridge, 1988–96, wrote, "What a dreadful thing it is for our slipshod scholarship to fall into the hands of the living Nuttall".

A generous friend, Geoffrey was always willing to encourage and, if necessary, to work unselfishly for, those who beat a path to his door in London and for many years in retirement in Birmingham, and, after having suffered a stroke in 2000, in Burcot, near Bromsgrove. His lively humanity was revealed in his usually happy dreams which he would relate to guests over breakfast, in his voluminous hand written correspondence, and in the boyish joy with which he greeted visitors. It is hoped to collect his correspondence at Dr Williams's Library. A faithful and gracious Christian, if at times a mite querulous, Geoffrey Nuttall was undoubtedly the finest historian Congregationalism has produced.

Alan Argent

WRITING THE HISTORY OF CONGREGATIONALISM 1900–2000[1]

Setting the Scene

I have been at work on a study of twentieth century Congregationalism (with the projected title 'The Transformation of Congregationalism') for some years. One might assume that such a history has distinct parameters. It begins and ends in principle with particular years, although these dates are in practice somewhat flexible. It is concerned only with England and Wales, and not with Scotland, although the Scottish Congregational churches have undergone similar wide-ranging changes to those in England in more recent years; and in Wales my concern has been with those churches which were members of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and not with the Welsh speaking Congregational churches, affiliated to the Union of Welsh Independents. Certainly the Scottish story remains to be fully explored. Nor does my study pretend to provide a detailed account of everything that happened within, or that concerned, the Congregational churches throughout this period (such as, choosing almost at random from one *Congregational Year Book* in my period, the long-lived stress on temperance, the National Anti-Gambling League, the Hodgson Trust which used its funds to supplement the incomes of poorly paid ministers, the Mansfield House university settlement in Canning Town, east London, the anxiety expressed at the Spring assembly in 1929 over the proposed Sunday opening of theatres,[2] and the many regular fellowship meetings which church life necessarily involved, among other matters important at that time). Rather my study is concerned principally with those factors which led to radical and permanent change, whilst also offering some account of other factors which promised such change but, in the event, failed to accomplish that which they had promised.

I have not set out to write a history of the Congregational Union because, at least in part, I wish to draw the distinction between that union and Congregationalism. The latter, as a form of ordering the church, has existed at least from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries, whereas the CUEW was only founded in 1831, thus proving, if proof is needed, that Congregational churches do not require a national body in order to survive or grow, or have an educated and competent ministry, or even publish a collection of hymns of the

1. A version of this paper was given to the Seminar in Dissenting Studies at Dr Williams's Library in 2007. I am grateful for the comments made then.

2. *CYB* (1930) 65.

finest quality. It is also true that many of the county unions were founded decades before the CUEW itself, suggesting that local unions are perhaps more important than national.

The CUEW's Authority

However, it is true to say that the CUEW, by the late nineteenth century, especially under the guidance of its Scottish secretary, Alexander Hannay (1822–90), had markedly increased in power and influence and, throughout the 20th century, this trend was greatly accelerated so that, for most people who thought at all about it, the CUEW and Congregationalism became synonymous. Indeed the outstanding Congregationalists of the mid and late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were preachers, like John Angell James (1785–1859), R W Dale (1829–95) and Joseph Parker (1830–1902), and missionaries like Robert Moffat (1795–1883), and his son-in-law David Livingstone (1813–73). This vital tradition continued into the new century with attractive preachers like John Brown (1830–1922) of Bedford, H Arnold Thomas (1848–1924) of Bristol, and Robert Forman Horton (1855–1934) of Hampstead—all of whom enjoyed long ministries in a single pastorate—as well as missionaries like James Chalmers (1841–1901) of New Guinea, who was eaten by cannibals, and Griffith John (1831–1912), whose activities in China vied with the South African War against the Boers for headlines in *The Christian World* at the beginning of the twentieth century. Sermon tasting remained popular and the activities of preachers and overseas missionaries were still newsworthy; the jubilee of the Welshman Griffith John's missionary service in China was the subject of widespread celebration in 1905, after which he retired to Hampstead in the following year.

Although overseas missionary work continued, along traditional lines, well into the new century, and retained much glamour for devout, young people, with heroic figures emerging, like the Olympic athlete Eric Liddell (1902–45), who died of a brain tumour in a Japanese internment camp in China, and Alfred Lionel Sadd (1909–42) of the Gilbert Islands, who, aged 33 years, was martyred also by the Japanese, it failed to excite and maintain the high level of public interest which it had gained in the mid and late Victorian period. In contrast, the leading figures of the mid-twentieth century were, without doubt, neither preachers nor missionaries but denominational officials, like Sidney Berry, CUEW secretary 1923–48 and 1955–56, and John Huxtable, CUEW secretary 1964 onwards—not glamorous and alluring, as the great Victorians had been, or dashing, as the dynamic Charles Silvester Horne (1865–1914) undoubtedly was (many young Congregationalists, like Geoffrey Nuttall, would keep in their bedrooms photographs of Horne, the self-same picture still displayed in the entrance to the Silvester Horne Institute in Church Stretton, in Shropshire), but honest, reliable men to be trusted and even admired and full of authority. The

changes of the twentieth century, we may therefore immediately claim, led to the creation of a considerable bureaucracy, at national level, which was accorded greater and greater authority and to which more and more local churches, and especially local ministers, routinely deferred.

The Breadth of Congregationalism

Yet this could easily be overstated, for Westminster Chapel was revived as a church and preaching centre by the two ministries there of George Campbell Morgan (1863–1945), who was influenced by the American revivalist Dwight L Moody, upon whom and upon whose son he himself made a deep impression and with whom he maintained a close relationship. On arrival at Westminster, Campbell Morgan found a small congregation in a huge building with two galleries. He was there 1904–17 and 1933–43 and, for the years 1911–14, combined this with being president of Cheshunt College. The theological liberal, Albert Peel, seriously considered including Campbell Morgan in his blatantly hagiographical book, *The Congregational Two Hundred 1530–1948* (1948), but, for undisclosed reasons, he finally decided to omit the great evangelical from his catalogue of worthies. Significantly Sidney Berry made great efforts to retain Morgan's involvement in the Congregational Union and to a limited extent, although not as much as Berry genuinely wanted, he succeeded in doing so and, in the process, in acquiring and retaining Morgan's own friendship. The fact that Morgan and Westminster Chapel remained valued parts of the CUEW supported the claim of Congregationalism to be a catholic Christian entity, able to embrace not only liberal Christians, but also those with strong evangelical views who took a conservative position with regard to scriptural authority. It also enabled the CUEW to hold its annual assemblies in a uniquely impressive preaching centre, at the administrative and parliamentary heart of the nation's capital city. In the twenty-first century this chapel appears irredeemably lost to the majority, if not to all, of the former Congregational churches and their members.

During the twentieth century the national bureaucracy of the CUEW did not always work well with Congregationalists at other levels. It was never above criticism, although in the 1930s and 40s and in the 1960s a broad level of contentment seems to have been established. Certainly CUEW central staff members endeavoured to work harmoniously with officials at the county level, yet rivalries and suspicions remained. Relations drastically deteriorated when R J Wells was the CUEW secretary 1905–23, and at one point the Yorkshire and Lancashire Congregational Unions, both employing full time county union secretaries, who were therefore accountable to their local bodies and not to the central denominational officials, threatened to leave the CUEW—difficulties which the silver-tongued master of the judicious phrase, that is the Welsh

preacher, John Daniel Jones (1865–1942), managed to smooth away. As a result, J D Jones became in 1919 the only person ever to hold the position of honorary secretary of the CUEW. That episode demonstrated that the county unions, especially the large and powerful northern ones, had a strong sense of their own identity which did not depend upon their membership of the CUEW. Indeed several continued to publish their own year books, as late as 1972.

The County Unions

The loss of the former Congregational county unions, with their strong sense of identities, which finally occurred as a result of the wholesale changes of the late 1960s and early 1970s, although a gradual erosion had been at work far longer, was a serious blow to local fellowship and to self-understanding, and none of the bodies which resulted from the changes of that period has been able to replace those unions satisfactorily. The loss suffered in Bedfordshire was perhaps the most grievous, for there a joint Congregational and Baptist association, the Bedfordshire Union of Christians, had been established as early as 1797 and had maintained a lively existence ever since that date. In 1966 that county union contained 38 Baptist churches and 12 Congregational churches, with 6 daughter mission fellowships, and the historic Bunyan Meeting in Bedford, which boasted a foundation date of 1650, and was itself one of the many union churches of Baptists and Congregationalists found throughout the country.[3] In this respect the coming of the United Reformed Church necessitated the destruction of a healthy, successful and long-lasting exercise in ecumenical fellowship. I am told that now, 35 years after that disruption, no sense of feeling for that union survives. It is past, over and forgotten and, with it, has gone part of the Bunyan legacy. The world may have moved on but was something of value surrendered and for what gain?

As late as 1961 the musician and scholar, Erik Routley, noted that traditional independency still survived in the Congregational churches. He observed that "the farther you are from London, the greater is the likelihood of your encountering emphatic expressions of pre-Union Independency. And if you happen to live in or near a provincial metropolis, there is added to the 'village' mentality of puritan independency a provincial mistrust of centralization." He went on to illustrate his point by referring to the attitude of the Lancashire Congregational Union to the proposed uniting in 1948 of the CUEW with the Presbyterian Church of England. The Lancashire Congregational Union, with its offices in Manchester and located some two hundred miles from London, and at that time a county with a large number of "prosperous Congregational churches", led the successful resistance to that proposal. Routley saw "the inner

3. *Congregational Year Book* (1966–67) 121–2.

unity" of Lancashire as significant for it was one of "the most powerful of all such unities in Congregationalism at the time". He continued, "The county had thoroughly accepted the principle of local unions; but it was suspicious of a national Union as an operative religious instrument, and it would not touch an ecumenical union of two denominations".

Certainly within Congregationalism suspicion of any moves which might be seen as government from outside, especially from the central offices, has resulted often in concerted resistance. Perversely some would as a rule mistrust all initiatives which originated in London, an address which in itself was enough for some to justify profound suspicion.[4] Early in the century individual Congregationalists might well be proud to belong to their county union but often knew little of, and cared less for, the national body. I have known individuals who proudly insisted that their church in Richmond-upon-Thames had long been a member of the Surrey Congregational Union while, in the same breath, they vehemently denied that it had been affiliated at any time to the London body which presumably they considered to have been inferior! In fact their church had, for a few years, been affiliated to the London Congregational Union, towards the end of its life, but they then explained that this had been forced upon them and had never been wanted by the church itself.

The CUEW General Secretary

The general secretary of the CUEW became in the twentieth century the single most important Congregationalist and Sidney Berry, the CUEW secretary 1923–48, in particular, must be credited with effecting this change. Thus we have the strange situation of a group of churches, whose polity is based upon local autonomy, being increasingly centralised around a single, respected figure who comes in time almost to embody the Congregational Union, if not Congregationalism itself. The tributes to Berry on his retirement testify to the depth of love which he inspired. In such a situation to question the policy favoured by the general secretary became tantamount to being disloyal to Congregationalism and may even have been seen as disloyalty to God. Berry was always careful to maintain the unity of his theologically disparate churches, and thus he retained the respect of his varied charges, although other general secretaries lacked his sureness of touch, personal charm, Christian humility and diplomatic skills, even preferring to alienate and isolate those they identified as potentially troublesome ministers and churches. Those general secretaries who sought to lead from the front had to accept that they threatened the unity of the CUEW by adopting a partisan approach. They had to be sure also that they were right, although self-doubt does not appear to have disturbed them overmuch.

4. E Routley *The Story of Congregationalism* (1961) 67–8.

It is not without interest that Congregationalism in the last ten or twenty years has become for some Christians (usually Anglicans and Catholics), including some highly placed persons, a pejorative term, even an insult, for castigating wayward branches of their own denominations, suggesting either that they do not understand the associations attached to the term, or that they somehow share some of the intolerant views put forward by church officials in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for exercising discipline over the freer spirits who would not and could not tarry in their urgent need for ecclesiastical reformation. I presume what these modern disciplinarians mean by the term congregationalism is a form of separatism which they fear will result in fragmentation, disunity and perhaps even theological error, yet they use the word to condemn and in doing so they display irritation and intolerance. Do they fear the directness of the Holy Spirit which may speak without intermediary to the hearts and minds of believers and to the local churches? Their denunciations ignore the fact that Congregational churches have existed for some 350 or 400 years without descending into theological anarchy and that they have produced theological giants in the twentieth century like A M Fairbairn (1838–1912), P T Forsyth (1848–1921), A E Garvie (1861–1945), C H Dodd (1884–1973) and G B Caird (1917–84).

Why write a history?

Arguably Congregationalism as a body of churches with national pretensions, or at least with a recognisable national profile, effectively ceased to exist in October 1972 when the Congregational Church in England and Wales (that is the English Congregationalists and those who worship in English in Wales) united with the Presbyterian Church of England to become the United Reformed Church. Those local Congregational churches which exercised their rights not to join the URC went various ways—some joined the newly founded Congregational Federation, aiming to maintain the doctrinal openness of the former CUEW, some joined the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, with its requirement of subscription to an explicit declaration of Christian faith, and some few remained, and still remain, totally and happily unaffiliated. It is true that many of the non-uniting churches were small and some have subsequently closed, although this same fate has certainly happened to more of those Congregational churches which joined the United Reformed Church. Congregationalism, therefore, is not a word which is readily understood or even recognised by many committed English Christians and sometimes not even by those ministers and members in churches which derive from Congregationalism, let alone by the public at large.

Incidentally I should report that the CUEW in 1966 became, instead of a union of independent local churches, a single national church, that is the Congregational Church in England and Wales. Again most Congregational

churches elected to join the CCEW, although some opted, as was their constitutional right, to remain independent of this body, while some even refused to return a vote on this development at all. Those who did not join remained Congregational churches but were not able to take part in the vote six years later on the proposal to unite with the Presbyterians to set up the URC. Had the two votes been conflated into one national ballot, perhaps the non-joiners, a minority on both occasions, would have been sufficient to prevent the URC coming into existence, although it is likely that this would have only provided a temporary, short-lived pause to the ecumenical proceedings, upon which the CUEW leadership and many others, especially the ministers, had literally set their hearts.

Local Examples

Only a few months ago a helpful, middle-aged man explained to me that the community centre, which he was proudly then showing to me, and which displayed on its walls attractive photographs of the congregation which had met there in 1888 and of a late nineteenth century funeral procession, had opened in April 1973 in his south coast town. He knew that it had formerly been a Congregational church although he did not know why the church had closed. Then he wondered aloud what had happened to the Congregationalists, of whom he had heard but little, if anything at all, in recent years. In my experience his response was only unusual in that he knew anything of the Congregationalists.

In a small market town in the north Yorkshire dales which I have regularly visited for twenty-five years, the former Congregational church was closed in the early 1970s and, with little visible physical alteration, was sold also in order to become the local community centre. This second building has been used for a variety of purposes since its sale, including housing regular craft fairs, and for some years an evangelical church planted in the town has been meeting there on Sundays. Three or four years ago the former Congregational building in this northern town was put up for sale, by the local authority, and a few months later the evangelicals bought it and advertised their services on the notice board. Neither the Congregationalists nor the URC now have a presence in that town.

Yet we may wonder, if these apparently unattached evangelicals can found and successfully maintain a cause there, why could not the original users of the building sustain their church and also appeal to these evangelicals to join them? Was there a lack of will on the part of the Congregationalists and their successors even to try? Was the rush to sell their buildings, both before and after 1972, in part motivated by a failure of nerve? or was the vision which prompted the founders of the URC, among them, as stated, the leading lights in the former Congregational Union, one which encouraged the sale of their buildings to be

replaced by something better or, as it has sadly turned out, nothing at all but, for some old folk, a memory? Of course it is possible to argue, to use terms derived from some of the least attractive aspects of modern business management, that the widespread closure and sale of Congregational church buildings in the 1960s and 1970s, that is in preparation for the coming of the URC and immediately following the founding of the URC, was nothing less than blatant asset-stripping, of a type not unknown among the less scrupulous businessmen of the day. What was and is being done in both these community centres could just as easily have been done in a Congregational church and neither of these towns now has a Congregational church nor a URC presence. Both have Anglicans, Catholics and Methodists. One has a Baptist church and the other a Friends' Meeting House. In the Yorkshire dales, which once had many Congregational churches, and almost no Presbyterian buildings, Congregationalists and the URC now have only a tenuous foothold. Committed members and local officials of the URC in the area cannot begin to suggest reasons for the closure of some of these chapels, unless it was simply for the money.

Existing Published Histories

Yet I repeat the question, if Congregationalism is so passé, so forgotten, then why bother to recall the record of its recent passing and to examine those factors which preceded this occurrence? If it can pass so easily and without widespread protest, or even notice, from English society, then am I wasting my time in attempting to discover what factors within Congregationalism in the twentieth century led to its own ministers and church members campaigning for and voting for this disappearance? It may be a mystery of distinctly limited interest. In my writing I have attempted to provide an interpretation of Congregational history, in large part for myself, so that I, and any others interested, may better understand its demise, or near demise? Of course, as a minister in the Congregational Federation I have a direct interest in seeking such an understanding. However, I realise that I am not the first in the field and that R W Dale (1829–95) wrote a readable and authoritative history, completed and edited by his son, which was first published in 1907 although, in the fashion of the day, it sought to demonstrate the justice of the Congregational cause. Dale began his book as a commission for the CUEW but, once he had begun writing, he decided that he "preferred to speak for himself, free from all responsibility to others" and so he let go of the formal link to the CUEW. Before publication the book had been revised and completed by Dale's son, Sir Arthur W W Dale, who added the final two chapters which cover "modern" institutions and enterprises, and the International Congregational Council which had first met in 1891.[5] Both father and son should really be credited with writing

5. R W Dale *History of English Congregationalism* (1907) v, vi, 727, 745.

the work and for the encouragement to historical studies which followed in its wake. It was a fillip to those who had founded the Congregational Historical Society at the turn of the century.

