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EDITORIAL

Historians are revisionists. There are varying degrees and differing accents of revisionism in each of this issue's articles. Simon Green provides a double dose since he revises the revisionists. Members of this Society who recall the 1950s will add their own gloss to Dr Green's invigorating blend of historiography, survey and polemic, delivered as the Society's Annual Lecture in Leeds, September 2005. David Keep's reappraisal of the Fenland pastor-evangelist, David Culy, places Culy more firmly in the Reformed tradition and in doing so sheds further light on that seed-bed of Dissent, Rothwell. Nigel Lemon's paper on the Hudsons and Borwicks recovers the Congregational dimension of a family whose social, commercial, cultural and political dimensions are almost too textbook to be true.

Dr Green is a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford; Dr Keep is a Methodist minister in Exeter. We welcome as reviewers Ruth Gouldbourne, Minister of Bloomsbury Baptist Church, London, Peter Brant, Superintendent of the Bangor and Holyhead Methodist Circuit, and Angela Tilby, Vice-Principal of Westcott House, Cambridge.

Notes: Listed Buildings. Christopher Buckwell, secretary to Thames North Synod's Listed Buildings Advisory Committee has provided details to be added to Paul Walker's survey (Vol 7, No 8, pp 495-6). In July 2006, of 128 churches held in URC Trusts two were Grade II* and twenty-one were Grade II: just under eighteen per cent of the Synod total. That July snapshot, however, illustrates the fluid complexity of the situation: of the listed buildings, one has been transferred to the Eastern Synod, one is leased to an Evangelical congregation and one, which has for some years been in Methodist use, is currently for sale. In addition two Church Halls are separately listed and two notable buildings are not included: St Luke's Bedford, is owned by the Moravian Church and Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church (the Synod's sole Grade I) has the London Baptist Property Board as Trustee. A further snapshot has come from the Eastern Synod which has four churches at Grade II* and forty-six at Grade II.

Ministers' Papers An archive devoted to the papers of URC and Congregational ministers is to be opened at Dr Williams's Library and the Congregational Library, 14 Gordon Square, London. The aim is to encourage ministers who have retired (or are retiring) not to destroy their papers but to give them to the archive. The focus is on the parson-in-the-pulpit's equivalent of the person-in-the-pew, in order to provide a primary resource for future historians to understand religious life in England and Wales since 1945. The families and executors of ministers might find this prospect as encouraging as ministers themselves. The scheme has been worked out in detail by the Friends of the Congregational Library, whose Hon. Secretary would be happy to supply enquirers with further details: Ann Davies, 38 Lansdowne Road, Bedford MK 40 2BU.

WAS THERE AN ENGLISH RELIGIOUS REVIVAL IN THE 1950s?

Take them at their own estimate, and the confounded general reader might wearily conclude that all of the most important truths about our common past have been revealed to “revisionist” historians alone.¹ “Ancient” wisdom once acknowledged how the fall of Rome plunged Western civilisation into centuries of darkness.² Better informed judgement now prefers to trace a “world of late antiquity”, emerging long before the eclipse of the western Empire and surviving long into the reign of Charlemagne, interpreted without “involving an intervening catastrophe [or] pausing [even] to pay lip service to the... notion of decay”.³ “Modernist” theory, in turn, identified the world-historical importance of the French Revolution; conceived either as the End of History or as a mid-wife to modern freedom.⁴ Those of the guild’s alternative ilk point to little more than an aberrant interruption in the development of Europe’s predominant pre-Victorian power.⁵ What such relentless correction – J.H. Hexter famously called it revisionist “splitting”, by contrast with pre-revisionist “lumping” – has made commonplace in professional predisposition towards so much of the distant past has now begun to strike a chord in scholarly accounts of more recent experience.

- 1 Identifiable less as a school (who would admit to being pre-revisionist?), and scarcely more in terms of a coherent doctrine, than by that self-conscious disposition against teleology, grand theory, and indeed all non-contingent explanation that has marked most professional historians since Butterfield. See *idem*, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London, 1931), esp. chs 2 and 3; and, for a later generation, J.H. Hexter, *Reappraisals in History* (London, 1960), pp. xx and 185–214. Perhaps the most memorable statement remains that of Conrad Russell, “Parliamentary History in Perspective 1604–1629”, *History*, 61 (1976), pp.1–28, at p.1, para 1.
- 2 Taught, above all, by Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. by David Womersley, 3 vols (Harmondsworth, 1994), vol. 1, p. 31, vol. II, pp. 404–9; vol. III, pp. 1062–84; with results chronicled in J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West, 400–1000* (London, 1952), preface and chs 1 and 2.
- 3 Most notably that of Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (London, 1971), *passim*; and, in particular, *idem*, “The World of Late Antiquity Revisited”, *Symbolæ Osloenses*, 72 (1997), pp.5–30, at pp.14–15, also G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown and O. Graber (eds), *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Post-Classical World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), pp. ix ff. For a modern, critical, discussion, see Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilisation* (Oxford University Press, 2005), ch. 1.
- 4 From Hegel to Hobsbawm; cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. by J. Sibree (London, 1900), Section III, ch. III, esp. pp. 461–77 and E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe, 1789–1848* (London, 1962), ch. 3.
- 5 Charted through Steven Laurence Kaplan, *Farewell Revolution: The Historians’ Feud: France 1789–1989* (Cornell University Press, 1995), esp. chs. 5 and 6; analysed by T.C.W. Blanning, in *idem* (ed.), *The Rise and Fall of the French Revolution* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), ch. 1; and acted upon in Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France From Louis XV to Napoleon* (Harmondsworth, 2003), chs 8–11.

Concerning no historical development is that dichotomy of intellectual consciousness – that is, of self-conscious expert pitted against increasingly bemused layman – more marked than about the fate of religion in the advanced societies; throughout western Europe generally and in Britain particularly. Certainly, there is no conventional wisdom more widely accepted than that we are now altogether a less faithful people than we once were. More: that the loss of this vital quality together with the passing of associated relationships has been a longstanding process, the product of broader social change across the whole of the twentieth century, perhaps much of the nineteenth century too. Finally: that these changes together constitute nothing less than a “secularisation of society”, that has led to multi-faceted decline and will eventually bring about the demise of religion, both in this country and elsewhere.⁶

Not so, say the revisionists. Some, to be sure more amongst the sociologically than the historically inclined, actually argue against the idea of decline, *tout court*. They insist that religion has simply changed – by definition, in characteristic focus, even according to common behaviour in post-modern, post-industrial, society. This approach is best exemplified by Professor Davie and her followers. For short, let us call it the “believing without belonging” school.⁷ Others, as yet unwilling to attribute positive insignificance to the mounting evidence of diminished affiliation, attendance, and the like amongst traditional religious organisations, nevertheless argue that the reality of what we see before us is something other than it seems. This is because the history of Christian experience, here as anywhere else, is better understood in terms of ebb and flow rather than decline and fall. More pointedly, a non-linear model better describes that history not merely across the centuries but for this century too. So, just as much as there has been religious decline, so there were religious revivals in twentieth-century Britain.⁸ In fact, there was a religious revival in Britain as recently as the 1950s. True, everyone but the revisionist historians seems to have forgotten it. But then, everyone but the revisionist historians is invariably

- 6 J.H. Hexter, *On Historians* (London, 1979), pp. 241–3 (when the idea is attributed to Professor Donald Kagan); A.D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740–1914* (London, 1976), ch. 2; Steve Bruce, “The Demise of Christianity in Britain”, in Grace Davie, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead (eds), *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 53–63; see esp. p. 62.
- 7 Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (London, 1994), ch. 6 and pp. 191–2; for a slightly different argument, but pursued to a similar conclusion, see Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley and London, 1985), esp. chs 1–2 and 19.
- 8 Callum Brown, “A Revisionist Approach to Religious Change”, in Steve Bruce (ed.), *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians debate the Secularisation Thesis* (Oxford University Press, 1992), ch. 3. Note the title.

mistaken about such matters anyway.⁹ About whether that process of ebb and flow has now come to an end (or might continue into the future), they are less certain. That it actually continued right up into the years of living memory, they are quite clear. And this fact alone, they suggest, renders virtually all orthodox modern ecclesiastical historiography redundant.

To take the most striking example. In *The Decline of Christian Britain*, Professor Callum Brown condemned an entire generation of conventional “[h]istorians and sociologists” (laymen, seemingly, forgiven for their ignorance) who, in his words, “have never come to terms with the growth of institutional religion in Britain between 1945 and 1958”. For such failure, he averred, compounded grave theoretical and empirical error; nothing less, in fact, than their collective inability even so much as to notice, far less explain, how it was “that the late 1940s and 1950s witnessed the greatest church growth that Britain had experienced since the mid-nineteenth century”. These mistakes of scale were, he believed, traceable in part to their reluctance to analyse the “relevant dates sufficiently carefully”.¹⁰ (If so, seldom can chronological inexactitude have wrought such calamitous consequences for broader understanding.) But the inadequacies of interpretation that they entailed were, he insisted, to a still greater degree forged by that mental blindness which afflicts so many scholars when confronted by facts that confound their theoretical presuppositions. He identified two such prejudices. First, that the process of secularisation was under way “long before 1945”; (think of those seemingly definitive tables in Currie, Gilbert and Horsley; then recall Chadwick’s compelling narrative, quite independently conceived¹¹); secondly, that Britain was by then, that is, by 1960 at the very latest, “already a secular society” – the informing assumption of Bryan Wilson’s *Religion in Secular Society*, and many subsequent works.¹² Brown aimed both to refute and to replace them.

Revisionism with such a vengeance characteristically presumes a certain authorial originality, whether of conception or in discovery. No less often it politely denies the title, if for no other reason than to render its seemingly novel

9 *Ibid.*, see esp. pp. 40–9. For a bit of salutary post-revisionism, see Richard Sykes, “Popular Religion in decline: A Study of the Black Country”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 56, no. 2 (April 2005), 297–307, esp. pp. 301ff.

10 Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularization* (London, 2000), p. 170. For two, contemporary views – similarly benighted – see A.J.P. Williams, “Religion”, in Ernest Baker (ed.), *The Character of England* (Oxford University Press, 1957), ch. 3; and J.D. Scott, *Life in Britain* (London, 1956), ch. 3.

11 Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert and Ian Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 128ff; Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, vol. II (London, 1972), ch. 6.

12 Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment* (London, 1966), part 1, *passim*; also *idem*, *Contemporary Transformations of Religion* (Oxford University Press, 1976), ch. 1, and *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 1982), chs 2 and 6.

arguments that much more palatable. Brown is no exception. Even his trenchant thesis on the "Return to Piety" recognised a forerunner in Gordon Parsons's re-evaluation of the fortunes of the traditional Christian Churches in Britain during the years immediately after 1945.¹³ Both, whether by explicit citation or through implicit borrowing, drew substantial succour from Hastings's landmark *History of English Christianity since 1920*, first published in 1986.¹⁴ A truly pioneering work, Hastings's comprehensive narrative independently identified precisely those allegedly crucial years that Brown later emphasised; consciously exorcised that secular teleology from recent historical enquiry that his successor so excoriated in other chroniclers; and then specifically concluded his pre-1960s account by noting, if not actually celebrating, an "undoubted revival in church life", indeed "a modest religious revival, common to the whole nation... during the 1950s".¹⁵

Put another way: so far from constituting an isolated howl in the wind, Brown's most recent survey represents something closer to an emerging professional consensus in the matter. In 1945, the then Bishop of Rochester chaired a Commission charged with a major evangelistic and advertising campaign intended to forge the "Conversion of England".¹⁶ Twenty years later, Roger Lloyd was content to dismiss the results of his efforts as "a very damp squib".¹⁷ Yet less than a decade after Chavasse began that hapless quest, his normally sober-minded superior, Archbishop Fisher, felt moved to celebrate the simple fact of a "massive... spiritual revival", then permeating the land. Contemporary revisionism increasingly takes that stern headmaster at his word.¹⁸ Which leaves us with a simple question: was he right? It also suggests a more complex consideration; one whose answer must be found not merely in the evidence which survives from that era but through the kind of explanation that renders those remains intelligible: is it true?

II

Let us be clear about what is at stake here. To argue that the religious history of the 1950s constituted a profound reversal of immediately previous trends – an

- 13 Gordon Parsons, "Contrasts and Continuities: The Traditional Christian Churches in Britain since 1945", in *idem.* (ed.), *The Growth of Religious Diversity: Britain from 1945*, vol. 1 (London, 1993), pp. 46–55; Brown, *the Death of Christian Britain*, pp. 170ff.
- 14 Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920–1985* (London, 1986), esp. Part V, pp. 403–504.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 443 and 464–5.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 431.
- 17 Roger Lloyd, *The Church of England, 1900–1965* (London, 1966), p. 474.
- 18 Anon, "Start of a Spiritual Revival", *The Times*, 16 June 1954, p. 4. Interestingly, this episode is entirely passed over in the official *Life*, which concentrated on the Prelate's visit to Canada that year. See Edward Carpenter, *Archbishop Fisher: His Life and Times* (Norwich, 1991), ch. 36.

argument explicit in revisionist account – is to insist not only that the traditional theory of secularisation is wrong (because those slow, inexorable, processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, similarly of the division of labour and the diminution of the public sphere, summed up in Wilson's notion of *societalisation*, cannot account for the non-linear course of religious change in twentieth-century Britain) but is also to posit an alternative model for the dynamics of contemporary social change in this country. That, in turn, entails an intellectual obligation to identify different causes, possibly too a novel context, for the dynamics of religious development in Britain during the 1950s. This obligation was rather hazily fulfilled in Hastings, who seemed content to assume the significance of what he calls “a very Anglican decade”, characterised by a pervasive “ecclesiastical social conservatism”, much as a reaction to the “radicalism of Temple”, precursor to the catastrophe of the 1960s. Similarly with Parsons; he relied mainly on the force of what he takes to be self-evident fact.¹⁹

By contrast, Brown assumed his intellectual responsibilities with evident relish. His argument was characterised by absolute clarity: indeed, stark simplicity. It was as follows. The period between the end of the Second World War and the late 1950s was “an age of austerity”. Specifically, it was an era of “economic retrenchment”, characterised by “rationing on foodstuffs, furniture and most commodities”. Partly as a result, it was informed by an “intensely conservative” national “mood”, resonant “with Victorian philanthropy in its talk of educating the working-class girls and preventing juvenile delinquency”.²⁰ Nowhere were the effects of such feeling more marked at that time than in what he calls “the discursive construction of femininity”. This was defined after the war by the state's promotion of “pro-natalism”, that is, of a women's place being in the homes of a nation in need of an invigorated birth-rate to overcome its chronic contemporary labour shortage.²¹

In short, the “traditional values of family, home and piety were suddenly back on the agenda between the end of the war and 1960”. And from that social reaction, the “[c]hurches benefited immediately”. Thus:

During the late 1940s and first half of the 1950s, organised Christianity experienced the greatest per annum growth in church membership, Sunday School enrolment, Anglican confirmation and Presbyterian recruitment of its baptised constituency since the eighteenth century... leading to peaks in membership in the 1955–9 period for virtually all British protestant churches.²²

19 Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, pp. 45ff; Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p. 425; Parsons, “Contrasts and Continuities”, pp. 46–55.

20 Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, pp. 171–3.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 171.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 172.

In parallel

religious revivals spread across Britain... The Billy Graham Crusades of 1954–6 were especially noteworthy, producing mass audiences in football stadia... with remoter congregations participating in cinemas and churches by the development of closed circuit radio and television. Radio evangelism was also permitted in the early and mid-1950s on BBC radio.

Finally, “accompanying all of this was a revival of tract distribution and district visiting on a scale not witnessed since the late Victorian and Edwardian periods”²³

This is bold social analysis. It is also wholly inadequate social history. Perhaps only a child of the 1960s could refer to the previous decade as an “age of austerity”.²⁴ It was actually a period of continuous economic growth, characterised not only by the progressive elimination of rationing but in the gradual (and often not so gradual) distribution of consumer durables throughout the population. In 1951, there were barely more than 750,000 combined television and radio licences in Britain. By 1960, the Post Office was issuing ten million TV Licences alone. As late as 1955, fewer than one-fifth of households boasted a washing machine, by 1958, nearly a third; in 1966, more like two-thirds. Over the same period, car-ownership tripled, transforming car-owners from a privileged tenth to a more characteristic one-third of the population.²⁵ Whether all or any of this constituted “success” or failure is not our concern. That these years could plausibly be condemned as a period of complacent social management, in which Britain did less well than it should have done, less well, anyway, than almost the whole of western Europe, need not be denied.²⁶ Perhaps that it is why so many now remember those famous words that Macmillan never said – “You’ve never had it so good” – conveniently forgetting what he actually did say – “Is it too good to last?” – immediately afterwards.²⁷ But the social history of this era is simply rendered incomprehensible if its real – material – gains are not even properly acknowledged. This if for no other reason than to appreciate how those advances were contrasted at the time with what so many contemporaries took to be the

23 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 171.

25 Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good: 1956–1963: a History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London, 2005), pp. 360–1, 105, 113–14.

26 For an influential indictment, see Sidney Pollard, *The Wasting of the British Economy: British Economy Policy* (London, 1982), esp. chs 2 and 3; more generally, Roger Middleton, *Government versus the Market: The Growth of the Public Sector, Economic Management and British Economic Performance, 1890–1979* (Cheltenham, 1996), ch. 12 and more specifically, Astrid Ringe, Neil Rollings and Roger Middleton, *Economic Policy Under the Conservatives, 1951–1964* (London, 2004), ch. 1.

27 Implicitly corroborated in the official *Life*, see Alistair Horne, *Macmillan, 1957–1986*, vol. II, of the Official Biography (London, 1989), p. 149. Properly confounded in John Turner’s subtler study, *Macmillan* (London, 1994), ch. 6, at p. 228.

accompanying spiritual losses. Certainly, it was the explicit difference between the (novel) hypocrisy and materialism of post-war Britain and the declining values of established religion, traditional morality and social duty that most struck John and Roy Boulting in landmark social satires, from *Pilgrim's Progress* to *I'm Alright Jack*.²⁸

Perhaps part of the problem consists in associating so many years of unbroken Tory government with the absence of economic and social change. This used to be a mistake quite easily made Britain enjoyed or endured – take your pick – continuous Conservative administration throughout the 1950s. By Macmillan's later years, it had also come to seem like “stuffed-shirt” government too; even, by contrast with its Labour opponents. Certainly, the secular use of the word “Establishment” dates from that time.²⁹ But such appearances more frequently deceive than enlighten. The grey men of subsequent memory included R.A. Butler, author of the Education Act from which so much of Britain's post-war sponsored mobility in fact flowed.³⁰ Their retinue also numbered Quintin Hogg, who was in fact the first Science Minister. Governments in which they and others seemingly like them – Powell, Macleod, and Maudling – played leading parts, presided over the development of new towns and the transformation of suburbs, coincidentally also, of an entire generation of New Commonwealth immigration and the birth of our present, multi-faith, religious minority in society; finally, albeit by ways in which their various authors probably never intended, over the progressive liberalisation of the drink and even the gaming laws, the development of commercial television, and the commissioning of the Wolfenden Report.³¹

Scarcely less of an error is to confound British cultural history in this period with the outpourings of the BBC during the 1950s. For the age of *The Brains Trust*

28 Julian Pettey, “The Pilgrim's Progress: The Politics of the Boultings's Films”, in Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan and Paul Wills (eds), *The Family Way: The Boulting Brothers and Post-War British Film Culture* (Tonbridge, 2000), pp. 15-34.

29 See, above all, the essays collected together in Hugh Thomas (ed.), *The Establishment* (London, 1959). The term may, or may not, have been first popularised by Henry Fairlie. See his “The BBC: Voice of the Establishment”, *Encounter*, XIII, August 1959, pp.7-16; also its first serious criticism by Bernard Williams, “Fairlie, the Establishment and the BBC”, *Encounter*, XIII, November 1959, pp.63-5.

30 On the “Ungrey Rab”, see Chris Patten, “R.A. Butler: What We Missed”, in Mollie Butler (ed.), *A Rabanthology* (York, 1995), pp. 97-118. On the genesis of the 1944 Act, see – alternatively – Lord Butler, *The Art of the Possible* (London, 1971), ch. 6 and S.J.D. Green, “The 1944 Education Act: A Church State Perspective” in J.P. Parry and Stephen Taylor (eds), *Parliament and the Church, 1829-1960* (Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 148-64.

31 Kenneth O. Morgan, *The People's Peace: British History, 1945-1989* (Oxford University Press, 1990), chs 4 and 5; Anthony Seldon, *Churchill's Indian Summer: The Conservative Government, 1951-5* (London, 1981), chs 7 and 9; John Ramsden, *An Appetite For Power: A History of the Conservative Party Since 1830* (London, 1998), chs 13 and 14.

and *What's my Line?* was no less the era of *Lucky Jim* and *Look Back in Anger* and, in a very different way, of Teddy Boys and rock-and-roll. Nor should it be assumed that contemporary Christian life was wholly immune to such – dare we call them – progressive tendencies. Thus with pop music came Christian skiffle. Remember Canon E.C. Blake and the Twentieth-Century Light Music Group? No less – indeed rather more – were supposedly vile and amoral boys' comics (usually American in origin) matched by “Dan Dare: Pilot of the Future”, hero of *Eagle Magazine*. First launched on 14 April 1950, his express purpose was to inspire adventurous youth towards patriotic duty and Christian service. This should not surprise us. His creator and moving spirit was the Revd Marcus Morris.³²

The point here is not to replace one caricature of a long-gone decade by another. Rather, it is to emphasise that in simply assuming a causal connection between what is now a very old-fashioned view of the 1950s, and the revival of what he calls “evangelical discursive... Christianity”, Brown not only weakens the plausible context of his argument but actually neglects much of the substantive content of Christian life in Britain during these years. For instance, one aspect of contemporary religious activity curiously unmentioned in Brown's account is that of church-building. Yet the 1950s have some claim to be the last great era of church-building in this country.³³ It is easy to assume that this was all essentially