My study for the most part is concerned with a different and later period, although some overlap with Dale, or at least with his themes, does exist. More important than Dale's weighty tome to my project has been the work of R Tudur Jones, a Welsh scholar of great erudition and fine judgment, who in 1962 published his reliable and comprehensive history, covering the period 1662–1962. His work was officially commissioned in May 1957 to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the Great Ejection, although arguably 1662 is not a date of such momentous significance for Congregationalists, Baptists and Quakers, as it is for Presbyterians and Unitarians, as well as, if for different reasons, for members of the Church of England. We may then wonder whether Congregationalists by the mid-twentieth century had come to see themselves as the main body of English dissent, that is the inheritors of the traditions of the 2000 or so ejected ministers of the Restoration, of whom probably less than 200 were sympathetic to Independency.

Again we may return to the question, why should anyone bother with the history of twentieth century Congregationalism? Given that my chronological boundaries are from 1900 to 2000, I close my study forty years after Tudur Jones had ended his own hefty volume; he did explain that, although he retained the terminal date of 1962 in his title, his narrative had ended in December 1960.[6] I am, therefore, examining again much of the ground already covered by him and, given that I admire his work and trust his judgment, and also that moves have been made to re-publish this seminal book, which was reprinted in 1963 but has been out of print for many years, is my work justified? Are my conclusions likely to be markedly different from his, and is my work likely to say anything original? Indeed I have found that his comments are always worth serious consideration and, given that he was living nearer the times that I am studying, and that he knew and was able to interview many leading figures who are now dead, like Sidney Berry (1881–1961) whom he liked, and Howard Stanley (1901–75), CUEW secretary 1956–63, whom, in concert with many others, he did not like, should I not leave well alone and be content with Tudur's sound treatment of the field?

I should also add that another historian whom I admire, Albert Peel (1887–1949), wrote in 1931 a comprehensive and detailed history of the Congregational Union of England and Wales[7] which also was officially commissioned but is full of Peel's own informed opinions and perceptive judgments. Perhaps to choose Peel as the CUEW historian was natural but he was also a courageous choice for the Union to make, because his scholarly standards and his love of independency

6. R T Jones *Congregationalism in England 1662–1962* (1962) 9.

7. A Peel *These Hundred Years A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1831–1931* (1931).

would not allow him to be uncritical. The foremost Congregational historian of his day and a specialist on Tudor separatism, he was neither a great supporter of centralisation, nor of institutional Congregationalism, and he took pains not to confuse the interests of the CUEW with that of the churches at large. Rather he disapproved of certain innovations, although he sat on several CUEW committees himself and was chairman of the Congregational Union in the critical year 1940–41.

Peel's type of questioning, independent stance, that is of a committed insider whose allegiance to the cause was beyond question, and yet who was not in thrall to the CUEW officials in Memorial Hall, where the denominational offices were located, became increasingly rare in the twentieth century. What room was left in the second half of the twentieth century for the individual who trusted his own instincts and believed the Holy Spirit could just as easily speak direct to him, as to the CUEW bureaucrats? In time all threads of Congregationalism became caught up in the spider's web at the centre of which sat the genial general secretary busily weaving. Those of a discriminating, independent spirit were made to feel distinctly uncomfortable, if not unwelcome. Why should such Christians feel at home in Congregationalism?

Incidentally two of these historians, Dale and Peel, were loyal English Congregationalists, the one a pastor and the other a pastor, journalist and independent scholar, while Jones was a minister of the Welsh speaking Union Of Welsh Independents and a full time academic. All, therefore, have written with a measure of sympathy for their subject, as I have, although Jones had some detachment. It may also be interesting to note that Dale's history was the culmination of his life's work and witness and was published some twelve years or so after his death. It went through several reprints, was into its second edition in August 1907, and clearly held sway until Jones' book was published.

In contrast to both Dale and Peel, Tudur Jones was a relatively young historian to have been given such an important commission to mark this significant anniversary, an event seen in 1962 as of considerable national significance by all denominations, including the Church of England. Were no other possible candidates available for this commission? The obvious person to have tackled this task was Geoffrey Nuttall but, for reasons which we can only guess at, he was overlooked and he himself in later life had no penetrating insight to throw on the reasons for that rejection. Why the leading Congregational historian of his day, possibly of any day, was not asked to write this history is itself a comment on the state of mid-twentieth century Congregationalism, of who made the decisions and why they made them. In the resulting book, Tudur Jones himself acknowledged his debt to Nuttall who had, he wrote in 1961, "favoured him with his guidance in many historical matters over the years" and also had allowed him "to quote from his notes and transcripts as the footnotes to

the text", in his study of English Congregationalism, suggest.[8] On his side the young Nuttall had learned much from Peel who had introduced the aspiring scholar to the sources for the study of Congregational history and he too always had an independent mind, although he stood aside from the sparring and theological wrangling which occupied much of Peel's activities in the 1930s and 40s, even if his views were not markedly different from Peel's in this regard.

Nuttall himself reviewed Jones' book finding it "a prosopographical tour de force" (prosopography is the description of a person or personal appearance, now used for biographical studies) which is "full of out-of the-way information" and concluding that "its lists of names and full documentation will make it of permanent use as a work of reference". However he did not find it entirely satisfactory. As Jones "ploughs on", he wrote, "1962 clearly cast its shadow before too soon, leaving blemishes which, with time, so thorough a workman would have removed". Then Nuttall proceeded to list a number of errors and infelicities which clearly he would not have made himself.[9]

Of course, the great difference between our time and the early 1960s is that English Congregationalism, as it was known by Dale, Peel and Jones, has been absolutely transformed. Perhaps it would be more accurate to state that it has been unrecognisably transformed and Jones was not principally examining transformation. Rather he was looking at the record of 300 years, in which Congregationalists had made a considerable contribution to the country as a whole and to the cause of the Church throughout the world. Writing in 1962, Jones could not have assessed the impact of the preparations for the coming of the URC, nor of the effects of the URC itself. He would have known that some were keen to promote, in the late 1950s and in 1960, any move which might have helped Congregationalists and Presbyterians to become one but he would also have known that the previous attempt at such a union, in the late 1940s, had failed, much to the chagrin of the zealots for such structural union. Perhaps he might have discovered a hint of what was to come in the title of another work which commemorated the tercentenary of the events of 1662, *From Uniformity to Unity*, edited by Owen Chadwick and Nuttall himself.

Tudur Jones would not have known that, only ten years after the publication of his history, English Congregationalism, as he had studied and reported it, would cease to exist and that it would have fragmented and been largely replaced by a curious, new, hybrid creation which, it was hoped by its creators, would herald a far larger, united Protestant Church in England. Given the proximity of his writing to the events themselves, he was also unable to comment with authority on the consequences of the 'Next Ten Years' initiative

8. Jones op cit 11.
9. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (1963) vol 14, 109–111.

of the Congregational Union, led by Howard Stanley, which occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He could not have anticipated the impact, on the local churches and their ministers, of national initiatives toward structural ecumenism.

Nevertheless the transformation of English Congregationalism which was finally achieved in the second half of the twentieth century clearly did not come about overnight. Nor did it occur only because one influential individual, or set of highly motivated and well placed individuals, desired it. A clear majority of Congregational churches and of individual Congregationalists were persuaded that this was the right course to follow and, in the words of the chief promoters of the day, that it was the will of God. Although a particular understanding of ecumenism was clearly involved in the achievement of this transformation, it is important to accept that ecumenism, or reunion as it was termed in the years before the Second World War, had been an enthusiasm of many Congregationalists and many other committed Christians since at least the 1920s. That transformation of Congregationalism did not occur only because the URC came along. It is worth recording that, even without the URC, time travelling Congregationalists from the 1900s would have found many changes in the churches of their order in 1950, and again in 1965, let alone in 1972. Yet elements of continuity from 1900 were still evident in 1950. A reading of the histories of Dale, Peel and Jones reveals change and development but also a considerable degree of continuity. Whether any such continuity persisted, beyond that of personnel in individual ministers and office holders and the use of some of the same buildings for worship, say in 1977, is at least arguable.

Critics and supporters of this transformation may take differing views of the desirability of denominational consolidation, especially considering the local autonomy of Congregational and Baptist churches and traditionally the fierce pride which they have taken in defending and exercising that autonomy. Yet my study of the twentieth century reveals that, even in 1900 and in the years immediately following, many leading Congregationalists campaigned consistently in favour of a more centralised Congregationalism which was quickly dubbed by contemporary journalists the ugly term 'Presbygationalism'.

Therefore, my reasons for offering an interpretation of the history of English Congregationalism must include an examination of those factors at work in this dynamic denominational grouping throughout the twentieth century. Nor do I wish merely to study the immediate factors behind the creation of the United Reformed Church and, for the most part, its necessary abandonment of former Congregational practices and principles.[10] Those factors which resulted in such a sweeping set of changes within Congregationalism were of long duration and

10. Practices such as trusteeship of churches at county level, splitting the London union between Thames North and Southern provinces, non-subscription to creeds and confessions.

many of them arose from initiatives taken at the centre of the CUEW. Again given that the dominant and characteristic feature of Congregationalism is the principle of independency, one might expect initiatives within the tradition to occur at the local level rather than at the centre.

Chronology

It is worth offering some explanation of my choice of the chronological boundaries for my study. I have chosen to begin in 1900 because at that time the advocates of greater centralisation, within the Congregational Union of England and Wales, who had previously been a minority, gained significant and surprising support from a previously suspicious source, that is Joseph Parker (1830–1902), who had hitherto delighted in his role as the champion of Independency and had resisted all attempts to enhance the powers of the CUEW. At that time also the Victorian age was drawing to a close and contemporaries were conscious of the deep seated desire for change—political and social, as well as ecclesiastical. Congregationalists, like the energetic and charismatic Charles Silvester Horne (1865–1914), placed themselves in the vanguard of those who expected and demanded such change. In 1900 many of the currents which would later reach fuller flow were already in existence, although some seemingly strong currents of that day would in time trickle away into insignificance.

My cut-off date of 2000 also requires some explanation. Given that 1972 saw the formation of the United Reformed Church and also of the Congregational Federation, that year would be an obvious and strong candidate for my completion date but to end the story there would be to leave matters incomplete. Readers might properly ask what happened next to the adventure of organic union, to the various continuing Congregational churches, and to the leading characters in the story. I might have taken my study to 1980, by which time the different groupings were able to establish their identities and the attempts at further structural church unity, in which the URC took a leading role, had all but come to a final conclusion. Yet the United Reformed Church was joined in 1981 by the majority of the Churches of Christ, a small congregationally organized body of churches which practiced believers' baptism, and shared the Lord's Supper every Sunday, as the basis of their main act of worship. Some local churches intending to remain outside this union with the URC, however, formed the Fellowship of Churches of Christ in 1980 and continue their life still much as before. In 2000 the majority of the Scottish Congregational churches joined the URC—a significant minority had already joined the Congregational Federation—yet further union at the denominational level has not occurred and the original vision of the URC's founders, which entailed so much institutional and personal disruption, was clearly flawed.

Transformation

The term transformation itself may require some explanation. In the twentieth century the history of Congregationalism involved not only the wholesale closure of churches, although that measure of decline has been more pronounced in Congregationalism than in other denominations, but it also has included the closure of colleges, the decline in the importance of preachers and the rise in the status and powers of denominational officials, the rise and fall of journals and publishing houses, the intimate relation of the CUEW to the Baptist Union of Great Britain, especially during John Howard Shakespeare's time in the early twentieth century as BUGB general secretary, followed by the severing of this intimacy, the transformation of those missionary societies traditionally supported by Congregationalists, the creation of large central funds, thus increasing the importance of the CUEW officers and committees which administered those funds, the perceived need for provincial officers, named moderators, although the models for those officers were Baptist Union officials called superintendents who have in recent years been replaced, the destruction of the county unions which successfully had claimed the loyalty of local Congregationalists for many years, and the overturning of the international denominational associations to which Congregationalists had long contributed. It has also included the challenging of previously widely held doctrinal positions, with the supplanting of a broad theological liberalism, (or was it only the more extreme modernism?) by what was termed 'orthodox dissent', although that term in its turn also appears very dated now.

One measure of the transformation or decline is to be seen in London where few, if any, of the large city centre Congregational churches survive, either as URC or as continuing Congregational churches (arguably only The City Temple and Westminster Chapel survive and it is questionable whether either now see themselves as owing anything of lasting value to their Congregational roots). Yet in 1910 these central London churches were impressively sited edifices with massive congregations whose activities, and the eccentricities of their resident preachers, were widely reported. We may rightly claim that the churches of other traditions have also declined and closed which is true, but the decline within Congregationalism has been more pronounced, as much inspired from within as without, and has been seen as acceptable, inevitable, justifiable and even to be welcomed, and to use again that phrase which is so redolent of that period, that is the 1970s, as the will of God.

Of course, many of these changes, controversial in their day, were introduced several years before the URC was thought of and the advocates of the URC are not to be credited with responsibility for all the changes, nor blamed for their consequences by their critics. In truth, what was generally called 'the old

independency' at the beginning of the twentieth century was subjected to sustained criticism on all sides and probably could not have survived. It was a pejorative term, used to indicate the hopelessly old-fashioned, rural, provincial, stuck in the mud, and anti-progressive. Yet this old independency has been supplanted by that which has little, if any, features of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Congregationalism which was, by any measure, remarkably vibrant and self-confident and was a force to be reckoned with in the city and the country, and in the nation as a whole.

J D Jones and Innovation

Part of the transformation of Congregationalism which occurred in the twentieth century has involved the steady loss of personalities, leading businessmen and major benefactors among the principal laymen and women who attended and supported Congregational churches and, through them, a variety of Congregational causes at the beginning of the century. In establishing the central denominational funds of the CUEW, J D Jones (1865–1942) could call on a sizeable number of well meaning wealthy businessmen and philanthropists, as he recalled proudly and shamelessly in his autobiography where he seems to suggest that he extorted money from these largely northern plutocrats. Jones claimed that the call to set up a central fund for the CUEW in 1909 was "an exercise in fellowship" and "a call to think not in terms of the local church, but of the whole Union of Congregational Churches". He maintained that it "provided a test of whether our Union was a mere rope of sand, or whether it was a real Union in the sense that each Church felt some responsibility for every other—whether we were just a number of detached and isolated Churches, each living its own separate life, or whether we were a Denomination with a common life and common responsibilities".[11]

J D began with £5000 from the banker, Mr W H Brown; then he obtained £5000 from (William) Windle Pilkington (1839–1914), a similar sum from Jesse Haworth, and sums, all running into four figures, from a number of generous well wishers, located as far afield as Bradford, Manchester, Leek, Bowdon, Chester, Hartlepool, Bolton, Sutton and London, as well as smaller gifts from notable ministers and ordinary church members. By 1913 J D almost single-handedly had raised the £40,000 target at which he and the CUEW had aimed. Recalling these adventures, for which he had "the happiest memories of the encouragement" he had received from "our leading laymen", he stated in 1940, "What losses we have suffered in the intervening years—for all these men whose gifts ran into four figures have passed away!".[12] These losses were not readily

11. J D Jones *Three Score Years and Ten* (1940) 99.
12. Ibid 99–103.

replaced but nor, of course, has Congregationalism produced any comparable figure to J D himself and is not likely to do so.

This central fund, in common with all JD's innovations, fundamentally altered the CUEW and affected the way in which Congregationalists understood themselves. That all spoke well of JD, that he remained the darling of the delegates to CUEW assemblies to the end of his life in 1942, that he was elected to the chair of the CUEW twice, serving in 1909–10 and 1925–6—a unique achievement in the twentieth century—, and that his former church at Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, could still boast the largest membership of any church in the CUEW in 1972, thirty years after his death, provide remarkable testimony to his industry, his enduring and winning charm, his organising ability and his powers of persuasion. He set up structures that were far-reaching and survived his passing and proved of more or less permanent quality. That so Machiavallian a character as his friend and fellow Welshman, David Lloyd George, should call him "the arch-wangler of Nonconformity", at a formal dinner in JD's honour, might raise all sorts of dark and disturbing thoughts in our minds that were not apparent to contemporaries.

Yet his achievement was undeniably considerable, if unappealing to me and, also, perhaps for different reasons, unappealing to Welsh nationalists who saw J D as flattering and toadying to wealthy Englishmen, chiefly for his own worldly benefit but doing nothing for his homeland, nor essentially helping the socially disadvantaged and the poor there or elsewhere. One could convincingly argue that J D Jones was responsible for the greatest changes in twentieth century Congregationalism and certainly that he created the situation in which the Congregational Union could become the Congregational Church in England and Wales, which was itself seen as preparatory to the coming of the United Reformed Church. Unlike JD's friend and initially more stellar colleague, the Baptist J H Shakespeare (1857–1928), whose star rose dramatically in the first two decades of the twentieth century but fell almost as theatrically in the 1920s, J D was ambitious, determined, steadfast and sure-footed. He was never likely to let his heart rule his head and thus outpace his constituents and supporters in the churches. Shakespeare, by over-reaching himself and proposing not only free church union but even the acceptance of episcopacy and reunion with the Church of England, had set himself at odds with his own Baptist followers and made them permanently suspicious of ecclesiastical ecumenism. The manner of his fall from grace—believing that his work was over in 1923, after he had dropped a Bible from the pulpit in Uppsala cathedral while preaching to an international congregation, his breakdown in health in 1925 with nervous exhaustion, and his eventual death in 1928—served to underline the tragic fall of this impressive but forgotten Baptist hero.[13]

13. P Shepherd *The Making of a Modern Denomination* (2003), *ODNB.*

Ministers and the Year Book

J D's reforms within Congregationalism, at least in part, aimed at redressing the poverty of some of his fellow ministers, in combination with other measures, and he received considerable support for them, from, among others, many of the leading ministers in the denomination, all of whom of necessity earned far more than their impecunious brethren for whom the reforms were designed. Yet these reforms also served to elevate the place of the accredited ministers within the CUEW. The denominational year books, first produced in the mid-nineteenth century, reflect the seemingly inexorable rise of the ministry. At first the year books were little more than a listing of the Congregational churches throughout the country. In time they acquired other information, such as details of allied bodies, like colleges, missionary societies, schools and a vast array of philanthropic agencies. Once the county unions had been added, it became natural to list the churches under their counties and details mounted. The year book's listing of ministers which, at first, consisted merely of names and addresses became more elaborate over time and was given an enormous boost by the CUEW's compiling a register of officially approved ministers.