- 28 Julian Pettey, “The Pilgrim's Progress: The Politics of the Boultings's Films”, in Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan and Paul Wills (eds), *The Family Way: The Boulting Brothers and Post-War British Film Culture* (Tonbridge, 2000), pp. 15-34.
- 29 See, above all, the essays collected together in Hugh Thomas (ed.), *The Establishment* (London, 1959). The term may, or may not, have been first popularised by Henry Fairlie. See his “The BBC: Voice of the Establishment”, *Encounter*, XIII, August 1959, pp.7-16; also its first serious criticism by Bernard Williams, “Fairlie, the Establishment and the BBC”, *Encounter*, XIII, November 1959, pp.63-5.
- 30 On the “Ungrey Rab”, see Chris Patten, “R.A. Butler: What We Missed”, in Mollie Butler (ed.), *A Rabanthology* (York, 1995), pp. 97-118. On the genesis of the 1944 Act, see – alternatively – Lord Butler, *The Art of the Possible* (London, 1971), ch. 6 and S.J.D. Green, “The 1944 Education Act: A Church State Perspective” in J.P. Parry and Stephen Taylor (eds), *Parliament and the Church, 1829-1960* (Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 148-64.
- 31 Kenneth O. Morgan, *The People's Peace: British History, 1945-1989* (Oxford University Press, 1990), chs 4 and 5; Anthony Seldon, *Churchill's Indian Summer: The Conservative Government, 1951-5* (London, 1981), chs 7 and 9; John Ramsden, *An Appetite For Power: A History of the Conservative Party Since 1830* (London, 1998), chs 13 and 14.
- 32 Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good*, pp. 384-5 and 443; for a truly evocative memoir, see Katharine Whitehorn, “It Didn't All Start in the Sixties”, in Wm Roger Louis (ed.), *Yet More Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (London, 2005), pp. 211-8. On the spectre of American horror comics, see Leader, “Hopeful Vigil”, *Methodist Recorder*, 30 December 1954, p. 6.
- 33 Lovingly described in Edward D. Mills, *The Modern Church* (London, 1956), ch. 2 and *passim*. In fairness, the subject is wholly ignored in Hastings and Parsons too.

restorative effort: think, as a matter of fact if not of ecclesiological doctrine, of Coventry Cathedral. There is some truth in this view. So, when the Bishop of Stepney spoke to the London Church Congress of May 1954, he simultaneously lamented the loss of some ninety percent of diocesan buildings damaged by enemy bombing during the war and rejoiced in the fact that most if not all were now in the process of being rebuilt.³⁴ Some truth, but not much: during the same years, almost as much labour was expended by the Methodist Church in averting restoration, by pursuing a policy of closing so-called “redundant” churches throughout the country and often contrary to the express wishes of surviving congregations.³⁵ According to this – then predominant – idea one key to growth lay (or seemed to lie) in accommodating people in “the new centres of population”: new towns, overspill suburbs and the great extra-urban sprawl more generally. That was certainly the principal basis of most 1950s church-building effort. It was most famously so in Birmingham’s “ten-year programme”, inaugurated by Bishop Watson in 1956, to provide for fourteen parishes in the new estates of an ever-expanding city, but also through similar schemes sponsored in Rochester, St Albans and Chelmsford. Even the ever frugal Methodist “General Chapel Committee” was content to authorise no fewer than 400 separate applications for new building schemes between 1946 and 1951.³⁶

Such labour has come to seem misdirected; almost as naively optimistic a commitment to the bricks and mortar determinism – let us build fine churches and the people will come – as that apparently embedded in the gothic revival of the previous mid-century. Contemporaries tended to look at the issue quite differently. They saw suburbs sprouting up all over the country served only “by secular bodies”. They feared the emergence of an entire generation given only “a pagan start in life”. And they acted accordingly.³⁷ Yet it was by no means obviously absurd to see “fruitful fields for evangelisation... in the new towns”, even if for no other reason than, as a contemporary *Times* leader put it, in such places especially, “a church was... one of the few places that [sustained] any... sense of community” amongst numerous and otherwise displaced “aggregations of people”.³⁸ All the more since this later commitment was seldom pursued ingenuously. Indeed, its planning often proved all too realistic. Certainly, the modern approach was “typified” less by the grandeur of Guildford Cathedral and

34 Anon, “Church on the Offensive: Message of the London Conference”, *The Times*, 20 May 1954, p. 8.

35 Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p. 465. Anon, “Redundant Methodist Churches: Wastage of Man-Power”, *The Times*, 17 July 1953, p. 2. President of Conference, Dr Donald Soper warned delegates that it might be necessary “to take such a coercive action as [is] legally possible”.

36 E. Benson Perkins, “General Increase in Methodist Buildings”, *Methodist Recorder*, 1 February 1951, p. 7.

37 D.J.C., “Is Methodism Losing the Battle for New Residential Suburbs?”, *Methodist Recorder*, 19 June 1952, p. 10.

38 Leader, “New Churches”, *The Times*, 11 May 1954, p. 9.

more, in the words of the Vicar of St Thomas, St Helen's, by "efficiently... compact new churches... designed to serve 300 or 400 people in parishes of 10,000–15,000 souls"; providing, as he put it, for the real needs of unenthusiastic communities rather than in "any serious... hope... of a religious revival".³⁹

So practical an approach may or may not have betrayed an underlying pessimism in ultimate purposes. But about one aspect of 1950s revivalism, the revisionists are surely right. This is that such activity was widespread and rooted in a strikingly robust view, common across all denominational boundaries. In that understanding, revival was both necessary and timely: generally necessary in a world so recently ravaged by war and secular despotism; *especially* timely in a country whose "religious life" had, by 1951, seemingly reached "its lowest ebb".⁴⁰ For all that, it was also immensely ambitious. Indeed, it aimed at nothing less than the reconversion of the realm. And, for a short period, roughly from 1953 to 1955, it was strikingly optimistic about its chances. In the words of Greville P. Lewis, Connexional Local Preacher's Secretary and stalwart of Yeovil Methodism, Britain in the age of the "New Elizabethans" stood "on the verge of the greatest revival of religion since the first century".⁴¹ Why? About one thing all parties were clear. This was that – apparent disproofs notwithstanding – Britain remained a faithful nation. For all the shock of widespread ignorance concerning Christian principles, as revealed in the 1941 *Bishops' Report* and for all the unprecedented evidence of popular distaste for a Protestant ministry as betrayed by Rowntree and Lavers's study of *English Life and Leisure*, published ten years later, informed opinion was convinced that Britain "had not become a pagan country" during the first half of the twentieth century; that, in fact, for all the evidence of obvious "indifference and apathy towards the work of the churches", there was "no marked hostility to religion in Britain". To the contrary, "an impressive degree of latent religious sentiment" remained amongst the people.⁴² The urgent task was to tap it. And suddenly it seemed that the means might be at hand to do so.

No-one seriously believed that the redeployment of physical plant would get the churches very far. But contemporary technical advances in the various branches of the communication industry really did seem to point to the possibility of a specifically modern solution to the perennial problem of translating undirected good feelings into real, that is, worshipful commitment. To this degree, what was truly novel and even exciting about Billy Graham's much-publicised evangelistic

39 Harry Bradshaw, "New Parish Churches", *The Times*, 28 August 1954, p. 7.

40 Anon., "Religion in Day Schools", *Methodist Recorder*, 25 January 1951, p. 8.

41 R.S.B., "Britain on the Verge of the Great Religious Revival", *Methodist Recorder*, 21 February 1952, p. 6.

42 Leader, "Survey of Religion", *Methodist Recorder*, 1 March 1951, p. 8; B. Seebohm Rowntree and G.R. Lavers, *English Life and Leisure: A Social Study* (London, 1951), ch. xiii. For a different, and more sanguine, "social scientific", perspective, see G. Stephens Spinks, E.L. Allen and James Parkes, *Religion in Britain since 1900* (London, 1952), esp. the concluding chapter, "Informed Opinion", in this context, describes the Methodist Press and Information Service.

campaigns during the mid-decade was concerned less about fact than method. After all, he was scarcely the first of his type. Both by provenance and purpose, he reminded many – friends and foe alike – of Moody and Sankey. Initial contact dispelled many of the fears. Contrary to early reports, he proved no rabble rouser; in fact, as the *Times* special correspondent observed, he was “no [great] speaker”.⁴³ Still less did he mount any significant intellectual challenge. For as *British Weekly* assured its readers, “he was not a very good theologian”.⁴⁴ Of course, his rallies were big. Perhaps 120,000 attended the culminating service at Wembley Stadium on 23 May 1954.⁴⁵ But even that achievement needs to be placed in perspective. Father Patrick Peyton drew more than 30,000 to the altogether less prepossessing Birkenhead Park rugby ground for similar interdenominational revelries, just two years earlier.⁴⁶ Even a six-week-long campaign in Glasgow the following summer yielded only a modest increase – less than ten percent – in average church attendances north of the border over the medium term.⁴⁷

For all that, Graham’s efforts unquestionably roused substantial popular interest. Moreover, they pointed to the possibility of renewed spiritual life that extended far beyond the logistical good sense of ecclesiological rationalisation. This was why the Bishop of Barking was moved to note a contemporary “miracle”: that of “Englishmen talking about their religion”, for the first time in living memory. And in that observation, at least, he was not alone.⁴⁸ True, evangelism in this mode achieved its effect as much through the packaging of the message as in its content. Each and every departure of his crusade was well publicised in advance; then, extensively reported; finally, broadcast. Not everyone approved of such methods. A sensible *Times* leader wondered aloud “whether the mechanism of modern advertising... is... properly... suited to the task of religious conversion”. An ever less than sensible Donald Soper, by then President of the Methodist Conference, even denounced Graham’s allegedly “totalitarian methods”.⁴⁹ On the other hand, some of the more traditionally staid were happy to

43 Anon., “Statistics of a Crusade: Mr Graham Takes Stock”, *The Times*, 30 March 1954, p. 2.

44 Anon., “Dr Graham as Theologian”, *The British Weekly*, 27 March 1954, p. 6.

45 Anon., “120,000 at Stadium”, *The Times*, 24 May 1954, p. 4.

46 Anon., “300 Faint a Religious Meeting”, *The Times*, 6 June 1952, p. 6.

47 Anon., “Church-going in Glasgow: Effect of Graham Campaign”, *The Times*, 22 September 1955, p. 4. For a notably cool account, see Anon., “Preface”, *Crockford’s Clerical Directory, 1955–6* (Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. xix–xx. There is a much fairer appraisal in William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York, 1991), chs 11 and 12.

48 Anon., “Talking about Religion: Results of the Haringey Campaign”, *The Times*, 12 January 1955, p. 10; cf. Leader, “The Incoming Tide”, *Methodist Recorder*, 18 November 1955, p. 8.

49 Leader, “The Issue of Dr Graham”, *The Times*, 24 April 1955, p. 7. Anon., “The President and Billy Graham”, *Methodist Recorder*, 4 March 1954, p. 13. For an altogether more balanced view, and one that has worn well with the passing years, see John Betjeman, “Billy Graham”, *The Spectator*, no. 6559, 12 March 1954, pp. 282–3.

lend their support. Five Tory MPs – F.A. Burden, Nigel Fisher, Robert Jenkins, Gilbert Langdon and Thomas Moore – wrote to the paper of record, celebrating the campaign as “the beginning of a Christian awakening” in this country.⁵⁰ The editor of the *Methodist Recorder*, implicitly rebuking his boss, noted “Graham’s... evident sincerity”, more strikingly how that quality had “impressed all fair-minded people”; finally, and most important of all, how his labours had furnished every church with “a great opportunity... for the future”.⁵¹ One man who really knew about opportunities quickly decided that, whatever else might be the case, it all made for cracking good television. In July 1955, Lew Grade signed Graham up to appear on ABC, in a twenty-six week session of religious broadcasts the following winter.⁵²

All of which, paradoxically, gave the modest preacher, his first taste of real competition. For perhaps nothing so defined the changing tone of religious life in mid-1950s Britain as religious broadcasting. First on radio and then on television, it became a staple of the major networks, old and new. By the end of the decade, religious programmes accounted for some seventeen hours of broadcasting time – ten for home audiences, seven for overseas – each week.⁵³ Post-modern prejudice might assume that the networks were wasting their time. If so, it would be mistaken. In the first major survey of audience reaction nearly one-third of some 2,000 persons chosen at random claimed “regularly” to listen to religious broadcasts; a further third “occasionally”. Radio’s “Five to Ten” reached nearly four million people daily; television’s “View Points”, nearly three million.⁵⁴ Ecclesiastical anchors such as Elsie Chamberlain, sole female chaplain to the armed forces and first woman Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, became household names through its provenance.⁵⁵ But such popularity was bought at a price; moreover, one not entirely lost on committed denominationalists such as Elsie Chamberlain. Religious broadcasts were never intended to replace religious worship. But early surveys suggested that, for some, at least, they may have done precisely that. Nor were they designed to “improve” liturgical form. But they did. Sometime in the mid-1950s, people suddenly ceased to think it worth their while to listen to a preacher. Almost immediately, they

50 “Greater London Crusader”, Letter to the *The Times*, 23 May 1954, p. 7.