During the twentieth century, the year book developed into becoming at least as much a guide to the ministers, as to the churches. The alphabetical listing of ministers came to include a mini-biography of each minister, with a record of colleges attended, educational attainments, previous pastorates, offices held and the years served in each. In addition, those college graduates who had newly joined the Congregational ministry were listed separately, as were those, if any, leaving the ministry, and, of course most useful for historians, full obituaries of those ministers who had died during the previous year were given. Later in the nineteenth century, where possible, photographs of the dead ministers were included in the year book. As stated beforehand, it is at least arguable that the year book was transformed into becoming a vehicle for the ministers, rather than for the churches which belonged to the CUEW. This development in itself reflected that wider change, discernible in the twentieth century, whereby the role and significance of the ministers were so transformed that we may wonder if the Congregational churches at that time existed to serve their ministers, rather than the ministers existing to serve the churches. Certainly churches were closed and chapels sold in order to raise the ministers' stipends. Did the CUEW chiefly come to serve the ministers rather than the churches? If so the churches, that is both buildings and people, were considered less important and, therefore, more expendable.

Such a development is a departure from the beginnings of English Congregationalism in the mid-seventeenth century, as set out in Geoffrey Nuttall's examination of those churches in his *Visible Saints: The Congregational*

Way 1640–1660 (Oxford 1957). Among the contemporary writers whom Nuttall cited in support of this assertion are the eminent Congregational ministers, Richard Mather, Thomas Hooker, William Strong and that favourite of John Huxtable and the new Genevans of the 1940s and 50s, the leading Congregationalist of the later seventeenth century, John Owen, whose work on the church Huxtable abridged, edited and reprinted in 1947.[14] "Without a minister", wrote Owen, in a posthumous work, "the members of a church 'cannot come to that Perfection and Completeness which is designed unto them. That which renders a Church compleatly Organical' is the 'Gift of Christ in the Ministry'", he claimed. "Nevertheless", Owen added unequivocally, "they may 'become a Church essentially before they have any ordinary Pastor or Teacher'."[15] That seventeenth century understanding of the church was not very evident in the planning of the CUEW in the twentieth century.

Although Nuttall's historical researches indicated that the heart of Congregationalism lay in other directions, some of his well-placed mid-twentieth century contemporaries seemed intent on regarding ministers as essential to the churches, that is not merely from a practical perspective but theologically. Nuttall's work, of course, proved that, if they wished to pursue this course, they could not legitimately claim that this was the Congregational way. That claim was, therefore, an unwarranted innovation, unsupported by scholarship.

Benefactors

J D Jones was not alone in appealing to the wealthy businessmen in the churches. Albert Peel also cultivated those whom he hoped might lend financial and other support to the causes which he particularly favoured, such as his various publishing ventures. In this he succeeded in interesting Halley Stewart (1838–1937), and benefited from the trust which the latter had established in 1924, in his scheme to publish some of the Tudor Nonconformist documents. Furthermore the colleges and schools which served the Congregational churches looked to gain considerably from wealthy individuals, as they had done in the nineteenth century. The loss of the select band of Congregational laymen, such as the brothers, Sir Evan (1849–1937) and Sir Albert Spicer (1847–1934), and Lord Leverhulme (1851–1925), although their families might remain loyal to the Congregational cause, was a severe blow to the many ventures which had profited from their munificence in earlier years. However, the glass manufacturer, William Henry, later Lord, Pilkington (1905–83) proved a lifelong

14. J Owen *The True Nature of a Gospel Church and its Government* abridged and edited by J Huxtable (1947).

15. G F Nuttall *Visible Saints* (Oxford 1957) 86.

Congregationalist, exercised a strict self-discipline and regularly attended chapel on Sundays. He remained a generous benefactor of numerous charities.

Nevertheless the declining number of such wealthy donors is in marked contrast to the situation of the churches in the nineteenth century when the number of such magnates was steadily growing. Benefactors like Mrs Enriqueta Augustina Rylands (1843–1908), whose vast fortune was dispensed lavishly in good works but primarily was used to amass, lay out and endow the great Manchester library which bears her husband's name, would clearly be impossible to replace. She was an exceptional woman in many ways—born in Cuba, to a French mother and English father, her father died when she was 5 and her mother when she was 12 years. She was educated at a convent school in New York, and at finishing schools in Paris and London. Brought up a Roman Catholic, she converted to Congregationalism, probably persuaded by the preaching of Thomas Raffles of Liverpool. She became a companion to Martha, the second wife of John Rylands (1801–88), the wealthiest merchant in Manchester (chief shareholder in the Ship Canal and in Rylands and Sons Ltd, the town's leading companies) and, after her friend's death in 1875, she married the widower.

Like her husband, she felt a calling to dispense charity. She had a profound sense of duty, a strong will and a philanthropic disposition. In 1905–6 she fully supported the Forward Movement, an evangelistic campaign launched by the 60 Congregational churches in Manchester and Salford. She helped the opening of mission halls in Salford in 1907, in London in 1908, and in Manchester in 1911. She was especially generous to hospitals, ragged schools, women's charities and educational foundations. Enriqueta's desire to commemorate her husband appropriately led to the building of the library that bears his name and which she had hoped would be a large theological library, for the use of Nonconformist ministers and lay folk. The library became her own best memorial, as well as his, even though the trust of 1900 was abrogated in 1972 when the library was merged with that of the university of Manchester, a merger, I am informed, which occurred because the Rylands library was financially too stretched.[16]

Such extravagant generosity, by definition, would never become the norm but the failure to replace such great-hearted individuals would be a blow for any society and it is another difference between the Congregationalism of the two centuries. By removing the emphasis from mission and evangelism, and taking those aspects of the church for granted, because the energies of the CUEW and those bodies which succeeded it were directed inwards at their own structures and seeking to develop growing ecumenical relations, Congregationalism was neither ready nor able to win converts, humble or wealthy. Again the

16. *ODNB.*

transformation of Congregationalism resulted in a turning away from those practices which in the past had proved fruitful and theologically well founded.

Yet we must not forget that not only the wealthy were in short supply in the churches. Peel's great vehicle which he founded in 1924 and edited with distinction, that is *The Congregational Quarterly*, ceased publication in 1958. Whatever the immediate cause, was that closure not stating that the numbers of Congregationalists who demanded a literate journal of superior quality had been drastically reduced since the war? Congregationalism was changing.

The New Theology

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Congregationalism was riven by a crisis surrounding the movement associated with the preaching of its chief proponent, Reginald John Campbell (1867–1956), who had succeeded Joseph Parker as the minister of The City Temple, in Holborn, in 1903. Campbell preached a series of sensational sermons and published them, with other writings, as *The New Theology* (1907). His teaching attracted headlines in the popular press and routinely drew congregations of thousands but was subjected to great criticism by orthodox theologians and many leading Congregational ministers, for its mixture of modernism, socialism and immanentism. His most severe critic, however, was his former friend, Peter Taylor Forsyth, who addressed the problems thrown up by the New Theology in a series of works. R J Campbell spoke in favour of the social gospel, votes for women and divorce but his health was fragile and he resigned from The City Temple in 1915 and was ordained into the Church of England by Bishop Charles Gore.[17]

Although most Congregationalists did not sympathise with Campbell and the extreme views of the new theologians, the dominant theological tenor among their ministers, in the first thirty years of the twentieth century, was broadly liberal, as was evident in the elections of certain ministers to the chair of the CUEW. However the First World War, and the profound examination of Christian faith which followed it, demanded a theology which explored the reality of suffering and the depths to which sin and savagery could sink. The work of the Swiss theologians of crisis, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, only became well known in this country in the 1930s, once English translations of their writings came to be published. Among those sympathetic to them was the principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, 1932–53, Nathaniel Micklem, and John Whale, principal of Cheshunt College, Cambridge, 1932–44.

The movement of thought.

Micklem and Whale, supported by Bernard Lord Manning, a lay historian and

17. Ibid.

fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, launched a challenge in the 1930s to what they saw as the dominant theological modernism characterising the CUEW, or, at least, the majority of Congregational ministers. Micklem was concerned about those ministers who preached a theologically weak and diluted version of Christianity, especially those influenced by the popular Frank Lenwood, whose *Jesus-Lord or Leader?* had appeared in 1930, and by Thomas Wigley, the minister of Blackheath Congregational Church. These two were leading figures in the Modern Free Churchmen's Union which was founded in 1932 and which had published its 'Re-statement of Christian Thought' in *The Christian World* on 9 February 1933. Micklem had denounced this watery faith only one month later and, in concert with others, he continued to do so for the rest of the decade and during and after the Second World War.

It is possible that Micklem, in particular, overstated his case. Certainly many leading Congregationalists had accepted, in larger or smaller measures, the liberal theology which was current in the early twentieth century and Lenwood had many friends and also the charm to win people over, but few were prepared to support his radical revision of Christian faith. Although Micklem himself believed the backlash of protest, which he claimed to have suffered, only served to justify his original claim, it is worth noting that one of his chief opponents in this, as in other contests, Albert Peel, described matters differently. In September 1934 Peel conceded that Congregationalism had "always had its right wing and its left—the Right looking longingly to Creeds and Confessions and Declaratory Statements, the Left occasionally marked by eccentricities, aberrations, and licence. But the two wings together have been but small compared with the vast majority in the churches, which have borne steady witness to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, despite the absence of a creed". Peel was adamant that doctrinal freedom should always be preserved, as he believed his contemporaries were disposed to do. "So far as I see them", he stated, "most Congregationalists are not disposed to wander with the wizards on the Blackheath, nor do they propose to fall down and worship the dogmatic image which Nathaniel the Principal has set up."[18]

If Peel was correct, and many of his friends, such as W B Selbie, the principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, until 1932, although broadly liberal in theology, and sharing a friendship with Lenwood, would have stopped a long way short of offering their wholehearted support to the Blackheath group, then Micklem exaggerated the possibilities of Congregationalism as a whole slipping into a modernist theological quagmire. Micklem had succeeded Selbie as principal of Mansfield College and there, in the mid to late 1930s and afterwards, he gained

18. A Peel *Inevitable Congregationalism* (1937) 112–113, A P F Sell *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century* (2006) 98–99.

many younger disciples who readily accepted his critical attitudes and saw his opponents, and many of the traditions of Mansfield and Congregationalism, as hopelessly old-fashioned, reactionary and wrong. Micklem's acceptance and advocacy of the use of dogmatic statements, coming from such an advantageous position, flew in the face of well established Congregational practices, like the distrust of the use of creeds, and was bound to be considered extraordinary by former Mansfield men and some women, schooled by Fairbairn and Selbie. From the ensuing but lengthy crisis, which occasioned much anguish and suffering among the teaching staff at Mansfield and among the college governors, emerged the new Genevan group of Congregational ministers and those who wrote for and edited *The Presbyter*, such as Daniel T Jenkins, Alec Whitehouse, John Marsh and John Huxtable.

Nathaniel Micklem's influence on his students was often so profound that it would not be an overstatement to claim that he shares some responsibility for the transformation under discussion. A figure of considerable charm, and a poet of imagination and originality, he had a variety of interests and his students especially profited greatly from his unusual and wide-ranging intellect. Certainly he engineered a theological revolution within the CUEW which eventually resulted, not merely in the overthrow of those independent entities which had long been part of the wider Congregational fabric, but also in a great willingness to surrender tradition and principle, in order to achieve institutional union with other Christian bodies.

Comparison with other Denominations

In the twentieth century all the Christian denominations in England have declined in numbers of members but Congregationalists and the URC have lost more than most. In contrast, the Baptists, who at the beginning of the century were seriously expected to merge with the Congregationalists, have lost at a slower rate than most others.

In England as a whole, prior to the Second World War, Congregational churches had been more numerous than the churches of the Baptist Union. In the early 1950s the CUEW figures for church membership fell below the Baptists and remained below. In January 1960 the CUEW had 2,970 places of worship, 211,329 members and 1,723 ministers. In January 1970 the comparable figures for the CCEW were 2,350 churches (with 2,499 church buildings), 169,965 members and 1,655 ministers—a loss of almost 19% of the total membership. In 1980 the URC had 1,951 places of worship, 149,883 members and 1,690 ministers—a loss of 11% of members.[19]

The URC in 2005 (including then not only the former English Presbyterian

19. *CYB* (1961) 312, (1970–1971) 328, *URCYB* (1981) 151.

churches but also those Churches of Christ congregations and the former Congregational churches in Scotland which had joined the URC) had 1,655 churches, 78,872 members (a loss of 47% from the 1980 figure) and 1,812 ministers. The figure for ministers in 2005 includes 648 stipendiary ministers, 137 non-stipendiary, 133 non-active or in non URC posts, and 894 retired. It does not include ministers of other churches, church related community workers, lay preachers or elders.[20] Between 1980 and 2005 the URC membership figures almost halved.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain in 1960 had 3,060 churches and 3,573 church buildings, 292,033 members, and 1,930 pastors in charge in England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. In 1970 the BUGB claimed 3,019 churches and 453 "branch causes", 245,805 members (a 16% drop from 1960), and 1,587 pastors in charge for the same countries. In 1980 the BUGB totals were 2,058 churches, 170,338 members (30% drop in ten years) and 1,489 pastors in charge.[21]

In 2004 the BUGB published totals of 2,089 churches, 141,994 members (17% drop from 1980) and 1,975 pastors in charge for England and Wales. These totals are for those churches in membership of the BUGB, although in 2004 an additional 78 churches (with 3,279 members and 81 pastors) were in membership only of the constituent associations.[22]

Methodists, Presbyterians and the Society of Friends actually experienced some steadying of their numbers. From 1945 to 1960 the Methodists suffered a slight decline and may in the 1950s even have experienced a small increase. Among the Free Churches, Congregationalists at that time suffered the worst downturn.

The introduction of districts to Wesleyan Methodism at the beginning of the twentieth century, with a chairman who was a minister with a normal pastoral charge, (Methodist superintendents in some countries were called bishops) was paralleled by the Baptist areas and superintendents and the Congregational provinces and moderators. It was a process which bore some resemblance to Anglican episcopacy, but also would come to reflect the need for greater stability to arrest decline, yet initially was expected to introduce propriety and dignity in ordering affairs. The greater use of printed books of worship, favoured by Nathaniel Micklem, also reflected a similar interest in such guides among Baptists, like Stephen Winward and Ernest Payne, among Methodists like Donald Soper, and among Presbyterians, with the publication of the *Presbyterian Service Book* (1948).

20. *URCYB* (2006) 12.
21. *The Baptist Handbook* (1961) 215–6, (1971) 244–5, (1981–82) 143.
22. Ibid (2005–2006) 188.

Most Methodist groupings, but not all, had united in 1932 but this had left hundreds or thousands of small chapels which twenty-five years later were "still clinging to life". Should they have been closed and the resources channelled elsewhere which the centrally organized Methodist Church could have made happen, if it had so ruled?[23]

In November 1946 Archbishop Fisher of Canterbury preached a sermon in Cambridge in which he invited the Protestant churches in England to take episcopacy into their system. This modest step seemed necessary to some. The World Council of Churches would have its inaugural meeting in August 1948 in Amsterdam, and the British Council of Churches had been established a few years earlier. In September 1947 the Church of South India was set up, with the coming together of Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. The non-Anglican clergy were not re-ordained but all the Church's bishops shared in the Episcopal succession, through the Anglican line, and all future clergy were to be ordained episcopally.[24]

In 1932 the Methodists had 14,000 church buildings but in 2005 had some 6,000 which are now closing at the rate of 100 a year. In the 1960s the membership of Congregational churches fell by 20% and of Presbyterians by almost as much. The Methodists had 733,000 members in 1960 but only 557,000 in 1975—a decline of 24% in 15 years. The Baptists who stood back from the excitements of the decade declined less rapidly, losing 13% of their members in ten years. One feature of the 1960s was the growth of churches primarily serving immigrants from the West Indies and Africa. These had some of the spirit of the Free Churches about them. Unburdened by denominational superstructure and the cultural presuppositions of the English middle class they were happy to meet in houses, flats, halls or churches and bore some resemblance to the Free Churches of the late nineteenth century.[25] According to recent reports, the Pentecostal and evangelical churches are growing but the older more traditional churches have been slow to adapt to modern demands.

Loss

Amid all the changes what has been regrettably lost? The missionary societies could not have continued as they were. Modern mission imperatives, the post-1945 understanding of mission, the varying numerical strengths and commitment of churches throughout the world—all would have compelled significant changes, if not necessarily those which have been implemented. One old hand saw the loss in several ways. In the past, when the London Missionary Society

23. A Hastings *A History of English Christianity 1920–1985* (1986) 461–466.
24. Ibid 466–8.
25. Ibid 552, 560, *The Times* 10 Feb, 2007, C Peach in *The Geographical Review* (2007).

still commanded the mission giving of the Congregational churches, he could be sure that on a visit to the officers at Livingstone House, he would meet people whom he knew. He was then in familiar territory and he could feel at home among friends. By 1988 he understood that very few URC people worked in the Council for World Mission offices and he felt "almost a stranger" there.