51 Leader, “The Next Step”, *Methodist Recorder*, 26 May 1954, p. 8.

52 “Graham on T.V.”, *The Times*, 20 July 1955, p. 4.

53 C.W., “Television: A New Religious Medium”, *Methodist Recorder*, 21 April 1955, p. 1. And for later accounts, Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, vol. iv, *Sound and Vision* (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 763–803; Kenneth M. Wolfe, *The Churches and the British Broadcasting Corporation, 1922–1956: the politics of broadcast religion* (London, 1984), pt 6.

54 Anon., “Biggest Audience for ‘Five to Ten’: BBC Programmes on Religion”, *The Times*, 1 December 1959, p. 6.

55 Anon., “Parish Unlimited”, *The Times*, 2 November 1959, p. 15.

stopped doing so.⁵⁶ At which, the supply of these curious beasts slowed similarly. The Methodist Conference began, from 1954 onwards, to report its “serious... concern” at the annual diminution in its supply of suitably trained lay preachers. And with their decline “at least some part of the *raison d’être* of the English Free churches passed away” too.⁵⁷

By no means the only part. Brown’s panglossian membership statistics suggest a general prosperity in organised British Christianity up to the end of the decade.⁵⁸ In so doing, they hide almost as much as they reveal. The greatest institutional growth amongst indigenous Christian organisations during the 1950s was enjoyed by the Roman Catholic Church. As a result, perhaps ten percent of the population of the United Kingdom were affiliated to that church by 1960.⁵⁹ However, its contemporary good fortune eventually proved as much the result of Eastern European and Irish immigration, as of local expansion.⁶⁰ Put another way, it was the product of an unrepeatable denominational windfall. Certainly, this kind of success was not repeated. Amongst Protestant denominations, an ever increasing distinction between the Celtic peripheries - especially true for Northern Ireland, but to some extent also for Scotland - partially concealed the fact that most so-called religious growth in England anyway amounted to little more than a minor redistribution amongst the practising religious towards the Establishment. Even there, the record was decidedly mixed. True, the number of Easter Day Communicants, as a proportion of the population, grew by a full percentage point – that is, from four to five per cent – during the decade.⁶¹ But if these otherwise occasional conformists really did constitute a new and eager faithful, they might have been shocked to find themselves increasingly served by a smaller, older, and less educated ministry. By 1957, its average age had risen to between fifty and fifty-five. Half of the new recruits were non-graduates. And even as their supply – if not qualifications – improved slightly from 1955, it failed to keep pace with the necessary replacement rate.⁶²

More strikingly still, these were bad years for British Dissent. Methodist figures which had held up well from the late 1940s, began an inexorable decline from 1954. A year of “special evangelism”, 1953, proved a desperate disappointment,

56 Leader, “Methodism Now”, *Methodist Recorder*, 6 January 1955, p. 8; Leader, “The Local Preacher”, *Methodist Recorder*, 7 June 1956, p. 10; Anon., “Free Churches and Preaching: Danger of Emphasis Being Lost, British Congress Warned”, *Methodist Recorder*, 28 March 1957, p. 3. And so on...

57 Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p. 465.

58 Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, pp. 164–5, 167–8, and 191.

59 Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p. 474; Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers*, pp. 153–5.

60 Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 473–4; Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers*, pp. 153–5.

61 Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, p. 164.

62 George Willsden, “Challenge to the Church”, Letter to *The Times*, 15 March 1958, p. 7. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p. 46.

adding just one-twentieth of one per cent to its membership rolls.⁶³ Even Billy Graham's later presence yielded no Methodish dividend. Suburban growth was more than offset by industrial and rural loss. Church correspondents in County Durham reported the chapel "increasingly replaced" by "working men's clubs" in local miners' loyalties. Rural stations found themselves unable to retain local preachers. Prayer meetings declined everywhere. A solemn "Leader" in the *Methodist Recorder* for 6 January 1955 rebuked "a church that is forgetting the mission to which God has called it".⁶⁴ So seriously had these various losses – above all, perhaps, the loss of nerve – become by 1958 that denominational authorities began negotiations for "closer union" with the Anglican Church.⁶⁵ In much the same way, if to a slightly less extent, Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians enjoyed no significant gains at any time during these years; whether of members, ministers or scholars. Indeed, they invariably lost ground. Not for nothing was the post-war origin of what became the United-Reformed Church to be found in a "pledge of mutual co-operation" promising a "new and solemn relationship" between the two denominations, as early as 1951.⁶⁶

III

Most important of all, what was true of adult worship was truer still of juvenile education. Brown cites carefully calculated data to suggest a small growth in the percentage of five- to fourteen-year-olds enrolled in British Sunday Schools between 1945 and 1958; this was of the order of something under five percent⁶⁷. It cannot hide the fact that Sunday School affiliation and attendance declined inexorably between 1906 and 1961; more significantly still, both in terms of absolute numbers and as a proportion of the population, between 1951 and 1961. The principal effect of this change was felt by precisely the cohort that came of age during those years. Thus in 1888, something like three-quarters of all children attended Sunday School. As late as 1957, about a similar proportion of those over the age of thirty still claimed the same experience. But amongst young people under thirty, that figure had fallen to little more than three-fifths.⁶⁸ Which is only another way of saying something else: Sunday School was an institution in crisis

63 Leader, "Church Leaders", *Methodist Recorder*, 18 February 1954, p. 8.

64 Leader, "Methodism Now", *Methodist Recorder*, 6 January 1955, p. 8.

65 Norman H. Snaith, and Eric Baker, "The address of the Conference to the Methodist Societies", in *Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, Held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, July 1958* (London, 1958), pp. 73–5.

66 Anon., "Mutual Help Pledged by Churches", *The Times*, 18 May 1951, p. 3.

67 Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, p. 168.

68 Christine Davies, "Moralisation and Demoralisation: A Moral Explanation for Changes in Crime, Disorder and Social Problems", in Digby Anderson (ed.), *The Loss of Virtue: Moral Confusion and Social Disorder in Britain and America* (London, 1992), pp. 1–13, at p. 11; David Martin, *A Sociology of English Religion* (London, 1967), pp. 41–2.

during the 1950s. More so in England, than in Scotland, to be sure; but fairly generally and, as it eventually proved, terminally, everywhere.⁶⁹ This was especially so amongst the Free Church Sunday Schools, whose enrolment fell by one-quarter between 1940 and 1959.⁷⁰ It was perhaps most spectacularly so within the Methodist Schools, where enrolment halved from 1932 to 1959.⁷¹

No contemporary doubted the “deepening decline” in Sunday School attendance at this time. Indeed, this underlying trend pointed to a diminution of the institution worse than the raw figures revealed. For it was not simply that Sunday schools were failing to furnish new members for the churches. They were also losing the scholars that they had at an earlier age than ever before. As Gerald Winsley, General Secretary of the Methodist Youth Department, put it:

There was a time when we were losing our youngsters [around six in every seven] at fourteen years of age... now we lose more than 50% between the age of ten and eleven...⁷²

What concerned them most were the causes of this new outflow. These were – and are – far from obvious. Contemporaries pointed to the attractions “of family excursions” and other secular pleasures; they also remarked upon the ambivalent impact of the 1944 Education Act.⁷³ But some part of a much broader change “in the social habits of the population” that so many described was also traceable to the profound, if elusive, transformation of parenting that characterised young married adulthood in the 1950s. Moreover, this was a social change experienced by most of these young Britons less as a reactionary project designed to condemn otherwise reluctant women to the rigours of traditional motherhood, than as a freely chosen path, forged in the wake of very different domestic conditions made possible by smaller families, better housing provision and the liberalisation of relations between the generations. For many of these self-consciously modern parents, Sunday School was suddenly no longer necessary. It was not even especially desirable.⁷⁴

Perhaps that was why so many observers at the time began to speak of children as free to choose (alternatively to decline) the delights of an age-old institution. One correspondent even spoke of the “unprecedented freedom” enjoyed by an entire generation; of boys and girls who, apparently for the first time, could “decide for themselves... with no reprimand from their parents if they stayed

69 Cf. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, p. 168 and Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers*, pp. 167–92.

70 Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers*, pp. 176 and 190–1.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 187; see also Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 465–6.

72 Anon., “Why Does Methodism Lose 6 out of 7 Young People?”, *Methodist Recorder*, 28 February 1952, p. 7.

73 J. Kenneth Muir, “Facing Hard Facts about the Sunday Schools Today”, *Methodist Recorder*, 21 February 1957, p. 6.

74 Sandbrook, *Never Had it so Good*, pp. 389ff.

away". Which, increasingly, they did, now persuaded, as the contemporary conceit had it, more in the purpose of that special day as a source of "recreation rather than re-creation".⁷⁵ After all, there was at last something else to do on Sunday afternoons. Strictly licensed since 1932, still occasionally subject to local obstacles – Blackpool Town Council voted against granting a licence for Sunday afternoon shows as late as 1956 – cinema gained more and more of a foothold in the English Sunday after London County Council's decision to liberalise its permitted opening hours in 1957.⁷⁶ An ingenious compromise, imposed upon movie theatres and churches alike by Sedgley Council, Staffordshire, the following year – namely that applications for Sunday opening be permitted "on condition that an opportunity be given for a person to deliver a short sermon from the stage during an interval in the performance" – proved, unsurprisingly, short-lived.⁷⁷

To the degree that Sunday Schools had once been effective recruitment agencies for the churches, the full institutional impact of those developments was delayed for a generation. But its immediate – and damaging – significance did not pass unnoticed; nor indeed, unchallenged. Some churches experimented by adopting different times; usually for morning, rather than afternoon school. Some simply changed its name. For a while, hope was concentrated on so-called "junior churches".⁷⁸ The ever-inventive Bishop of Rochester, always alive to the "changing habits of the people", even suggested a change in the day; albeit in the safely obscure pages of the *Rochester Review*. His proposal was that schools should meet on Saturday. This came to nothing, less as a concession to outraged Sabbatarians than because altered *mores* increasingly comprehended the idea of a fully secular weekend. Time may have been when most people could not refer to "the continental Sunday" without a shudder. But "times had changed" and that sensibility had passed. By 1953, "many... who maintained that they were Christians" had come to "use Sunday for nothing more than visiting entertainment and travels to the countryside".⁷⁹ This "difference of approach" pointed, in turn, not merely to a "widespread decline in religious observance" that affected every part of the community but something more general still. No account of British moral life during the 1950s is complete without a serious consideration of what was then widely understood, specifically remarked upon in the lugubrious "Preface" of *Crockford's Clerical Directory* in 1952, and generally assumed by the defining clichés of Sampson's *Anatomy of Britain*, published ten years later. This was "the diminish[ing] influence of the churches in national life"; a decline,

75 Anon., "Children in Church: New Ideas for Sunday School Participation in Worship", *The Times*, 13 August 1956, p. 9.

76 Anon., "No Sunday Afternoon Films", *The Times*, 5 July 1956.

77 Anon., "Sermons in Cinema: Doubt on Sunday Opening Plan, Sedgley, Staffordshire", *The Times*, 27 February 1958, p. 8.