He also believed that the URC department, concerned with mission, had stressed the ecumenical aspects of the work and that the necessary transition, from being givers to overseas work to becoming part of a more responsive involvement, had not succeeded in making ordinary people care sufficiently. It proved difficult to "rouse interest" in the churches, he observed, which meant that the ministers no longer included a "missionary dimension" in their preaching. Given that few missionaries are now committed to lifelong service overseas, he maintained that the "intimate involvement" which was needed might be stimulated by those who have lived overseas and met the churches. The ministers needed to make these links and to arrange visits to the churches from CWM officers and visitors from overseas. Yet he also accepted that many are no longer convinced of the superiority of the gospel, nor even of their right to make converts.

In this experienced former moderator's view, children's work had been "the great failure of the last thirty years", that is 1958–88. Few children were found in the local churches and their "helpers" were distinctly "elderly". Yet this former moderator of the CUEW and of the URC felt that the move to the URC had "on the whole been good" but wondered whether "we have read the signs of the times", because he saw "a danger not just in too much centralisation, but in relying more and more upon others". He observed that some of "our churches have lost the saving independence they had" and that "True independence is a spirit to be developed, along with caring for one another, with the strong (spiritually as well as financially) helping the weak". However, he was certain of one thing, "our ministers are better cared for during working years and in retirement than ever before".[26]

Change and Continuity

Given the transformation which took place, especially in the years from the 1950s onwards, we might ask if there has simply been too much change, too quickly. Churches are often regarded, correctly in my view, as providing the social cement and the continuity in a community. The rapid succession of changes which occurred within the CUEW 1956–72, and which was intended to bring about a wholesale reshaping of the Christian denominations in England,

26. R Hall "Fifty Years a Minister (1938–1988)"—typescript held in The Congregational Library, 14 Gordon Square, London, WC1H OAR.

may have unintentionally resulted in an undermining of public confidence in the churches' willingness and ability to provide much needed confidence in their messages, and in the reassurance which their presence had brought for generations to the communities of England. Churches and their ministers, by the nature of their calling, must be concerned with the mysterious and the supernatural and with the crucial but infrequent experiences of human life—birth, love, suffering, fear, doubt, guilt, remorse, sacrifice, death, and the extremes of joy, sorrow and anguish which are necessarily involved with these.

Ministers and church members alike must struggle to discover the significance of these singular events for their own lives, as much as for others. This kind of witness and ministry is necessarily bound up with respect and trust and, for Protestant Nonconformists in particular, also with personal authority, which is rarely now attached to a title but is more often built up over time, through sensitive, pastoral contacts. A succession of rapid changes, in the location of the church, its external aspect, its name, its notice board, as well as its known officers and personnel, let alone that kind of publicity material it seeks to distribute, can easily destroy confidence and communicate uncertainty. The development of confidence, therefore, is achieved only patiently and in the long term. To demolish local church contacts and myriad other long established bodies, in order to usher in the longed for new Jerusalem, that is to realise the dream of full church unity by 1980 (which was the hope and promise of luminaries in several denominations, but was especially true of the CUEW's and CCEW's leaders throughout the 1960s and 70s), was strategically risky, even if it seemed blessed by scriptural warrant. To have one's own dreams underwritten by holy writ is surely to have the highest authority on which to build and to command compliance but also, if necessary, to destroy. The realization of such a dream may require dedication, determination and a politician's certainty that the dreamer or dreamers, in the grip of what appears to be an overriding divine truth, really do know best, both with regards to their own affairs and also with regards to others. The only justification for such risk taking, which may entail riding roughshod over the hopes and dreams of others, must be the promised new order. It did not come.

Alan Argent

COLIN EWART GUNTON (1941–2003): CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIAN AND PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL

Introduction

In a recent book, Carl Trueman described John Owen, the sixteenth-century Puritan theologian and spokesman for Congregationalism, as a 'Reformed Catholic and Renaissance Man'.[1] Dr Trueman contends that, rather than effecting theological innovations,[2] Owen is to be located within mainstream Christian orthodoxy, corrupted during the Middle Ages and rediscovered during the continental Reformation. In his doctrine, he offered no novel—and potentially controversial—insights, nor did he seek them. Instead, he sought to express and defend the truth 'once delivered to the saints'. Furthermore, Owen defended his orthodoxy by drawing on and debating with the work of continental scholars, assimilating into his own theological system that scholarship which resonated most with Christian orthodoxy. Though unmistakably Puritan, Owen was primarily a theologian working in continuity with the catholic (namely, orthodox) tradition, inspired by Reformation principles, and thoroughly immersed in the discoveries of Renaissance Europe.

For a number of reasons, much of this could also be said—with only slight qualifications—of another Reformed, nonconforming, English theologian, namely Colin Gunton. Like Owen, Gunton was a most prolific author whose primary concern was to defend Christian orthodoxy by highlighting specifically Reformed categories, and he did so by engaging with both the Christian tradition and with contemporary (and specifically post-Enlightenment) European thought. Calvin, Hegel, Kant, Schleiermacher and Barth perhaps obvious dialogue partners for him; perhaps more surprising were Basil,[3] Irenaeus

1. Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Burlington VT and Aldershot, 2007).

2. This is a somewhat free use of a complaint of Calvin against 'such as effect innovations' in liturgical order, quoted by Graham Redding, 'Calvin and Café Church: Reflections at the Interface between Reformed Theology and Current Trends in Worship', in *The Record: The Church Service Society* 41 (Winter 2005–6) 36–47 [45].

3. 'According to St Basil, the distinctive function of the Spirit is to perfect the creation, and we can interpret this as meaning to bring to completion that for which each person and thing is created. In that respect, the distinctive work of the Spirit is eschatological.' *The One, The Three and The Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge 1993) 189.

and the Cappadocians, while Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Edward Irving[4] could be considered unusual if not even obscure. Yet all could be quarried in search of insights which were never to be paraded for their own sake but used to defend and expound the Christian gospel and to demonstrate not just the truth but also the coherence and reasonableness of Christian teaching.

Life and Career

Born in Nottingham on 19 January 1941, Gunton read Greats at Oxford (Hertford College), graduating BA in 1966 before studying theology at Mansfield College, being awarded his MA in 1967. Under successive principals, John Marsh and George Caird, he was schooled in the Genevan tradition of the continental Reformation. He embarked on doctoral work in which he contrasted the doctrine of the Wholly Other God—the God who is distinct from his creation—as found in Karl Barth (who, it should be recalled, was still alive when Gunton began his work) with the thought of Charles Hartshorne (1897–2000), whose conception of a dynamic, process-driven relationship between God and the universe led to an espousal of panentheism, and left open the likelihood that 'God' was left at the mercy of cosmic forces.[5] Initially, Gunton worked under the supervision of the American Lutheran theologian, Robert W. Jenson, who had himself completed a doctorate on Barth at the university of Heidelberg.[6] This study inaugurated a life-long fascination and engagement with Barth's work while it also established Gunton's position as one of the foremost English critics of process thought.[7]

Two years into his research, he was appointed lecturer in philosophy of religion at King's College, London, remaining there for the rest of his career, but becoming lecturer in systematic theology in 1980 and professor of Christian doctrine in 1984. He was awarded his DPhil in 1973 and fourteen authored

4. 'Irving deserves to be celebrated today primarily for developing this insight into the doctrine for which he was convicted of heresy: that at the incarnation the eternal Son took to himself the fallen flesh that all human beings share. Irving's concern is not, of course, to teach the sinfulness of Christ, but to give an adequate account of the representative nature of his humanity.' *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (2003) 192.

5. See Alan P. F. Sell, *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Milton Keynes, 2006) 34.

6. The fruit of Jenson's research was published as *God After God: The God of the Past and the God of The Future Seen in the Work of Karl Barth* (Indianopolis, 1969).

7. See Gunton's thesis, published as *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (Oxford, 1978). According to David Peel, 'Gunton…engaged in the destruction of a straw man due to a misreading of Hartshorne's concept of dipolarity.' See Peel, 'So Last Century?—Review Article: *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century*. By Alan P. F. Sell', in *The Journal of The United Reformed Church History Society* vol 8 no 1 (January 2008) 49–54 [42].

books, a further eight edited books and numerous articles subsequently flowed from his pen, suggesting not only a lifetime of industry but also a fertile and energetic mind. He was certainly one of England's most significant and prolific theologians, though his tenacious loyalty to a tradition that, all too often, has been refused both social and academic recognition[8] may have contributed to his not receiving either the honour or the recognition that his talent and his contribution deserved. Nevertheless, he was awarded the DD of the universities of London (1993), Aberdeen (1999) and Oxford (2003), while he was also elected to a fellowship of King's College (2003). His sudden and unexpected death on 6 May 2003 at the age of 62 was certainly tragic and heartbreaking for his family and friends, but shock waves also reverberated around the theological world, particularly the Reformed one, which certainly lost one of their most able, and accomplished, spokesmen.

Not long after his death, a collection of essays appeared under the title *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (2003). Although written at different times, Gunton considered that the essays contained in this volume mapped out the direction which he would take, and the themes he would expand, in an envisaged, multi-volumed systematic theology ('the proper and intended summit and summary of his work'[9]). More recently, two further volumes have appeared largely due to the efforts and editorial skill of others. *The Theologian as Preacher* (2007) is a second volume of sermons,[10] collected and edited by his daughter Sarah (with John Colwell), while *The Barth Lectures* (2007) is a most remarkable work, being the verbatim account, made from tape recordings, of the lecture course on the theology of Karl Barth given by Gunton at King's College, recorded, transcribed and edited by one of his doctoral students, P. H. Brazier. In some ways, these latest books highlight three of the major characteristics of Gunton's work as a whole. First of all, he was, especially in his later writing, careful to locate all his theological reflection within a Trinitarian framework. Secondly, his work was both heavily influenced by and perceptively critical of Barth, whom he saw at times as having been insufficiently Trinitarian. And, thirdly, his motivation in all his theological work was to serve the Church both in his advanced reflections and in his preaching ministry to, and membership of, a local congregation.

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8. Carl Trueman's comments on Owen seem to ring true here as well: 'By 1674 … Owen was politically marginalized; the ecclesiology which he had advocated was broken and being written out of the history books like an embarrassing mistake; and the theological tradition of which he was a part was about to be overwhelmed.by…enlightened reasonableness…' Trueman *op cit* 123.

9. So says Stephen R. Holmes in the Foreword to *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, ix.

10. The first had appeared as *Theology Through Preaching* (Edinburgh, 2001).

The Barthian Influence

There can be little doubt that Barth was a formative influence on Gunton, though the sheer complexity—not to mention the amount—of the Swiss theologian's published work meant that Barth was more a lifelong companion whose theology provided a means of continuous engagement rather than someone whose writing could be plundered for its insights and then abandoned as interest developed in other directions. From his days as a doctoral student, he had a clearly appreciative but critical relationship with Barth's theology. Barth's name, as well as scintillating assessment and creative utilization of his ideas, recur time and again in Gunton's writing. It had been his intention to write a book on Barth during his retirement, and his lecture course at King's was, according to his friend, and former student, Stephen Holmes, a '"flexing of the muscles", working towards that end.'[11] Given the scholarly consensus that the Barthian project is only now beginning to be fully understood, and the fact that Gunton had spent almost forty years pondering Barth's theology, the intended publication would almost certainly have provided an important contribution to our understanding of the great Swiss theologian's thought.[12] So it is in some ways to present the theological world with a version of the book-that-never-was that *The Barth Lectures* has been published.

Intriguing as the book is, it certainly lacks the finesse and the polish of his more considered volumes. The rhetorical style of the lecture shines through on each page, as does the fertile and energetic mind, leaping on to an idea and exploiting it, responding to a question or merely waxing eloquent about Barth's genius. On this, Gunton was absolutely clear: 'Barth's greatness was in realizing that Schleiermacher's scheme had to be rejected,' he said.[13] In this one sentence, Gunton both summarizes the motivation behind Barth's rediscovery of the true task of theology and also seems to encapsulate—at least in essence—his own animus towards the enlightenment and its tendency to enthrone man and to depose God from his sovereign position. For Schleiermacher, to be truly human was to be truly religious, with religion representing the claim to an immediate, inherent, or immanent connection between human beings and God. To adopt such a view is to stand precariously at the top of a slippery slope which inevitably led to Feuerbach's projectionism (that God is *merely* the projection of our highest thoughts and values) and ultimately to the conclusion that 'the true

11. *The Barth Lectures* (2007) 2.

12. Christoph Schwöbel's comment in his Foreword to *The Barth Lectures* is worth quoting here: 'The strength of his interpretation of Barth does not come from the intention of producing the unsurpassable correct interpretation of Barth, but from engaging with Barth's struggle and adventure to offer a faithful exposition of the revelation of God in Christ.' See *The Barth Lectures* xxiii.

13. *Ibid* 15.

sense of theology is anthropology'.[14] This was summed up in Pope's famous couplet, often quoted by early twentieth century liberal nonconformists:

> Man, know thyself, Presume not God to scan,
> The proper study of mankind is man.

This, for Barth and for Gunton, simply denied the very heart of the Christian gospel. For 'If God is immediately perceivable by all people of all religions then you do not need Christ'.[15] This raises two fundamental theological issues. First, what is the relationship between the Creator and the creation? If there is a fundamental, 'immediate' connection, as Schleiermacher supposed, then the whole redemptive scheme, apparently outlined in the New Testament, becomes redundant. There is no need for reconciliation because the human and divine are in some senses already reconciled. This, in Barth's view, represented 'religion', namely human attempts to seek God and to find him somehow at the depths of human being. Yet, for Gunton as well as for Barth, the New Testament, the Word of God, demonstrates not a continuity between God and humanity, but the 'fundamental ontological difference between God and the world',[16] a difference that demands divine action in order to draw creation and its Creator into fellowship. This occurred in Jesus Christ, the *logos ensarkos* ('enfleshed' or incarnate word) who thus, in his very person, brings reconciliation between humanity and divinity and in his death accomplishes that which no human could accomplish, namely atonement for 'sin' (the estrangement between God and creation). To deny the ontological difference between humankind and God, both for Barth and for Gunton, was simply to deny the gospel.

Second, this demonstrates the need for mediation between God and humanity. Human beings are not ontologically connected to the divine, therefore they need the divine mediator. This occurs in God's Word, made flesh in Christ, but also proclaimed under the power of the Spirit through the exposition of scripture in which that Word is contained. As Gunton said, 'If God is God, and not the world, and if we are still to know him, then some form of mediation, some way of getting from here to there, is required'.[17] Gunton's dependence here on Barth is most clearly seen in his book on revelation (*A Brief Theology of Revelation*), where he reflected on the nature of revelation as the 'personal relation of God to the world conveyed by forms of words'.[18] In other words, revelation was God's historical activity in Christ which does not come directly to human beings but is mediated, by the power of the Spirit, through

14. Ludiwg Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* tr. George Eliot (New York, 1957) xvii.
15. *The Barth Lectures* 20.
16. *A Brief Theology of Revelation* (Edinburgh, 1995) 3.
17. *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* 164.
18. *A Brief Theology of Revelation* 106.

creeds, confessions and proclamation.[19] Yet revelation is not the bearer of information but of saving knowledge.[20] For Gunton, as for Barth, the Christian gospel was an event where God incarnate effects redemption for the created universe. And this communication, of necessity, had to come from beyond the creation, due to the latter's servitude to corruption.

This was the fundamental contribution that Barth made, marking a new epoch in Christian thought. Christianity was not the sum total of human striving for meaning, but the redemptive activity of God in history. Theology was not the sum total of human thought about the meaning of life, but the attempt to deal knowledgeably with the Christian good news. Christ was not a teacher of good deeds, the highest example of the moral man, but the incarnate Word whose death and resurrection proved, and will prove (the eschatological note is significant), to be redemptive for human beings and the creation at large. All this constituted a communication from God to human beings—a revelation of the divine will which is seen once and for all to be love. If they differed over certain details, then they agreed over this. The gospel was God's self-revealing good news to the world. The theologian's task was to proclaim and expound it and to demonstrate why it was still believable despite modern agnosticism and scepticism.

But Gunton was not uncritical of Barth. There are two basic criticisms that appear in his work. First, he thought that Barth, too, succumbed at times to a sense of immediacy rather than mediation. Theological liberalism had claimed that *unmediated* revelation was available through experience (Schleiermacher) or Reason (Hegel). Gunton discovered something similar in Barth's apparent adoption of a sense of God's immediate revelation to the mind which stops short of Hegelianism because he rejected the idea of an ontological conflation of God and the world. Gunton, however, renounced any sense in which revelation is perceived as an unmediated experience.[21] He looked to the work of the Spirit, within the overall life of the Trinity, as being the mediator of this revelation to humankind.

This leads, secondly, to Gunton's perception in Barth of a weak doctrine of the Spirit. Barth tended towards the traditional view that the Spirit merely makes Christ's benefits real to the believer. For Gunton this resulted in a less than fulsome—and thus rather suspect—Trinitarianism. In his own work, he sought to give a clearer place and function to the Holy Spirit in a scheme that avoids the extremes of tritheism and modalism and seeks to be consistently Trinitarian. Barth could not help here; so who was it that gave him the insight to do this?

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19. *ibid* 18.

20. 'The unique character and authority of scripture as *revelation* is that it claims to be more than the provider of unique information…but also to be the bearer of saving knowledge, a vehicle of the word…' *ibid* 73.

21. *ibid* 16.

The Spirit and the Trinity

Interestingly, Gunton records in his 'epilogue' to the second edition (1997) of his Christology *Yesterday and Today* (in which he argues that the manifestation of the eternal in time, and that a specific and particular occurrence can be of general benefit, are both reasonable propositions), that Geoffrey F. Nuttall had pointed out to him that it was an odd book about Christology that contained so little on the Holy Spirit.[22] As is well-known, the Holy Spirit had been the subject of Nuttall's first major work[23] while the Spirit's presence with and guidance of the Christian were vitally important in his own Christian pilgrimage. Clearly Gunton took this to heart and his attempt to maintain Christology alongside a Pneumatology within an overarching Trinitarian understanding of God's act and being shines forth from virtually every page of his subsequent work.

Nevertheless, it was not in contemporary theology that Gunton found inspiration for his Trinitarianism, but in Patristic thought, especially that of Irenaeus, the third century bishop of Lyons, 'one of Christianity's first great systematic theologians'.[24] His praise for this often neglected Father of the Church was almost effusive:

> Never was there a writer more necessary to an understanding of the modern age than Irenaeus of Lyons. He is a model of a theological integration of incarnation, saving death, resurrection and ascension, all embraced within a Trinitarian framework according to which the creating and redeeming work of God the Father is mediated by the Son and the Holy Spirit.[25]

It was Irenaeus who had argued for a Trinitarianism whereby God the Father engaged in redemptive activity in the world by means of his 'two hands', the Son and the Spirit.[26] For Irenaeus, Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection marked a 'recapitulation' for the creation which would only be completed at the eschaton.[27] The presence of the Spirit both continues the recapitulation and promises the creation's consummation. As a result, the Spirit enables the life of

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22. *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* (2nd edn, 1997) 221.

23. The incomparable, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford, 1946)

24. *Yesterday and Today* 173.

25. *ibid* 225.

26. *The One, The Three and The Many* 159; *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* 72, 77, 162; *Theology Through Preaching* 57.

27. '*Recapitulation* expressed not only what would now be called the narrative structure of the Christ-history, but of that history as it takes up into itself the whole of created reality. Irenaeus' pneumatology also has an orientation to time, for he shares the eschatological orientation of the New Testament in his view of the work of the Spirit. Eschatology for him is not oriented primarily to another world that is temporally and spatially discontinuous with this one, but to that eternity wherein lies the perfecting of the created order, a perfecting that continues to be shaped as recapitulation works itself out in the life of the church.' *The One, The Three and The Many* 80.

the new creation, won in Christ, to be lived in anticipation in the present while also moving the creation towards its purpose according to the Creator's will. Thus the gospel marks God's re-creation of a fallen universe rather than the merely moral or legal restitution of a corrupt humanity.

It is here that the central concerns of Gunton's more considered thought truly come to the fore. He was keen to be fully Trinitarian, recognising the perichoretic interaction of the persons of the Trinity in all divine activity—creation, redemption and consummation. Not only was he keen to see the Trinity as a metaphysical truth about the being of God, but the Trinity also accounts for God's activity in the world—i.e., God is both immanently and economically *Trinity*. As a result, he tended to see the traditional formula of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as essential in reference to the Christian God, something he might, in part, have inherited from the work of his doctoral supervisor, Robert Jenson. Jenson argued that, in the ancient world, dominated by polytheism, belief in God was not significant, instead the God had to be named, and the God revealed in Jesus Christ has been identified as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[28] While Gunton did not make much of this as the specific name of God, he did see it as part of the revealed truth about God and claimed that, in order to be in any sense meaningful, our language must be trusted, even elusively, to 'refer, or to affect to refer, to realities which lie beyond it'[29] meaning that the form is 'indispensible *in certain respects* if the content is to be retained.'[30] This conservatism of language was no atavistic attempt to cling to the past but a recognition that it was the nature of the revelationary (and redemptive) event to be encapsulated in and conveyed by words (albeit inadequately and incompletely). Thus the words were related directly to the reality they convey and this could not be abandoned or adapted without in some senses doing damage to our perception of that reality.

For Gunton, it was an adequate understanding of the person of the Spirit that would lead into a more adequate Trinitarianism. In his Bampton Lectures (1992), he argued that a grasp of the truth of the Trinity had a practical outworking in human sociality. For Gunton, contemporary society, at any given time, either gave prominence to the interests of the many (or society) or of the one (the individual) to the detriment of the other. This had led to the imposition

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28. Robert W. Jenson, 'The Triune God', in C. E. Braaten and R. W. Jenson (eds), *Christian* Dogmatics, I (Philadelphia, 1984), pp.87–92. See also Alister E McGrath (ed) *The Christian Theology Reader* (Oxford, 1995) 122–5. Gunton refers to this, apparently approvingly, when he states; 'I do not wish to deny that God historically reveals himself—in Robert Jenson's way of putting it, names and identifies himself as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.' See *A Brief Theology of Revelation* 16.

29. *ibid* 8–9.

30. *Yesterday and Today*, p.5.

of a bland homogeneity on society or to the oppression of the masses. The fault lay in a false understanding of *hypostasis* as meaning 'individual'. The threeness of God is instead to be seen in terms of *persons* wherein God's being is constituted by the interaction or relationality of the three persons.[31] It is this that maintains—almost paradoxically—the importance of the One and of the Many. For, on the one hand, 'to be a person…is also to be uniquely what we are—ourselves and not identical with others',[32] while, on the other hand, 'being in Communion is being that belongs together, but not at the expense of the particular existence of the members'.[33] Thus Gunton argued for an ontology predicated on mutual giving and receiving perceived to be at the heart of the life of the Trinity. One's being is somehow gifted by the other. '[T]he three persons of the Trinity exist only in reciprocal eternal relatedness. God is not God apart from the way in which Father, Son and Spirit in eternity give to and receive from each other what they essentially are. The three do not merely coinhere, but dynamically constitute one another's being…'[34] And this theological truth should enable the working out of a sociality that recognises the importance of both the individual person and society in general.

Eschatology

Alongside the practical, or political, implications of Trinitarianism, Gunton's emphasis on the doctrine of the Spirit within the Trinity also led him increasingly to emphasise the eschatological nature of the gospel. For Gunton, under Irenaeus's influence, the eschatological hope is not for another world, but for this one because it points 'to that eternity wherein lies the perfecting of the created order, a perfecting that continues to be shaped as recapitulation works itself out in the life of the church'.[35] As a result, eschatology itself is not purely future, but it is both present (realised) and anticipated. As such, eschatology must first be understood Christologically, and thus perceived as something inaugurated and promised in the past, but orientated towards and consummated in the future. This depends on a pneumatological understanding of eschatology whereby the eschaton, inaugurated and anticipated in Christ, is made real by the mediation of the Spirit.[36]

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31. See, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, (Edinburgh, 1991) 10.
32. *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* 14.
33. *ibid* 16.
34. *The One, The Three and the Many* 164.
35. *ibid* 80.
36. *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* 76. 'To say [with Calvin] that the Spirit is the perfecting cause of creation is to make the Spirit the eschatological person of the Trinity: the one who directs the creatures to where the creator wishes them to go, to their destiny as creatures. Where the Spirit is, there do the creatures become that which God creates them to be…That, we might remember, happens only through Jesus Christ, so that we are distinguishing, not separating, what the three persons do.' *ibid* 81–2.

> The words and actions of Jesus…[in the Synoptic Gospels]…make known the re-establishment of the rule of God that is realised through them, but also makes clear the eschatological character of revelation. God's will to perfect the creation is in Jesus both re-inaugurated and declared. This has to be understood in two-fold respect. In the first place, it is future eschatological: 'as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 1:7); 'that the genuineness of your faith…may redound to praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ' (1 Pet. 1:7). The completion of revelation is yet to come. But, in the second place, the eschatology of the future is one that impinges on the present, no more so than in the divine saving action in Jesus of Nazareth, because the completion of the eschatological intent is inaugurated in him, what happens there is also rightly described as revelation… that which we are granted to know in the midst of things.[37]

As well as Irenaeus, Gunton certainly inherited some of this from Barth. 'For Barth…[the incarnation]…is realized eschatology because the end in the form of Jesus Christ really has come amongst us—this is in such a way that the human situation and condition is changed forever. The coming of Christ changes the situation and condition of humanity universally. Every single human being would be in a different place had he not come.'[38]

However, realised eschatology is 'only a beginning' because 'it has a future eschatology to come'.[39] This future is not the product of human agency but depends on God's action mediated by the Son in the power of the Spirit and it is a misunderstanding of this which lies at the heart of contemporary problems, characterised by Gunton as 'the anxiety to bring the future about' which 'is the cause of the frantic rush that is one mark of the modern failure to live serenely in time'.[40] He was aware of being caught himself within this rush. In one of his sermons, he made the following poignant remark, given the plans for projects which came to naught, 'I get compulsively busy when I begin to think, for example, for all the writing I ought to complete before—before what? Death?'[41] Perhaps less poignantly, but just as insightfully, he further remarked, during his Bampton lectures:

> Why is it that a world dedicated to the pursuit of leisure and of machines that save labour is chiefly marked by its levels of rush, frenetic busyness and stress?[42]

While this suggests his deep-seated ambivalence towards modernity, it also shows that there was a pastoral edge to his theology. Part of the theologian's task was to identify the humanity-denying forces at work in the world. This pastoral edge

37. *A Brief Theology of Revelation* 112–3.

38. *The Barth Lectures* 149–50.

39. *ibid* 158; See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1 *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh, 1956) §58.2, esp. p.110.

40. *The One, The Three and the Many* 90.

41. *Theology Through Preaching* 46.

42. *The One, The Three and The Many* 73.

was maintained largely in his membership and service of the local church. As Stephen Holmes remarks: 'Theology, he believed passionately, was the church's science—pointless and meaningless if not directed to the maintenance, edification and extension of the body of Christ'.[43] Indeed, there was, here, a sense in which an upbringing within Congregationalism had made an abiding impression on his ecclesiology. In one of his sermons, entitled 'The Church in the World', he proclaimed:

> …there are, it seems to me, only two real options for the Church in a world in danger of falling into disorder. The first is something like the traditional Roman Church, organised like an army, with a command structure imposed from the top. The second is a theology of the absolute sovereignty of God, the Lord of history, who calls every member of his church to…'be holy and blameless before him', so that we are in a condition to meet the demands that are going to be placed upon us…[44]

His theology was certainly informed by, if not also geared towards, a practical or pastoral understanding of the gospel which enabled Christians to live it in the world. And he engaged in local ministry in part to fulfil this.

The Preacher

Gunton was ordained a minister of the newly-formed United Reformed Church in 1972. He served the congregation at Western Road, Romford, for three years before moving to Brentwood in 1975. He remained associate minister there for the rest of his life, preaching once or twice every month, but also becoming fully involved in the life of the congregation. As one obituary put it: 'Brentwood was Colin's anchor, a church he cherished and loved. All his achievements as a teacher and theologian were earthed in the reality of fellowship, witness and worship at Brentwood'.[45] Two volumes of sermons, virtually all of them preached at Brentwood, were later published.

Gunton's first collection of sermons was *Theology Through Preaching* (2001). In an introduction, his friend and one-time colleague, Christoph Schwöbel, suggested 'that preaching is one of the most important ways of doing theology.'[46] Schwöbel claimed that to do theology through preaching meant preaching biblically—'attempting to find the message for today's church in the patient engagement with the biblical texts'; pastorally—'so that preaching becomes part of pastoral care in the community of the church'; doctrinally—'to recover the meaning of doctrine as guidance and aid for today's church'; and congregationally—'acknowledging…the life of a concrete congregation' and,

43. *The Theologian as Preacher* (London, 2007) xi.
44. *Theology Through Preaching* 141–2.
45. *URC Year Book* (2004) 324.
46. *Theology Through Preaching* 5.

enabling that congregation to hear and bear witness to God's Word.[47] This is as good a description as any of Gunton's sermons.

In both collections, we find that Gunton's sermons were primarily biblical and doctrinal. Their biblical nature rises from the fact that the preacher passionately believed that the scriptures contained the 'living word of God'. He is recorded once to have said that in every service: 'you should always have three readings from Scripture—Old Testament, New Testament and Gospel—and a psalm at the beginning. After all, it is only when the Bible is being read that you can be sure God is speaking to the people'.[48] Consequently, each sermon is preceded by a list of the Bible readings for the relevant Sunday (and is only really understood in light of what the readings say).

Yet this was no literalism. Gunton also knew that the text was to be wrestled with if its meaning was to be understood. As a result, his sermons were carefully crafted, each text, each subject, each illustration, and even each word given due consideration. Each sermon offers the exposition of scripture—often the exposition of a single verse—always geared towards proclaiming the hope of the gospel and showing that it remains its potency and truth despite the claims of secularism, modernity and postmodernity. As professor of Christian doctrine, it is hardly surprising that Gunton saw doctrine as assisting in this task. Doctrine arose from the exposition of scripture and this relationship also comes to the fore in his sermons, especially those which were based on the explanation of the creeds.

In style, Gunton's sermons tend to lack homely illustrations. An occasional reference to gardening or singing or—more often—his academic life (the work of a research student or attendance at a conference) reveal that he was at home preaching to the members of this congregation. There was a sense in which he knew them, and they knew him. While the exposition is scripturally based, each sermon is also geared towards life in this world. The Christian's duty is not to be world-denying. The Spirit is not a concern with the paranormal but with the normal, nor is it a concern for another world.[49] 'Our calling is not to renounce this world but to live in it as God's creation.'[50] It is the grasp of the theological significance of the Christ event that enables life in the world, that enables the Christian to live serenely in the face of all that occurs. Consequently, the sermons are only secondarily interested in commenting on contemporary events. That does not mean that he made no comment about particular occurrences. Like many others, he had to mention the attack on the World Trade Center ('9/11'), but he did so more to confirm 'the problem of evil' and its solution in

47. *ibid* 6–7.
48. Again, this belongs to Stephen R. Holmes, in *The Theologian as Preacher* xiv.
49. *ibid* 27.
50. *ibid* 42.

Christ than to wax lyrical about modern politics, culture, globalization or terrorism. His sermons are not, in that sense, contemporary, but instead they offer an exposition of the scriptures and they outline clearly the duty of Christians in all ages to live faithfully for Christ in the world, while also looking in hope towards the renewal of all things in Christ through the Spirit. This note is clearer in the second collection of sermons than the first, where his emphasis on the person and role of the Spirit leads into eschatological consideration as the means of restoring hope. As he wrote elsewhere,

> In sum, we must say that through his Son and Spirit, his two hands, the Father both prevents the creation from slipping back into the nothingness from which it came and restores its teleology, its movement to perfection.[51]

None of this is intended to give the impression that his sermons are merely dry explanations of particular biblical verses. Instead they possess a vitality which means that they could easily be read devotionally. A certain energy shines through them, born from the fact that the preacher profoundly believed in the truth of the gospel. For when all else is stripped away, the gospel hope remains to which, in the fellowship of the Church, one can cling. This is what makes his sermon on Luke 24:39–40 (about the nature of the resurrection) so poignant, preached, as it was, two days before his death,[52] and what makes so profound, in his earlier volume, his words preached on the death of his infant grandson.[53] The gospel was not, for him, a piece of interesting philosophy, open for intricate but ultimately pointless debate. It was the living Word of God addressed to human beings, speaking of their reconciliation with God in Christ, and challenging them to repent and believe the good news and, in believing, also to live in fullness of life and in hope for the renewal—the recapitulation (in Irenaeus's terms)—of all things. Fellow members of Brentwood URC made the point well: 'He was an enthusiast for so many of the things that enrich life—music, theatre, his garden, cricket, church social gatherings, children in church, good books, fine hymns (especially Isaac Watts), family holidays—and his enthusiasm was infectious. But in times of doubt and anxiety he insisted on the bare hope of the Gospel.'[54]

Conclusion

It is not easy, in conclusion, to outline Colin Gunton's contribution and achievements. He published extensively on such varying aspects of Christian teaching, he had so much enthusiasm for his subject, he nurtured so many theological students (many of whom completed doctorates under his supervision and themselves went on to teaching careers) and he left virtually unstarted what

51. *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* 117.
52. *The Theologian as Preacher* 23–29.
53. *Theology Through Preaching* 209–211.
54. *ibid* x.

would undoubtedly have been his greatest contribution. And yet he lived out his life to the full, active to the end, dying at the height of his powers rather than incapacitated and consigned to obscurity after living out a long and unproductive retirement. This led his daughter, Sarah, to make the remarkable statement—undergirded no doubt by a trust in the gospel promises—that: 'Reference is made to my father's "untimely death". I believe that it was not untimely and that he would have agreed with me…'[55] As he himself had preached, the gospel enables all to 'live freely as [God's] people in the time he has given, to do what he wants us to complete in our particular life-spans, however long or short.'[56]

It is not the theologian's lot to complete the task of formulating a theology that will stand for ever as the best, most accurate and complete articulation of the truth of God. Rather it is to contribute to the ongoing Christian pilgrimage that seeks to understand and live out the gospel in this world. Colin Gunton did that. Perhaps more than anything else, Gunton was a spokesman for the Christian gospel,[57] aware of human need and assured of God's providential meeting of that need by his 'two hands': the redemptive work of Christ in history and the Spirit's drawing all believers towards God's appointed consummation. He may well have been overly critical of Augustine,[58] and too dismissive of the Enlightenment,[59] but, like Barth before him, he 'was prepared to risk grounding all on the gospel'.[60] It is this, more than anything else, that gives his work an abiding value and significance, and it is this which will cause many to welcome the posthumous publication of additional volumes which further reveal his theological genius.

Robert Pope

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55. *The Theologian as Preacher* vii.

56. *Theology Through Preaching* 48.

57. One further quotation is worth having to hand: 'Christianity is good news, gospel, not because it offers final solutions to the problems of the inner city (or whatever), though there is no doubt that it has much to say to those who live both at the centre and at the margins of our society, but because it proclaims and lives from a prior and redeeming act of God in Jesus Christ.' See *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh, 1988) xi.