78 Anon., "Children in Church: New Ideas of Sunday School Participation in Worship", *The Times*, 13 August 196, p. 9.

79 Leader, "Sunday Observance", *Methodist Recorder*, 29 January 1953, p. 8.

so contemporary wisdom had it, marked not so much by numbers – received opinion had long presumed that the churches exercised an authority far in excess of the simple arithmetic of affiliation – as in the increasingly weak hold which the churches collectively exercised over common behaviour and its appropriate legal sanctions; and, similarly, of respectable values and their informal enforcement.⁸⁰

Certainly the contemporary decline of Sunday School only highlighted the passing of a righteous sabbath more generally. And if some blamed the cinema particularly – for which read society generally – others still clung to the idea of ill-inspired agency. Hence, presumably, the dismay expressed on 9 July 1956 by O.J. Taylor, Secretary of the Protestant Alliance, writing to one whose “custom of taking part in games on the Lord’s Day” was, he believed, causing “widespread ... public concern”. For good or ill, the Duke of Edinburgh seems to have taken no special notice of this particular dressing down.⁸¹ Nor, so far as we can tell, did Harold Macmillan, castigated on 10 January 1957, by Harold J.W. Legerton, Secretary of the Lord’s Day Observance Society, for presuming to demand a Sunday audience with his sovereign the previous week. And that for the minor matter of informing her of the composition of his new government.⁸² If these interventions now strike most of us as anachronistically amusing, the “Battle of the Bonds” – the conflict between virtually *all* the churches and the government over the question of premium bonds, waged throughout 1955 and 1956 – seemed no joke at the time. Archbishop Fisher’s principled opposition to the scheme has come to seem absurd with the passing years.⁸³ Chancellor Macmillan complained then about bishops “bleating... away” in his diary.⁸⁴ But the fact was that the Primate of England enjoyed the full support of all the major Free Churches on this issue. To no avail.⁸⁵ That was why such battles were generally avoided, even at the time. The Church (and that usually meant the Churches) was by then only too well aware of the ever increasing likelihood of its defeat. We famously remember Princess Margaret’s disavowal of a civil marriage to Group Captain Townsend

80 Anon., “Preface”, *Crockford’s Clerical Directory, 1951–2* (Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. iv–v; Anthony Sampson, *Anatomy of Britain* (London, 1962), ch. 11.

81 Anon., “Letter to the Duke of Edinburgh: Concern over Sunday Services”, *The Times*, 9 July 1956, p. 5.

82 Anon., “Matters of State on Sunday: Lord’s Day Observance Grieved”, *The Times*, 15 January 1956 p. 4; cf. Harold Macmillan, *Riding the Storm, 1956–9* (London, 1971), pp. 189–91 – which mentions the fact, but none of the contemporary comment.

83 See the punch-pulling account in Carpenter, *Archbishop Fisher*, pp. 405–6.

84 Peter Catterall (ed.), *The Macmillan Diaries: The Cabinet Years, 1950–1957* (London, 2003), p. 533; entry for 26 April 1956.

85 Anon., “Premium Bonds Will Not Do: Plan Condemned by Baptists”, *The Times*, 1 May 1956, p. 6; J. Clark Gibson, “Premium Bonds: United Calls for Church Action”, *Methodist Recorder*, 3 May 1956, p. 3. Ironically, Premium Bonds were the dream-child of Lord Mackintosh of Halifax, himself a Methodist. I owe this information to Professor Clyde Binfield.

“mindful of [the Church’s] teachings”.⁸⁶ But most of us have forgotten the *Church Times*’s assault on Anthony Eden’s earlier remarriage; one that even then rebounded almost entirely to that paper’s discredit.⁸⁷ More important still was Fisher’s belated advice to the convocation of York, ultimately heeded. This was that it specifically “not... ask parliament to establish by statute” its declared opinion on the remarriage of divorced people in church as part of its revision of Canon Law. His grounds were that such a request, even in 1956 and with a large (and recent) Conservative majority in the House of Commons, “would almost certainly be lost... in parliament”.⁸⁸

IV

Does that explain why the excited Protestant of 1954 had become a cautious prelate two years later? Had he realised that there had been no religious revival in his native land, after all? Or had he perhaps come to appreciate that England in the mid-1950’s presented a more subtle, indeed a more profoundly ambivalent, religious aspect than the happy state he had earlier anticipated, characterised neither by conspicuously revived institutions nor a massively haemorrhaging faith but by something rather different, more complex, even baffling – neither then, nor now, easily described. For all the difficulties, some contemporary observers consciously made the effort to do so. Most resisted the “paganisation thesis” made popular in Geoffrey Gorer’s controversial study.⁸⁹ But few arrived at especially sanguine conclusions. A thoughtful *Times* leader, published on 12 October 1957 referred to a religious atmosphere of “curiosity combined with ignorance”. That it took to be a pervasive state of affairs which, in fairness, it applied almost equally to the educated and the uneducated classes in society. For its author was driving less at a vision of redeemable apathy than a state of settled detachment. This was his way of describing a people that had effectively given up on the traditional paths to salvation. These were, of course, loaded terms. By way of a non-judgmental translation, let us suggest that a separation of the “religious” from the “irreligious” in English society was the principal cultural characteristic of the age.⁹⁰

86 Most recently recounted in Christopher Warwick, *Princess Margaret: a Life of Contrasts* (London, 2000), ch. 7, at pp. 82–3.

87 Catterall (ed.), *The Macmillan Diaries*, p. 180; entry for 13–15 August 1952.

88 Anon., “Private Warning on Remarriage: “Certain Defeat” in Parliament”, *The Times*, 18 May 1956, p. 6.

89 Geoffrey Gorer, *Exploring English Character* (London, 1955), ch. xiv.

90 Leader, “Christian Knowledge”, *The Times*, 12 October 1957, p. 7. For a slightly different approach, see E.R. Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (London, 1957), ch. 6, and the debate pursued by R.H.T. Thompson, “The Church and the Proletariat” and R.A. Buchanan, “Religion and the Working Classes”, in *Theology*, no. 455 (May 1958), pp. 179–84 and 184–89; also R.C. Thompson and the Bishop of Llandaff, “The Church and the Working classes”, *Theology*, LXI, no. 458 (August 1958), pp.333–5.

This is certainly the view that Adrian Hastings applied to the religious dimensions of British intellectual life during the 1950s. As he says, there was evidence of a renewed interest in, even the respectability of, religion amongst the English “educated classes” at that time.⁹¹ C.S. Lewis famously remarked upon such a growth in contemporary Oxford; he may even have been part of the cause.⁹² R.J. White went so far as to describe, if scarcely to corroborate, a “religious revival” in 1950s Cambridge.⁹³ Yet as Crockford noted, with an acerbity born of experience, much of that “much-talked of religious revival” at Oxbridge turned out to be “very deceptive”. Tales of “full college chapels”, similarly of “packed meetings of religious societies” often reflected no more than the general expansion of higher education after the war. More to the point, they invariably offered little protection against that “strong body of [varsity] opinion”, not often “publicly manifested”, but when roused – on this occasion, at the separation of the Regius Chair of Hebrew from a Canonry at Christ Church – capable of expressing real hostility to Christian principles. For which, more generally, read a world of Austin Farrer, Herbert Butterfield and Dom David Knowles pitted against that of A.J. Ayer, A.J.P. Taylor, and Hugh Trevor-Roper. And record, at best, a rather ill-mannered score-draw.⁹⁴

Hastings also observed how in the 1950s these worlds seemingly lived alongside each other, (sometimes literally lived alongside each other – think of his Lewis and Taylor) whilst barely making contact with each other.⁹⁵ Not always in tolerant plurality: Crockford’s strictures were well matched at the time by Wolfenden’s warning – in his capacity as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Reading – of the spectre of so many

... young people... becom[ing] fossilized in their development by a naive form of Christian belief which appears to have been revived in the past few years.⁹⁶

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- 91 Donald Rose, “Evangelism in the University”, *Methodist Recorder*, 8 May 1952, p. 4; Anon., “Catholicism in the University”, *The Tablet*, 29 July 1955.
- 92 C.S. Lewis, *Collected Letters*, vol. II, *Books, Broadcasts and War, 1931–1949*, ed. by Walter Hooper (London, 2004), p. 701; letter to Sister Penelope, CSMU, 31 January 1946. For the influence of Lewis’s wartime religious broadcasts, see Justin Phillips, C.S. Lewis: *In a Time of War* (London, 2002), esp. pp. 280–5.
- 93 R.J. White, *Cambridge Life* (London, 1960), pp. 133 and 190; note the rather cooler view expressed in Dacre Balsdon, *Oxford Life* (London, 1957), pp. 277–8.
- 94 Anon., “Preface”, *Crockford’s Clerical Directory, 1959–1960* (Oxford University Press, 1960), p. xvii–xviii. See also, Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 491ff.
- 95 Lewis and Taylor seem, for all that, to have maintained perfectly amicable social relations – at least to the end of the War. See Adam Sisman, *A.J.P. Taylor* (London, 1994), pp. 135–7.
- 96 Anon., “Locked Minds of Young People: Warning on Naive Form of Belief”, *Times*, 4 January 1956, p. 5.

He meant evangelical Protestantism. And his fears were not peculiar to him. They were not even unusual amongst contemporary Churchmen.⁹⁷

For the most part, however, and especially amongst the educated classes widely understood, necessary relations seem to have been conducted at a level of mutual indifference. For many, it was almost as if the agony of 1840s and, for that matter, the antagonism of the 1920s, had given way to something closer to polite contempt on one side (the unbelievers) and bemused impotence on the other (the faithful). Commenting on the furore that surrounded "Morals Without Religion", two impeccably atheistic – alternatively dogmatically humanist – broadsides broadcast on the Third Programme by Margaret Knight, then a little known lecturer in Psychology at the University of Aberdeen, the *Times* was moved to remark on how "the [resulting] controversy" – in essence, Mrs Knight had insisted that it was wrong to instil religious belief into children, for fear of setting them at odds with the prevailing climate of opinion – had shed "interesting light" not merely nor even especially upon public opinion generally conceived but on the "contemporary attitudes" of "many agnostics and atheists", more strictly defined.⁹⁸

This was because contemporary public opinion had, in fact, been divided; initially much of it was opposed to, even shocked, by the expression of such opinions; eventually, much was almost in favour of – anyway forty-five percent declared themselves "favourable" to the airing of – such views. But the self-consciously enlightened, by contrast, had treated religion throughout as

something to be dismissed with a sigh and a smile...and Christian revelation... to be regarded... as no more credible than Father Christmas.⁹⁹

By a similar token, Archbishop Garbett of York, offering "Christian Advice" for a proper reply to Mrs Knight's strictures could not help noticing that the broadcasts "contained nothing new... their substance...consisting of the stock-in-trade of atheists and agnostics for the past two centuries".¹⁰⁰ This put him into good Protestant company. The *Methodist Recorder* was happy simply to note that "humanism has discredited itself, not for the first time".¹⁰¹ All of which would no doubt have been all very well so long as the matter of substance had remained at the level of intellectual disagreement.