58. 'I think he is the fountainhead of all our troubles…' he said, quoting Barth's reference to Augustine as 'sweet poison'. See *The Barth Lectures* xxiii, 6, 97; also *Yesterday and Today* 89, 108, 129; *A Brief Theology of Revelation* 43, 54–5; *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* 3, 32.

59. He blamed the Enlightenment for introducing such unhealthy dualisms as 'faith and knowledge', 'arts and science', 'God and the world' and for transferring the divine predicates of power, knowledge and glory from God to human beings. See *Enlightenment and Alienation: An Essay Towards a Trinitarian Theology* (Basingstoke, 1985); also *The One, The Three and The Many* 29, 38 and *passim*. Also see Alan P. F. Sell, *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Milton Keynes, 2006) 82.

60. These are Stephen Holmes's words about Barth in *The Barthian Lectures* 7.

REVIEWS

***Protestant Nonconformist Texts Vols 1* and *4*. Series editor, Alan P F Sell. *Volume 1 1550–1700*. Ed R Tudur Jones with Arthur Long and Rosemary Moore. Pp 432. Ashgate, 2007. £75. ISBN 978–0-7546–3854–3. *Volume 4 The Twentieth Century*. Ed David M Thompson with J H Y Briggs and John Munsey Turner. Pp 416. Ashgate, 2007. £75. ISBN 978–0-7546–4013–4.**

These two volumes complete this impressive series (volumes 2 and 3 were reviewed in the previous issue p203) and together they offer a broad view of the emergence and development of English Protestant Nonconformity. In keeping with the series framework the editors of these volumes have been allowed to shape their work within the general advice so there is a schematic difference in presentation. Each editor explains that the extracts are illustrative and not to be taken as representative, for in choosing so much is not chosen.

The earlier volume covers beginnings in illegal gatherings through alternating periods of persecution and toleration. Here are Barrow and Browne; Bunyan, Owen and Philip Henry; Walter Cradock, Richard Baxter and George Fox. Collective statements are drawn from the Westminster Confession, Savoy Declaration and the 1689 Baptist London Confession. The sections run chronologically followed by a chapter exploring the Nonconformist experience, one of miscellaneous texts and finally a section on poetry, mostly Milton. The texts take us to the threshold of toleration that heralded a new chapter for nonconformity—recognised but only tolerated, challenged to adapt to changing social, philosophical and theological trends. The early experiences born in suspicion and persecution would forge an attitude that would shape the Nonconformity mind for two centuries.

The latter volume deals with a period that saw decline in influence, numbers and confidence. The thematic approach here explores church life and the views of churches on social, ethical and political issues when they were increasingly marginal and numerically less significant. There are fewer Unitarian and Quaker contributions than in previous volumes. This was an era of positive rapprochement between denominations, when some aimed for organic unity whilst some just missed, and the largest section is devoted to contributions on church unity. There are a good number of official statements drawn from church bodies reflecting the increased importance of denominational organisations and their relationships. The culture of nonconformity is noted in the backgrounds of Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher, James Callaghan and Harold Wilson, although not Lloyd George, that wily operator. The editors have decided not to include any of the excellent work on Biblical studies by nonconformist scholars but to concentrate on material indicative of the nonconformist story.

A comparison suggests that the seventeenth century volume reflects a pioneering spirit involved in defence, definition and exploration, whereas the later volume reveals a more formalised and orderly Nonconformity, albeit in a changing

world. The editors have continued to feature traditional groupings. But the twentieth century also saw an increase of networks of churches that do not share the history and yet operate outside the established and Roman churches. Are they nonconformist? These groups are not represented in the texts. Their story is different—dynamism, growth and even aggressive confidence. Doubtless it will not always be so, but the inclusion of pentecostals, black and minority ethnic networks and charismatic house church movements may have introduced a different element into the volume. This is not to suggest that they should be here but it does offer an insight into the complexities of defining Protestant Nonconformity, and to raise questions about who is involved as nonconformists reflect on the future.

These two volumes complete the series of what is likely to be a unique attempt to showcase the defining qualities of Protestant Nonconformity across the centuries. The series will be invaluable reading for source material and to provide students and researchers with pointers to other sources. Whether it will be seen as such a rich resource by contemporary Protestant Nonconformists is another matter.

One of Alan Sell's stated hopes is that this series may offer a lesson to today's inheritors of the Nonconformist label. The reader will judge for herself whether this project is an evocative epitaph or a journey *ad fontes* to draw inspiration and face the future, whatever it may bring. We are indebted to the vision of Professor Sell to bring this project to fruition, and to his editors for their careful sifting of the plethora of sources and for their judicious selections.

Stephen Copson

***The Origins of the Scottish Reformation (Politics, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain series).* By Alec Ryrie. Pp xiv, 218. Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2006. £55. ISBN 0 7190 7105 4**

This compact volume is a very welcome addition to Reformation studies in general and to the study of the Scottish Reformation in particular. It provides an overview of sixteenth-century developments within Scotland up to 1560 concentrating upon the 1540s and 1550s. Dr Ryrie addresses the complex question of the origins of the events of 1559–60, making the dramatic assertion in his opening paragraph that they produced, "one of the most extraordinary national transformations in European history. [When]…the kingdom of Scotland experienced what was arguably the first modern revolution". [p. 1]

In examining the long-term causes of this revolution, the "corrupt medieval church" and other traditional confessional explanations are briskly dismissed. Instead, great emphasis is placed upon the Scottish political context during the twenty years before 1560 and the immense importance of contingent factors is underlined. Arran's "godly fit" of 1543 is identified as a crucial stage which shaped a new pattern for Scottish evangelicals and in the following decade the Regent, Mary of Guise, is deemed culpable of not giving the necessary political support to the Catholic bishops and their attempts at reform and compromise. At the end of that decade the Scottish Protestant movement gained that all-important

"momentum" leading directly to the 1559 outbreak of rebellion which is explained as a crucial and deliberate use of political violence by a Protestant minority. What occurred constituted "an attempt to force the pace of change and to precipitate a conflict which most people on all sides wished to avoid…As so often in politics, violence worked". [p 157] Dr Ryrie argues that contingent factors were responsible for turning the Perth riot in May into a rebellion which then developed into a full-scale revolution. When it is employed, this "for-want-of-a-nail" explanation can sometimes lead to an obsession with the precise dimensions of nails, but Dr Ryrie does not neglect the broader theological and ecclesiological issues in contention during the Scottish reformation process. By deciding to end his study in 1560 there are only hints about the subsequent establishment of Protestantism; it is to be hoped a subsequent volume will fill this gap.

This book is written in a punchy style with modernised quotations and its chapters, like lectures, provide focussed explanations within a broadly chronological pattern. Students will find it user-friendly with a helpful timeline and a [rather minimalist] map and the volume will deservedly move straight onto Reformation course reading lists for undergraduates and be an interesting and informative book for the general reader. As well as making the Scottish Reformation [so often an 'also-ran' in British and European reformation studies] accessible to a wide audience, the book's main argument about contingency and the employment of violent tactics challenges a number of preconceptions about the nature of Protestantism and about Roman Catholic responses. It thus makes a significant contribution to the continuing debate about the wider Reformation process and helps to place the Scottish Reformation where it belongs, in the midst of Reformation studies.

Jane E A Dawson

***A Bruised Reed: The Life and Times of Anne Steele.* By J R Broome. Pp 383. Gospel Standard Trust Publications, Harpenden, 2007. £7.50. ISBN 1–897837–18–6.**

This monograph makes extensive use of the Steele family archives, now located at the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford, to piece together the details of Steele's life, and to demonstrate her work as the first major British woman hymn-writer. In addition to the biographical narrative, the book includes reprintings of Steele's hymns and metrical psalms from *Hymns, Poems and Psalms* (1863) and her prose works from *Miscellaneous Pieces in Verse and Prose* (1830), as well as three appendices: extracts from the diary of her stepmother, an example of eighteenth-century spiritual autobiography; a sermon by William Steele (Steele's father); and a hymn by the prominent dissenters, James Fanch and Daniel Turner.

The seventeenth-century persecution of dissenters after the Restoration is discussed here as shaping the circumstances of Steele's parents, on both sides. Broome outlines their courtship and marriage, and the early death of Anne's mother. The pattern of Anne's own life is reconstructed from the diary of her

stepmother, letters, and other sources from the family archives. Facsimiles of several of these manuscript sources are given as samples throughout the book, as well as pictures of various residences with which the Steeles were associated. A series of colour reproductions also provides images of her brother's branch of the family (sadly, no image of Anne seems to have survived). Some critical analysis is given of Steele's hymns, particularly emphasising the debt she owed to Isaac Watts. Interesting new information brought to light from the archives include a letter written in verse by Steele's father dated 1712, and a hymn by her brother from 1734.

Broome seeks to examine Steele's life in the context of her familial and social connections. Indeed, the considerable attention given to Particular Baptist church history in the Hamphire/Wiltshire area, and the assessments of prominent dissenting individuals who were members of the Steele family circle, means that the work provides a broad picture of eighteenth-century dissenting life in the south west, which is a kind of second narrative within which the life of Anne Steele is set. This important aspect of the book could perhaps have been enhanced by contextualisation and comparison with scholarship that has been done in this area, such as *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520–1725,* edited by Margaret Spufford (1995).

As the title suggests, the sufferings of Steele's life are fully relayed; her history is littered with the perils of eighteenth-century life, such as susceptibility to ill health, the early deaths of friends and family, and the potential pitfalls of horse riding. Broome thus follows the traditional understanding of Steele's life that her writings are the products of a spirituality refined through mortal sufferings. He does, however, provide some nuanced revisions to this interpretation; for instance, he questions the details of the famous story of the death of Anne Steele's fiancé which has been interpreted as a defining tragedy in her life, as others have done in recent years. He also provides greater insight into Steele's character and relationships; for instance, his accounts of the closeness between Anne and her niece, Mary (known as Polly), who became a kind of surrogate daughter to Steele after the death of her mother, are especially poignant and valuable.

This book provides, for the first time, a full biography of Anne Steele, and sets her life and work in context. Broome's archival research has been pursued over several decades of independent scholarship, and is greatly to be commended.

Nancy Jiwon Cho

Eighteenth-Century Psalmody (Musica Britannica Volume 85). Ed Nicholas Temperley and Sally Drage. Pp 392. Stainer and Bell, 2007. £95. ISBN 978–0–8524–9895–8.

Musica Britannica is a continuing series of collections of British music considered worthy of performance, but not readily available in other editions. The editions are primarily scholarly, but are also intended to serve as a basis for performance. The heavy volumes sit more appropriately on library shelves than on music stands, but individual pieces are available separately.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a genre of music came into use in our town and country chapels and churches which differs markedly from that in cathedrals and similar places of worship. It was intended for performance by amateur choirs of moderate ability, with any accompaniment being supplied by string or wind instruments. Modern enthusiasts of this genre usually refer to it as West Gallery music, though the editors have preferred to use the term psalmody in its eighteenth century sense, encompassing all local church music, and not only psalm settings.

Independent chapels had an important influence on the development of the genre. While Anglican and Presbyterian ministers favoured metrical psalms, being scriptural in origin, Independents made free use of hymns, and this usage had spread by the nineteenth century into the established church. The hymns and psalm paraphrases of Isaac Watts (1674–1748) are represented in this collection by no fewer than 13 of the 76 metrical texts, far more than any other author. Philip Doddridge (1702–1751) and Joseph Hart (1712–1768) are also represented.

The editors have chosen 47 strophic settings of hymn and metrical psalm texts, 27 anthems and other prose settings, and 29 metrical pieces, ie through-composed settings of metrical texts. The research and editing is of the uniformly high standard to be expected of the two foremost scholars in the field, and the musical quality of the settings well justifies performance. A particularly welcome feature is the underlaying of up to three verses of text in the strophic settings. West Gallery tunes are frequently florid and contrapuntal, calling for repetition of lines and even parts of lines, and fitting the text in performance is often challenging.

My only disappointment with this volume is over what it omits. It is unlikely that further volumes of West Gallery music/psalmody will be issued in the series. By limiting the time span to the eighteenth century, the music of some well-loved later West Gallery composers, such as Thomas Clark (1775–1869) and John Fawcett (1789–1867), does not find its deserved place in *Musica Britannica*. Nor do many fine settings which have come down to us only in manuscript, because of the editors' stated policy of limiting themselves to printed sources. These policies exclude in particular a rich repertoire of West Gallery Christmas carols.

Nonetheless, the very existence of this volume represents a triumph for those of us involved in the revival of West Gallery music. It is to be hoped that it will stimulate further interest in performing this neglected part of our British musical heritage, both in Christian worship and in the concert hall.

Websites: Musica Britannica: http://www.musicabritannica.org.uk/

Francis Roads

***The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700*. By Jeffrey Cox. Pp 315. Routledge, New York, 2008. £75.00. ISBN 978–0-415–09004–9.**

Jeff Cox is a keen and insightful observer of the English ecclesiastical scene of the last three hundred years. His first work, on secularization in south London at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries,

challenged established assumptions and revealed an original, incisive judgment. He then turned his attention to the Punjab and to missionary activities there at the time of the British Raj. This new work is part of a series, edited by Hugh McLeod, on 'Christianity and society in the modern world', and it offers the reader a welcome survey of British Christian missions from the early eighteenth century to the post-colonial world which emerged after 1945. Cox begins with the lament of Archbishop Secker that the British had failed to take Christianity to the non-white peoples of the empire, that is principally the native Americans and the African slaves of the West Indies. He relates the "strange story of Philip Quaque, a black African who arrived in London in 1754 and who trained to be an Anglican clergyman in St Sepulchre's parish, which included caring for the condemned prisoners of nearby Newgate prison. After ordination in 1765, he returned to the Gold Coast as a missionary with an English wife and there ironically served as chaplain to the imperial agents supervising the slave trade. Cox also reports on the little known pietist Lutheran influence which led to early mission work in India.

He corrects the oft repeated misunderstanding that the British missionary enterprise began as a result of the evangelical revival associated with Whitefield and Wesley. Rather, he states, the original impetus for British overseas missions came from the established church whose leaders responded to the spiritual obligations imposed by the British Empire. However the evangelical revival created opportunities for independent initiatives outside the boundaries of the confessional churches. Some evangelicals became chaplains in the East India Company, although most chaplains would only minister to Europeans.

Familiar figures like Philip Doddridge, Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians, the Scottish Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge and David Brainerd, Whitefield, Wesley, Thomas Coke, the Clapham Sect, and William Carey, and the Baptist and London Missionary Societies all make their due appearances. Cox also leads his readers from Sydney Smith's lament at low born and 'maniac' missionaries, at the beginning of the 19th century, to the considerable contributions of William Knibb, Livingstone, Henry Venn and the freed slave Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther. He visits en route the voyage of The Duff, John Williams in the South Seas, the situation of the missionary wives, and encounters with cannibals and slaves. The link between commerce and Christianity is examined, revealing that Thomas Fowell Buxton and Livingstone were anti-racists, who understood commerce among black people in the West Indies and south Africa, as a means to their independence from subordination to white planters and government officials. They maintained that honest trade must be carried out between equals, without regard to race.

Cox also shows that voluntarist missionaries recreated a form of confessional Christianity, providing religion for the people rather than a religion of the people. The problem was that missionaries were essentially institution builders who aimed at the creation of an indigenous independent church. Yet, as Cox asks, "How does one create a self-governing, independent church out of a

missionary enterprise that builds western-style institutions under missionary control in lands that were under imperial rule or imperial influence?"

By the Edwardian period the identity of God's work in the world with Britain's work in that same world was pronounced. The use of respectable unmarried women in mission work, even among Roman Catholics, was a development of that age, although they were not ordained, unlike their male colleagues. Women came to be used in China and India, especially in educational and medical work. The great missionary conferences, including that at Edinburgh in 1910, are examined but, as Cox writes, "It is difficult to see much in the published conference volumes now but the certainty of shattered dreams to come, with the failure of Christianity to date in India and its long oppression in China, and the disintegration of dreams of a united Protestant Christianity, much less a global Christianity". In the 1930s the British missionary presence proved remarkably durable, and the great British missionary hero of the closing days of the missionary period in China was the former parlour-maid, Gladys Aylward, who was considered too ill-educated even for the China Inland Mission.

The long term health of the British missionary movement depended on the health of the British churches and in the inter-war period those churches were in decline, with fewer wealthy lay persons to finance them. The promotion of indigenous leaders in the churches overseas was favoured by mission societies and over 50% of those attending the Madras conference in 1938 were non-western delegates. Modern historians of mission have downplayed the role of missionaries, who are depicted as 'enablers' or 'detonators' of Christian growth, but not as part of a multi-racial Christian community. The Christian churches which emerged overseas owe much to locals but also to dialogue with the foreign missionaries. The hope that the minority Christians in India might have a temporizing effect on nationalism proved ill founded in the light of the rise of Hindu political communalism which rendered Christians there an embattled minority in the 1980s and 90s. Western intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan, coupled with the rise of aggressive Islamic politics, left Christians in Pakistan in some danger. The sudden expulsion of missionaries from China in 1949 and 1950, as a result of the triumph of communism, contrasts with the erosion of the Christian presence in south Asia in the second half of the twentieth century.

The slow development of ecclesiastical self-government resulted in the eventual appointment of the first non-western bishop of Lahore in 1968 and in the inexcusably slow handing over of authority to the African churches, given the rapid growth of Christianity in that continent. Recent work on Nigeria suggests that the catechists/teachers, in effect trained second class clergy, were crucial in the spread of Christianity and in promoting upward social mobility. As Cox points out the irony is that while missionaries genuinely believed that non-western churches should become independent, non-western Christians wanted to retain an ongoing missionary relationship. As a result Livingstone is seen in the west as an arch-imperialist but remains a hero to African Christians because he brought the gospel to south and central Africa. However this study demonstrates that British religious bodies were more important in the 1950s and

60s than has previously been thought and that Britain was the second largest sending nation of Protestant missions, throughout most of the 20th century (9,000 British Protestant missionaries overseas in 1930s and about 6,000 in 1980—in 1890 there were only 4,000). Incidentally Korea had overtaken Britain in sending Protestant missionaries by the end of the 20th century.

Arguably one of the by-products of the end of the imperial age is that Christianity in China is now growing phenomenally. Welcome as this book is, I looked in vain for some names I had expected or perhaps had rather hoped to find, such as Bishop Heber, A M Chirgwin, Eric Liddell, and Alfred Sadd, the latter two who, in their different ways showed the continuing enthusiasm for overseas missions well into the twentieth century. Also missing is the Church of South India. I was not surprised that the Council for World Mission, the Colonial Missionary Society, and the elusive A G Sleep were missing, but the absence of references to Norman Goodall, although John Mott and J H Oldham are included, reinforces the difficulties of selection, especially in the twentieth century, when sources are so plentiful. The book contains an appendix with graphs, charts, and tables sufficient to support the author's contentions. In addition it has a full bibliography and end notes.

Alan Argent

***All Love—A Biography of Ridley Herschell*. By Geoffrey Henderson. Pp 199. HTS Media, 2006. £6.95. ISBN 978–0–9555 304–0–1**

Ridley Herschell (1807–1864) cries out for a biography. No account of him could fail to be interesting or to test a biographer's skills. His life takes the reader from Prussian Poland to London's West End (or, at least, to Paddington) and from Orthodox Judaism to Evangelical Christianity. It introduces a succession of intelligent and educated women (one was his patroness, two were his wives, and two were his daughters), and several younger brothers whose lives emulated his. A son became Lord Chancellor, equally admired as lawyer and as politician; one son-in-law became Wayneflete Professor of Physiology at Oxford (with Lord Chancellors as great-uncle and nephew as well as brother-in-law) and the other was a City banker, retiring, philanthropic, and very rich. Here, surely, is material for a novel, a searching commentary on social conventions and social mobility; and, indeed, it is highly likely that aspects of it coloured Trollope's portrayal of Mr. Emilius in *The Eustace Diamonds*. Here, certainly, is material for historians of gender, mission, and society and here, particularly, is material for ecclesiastical and especially Congregational historians: the interfaces between theology and witness, Christianity and Judaism, Evangelicalism and millennialism, the United States and the Continent and England and Scotland, all this and Congregationalism, and all of it to be explored in settings of intense economic, political, and cultural change. It is a tall order.

Are there sources to do justice to such developments? Up to a point, there are. Herschell's daughter, Ghetal Burdon-Sanderson, wrote attractive memoirs of

her parents, both of whom published usefully in their own right. There is also the literature accumulated by different sorts of millennialists, especially those ensnared by Edward Irving, and by those who promoted the conversion of Jews. The corroborative material is encouraging but what is lacking are the family papers, the letters and diaries to add flesh to the bones, to answer the remaining conjectures, to make sense of a multitude of clues. The present Lord Herschell, whose title dies with him, is courteously unforthcoming to all enquirers, perhaps because remaining papers were destroyed in a fire, possibly from the reticence of good breeding, perhaps because most enquirers are motivated by his great-grandfather's Jewishness. So it is hard to sustain a biography of Herschell without more of the novelist's license than a historian might wish.

Geoffrey Henderson has done his homework. His book is honest, sensible, and sufficiently forthcoming about his sources. Its strength, indeed, comes from its bias. Here is a story of Christian faith tested, proved, and rewarded. That is what Herschell himself would have regarded as of prime importance. Here too is an instructive account of a man who did not cease to be a Jew when he became a Christian. The integrity and consistency of Herschell's position is made clear, and it gains from the author's shrewd sense that Herschell could so easily have been a chancer, as indeed his brother Joseph seems for a while to have become. This book also gains from being *in piam memoriam*: the author's great-great-grandfather, an Essex fisherman, was converted to a version of Methodism, which he proceeded to preach powerfully, by the still young Ridley Herschell.

Even so, it is not unreasonable for Congregational readers to ask for more. It would have been satisfying to have had the Mr. Emilius slur nailed, or explained. It would have made for a yet richer story had it more been made of it as a family saga: the brother who went off the rails; the brother murdered in the Caribbean; the brothers who entered the ministry; the descendants of the mercantile brother who settled on the Wirral and in the 1930s rescued two German cousins. This would also have strengthened a significant denominational angle which is teasingly absent.

Ridley Herschell and his brothers Louis (d. 1890) and David Abraham (d. 1904) stayed the course as Congregational ministers; their obituaries are in the *Congregational Year Book*. Some of the Wirral Herschells were members of local Presbyterian and Congregational churches; Ridley's second wife came from a long prominent Dissenting family, some of whom latterly sat under John Stoughton in Kensington Chapel; his daughter Mary Cunliffe married a Congregationalist and her great admiration for the Presbyterian Dr Dykes explains a strikingly good window in the Hall of Westminster College, Cambridge; Ghetal Burdon-Sanderson's sister-in-law was a member of R F Horton's Lyndhurst Road church, and Ghetal's husband latterly liked to worship in Mansfield College chapel (or so the *Christian World* noted in 1905, and it was usually right about such things). These things are important precisely because the Herschells were not strong *denominationalists*: and I suspect that Geoffrey Henderson is not greatly interested in denominational minutiae either (for one would dearly like to know more about the Methodism of his forebear, Ridley's protégé). Consequently the word "Congregational" is disconcertingly absent from his book, and the word

"Independent" is left vague. Yet greater precision would not have been pernickety. Indeed, it would have done his readers a great service. It would have reminded them of the significant and reasoned part played by millennialism and by relations between Christians and Jews in mainstream nineteenth-century Congregationalism and it would have shed light on the changing relationship in the first seventy years of that century between the evangelical denominations and undenominational evangelicalism: that "Catholic Christianity" which survived for so obstinately long. Geoffrey Henderson's affectionate and understanding biography has—for the purist at least—missed a few tricks.

***The Welsh Journal of Religious History.* Ed Dr Robert Pope and Prof D Densil Morgan. Pp 154. Centre for the Advanced Study of Religion in Wales, School of Theology and Religious Studies, Bangor University, Vol 2, 2007. £10.00. ISSN 1753–9595**

Religious History until quite recently tended to be called Ecclesiastical History. In the latter guise it has long suffered in a steady war of attrition; or, rather, it has in English universities. In Wales matters appear to be different, although it remains to be seen if Religious History is to Ecclesiastical History as Classical Studies is to Classics, or as any other "Studies" are to the real thing.

Aberystwyth, Bangor, and Lampeter are in the vanguard of this campaign to explore the historical dimensions of religion. Lampeter's research centre, The Bible and the Visual Imagination, for example, has produced *Imaging the Bible. An Introduction to Biblical Art* (ed. Martin O'Kane, SPCK 2008) and more is promised. Bangor's Centre for the Advanced Study of Religion in Wales provides *The Welsh Journal of Religious History.*

That title's wording is important. This is not a journal of Welsh religious history. That would have been regional, even parochial; a Welsh journal, however, has national import. The point is usefully made for English readers by E Wyn James: "Wales is in the interesting position of being part of the Anglophone world…while being at the same time a discrete linguistic and cultural entity with its own indigenous literature, world view, and so forth". That is with regard to an article on "Welsh Ballads and American Slavery", but the comment applies to the whole volume. Here are six significant articles, two "short notes", one obituary, and eight book reviews.

Their scholarship is uniform. Of course there are gremlins but readers resigned to such things will encounter them with sympathy rather than irritation. The reviews are exemplary; the reader learns enough about each book to decide whether to read, borrow, or purchase. The notes are short but not light in weight. The obituary, "The Pursuit of Precision", would have greatly pleased its subject, Geoffrey Nuttall—who would also have noted one misleading assertion (Cheshunt College did not migrate to Cambridge in 1915; that was when it moved to its *purpose-built* home in Bateman Street, Cambridge). The main papers range from Llandaff Cathedral's medieval tombs (Debra Bardo and Madeleine Gray) to William Williams, Pantycelyn, and his *Guide to Marriage* (Eifion Evans). Four of

them, however, were first delivered as lectures in July 2007 at Aberystwyth, on the theme "Wales and the Social Gospel", and they pinpoint what promises to be the *Welsh Journal*'s strength, at least for the non-Welsh. For the balance of this *Journal* is significant. Nonconformity is not presented here simply as a curiosity, interesting in an increasingly antiquarian way for those who like that kind of thing; Anglicanism is rediscovered in its own Welsh right; and thus a nation's culture is illuminated and set in full context. David Bebbington writes on "The Evangelical Conscience", to which with his usual persuasive clarity he annexes Hugh Price Hughes. Robert Pope, "From New Theology to Social Gospel", brings The City Temple's R J Campbell into the picture. Thus the reader can place Hughes and Campbell within the same sort of mindset. (This reviewer's Congregational grandmother learned from her parents of the impact of the Wesleyan Hughes in Dover in the 1870s; and his equally Congregational grandfather, also in Dover and a few years younger than Campbell, bought and held on to Campbell's *New Theology*; but it is clear that he did so in the way that Robert Pope suggests most people-in-the-pew, or lay-preachers-in-the-pulpit, did). Best of all, however, is the way in which serendipitous readers can enlarge their horizons by lateral thinking (in the most scholarly way): medieval attitudes to death and remembrance, eighteenth-century attitudes to sex, love, marriage, and gender, medieval cathedral music, eighteenth-century piety and charitable giving, join the Evangelical Conscience and the Edwardian Social Gospel and each informs the other.

It is devoutly to be wished that this *Welsh Journal* should continue as it has begun.

Clyde Binfield

Land, Faith and the Crofting Community: Christianity and Social Concern in the Highlands of Scotland 1843–1893. **By A W MacColl. Pp 240. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2006. £54 (Special offer to CHS members £40: telephone 0131 650 4218 or e-mail marketing@eup.ed.ac.uk quoting "Congregational History offer"). ISBN 978–0–7486–2382**

In *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community*, Dr Allan MacColl has set himself the task of reviewing, and to some extent justifying, clerical involvement in the social agitation which convulsed the Scottish Highlands for much of the 1880s. This he accomplishes with some aplomb. Commencing with the traumatic events of the Disruption some forty years earlier, immediately followed by the Great Highland Famine, MacColl, following the lead of Dr James Hunter, makes a carefully argued case for a modern Highland sense of 'peoplehood' being predicated upon and forged by the new evangelical institution apparently claiming the allegiance of nine tenths of the people of the Gàidhealtachd, the Free Church of Scotland. MacColl pointedly rebuffs those historians who argue that providentialist perspectives hindered the participation of the clergy in social issues: for him, the active rôle played by Free Church ministers in alleviating the Famine foreshadows the contribution of many of the clergy to the crofters' and cottars' cause in the

land struggle a generation later. In putting his case, he provides a lucid narrative account enlivened by a series of pen portraits of the principal characters. The author is a candidate for the Free Presbyterian ministry, but the book remains fairly even-handed and devoid of any sectarian animus, with the exception, perhaps, of a somewhat ill-tempered excursus concerning Principal Robert Rainy.

The book's major strength lies in its judicious assessment and integration of theological, political, and cultural perspectives in examining the growth of agitation and unrest in the Highlands which culminated in the Napier Commission of 1884 and the passing of the landmark Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Act two years later. MacColl's narrative points up the necessity of incorporating ecclesiastical issues into mainstream Highland historiography, in the process taking several sideswipes at an older generation of historians whose observations on Highland protestant religion perhaps owe more to tabloid prejudices than to any serious engagement with evangelical doctrine. Although *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community* is essentially a rebuttal exercise demonstrating the active part played by many Free Church ministers in lending their imprimatur to the crofters' cause, MacColl constantly draws the reader's attention to the complexity and diversity of their responses, determined above all by their reluctance to encourage, or to be seen to encourage, radical law-breaking and violence among their congregations. It should be noted that the volume focuses heavily upon ministers rather than lay members of the church. Given the plethora of anecdotes concerning them still retailed in local oral tradition across the region, however, one feels that MacColl is perhaps unduly pessimistic in stating the impossibility of unearthing information concerning the reactions of church elders to the events described. Nevertheless, the book brings out well the difficult position of the Highland minister. Far from being the all-powerful arbiters of their congregations of popular myth, most clergymen appear to have occupied a much less comfortable berth, their beliefs and character constantly and minutely scrutinised both by their presbytery and their own congregations. At a time of intense controversy occasioned by the rise of biblical criticism and 'New Theology', it is hardly surprising that many minsters preferred to keep their political beliefs unobtrusive for fear of occasioning further discord, despite the strenuous efforts of radicals to win the clergy's endorsement of their cause. In MacColl's pithy summary, '[b]y using fairly radical rhetoric to support moderate land reform in order to facilitate socially conservative ends the Free Church position was bound to attract criticism from many different sources.'

A number of comments concerning the volume's structure may be apposite. Firstly, MacColl's decision to commence his narrative with the Disruption of 1843 appears a questionable one. The Free Church may well have facilitated a new sense of 'peoplehood' among Scottish Gaels, at any rate in the north and west of the Gàidhealtachd, but the strength of evangelicalism in that part of the region was surely underpinned by two earlier developments: the creation, in the early nineteenth century, of a crofting system offering considerably more scope to individualism than in the previous communally worked townships; and, as the author admits, the departure of much of the nascent Gaelic middle class overseas as a result of the Clearances. At a deeper level, the strongly narrative framework

of the volume, drawing heavily upon the seminal work of Dr Ewen Cameron, serves to obscure rather than bring out the radical implications of his approach. The most successful parts of *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community* are those in which MacColl deploys a thematic analysis drawing upon his deep knowledge of doctrine and his evident sympathy with the quandaries of the actors involved. That these are effectively asides rather than fully developed and integrated sections is somewhat unfortunate.

The most serious omission, I feel, is a consideration of the Irish dimension, both in relation to the Irish Land League and Home Rule agitation. Reading between the lines, one has the impression that presbyterian ministers were constantly at pains to stress the loyalty and even submissiveness of their Scottish Gaelic flocks in contrast to the violent insubordination of their Irish, Roman Catholic counterparts. More might have been made of the unspoken presence of the Irish situation in the various discourses concerning crofter agitation of the period.

Nevertheless, MacColl's book, along with Dr Douglas Ansdell's earlier *People of the Great Faith*, sets a fresh agenda for the history of the region, a history not only of crofters but also of congregations, a history in which theological disputes are to be examined alongside political and social ones, whether motivating them, reinforcing them, or cutting across them entirely. MacColl offers us one example of a more general global process, by which marginal populations, evangelised earlier through cheap print, the growth of literacy, and improved transport networks, deploy their knowledge of the sacred word in confronting and coming to terms with the extension of the reach of the nineteenth-century state, and negotiating their own status within it. This he does with style, assurance, and a deep insight into the Scottish Gael, being that *rarissima avis*, a Highland historian who actually understands the language of the people in whose history he professes to be an expert

D W Stewart

***The Rev. Edward Irving and the Apostolic Church in Camden and beyond.* By Barbara Waddington. Pp 72. (Occasional Paper No. 7) Camden History Society, 2007. £7.50. ISBN 978 0 904491 72 2.**

The Camden History Society, who have published this excellent little account of the comet like career of Edward Irving, should not be confused with either the Camden Society (founded in 1838 and named after the historian William Camden, and now subsumed into the Royal Historical Society) or with the Cambridge Camden Society (founded a year later and also known as the Ecclesiological Society). Mrs. Waddington's decision to treat Irving as an extension of the local history of the Borough of Camden in north London reminds this reviewer that some forty years ago he made a note that an original letter of Edward Irving was in the Camden Public Library. The author makes no reference to that particular letter but has made good use of some of the correspondence by and about Irving in the Regent Square Church records, which, we presume, are in the URC

archives in Westminster College Cambridge, as well as primary materials from further afield in Edinburgh and Northumberland.

Mrs. Waddington's treatment of her subject is not unsympathetic and Irving's warmly affectionate humanity can be found repeatedly in the development of his career's meteoric trajectory—in Glasgow, frustrated; unexpectedly thrust into the limelight as a London preacher in the early 1820s; apparently secure in the newly built church at Regent Square, and then charged with heresy and embroiled in the controversy over glossolalia and the foundation of the 'catholic apostolic' church—at each stage it is his almost naïve sincerity that is attractively characteristic. In the last part of the book the author considers various criticisms that have been made of Irving—that he never got over his earlier love for Jane Carlyle, his vanity, and his folly, but the innocence of the man, who emerges in her earlier pages, makes it hard for the reader to take these charges very seriously. The author has more time for his Christology than his other beliefs, but she refrains from harsh judgments.

There is a useful, succinct appendix on the later history of the seven 'catholic apostolic' churches in London. The book is illustrated with some excellent architectural prints and photographs, as well as portraits. Particularly appreciated by this reviewer was the reproduction (albeit miniature) of Edward Armitage's fresco of Henry Crabb Robinson and his acquaintances, which could be seen (until it was whitewashed over) in University Hall, now Dr William's Library. The circumstances of this sad obliteration are not given.

Timothy C F Stunt

***Westminster College, Cambridge: Its Background and History*. By R. Buick Knox (and Stephen Orchard, with assistance from Martin Cressey and Stephen Mayor). Pp 68. Westminster College, Cambridge, 2007. £7.50. No ISBN.**

Westminster College, Cambridge, was the theological college of the Presbyterian Church of England, continuing from 1899 the work of its predecessor in London, which had begun in 1844. In 1967 the staff and work of Cheshunt College, which had become effectively a Congregational college, though not founded as such, were transferred to Westminster, and the two eventually became one college under the name of Westminster College, though the Cheshunt Foundation retains its legal identity and its distinct work, which extends to Congregational churches. On the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972 the college became, as it remains, the one college under the control of that church; it is now one of the URC's three so-called 'resource centres'.