But during 1950s the real matter of difference broadened beyond mere

97 Anon., "Preface", *Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1955–6* (Oxford University Press, 1956), p. x: there bewailing "the increasing number of fundamentalists amongst contemporary Anglican ordinands".

98 Leader, "Sceptics", *The Times*, 22 January 1955, p. 7.

99 Anon., "Morals Without Religion: 1,500 Letters of Two Broadcasts", *The Times*, 20 January 1955, p. 5.

100 Anon., "Morals Without Religion. Dr Garbett's Advice on Christian Reply", *The Times*, 17 January 1955, p. 4.

101 Leader, "Complacent Humanist", *Methodist Recorder*, 28 January 1955, p. 8.

disagreement. Rather, it became something much less concerned about matters of doctrine than defined by sensibility. Precisely on that account it became much less tractable. Ostensibly convinced, as they usually pronounced themselves to be, that, in the words of the Bishop of Southwark, F.R. Barry, England remained a “deeply and pervasively Christianised nation”; invariably corroborated as such beliefs usually were through contemporary social scientific surveys; in which around three-quarters of the population invariably *claimed* some sort of denominational allegiance, open-eyed churchmen, ministers and committed laymen nevertheless could not help noticing the complete absence of whole swathes of the population from their Sunday congregations – whether the “working classes” in the forlorn view of the new Bishop of London, H.C. Montgomery Campbell (this in 1955) or “the young” in the equally lugubrious account of Leslie Weatherhead, President of the Methodist Conference and minister of the Congregational City Temple (that same year).¹⁰² Moreover, in so far as they could see, those problems were getting worse.

This was not just a matter of numbers. Interpreting the results of the BBC Audience Research Enquiry of 1954, Carr Saunders and Caradog Jones in their famous *Survey of Social Conditions in England and Wales*, concluded that non-attenders were made up, by mid-century as much of those who had once attended church as of those who never set foot inside a sacred portal.¹⁰³ Rowntree and Lavers had earlier identified at least part of the reason for that fall-off as popular alienation from traditional English, that is, Protestant churches.¹⁰⁴ Those working on the ground put the point differently. They began to talk of an emerging hiatus between “Christianity and Churchianity” in the popular mind. By this, they meant the emergence of a popular emphasis not merely on the ethical content, but also on the individual apprehension of religion that gave some sort of credence to an ever growing conviction that the ever smaller minority of regular attenders were, in Weatherhead’s words, “thin-lipped, laughterless spoil sports who drank vinegar and disapprove[d] of fun”.¹⁰⁵ Not for nothing did Professor T.E. Jessop, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, declaim in 1955 that “the English had to learn... that it was not by being moral but by being worshippers that they [became] properly ... religious”.¹⁰⁶ Hindsight should properly fault only his sense of pedagogical dynamics. For all the contemporary evidence suggested that they

102 Anon., “England not a Pagan Country”, *The Times*, 14 September 1953, p. 4; Anon., “Bishop of London Enthroned: ancient Ceremony in St Pauls”, *The Times*, 29 February 1955, p. 10; Anon.; “Poor Attendance at churches: Dr Weatherhead’s Appeal”, *The Times*, 5 July 1955, p. 6.

103 A.M. Carr-Saunders, D. Caradog-Jones and C.A. Moser, *A Survey of Social Conditions in England and Wales, as Illustrated by Statistics* (Oxford University Press, 1958), ch. 18, at p. 26.

104 Rowntree and Lavers, *English Life and Leisure*, pp. 345–9.

105 Anon., “Poor Attendance and Churches: Dr Weatherhead’s Appeal”, *The Times*, 5 July 1955, p. 6.

106 *Ibid.*

were increasingly imbibing the opposite lesson. That was why, by 1958:

The church... was on the defensive, had been on the defensive for a long time and would be on the defensive for as far ahead as an intelligent estimation could predict.¹⁰⁷

The real problem was that there were fewer and fewer reasons to believe that the majority of them might ever learn to correct their ways. An ever diminishing minority attended Sunday School, with an ever decreasing intention of passing on from there to regular adult worship. Most now learned what little religion they ever imbibed in the infant and primary schools of the maintained sector. In theory anyway; for all Butler's promises, for all early expectations, scripture lessons for more than a few were, in the words of one leading expert, "still used [this in 1957] for collecting milk money".¹⁰⁸ Margaret Avery's comments sparked a major debate about the state of "Christian knowledge" throughout the land that year. It was unsurprisingly inconclusive. But beneath the rhetoric of "remarkable and lamentable... ignorance", whether denounced as a product of neglect in the schools (according to religious professionals) or celebrated as part of changing attitudes at home (in the view of most educationalists) or simply accepted as irreducibly true (the consensus amongst neutral onlookers), lay a simpler and starker message. More and more English men and women, especially younger English men and women, were by 1960 effectively beyond the reach of all of the conventional mechanisms with which, in varying degrees of success, Protestant England had traditionally socialised its young. This process was not unique to the 1950s. It predated 1951. It assuredly outlived 1960. But it marks the most significant religious dynamic of those years. Within that broader framework, visions of revival proved to be brief delusions. In fairness, few contemporaries were fooled for long. How ironic that some of their successors should have fallen victim to false hopes which had in fact been banished long before mere hindsight relegated them to the dustbin of history.¹⁰⁹

S.J.D.GREEN

107 Leader, "The Lost Initiative", *Methodist Recorder*, 29 May 1958, p. 8.

108 Anon., "Stiffer Theology for Children: Something More than Better Stories", *The Times*, 27 May 1957, p. 12.

109. Though note the remarks of Russell in "Parliamentary History in perspective", p.1.

DAVID CULY: A REAPPRAISAL

David Culy was described in the original *Dictionary of National Biography* as a "sectary" and his doctrines as "anabaptist." A review of his life and writings shows that he was an Independent minister close to the Reformed tradition of his French ancestors. He was also an effective evangelist. There is no more evidence that he intended to found a separate denomination of "Culimites" than there is for William O'Bryan (1778-1868), whose name persists in Cornwall in the term "Bryanites" for non-Wesleyan Methodists. Rather we get the impression of fiercely independent congregations who regarded themselves as the true Church linked as a network of like-minded believers over a forty square mile area. Their inspiration was the congregation led by Richard Davis at Rothwell in Northamptonshire. Though there is insufficient evidence to identify whether, like other Reformed churches, they saw themselves as a potential established church, their debates in later years about paying duty on tea, praying for the victory of the King's forces and collecting money for government relief certainly indicate that they were not of that separatist persuasion which tries to deny the existence of the world.¹

More recent knowledge of Culy grew when Trevor A. Bevis of March introduced him as "The Bishop of Guyhirn" in the *East Anglian Magazine* in November 1959. He extended this in two privately published pamphlets, *David Culy and the Culimites* (1975) and *Thorney's Huguenot Colony* (1980). These look at the antecedents and migration of the Protestant French in the Fens. Kenneth Parsons published an annotated version of the Church Book of the Independent Church at Isleham in 1980 and K. G. Tibbutt transcribed the Rothwell record, a copy of which is now in Dr Williams's Library. Raymond Brown revised the history of the Guyhirn church in his Cambridge B.D. Thesis in 1980 and confirms the inaccuracy of referring to Culy as anabaptist.

Guyhirn, near Wisbech and now part of the joint parish of The St Mary's North of the Nene, was for long isolated. As Norman Glass wrote in 1871:

A more desolate-looking country than about Guyhurn can hardly be conceived. For miles there is nothing to be seen but stunted trees, sluggish water and interminable banks and dykes. The minister condemned to live in such a country would be deserving of pity, unless he were mercifully a man of unrefined taste or iron nerves.²

Culy, or Cowley as the name also occurs, was born to Huguenot parents at Guyhirn where the family had migrated from Thorney about 1655. Assuming that

- 1 Kenneth A. C. Parsons, *The Church Book of the Independent Church (now Pound Lane Baptist) Isleham 1693-1805*. Cambridge Antiquarian Society, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 103-11; 68-70; 119-20.
- 2 Norman Glass, *The Early History of the Independent Church at Rothwell*, 1871, p. 118.

his conversion occurred between the ages of seventeen and twenty-seven, this would have been between 1660 and 1670. There is no record of his education or trade, but devout artisans often learned to read in the home and knew the scriptures. He and his wife-to-be were referred to as "poor people" in the records of Rothwell.³ Culy was able to quote the French translation of the Bible to clarify *Colossians* 1, 15. This described Jesus as "the Substance of every Creation"⁴, and suggests that such a copy was preserved in his family. He did not know Greek, as he admitted in a later discussion of the meaning of "ecclesia".

The Minute Book which records Culy's conversion at March in 1687 has been preserved in the archives of Pound Lane Baptist Church, Isleham, a congregation originally founded by him. East Anglian churches have a tradition of moving between believers' and infant baptism and this is especially to be seen in the congregations founded by Bunyan and his contemporaries, like Bunyan Meeting itself in Bedford. Culy's conversion was under the influence of Francis Holcroft (c.1629-92), sometime Fellow of Clare Hall, who had been ejected from Bassingbourn in 1662 and established a number of Dissenting congregations around Cambridge, including Guyhirn. Holcroft's subsequent depression, "which was promoted by grief for the headiness of some of his people, who turned preachers, or encouraged such as did so", may refer to Culy's claim:

The Lord sent me out to preach the gospell of his son, whose voice I obeyed. I began first at my own sisters house at Guihorn, being a widdow to whom ye Lord blessed my ministry with many others of my relations, & many others.⁵

The Ely Diocesan Records for 1755 contain *A Short Account of the Culimites* which states of Guyherme (*sic*): "most of the inhabitants of which Place became his followrs and many also of Whittlesea, Wisbech St Mary's Outwell & Upwell, till at last his flock from very small Beginnings was increas'd to seven or eight hundred."⁶ These had sunk to fifteen families by 1755, though the chapel continued with a Baptist pastor for 150 years.

Culy and his followers failed to find a spiritual home either with local Baptists (possibly the Wisbech Particular Chapel) or with the Green Street Independent congregation at Cambridge, and he too suffered a period of depression. This was relieved when Richard Davis who was minister of the Independent Church at Rothwell, Northants, visited Guyhirn in 1691.

Davis was a Welshman born in 1658, who joined the church of Thomas Cole⁷ in London and learned his high Calvinism. He married a widow, Rosamond

3 *Ibid.* p. 116.

4 *The Works of Mr David Culy, in three parts*, printed for J. T. sold by John Marshall, London, 1796, p 18.

5 *O.D.N.B.*; Parsons, *op cit*, p. 26.

6 Quoted in Raymond Brown, "Religious Life and Thought of the Cambridgeshire Baptists (1650-1850) with special reference to their doctrines of the Church, Ministry and Sacraments". Cambridge B.D., unpublished thesis, 1980 p. 26.