In 1978 the late R. Buick Knox, the college's professor of ecclesiastical history, published a distinguished short history of the college. Its republication is very much to be welcomed, but of course it required an update. The procedure adopted by the reviser, who was principal of Westminster between 2001 and 2007, is to present it unchanged, as far as I can see, even to its footnotes, but with

the addition of an appendix of thirteen pages to take the story up to the present day. Orchard's assistants are respectively one of his predecessors as principal, and one of the latter's colleagues.

The result is a somewhat uneven piece of work. Knox's original work is still worth reading, despite his somewhat eccentric style. He deals with the whole history of the Presbyterian College, in London and Cambridge, and places it clearly within the history of Presbyterianism in England. His summary of the arguments on both sides over the question of the move to Cambridge brings it all to life: clear, sympathetic to both, but with a delicate note of irony. The chronological history, which effectively concludes in 1972, is followed by sections on the students, the college finances, its chapel and its library. The revisers have followed a similar structure in respect of the college's life since 1972. Their work cannot be faulted for accuracy or thoroughness, but the effect is to put asunder what should be joined. And the lack of any revision of Knox's own work is also unfortunate: the bemused reader who has noted the date of publication, and who has doubtless heard of the death of Lesslie Newbigin, may be surprised to learn on page 33 that 'he is now teaching in the Selly Oak Colleges'. It is a pity that the opportunity was not taken for a more thorough revision, or the composition of an entirely new work, especially as Westminster's sister colleges of Mansfield in Oxford and Northern College, Manchester, now have each a full-length history (both of them by Elaine Kaye).

Walter J. Houston

***Who they were: in the Reformed Churches of England and Wales 1901–2000*. Ed John Taylor and Clyde Binfield. Pp xii, 254. The United Reformed Church History Society, 2007. £19.95. ISBN 978 1900 289 285.**

University trained ministers and laypeople dominate this biographical dictionary of the Reformed Churches in England and Wales, and editors John Taylor and Clyde Binfield are to be congratulated, while recognising that 'omissions are inevitable' and some declined to appear.

Enigmatically, the only picture in it is of Elsie Chamberlain, the first woman chaplain in HM Forces, whose marriage in July 1947 to an Anglican priest was another first. She was the first woman producer in the BBC's religious broadcasting department. Finally in 1972 she became a leader in the Congregational Federation. This 'first lady of the pulpit' is one of many 'first' Reformed Christians noted.

This book has no subject index, and the reader needs to make his or her own links. Under 'ecumenism', URC would have a distinctly Presbyterian rather than Congregational feel from its inception. In the 1930s, tension among Congregational churches climaxed in a signed manifesto calling for 'Gospel faithfulness'. J S Whale, a 'High Church' Congregationalist, declared Christ 'the incarnate, crucified, vindicated Word of God', and fiercely refuted Frank Lenwood's *Jesus—Lord or Leader,* which questioned Christ's divinity and

Trinitarian belief. Nathaniel Micklem's influence on Congregationalism is 'indisputable.. . as an architect of the URC', but were there connections between him and J H Shakespeare of the Baptist Union? The rejection of historic Congregationalism troubled R W Cleaves, who challenged the Congregational Union when it became the 'the Congregational Church in England and Wales'. He claimed the use of 'church', to describe a denomination of *the* Church, as contrary to the New Testament.

'Mission' would list some truly remarkable overseas missionaries. Illustrating Baptist input to the Reform tradition are S L Hart, inspired by Baptist China missionary, Timothy Richard; or the Churches of Christ missionary, Mary Bannister in Africa, who when prevented from working in Nyasaland, found an outlet for her energies in the Baptist Industrial Mission in Gowa.

'Hymnody', with entries for (Thomas) Caryl Micklem, Fred Kaan and Brian Wren, reveal the strong sense of Church in congregational worship that withstood the excesses of Charismatic renewal. Wren's most popular hymn, 'Christ is alive, let Christians sing', was written as a response to the assassination of Martin Luther King. According to David Cornick, Micklem's remarkable paraphrase of 1 Cor 13 deserves to live for ever; and his 'Give to me, Lord, a thankful heart' is a 'primer of Reformed theology in 20 of the simplest and most elegant lines'.

'Civil Rights' would note Jamaican born H A Moody, a well qualified black doctor who, in response to institutional racism in Camberwell Green, founded *The League of Coloured Peoples [1931–47]* and became a leading UK black civil rights leader. His bronze statue by his brother, Ronald, is in the National Portrait Gallery in London.

Under 'double acts' would be Smith and Wrigley, who shared a *38* years' joint pastorate at Salem, Leeds, and then became joint chairmen of the Congregational Union of England and Wales! Then there would be the Presbyterian twins, Margaret and Agnes Smith, who became renowned in the male dominated world of biblical scholarship. These two remarkable women, who claimed they were 'Catholic Christians first, and Presbyterians afterwards', were the financial providers who made Westminster College, Cambridge, possible.

And then there are those who helped me over the years. Leslie Tizard, who revealed the meaning of marriage, and challenged me to 'to preach in such a way that we bring souls in our congregation face to face with Christ'. Bruce Kenrick, whose remarkable achievements include the founding of the charity Shelter*,* as well as his two seminal books, *Come out the Wilderness* and *The New Humanity,* introduced by Dr L G Champion of Bristol Baptist College, to a whole generation of students. Here H F Lovell Cocks who notes he learned not just from P T Forsyth, but from Christ himself, that 'Christ did not die to make God love us; He died because God always loved us'. My life-long affair with *Jeremiah* began when I read John Skinner's *Prophecy and Religion* which Robert Carroll called 'the starting point' of his own studies 60 years later. And then there is Colin Gunton, a significant theologian who changed the shape of the British theological enterprise with a re-discovery of the doctrine of the Trinity, in his 1992 Bampton Lectures, *The One, the Three and the*

Many. His *Theology Through Preaching: Sermons for Brentwood* (2001) demonstrates how to earth membership and ministry in the local church.

So many gems to be gathered here, for the thoughtful, careful reader of this biographical dictionary.

Roger Hayden

***This is Our Story: Free Church Women's Ministry*. Ed Janet Wootton. Pp xii, 221. Epworth, 2007. £16.99. ISBN 978 0 7162 0606 4.**

The ministry of women in the Free Churches of England and Wales has suffered from a double neglect: first, because it is a so-called 'minority' interest amongst Christians who still see male ministry as normative; and second, because it has been eclipsed by the much more widely publicised ordination of women in the Church of England and the Church in Wales. *This is Our Story* begins to redress the balance by offering six scholarly articles which treat women's Free Church ministry historically, sociologically, theologically and practically, as well as eleven 'stories' recounting the experiences of women in ordained and lay ministry. Following in the footsteps of *Daughters of Dissent* (ed. Elaine Kaye, Janet Lees and Kirsty Thorpe, The United Reformed Church, 2004), which told the stories of women ordained in the Reformed traditions in Britain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *This is Our Story* extends its coverage to Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostalists, Salvationists, and Unitarians, as well as an Anglican ecumenist, and seeks the roots of women's ministry in the New Testament, the early church, seventeenth-century England and early Methodism. In a book presenting as great a variety of material as the varied experiences of the authors require, three persistent themes emerge.

First, there are frequent references to the hurt experienced when those seeking the ordination of women in the Church of England seemed not to realise that their Free Church sisters had been dealing with the same theological and ecclesiological issues and fighting (and sometimes winning) their own battles for nearly a century. Failure to notice this meant that Anglicans also failed to notice that the congregational structure of some of the Free Churches had sometimes (not always) allowed women to be ordained much earlier; the ecclesiological implications of a different church polity allowing for greater flexibility and freedom were not appreciated.

Second, many of the authors of *This is Our Story* fear that ordained women will learn to reinforce male patterns of ministerial authority as soon as their own position within the ecclesial structure is secure. They urge women ministers to help break the mould of an educated ministry which dominates a passive, ignorant, laity, instructing them in the faith but not allowing them to grow, discover, be mutually nurtured and encouraged, and to make theological discoveries together.

Third, *This is our Story* celebrates the feminine qualities of God and of woman made in his image. Women's ministry can help to bring the whole of human life—sexuality, childbearing, the family, women's own gifts and talents—within the

saving love of Christ. The creative approach of women to ministry will mean that story, song, drama, and above all, human relationships, may supersede the sermon as an academic discourse, to the spiritual enrichment of all who hear and participate.

This Anglican reviewer found *This is Our Story* compelling, provocative and deeply encouraging.

Marilyn Lewis

A History of Newport Congregational Church. **By Paul Hooper. Pp 32. Available from the author, Selborne, Pyle Shute, Chale, Isle of Wight, PO38 2LE. £5.00**

This is the fourth history of the Congregational church at Newport, on the Isle of Wight. The author, a retired general practitioner, is a competent and knowledgeable local historian who will proudly point out to visitors the room used as a study by the redoubtable Thomas Binney, a former minister, who moved from Newport to begin his memorable ministry at the King's Weigh House, London. Although the church's history was last written only eight years ago, the discovery of a large number of documents more than justifies this present work. It is divided into six chapters, has three appendices and a list of references. In addition it contains six well produced photographs and is a helpful and welcome publication.

Wales's Best One Hundred Churches. **By T J Hughes. Pp 304. Seren, Bridgend, 2006. £19.99. ISBN 978–1-85411–426–6 hbk, ISBN 978–85411–427–3 pbk.**

This is a beautiful book, well illustrated and produced to a high standard, as its subject deserves and as might be expected from Poetry Wales Press which has published it through its book imprint, Seren. My suspicion that it is a response of the Welsh to Simon Jenkins's detailed work on England's best churches is apparently unfounded, but the success of Jenkins' book proved an inspiration, and Hughes's work does not pale in comparison. The author points out that architectural historians, like Pevsner, Betjeman and Clifton-Taylor, have stopped at the Welsh border and he suggests that this is due to the fact that, in Wales's ancient places, "setting and atmosphere make more impact than architecture". The Welsh landscape has "such dominating presence" and is itself "spiritually charged". As he states, even the place names of Wales are "religion and landscape conjoined". His book and its photographs bear this out. So many of the churches and chapels (this is Wales and chapels could hardly be omitted) are still "solitary buildings in isolated places". Churchgoing for their worshippers meant travelling some distance in all weathers and, therefore, necessarily engaging with the setting and the landscape.

The book consists of an introduction, an essay on the Welsh past, and five sections, detailing the churches and chapels of the study, that is the north west, the north east, mid-Wales, the south west, and the south east. We are also provided with a brief guide to the elements of a church and a brief Welsh vocabulary.

Many of my favourites are here. Among them is Llanfair-ar-y-bryn (St Mary on the hill) at Llandovery/Llanymddyfri, with all its memories of Vicar Prichard and, more especially, of William Williams Pantycelyn (who wrote Guide me, O thou great Jehovah). This evokes, for me, memories of many picnics in the picturesque churchyard with family, friends and dogs. St Winefrede's Well, Holywell/Trefynnon recalls a happy visit made with my then fiancée and mother.

Hughes presents his readers with the medieval cathedrals and ruined abbeys but he also praises the rough boxes of unbroken walls, the stocky chapels which remain among the secret treasures of the principality. Included are the majestic Strata Florida, the surprising Margam Abbey, St David's Cathedral which Hughes modestly describes as "Dewi's house in the hollow", St Asaph's, St Govan's Chapel, wedged into the coastal rock of Pembrokeshire, the ruined monastery of Valle Crucis, the abbeys at Llanthony and Tintern, Carmel Chapel at Nantmel, All Saints, Llangar with its wall paintings, and the oldest complete surviving Quaker meeting house, The Pales, at Llandegley/Llandegle in Radnorshire. I know some of these but this book makes me want to return to Wales in search again of these and other treasures.

Yet, for me, the most glorious and attractive of all is the simple Maesyronnen Chapel, set up the hill from Glasbury. This, writes Hughes, is "the closest we can come now to the first chapels of three hundred years ago, wonderfully intact with early furniture and a many-stranded tie-beamed roof: Welsh vernacular at its sociable and unassuming best". He continues, "An extraordinary assembly of old tables, pews and benches stretches in a long row down the flagstones. At the centre two communal seats face each other across a plank table, all joined at the base and dated 1728. This was a statement of belief: communion had been placed at the heart of the congregation, not railed off at an altar, and they too were at the heart of things, independent and free to worship as they chose collectively, without instruction from others elsewhere." Legend says that Cromwell visited and that Whitefield preached here. R S Thomas was certainly present in the 1940s, imagining the first worshippers and being overcome with a vision of creation. Bruce Chatwin used the chapel in his work of fiction *On The Black Hill*. This is a place of dreams and of Puritan pilgrimage.

Hughes is aware that the way to knowledge of this heritage is by visiting. We might justifiably claim that it is further enhanced by joining in worship with the people of those places. Yet we might allow that by visiting we encounter "the setting and the oral tradition", as he states. This book has emerged from an insider's love of his people, as well as the impressions, memories and stories that are an essential part of a Welsh upbringing. To walk in these places, for Hughes, is to "touch … the memory of all our ancestors' lives". Even if we are not Welsh, we might include ourselves as their spiritual descendants. I am grateful for this study.

Readers of this magazine might note that R Tudur Jones's seminal *Congregationalism in Wales* has been mistakenly attributed to R Tudur Davies.

Alan Argent

***Together met, together bound. 50 years of partnership between the United Reformed Church and the Evangelical Church of the Palatinate*. By John Reardon. Pp x, 114, 18 Illustrations. The United Reformed Church, 2007. £12.99. ISBN 978 0 85346 262 0.**

This publication tells the story of how one sign of reconciliation blossomed into a deep and lasting relationship which has enriched the lives of believers in Britain and the German Palatinate. Only a year and a half after the end of the Second World War the Congregational church in Worthing sent two food parcels to the evangelical church in Wolfstein in the Palatinate and then began exchange visits of young people, a sign of concern for the hardship endured by that country in the harsh cold of winter. That single pioneering contact between two congregations, expressive of the desire for reconciliation, was the beginning of an intense relationship between the Congregational Union, and later the United Reformed Church, and the Evangelical Church of the Palatinate. This relationship led to an historic agreement in 1956 (under the auspices of the International Congregational Council) which included the exchange of ministers and the unrestricted sharing of communion and has sustained itself over fifty years, through local church partnerships throughout both denominations, annual joint conferences, theological dialogue, social issues and numerous visits by the leaders and members of the churches, especially the youth. The formal mutual acceptance of pulpit and table fellowship of 1956 was far from a merely paper agreement, but a living corporate friendship that continued when on the British side the United Reformed Church was formed in the Congregational-Presbyterian union of 1972.

No link with an overseas Church has permeated the United Reformed Church as comprehensively as that with the Palatinate, both in terms of its duration and the number of people and aspects of the life of the church it has touched. Finally, the publication deals with the description of the overall power of a testimony that reconciliation con be real, and moreover fruitful in ways not dreamt of at the beginning. The significance of the story reaches more widely into the ecumenical world on both the British and the continental European levels. In the context of inter-church relations as a whole, it is noteworthy that a relationship, codified in a formal covenant, was made between a British Free Church and one of the constituent *Landeskirchen* of the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD), anticipating by some 17 years the formation of the Leuenberg Fellowship of Churches of the Reformation.

This publication in 13 chapters was written by John Reardon, the former general secretary of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (1990–1999). For over twenty years he visited the Palatinate every year, often two or three times a year. His small history of this British-German relationship is not a personal memory but the result of careful research which is necessary especially when the documentation of origins is scarce. For his vivid and at times moving account Reardon used also the Archive Centre of the Palatinate Church in Speyer (Germany).

Stefan Samerski (Munich)

Emerging Church—Congregation or Aberration? The Congregational Lecture 2007. **By Robert Pope. Pp 32. The Congregational Memorial Hall Trust (1978) Ltd. £2.00. ISSN 0963–181X.**

Dr Pope's questioning title may suggest that this published lecture offers a wholesale critique of the emerging church phenomenon. Instead he has provided a surprising and rigorously academic study, beginning with Gabriel Fackre's learned discussion of the church. He points out that emerging church sits, comfortably or uneasily, on the cusp between traditional theology and Christian communication through cultural compromise. This compromise is clearly evident in the various fresh expressions of the church, manifest in café, cyber, pub and workplace church, and specific examples of these receive due attention from Dr Pope. He does also acknowledge that the infant movement is undeveloped and that it has arisen out of an impatience with the older churches which have failed to convey the gospel effectively in the post-modern world.

If the chief aim of the emerging church movement is primarily missiological, as Pope argues, supported by the fact that its proponents frequently use websites, on line chat rooms and blogs, then the traditional churches might do well to embrace it and work with it, as indeed is happening in some instances. Pope obviously finds value in this movement but recognises that some would find it makes too many compromises.

Towards the end of his lecture Pope devotes a little space to wonder if emerging church, reliant as it is on the Holy Spirit, is in fact Congregationalism in a new guise. Those who join such churches make a commitment to Christ and to each other but also determine to work out the implications of such a commitment, without recourse to any outside secular or ecclesiastical authorities. Pope therefore concludes that the emerging church movement should not be seen as an aberration and, with a carefully chosen quote from the Welshman Matthias Maurice (1684–1738), he shows that, as long as Congregationalism has its roots in the Bible, it will grow again.

Despite Pope's persuasive presentation, I remain unconvinced that the emerging church movement, as presently understood, will endure. Yet this is a rewarding read and a worthwhile addition to the modern series of Congregational Lectures. My bone of contention with this study is that, for all his sympathy for Congregationalism, Pope is hesitant about using the term 'church', which is Biblical, and sadly opts for the weaker 'congregation' when referring to the local body of believers.

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