Williams, and was called to Rothwell, or Rowell as it was spelt, in 1689, and remained there until his death twenty-five years later. Davis was a charismatic and controversial figure. He started badly by being ordained by his congregation, and inviting neighbouring ministers as spectators rather than participants. He offended them further by preaching in their communities and church planting: that at Kempston was seen as a threat by Bunyan's successor, Ebenezer Chandler, in Bedford. His congregation grew rapidly to 795 and he had to cope with hysterics, who were considered to be in need of purging of demons, rather than to be filled with the Spirit. He reported visions, and apologised for inadvertently baptising one of his members for the second time as a believer. He was accused of drunkenness, adultery, disaffection to the Government, jesuitry, conjuration and heresy. In 1692 he was acquitted at Northampton Assizes. In effect, he was in the tradition of John Bunyan rather than of Presbyterians and was unpopular both for his success and for his understanding of scripture. Possibly his later conflict with Culy, initially described as a lay preacher, was based on the same resentment but religious revival has usually led to sub-division rather than unity. Glass commented wisely: "As far as doctrinal questions, we will not enter into their discussion, labouring as we do, under a constitutional inability to understand, or at least to appreciate, many of the very fine distinctions for which our forefathers so ardently contended."⁸

The Rothwell Minute Book records the development of Culy's church. Two groups from Guyhirn joined Rothwell in August and David Culy preached. By the end of 1692 forty had become members, nine of them Culy's. On 26 July 1693 Guyhirn Church was separated with a branch at Soham. On 6 August 1692 "Brother David Culy [was] set apart to the office of rule," and became Pastor of the Guyhirn church on 10 November 1693.

There is no record of the baptism of these new members, but practice at Isleham in the eighteenth century indicates that the infants of members were baptised and also converts from the Church of England. On 28 September 1698 the Soham branch declared: "We juge it an evill to eat with the world at ther feast offered up to ther idols of christianing." With this view, the baptism of "converts" would not be regarded as rebaptism. Culy defended infant baptism against William Dunkin in an undated letter. Later practice depended on who had the oversight of the congregation. The original custom for both Davis and Culy was to baptise converts, irrespective of earlier christening. The Guyhirn Church was described as Particular Baptist by 1775 and Independent in 1820. When Glass wrote in 1871, it was in decline and its records had been destroyed by one of the ministers.⁹

7 Thomas Cole (c. 1627-97) ran an Academy at Nettlebed after his ejection from St Mary's Hall, Oxford. His pupils included Samuel Wesley (1662-1735), father of John and Charles. In 1674 he was called to the Independent Church in Silver Street, London, later at Pinners' Hall, *O.D.N.B.*

8 Glass, *op cit*, p. 53.

9 Trevor A. Bevis, *David Culy and the Culimites*. March, 1975, p. 12.

It is likely from the records that David Culy married Anne Delahoi who went to Rothwell in the original party, as "Sister Culy junior" appears in place of her name in the later list. Culy had a daughter, Anne, born on 11 November 1695, baptised five days later so clearly not following Baptist tradition, unless moved by the sickness of the child. Anne "Cewley" was buried on 4 February 1697 and Culy formed a relationship with Ann Scott. In 1705 he married Elizabeth Evans and the couple must have had a least one son as there was a wealthy trustee, Abraham Culy, who died about 1850 and claimed direct descent.¹⁰

David Culy was clearly a charismatic and effective open-air preacher, but there is only one hint of an attempt to use the law to control his evangelism. According to F. J. Gardiner, Culy was prosecuted and acquitted at Wisbech Assizes, then pressed into the Navy at Lynn. He was released at Yarmouth because he made such a nuisance of himself singing hymns, and walked the eighty miles home, preaching on the way. To avoid further such persecution his friends bought him a small freehold which continued to be known as "Culy's lots." His successors at Wisbech did not seek licenses for their meeting houses until 1751.¹¹

David Culy was a popular preacher, and his artisan hearers were likely to be responsive and Bible readers. Calvinism stressed the role of the head of the household as a minister, and domestic Geneva Bibles survive in good numbers. Culy was building on Holcroft's work. Study of Nonconformity in the past half century suggests that the growth in the two centuries after 1688 was as much due to good organisation and a more popular presentation as it was to the conversion of sinners. Culy's own congregation was largely his family unit, and population growth in the emerging artisan classes helps to explain the later nineteenth-century expansion. The Church of England did not restructure its parishes until the mid-nineteenth century. Guyhirn itself had a new parish church built in 1879, twenty years after the decline of the Culimite ministry, and an Anglican clergyman came to reside in the village for the first time in 318 years.¹² Many parishes in the eastern counties consisted of more than one manor, and Dissenting congregations flourished in these "Ends" or hamlets, which were distant from a parish church.

Culy was no stranger to controversy. It is a pity that only the last letter in his published correspondence is dated, and that we do not know more about Thomas Cole, who might have been Richard Davis's mentor, and Thomas Farmery, to whom there are several letters. Culy wrote: "There is two things which I much admire in you; first your ignorance in the Scripture.....secondly your Falsehood..."¹³

Other correspondents were Thomas Swinton, William Dunkin, Thomas Speechley and Mr Isaacs. They seem to have been fellow Independents with differing views on baptism and grace. Speechley was "Anabaptist Preacher in

10 Parsons, *op cit*, p. 11.

11 F. J. Gardiner, *History of Wisbech and its Neighbourhood during the last Fifty years*, Wisbech, 1898, p. 260; Ely Diocesan records. B4/4/27 & 35.

12 W. Carpenter, *Our Country Parish or Annals of Guyhirn*, Wisbech, 1879, p. 9.

13 Works, *op cit*, p. 91.

Whittlesea" with a bigger following than Culy.¹⁴ There is no evidence of any fellowship with the Established Church.

Culy separated from Richard Davis and his doctrines were questioned by the Rothwell Church Meeting. On 10 February 1696 a letter was read from "the Church assembling at Guyhorn and Soham" defending Culy against five charges of heresy. It is not difficult to catch enthusiastic extempore preachers saying more than they intend, and Culy's answers were apologetic and irenic. The most serious was the suggestion "That Christ was not the son of God when upon the Crosse." On this occasion he was exonerated, but he appears to have been more tolerant than Davis and defended other offenders by letter in 1697, 1701, and 1702. On 30 May of that year he was expelled with his adherents.

Apart from doctrine, scandal split those loyal to Culy from other Dissenters. In 1699 he was "cut off" from his church at Isleham. Four years earlier Ann Scott had been "erased from fellowship" and a later hand added "for fornication with David Culy." Emotional intimacy leads to actual and imputed sexual offences at times of revival, generally coded as "antinomianism" and suspicion can run for years in a close community. The stress on the Covenant of Love, as against Law, has regularly been misapplied.

The Guyhirn congregation remained faithful and Culy extended his work to Lincolnshire where he was simultaneously pastor to a new church at Billinghay, licensed in 1720. He travelled the forty miles by pony. He recorded that the Vicar, Henry Blaxley, challenged him to debate in 1719 but produced only a written list of charges on 17 June, to which Culy replied in detail. These questioned his right to preach, to which Culy replied claiming that his ordination was as valid as the Vicar's. This is significant as Davis had sent Culy as a lay preacher, and Davis himself had not been recognised by his Presbyterian neighbours. The Vicar concluded by calling him a vagabond.¹⁵ It was here that he fell ill and died about 1725 and was buried in the churchyard as a Dissenter in an unmarked grave.

Isleham, as has been noted, is one of his congregations, surviving as Pound Lane Baptist Church. As Kenneth Parsons demonstrated, it ceased to be Culimite after 1747. By 1808 it had become Baptist, having been served by Presbyterian and Independent Ministers. The present building is forty years later, and, unusually, has burials inside.¹⁶ Guyhirn's doctrine, however, was specified by Lysons in 1808 as "nearly the same as those of the disciples of Mr Whitfield".¹⁷ This is the only direct reference to Culy's theology and, assuming it is correct, suggests that his successors were in the Calvinist tradition of the original Huguenot families. This church also became exclusively Baptist in practice. Stevenson quoted an earlier, less well-informed tradition when he called Culy an

14 Speechley had 160 hearers and 3 Freeholders; Culy 100 and 5. Courtney S Kenney, "Early History of Emmanuel Church, Cambridge", *CHST IV*, 1909-10, p. 188.

15 *Works, op cit*, pp. 142-50.

16 Parsons, *op cit*, p. i; Bevis, *op cit*, p. 4.

17 Daniel Lysons and Sam Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, Vol.ii, Part 1, London 1808, p. 291.

“anabaptist” in 1817. The surviving Culimites in 1827 changed their name to “The Wisbech Calvinists” and moved to the Wool Hall. According to Pishey Thompson, the term Culimites persisted to describe Dissenters in Lincolnshire until 1860 and had to be distinguished from “Kilhamites”, called after the founder of the Methodist New Connexion, Alexander Kilham (1762-98).¹⁸ Even so, there is no evidence that David Culy set out to found a sect.

The only printed edition of writings of Culy was posthumous, but this is clearly a collected edition and it is difficult to believe that the theological work did not come from early in his ministry. The texts must have been circulated in some form. Glass commented that *The Works of David Culy of Guyhirn* was advertised on the verso of the title-page of one edition of Richard Davis, but he does not specify which.¹⁹ This does suggest a lost, earlier version. The 1726 edition of Culy has, as its last letter printed, one to Blaxley in 1718. Publication indicates that interest in Culy remained relatively strong after his death, and the very broad general catalogue of the bookseller, John Marshall’s publications appended to it, tends to confirm this.

The Works of David Culy, in three parts: I. The Glory of the two Crown’s Heads, Adam & Christ Unveil’d; or the Mystery of the New Testament opened. II. Letters and Answers to and from several Ministers of divers Persuasions, on various subjects. III. Above forty Hymns compos’d on Weighty Subjects, was published in London 1726, and Boston (Lincs.) 1787. According to Thompson, the bulk of this edition was pulped. Part I reappeared at Plymouth in 1800 with an extensive commentary by Samuel Reece which added little to what Culy had written but supported it not only by a letter of Luther (1483-1546) on predestination printed in full, but also by citing St Augustine (354-430) and Martin Bucer (1491-1551). There was a final reprint of the text at Spilsby, Lincolnshire, in 1820 with an appended apology for grammatical errors transcribed from the original.

There was clearly some interest in Culy’s theology in the West Country as well as his native Fens. His *Two Crown’d Heads* is not, as one might expect, an apocalyptic work but a consideration of the nature of Man before the Fall, and so the place of the pre-existent Christ. The Covenant with Adam was a Covenant of Grace, not of Law, and the Fall only imputed sin to the human race, it did not transmit it directly: “The Sin of Adam cannot be ours by natural Relation, not conveyed by generation, but by imputation...”²⁰

This seems obscure in the twenty-first century, but was a reaction to earlier Reformed writing. It had important implications at the time as it supported the General Baptist rejection of the need for baptismal regeneration of fallen infants. Culy’s insistence on grace coming from Adam and hence the survival of some human natural innocence had roots in the more humanist reformers. Miles Coverdale (1488-1568) had translated a humanist work by Bullinger, *The Old*

18 *Notes and Queries*, 2nd Series X, 1860, p. 407.

19 Glass, *op cit*, p. 91.

20 Works, *op cit*, p. 59.

Faith, in 1547. The third edition of 1624 was re-titled *Looke from Adam*. Culy did not specify the innocence of new-born children, but modified the strictest tenures of Calvinism. His argument that Grace was more important than the much later Law gave grounds for the accusation of antinomianism.

While it cannot be suggested that Culy's thought is of sufficient interest for his works to be reissued, he should not be written off as of no significance. A great deal of Dissent has tribal or family roots. Culy drew together descendants of Huguenot immigrants and helped to focus and preserve some elements of their theological position for over a century. No doubt folk memory survived of their rejection by the natives of the Fens. Culimites were distinctive, but they did not separate themselves altogether from human life like some sectaries. The confusion over whether David Culy was an Anabaptist rests on the practice which he followed from Richard Davis of baptising those who came into the fellowship from outside, and then baptising the children of believers: a practice which some think is based on the New Testament.

DAVID KEEP

A CONGREGATIONAL SOAP: SOME PRODUCTS OF A NINETEENTH-CENTURY BLACKCOUNTRY MANSE

Nineteenth-Century Congregationalists had some distinctive links with the soap industry.¹ For many observers, such an association will be located in William Lever's purpose-built manufacturing and residential community at Port Sunlight, just south of Birkenhead. This model development, commenced in 1888 and several decades in building, enjoyed access to water and railway transport, used large-scale production efficiency and exhibited a concern for workers' housing, social amenities and their general well-being. Lever also built the architecturally distinctive churches at Port Sunlight, Late Perpendicular in style and of 1902-04, and at Thornton Hough, Romanesque and dating from 1906-07: although eschewing membership of the County Union, they had a Congregational ethos, were normally served by Congregational ministers, and were listed in the Wirral District of the Cheshire Union in Congregational Year Books. This all represented a notable, though neither unique nor final, example of socially committed industrialisation by a Nonconformist entrepreneur, here exercised with a paternalistic authoritarianism.²

Rather less well known than Lever, more personally involved in scientific achievement, and perhaps more prominent in his active Congregationalism, is the subject of this present paper, Robert Spear Hudson, styled in contemporary reports of all kinds as Mr. R.S. Hudson. He lay nearer in time than Lever to Gladstone's 1853 abolition of soap duty: this Act related to an increasingly industrialised, urban and dirt-laden Britain. His inventiveness and subsequent commercial success permitted a denominational benevolence of almost unimaginable extent: to date, however, he appears to have been described only in isolated references where other narratives or individuals have larger import,³ and

- 1 Readers of this *Journal* will recall the recent article by C. Binfield: "Tadao Yanaihara and Mrs Cook. III: The Cooks" in *JURCHS*, 7 (2005), pp. 390-393. See also *Idem*, "Business Paternalism and the Congregational Ideal: a preliminary reconnoitre" in D.J. Jeremy (Ed.), *Business and religion in Britain* (Aldershot 1988), especially pp.128-133.
- 2 For William Hesketh Lever (1851-1925), see *O.D.N.B.*; F.J. Powicke, *A History of the Cheshire County Union of Congregational Churches* (Manchester 1907), pp.266f.; and C. Wilson, *The History of Unilever*, Vol. 1 (London 1954), *passim*. Lever was ennobled in 1917 as the first Lord Leverhulme of Bolton-le-Moors and made Viscount Leverhulme of the Western Isles in 1922: Port Sunlight and Thornton Hough are both now local churches of the Wirral District of the URC Mersey Synod.
- 3 C.E. Surman, *A Congregational Six-Thousand. Some Representative Congregational Laymen* (Typescript Volume in the collection of the Congregational Library at Dr Williams's Library, 1966), p.199, lists the relevant Congregational references. Two brief articles in *The Blackcountryman* focus respectively on Hudson's commercial career and his religious activity: thus, H.L. Kershaw, "Mr R.S. Hudson - Chemist - High Street, West Bromwich" in Vol. 22 (1989), No. 2, pp.64-5; N. Lemon, "Godly

also to have lacked substantial mention in works with a business focus.⁴

Robert Spear Hudson was born in Westbromwich on 6 December 1812: he served an apprenticeship with a Bilston apothecary and before 1839 had set up on his own account as a druggist and chemist in his home town.⁵ His experiments with a “dry soap” or soap powder were made initially by hand-grinding hard bar-soap in the back of his High Street shop: the resulting commercial product was the first successful example of its type and mainstay of the Hudson business.⁶ Further development albeit without ever patenting the secret method of manufacture, expansion of production from the Blackcountry to Liverpool, residence in Chester, a lifetime’s philanthropy towards a whole breadth of humanity, and a particular financial support for his Congregationalism filled the decades until his death in 1884.

The chemist’s father was the Revd. John Hudson, born in Staines, Middlesex, in 1778 and trained for four years at Hoxton Academy: he assumed the pastorate of Mares Green Independent Church, Westbromwich, in June 1801, was ordained in May 1802 and spent the whole of his active ministry and indeed his retirement at the one church.⁷ John Hudson also probably led the 1830s Mares Green outreach work at Smethwick having earlier, with Jehoiada Brewer, a Birmingham minister, helped to revive an older cause at Bilston. His numerous family included three sons whose activities in science and religion reflect different aspects of the changes within nineteenth-century British life.⁸ Respected for his work amongst both the townspeople and his congregation, Hudson died a wealthy man in 1864:⁹ an apparent business acumen was also used in the service of the church when in 1808 he ensured the purchase of a sizeable plot of land from the Waste Lands Enclosure Commissioners.¹⁰

The family’s reasons for choosing the third son’s names remain a mystery.

Cleanliness. Robert Spear Hudson - Chemist and Congregationalist” in Vol. 38 (2005), No. 4, pp.36-38. The present author is also preparing for *Cheshire History* a parallel piece to this *JURCHS* paper, focusing more on Hudson’s local activities.

- 4 Robert Spear Hudson lacks an entry in, for example, *Dictionary of Business Biography*.
- 5 Robson’s *London & Birmingham Directory 1839*, Vol. 2. In the Hudson years, Westbromwich was the normal form of this name.
- 6 J. S. Hunt, “A Short History of Soap” in *The Pharmaceutical Journal* 1999, (via PJ Website); Unknown, “Pharmacy - the mother of invention? Robert Spear Hudson” (via Pharmaceutical Society Website). Hudson was not himself a soap-maker, always buying in the raw soap from William Gossage of Widnes.
- 7 The names Mares Green, Mare’s Green, Mayor’s Green and Mayer’s Green were all in use in the nineteenth century.
- 8 The Baptismal Book of Mares Green Independent Chapel records their baptisms variously from 1807 to 1818.
- 9 For John Hudson (1778-1864), see *CYB*, 1865, pp.248-9. At death, his effects were valued at approaching £14,000.
- 10 F.W. Hackwood, *A History of West Bromwich* (Birmingham 1895; references to Studley, 2001 edition), p.203.

Robert Spear was a Manchester cotton speculator working on his own account from 1783 until 1808: he made some of the earliest imports into this country of sea-island cotton. Born in 1762, he was sufficiently successful to retire early from his cotton business; funded from 1803 to 1808 Roby's Academy in Manchester for the training of itinerant ministers, despite an initial hope to facilitate with Robert Haldane the establishment of a College for intending missionaries; financed other ministerial training at the Rotherham Independent Academy; and gave generously to a range of people, some entirely unknown to him save for their reported distress or disadvantage. He removed from Manchester to Cheshire in 1808 and finally to Edinburgh in 1816.¹¹ Robert was thus born after Spear's retirement and during his Cheshire years; no other Hudson of that generation bears his names; no family link has yet been traced, and the plausible suggestion that around 1812 John Hudson received some particular pecuniary support from Spear himself sits uneasily with Hudson's later financial comfort, even after funding a university education for two of his sons.

Mares Green Independent Church was founded in 1785, opening its Messenger Lane building in 1788:¹² it owed its origins to some Westbromwich members of the Wednesbury Independent Church and initial ministerial support to the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. Mares Green formed itself into a Congregational church in 1800,¹³ replacing its original building in 1807 and extending its schools in 1813. New school premises costing more than £1,000 were raised in 1844, prior to the formation of a British School: this was leased to the local School Board in 1871, but closed in 1893. Following John Hudson's retirement in 1843, three other ministers successively served the congregation before Robert Hudson's principled decision to leave: the then resident minister being accused of preaching someone else's sermon, a split occurred leading to a secession which included William Creed, minister at Mayers Green from 1852 to 1859 until resting on health grounds with very early but full retirement following

11 For Robert Spear (1762-1817), see R. Slate, *A Brief History of the Lancashire Congregational Union and of the Blackburn Independent Academy* (London 1840), pp.15-22; Joseph Thompson, *Lancashire Independent College 1843-1893: Jubilee Memorial Volume* (Manchester 1893), pp.10-13; B. Nightingale, *Lancashire Nonconformity Vol. 5* (Manchester 1893), pp.133 and 200; Elaine Kaye, *For the Work of Ministry* (Edinburgh 1999), p.47.

12 The detail in this paragraph depends on A.G. Matthews, *The Congregational Churches of Staffordshire* (London 1924); F. W. Hackwood, *op. cit.*; and M.W. Greenslade (ed.), *A History of the County of Staffordshire: Volume XVII* (London 1976). A copy of the 1788/89 indentures relating to the first building, naming the Countess of Huntingdon among others, is retained in the *Trustees [Book] of Mayers Green Chapel, 1844-1893*.

13 The most recent direct descendent of Mayers Green Independent Chapel was Hardware Street United Reformed Church: formed in 1971 by uniting the former congregations of Ebenezer, High Street and Mayers Green Congregational Churches and the Woodward Street Mission, it was itself closed in November 2005 in yet another round of town centre redevelopment. I am indebted to Mr J. Hutchcocks, one of the Hardware Street elders, for substantial help regarding its history and records.

his next pastorate. The result was the founding in 1873 of High Street Congregational Church.¹⁴ Robert Hudson retained his trusteeship at Mayers Green, already held in 1844, until at least 1878:¹⁵ with a brother-in-law, Joseph Cooksey, he had also stood guarantor for a mortgage on adjacent property which the chapel purchased at an earlier date.

The new congregation, meeting initially under Creed's honorary ministry, was temporarily housed in the rented Prince's Assembly Rooms and then in the Town Hall: its first entry as a separate church was in the 1878 *Congregational Year Book*, with E. Waldron Skinner from New College who settled in 1879 as its first named minister. John Sulman, the London architect, designed striking and extensive permanent premises which anticipated growth in all departments of church life: the first phase costing £2,700 was opened in April 1879.¹⁶ By then however Hudson had himself moved away, from his work at West Bromwich to Liverpool and from residence in perhaps Edgbaston to Chester: he was not among the initial trustees at High Street.

William Creed remained part of the Robert Spear Hudson story, not least through his marriage to Hannah Elizabeth, John Hudson's third daughter. Born in Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire, in 1819, Creed trained at Airedale College and served at Wakefield before his call to Mayers Green. When ill-health forced his permanent withdrawal from active ministry following a Bangor pastorate, he appeared to live comfortably either on his own independent means or through a reported aptitude for business. Having returned to Gloucestershire, he described himself in 1881 at Rodborough as Superintendent of Carpentry Advertising of a London firm (the census enumerator's amended entry was as Newspaper Agent) with no mention of his ministerial status: his later title both as one of Hudson's executors and at death is as Gentleman.¹⁷

The success of Hudson's dry, and later liquid, soaps over those of his competitors had required the expansion of the company and a vastly increased factory space. Production in 1854 involved only a small workshop industry employing ten former Mayers Green Sunday School scholars whose hymn singing was found to aid productivity; in 1861 the total was still only twenty-five. It developed to occupy from 1875 the Bank Hall, Bootle, factory and Head Office at Liverpool where ultimately one thousand people would work with export markets already active in Australia and New Zealand. Around 1900, Lever

14 F.W. Hackwood, *op. cit.*, p.204, states that Revd John Griffith Jukes resigned his charge at Mayers Green and led the secession, taking some influential members with him: Jukes, who then settled at Newark, attended the May 1878 stonelaying at High Street.

15 *Trustees [Book] of Mayers Green Chapel, 1844-1893.*

16 *CYB*, 1878, p.415. High Street Church, West Bromwich, closed in April 1963 and was sold for £35,000 to the neighbouring printing company, Kenrick & Jefferson Ltd, also now closed.

17 For William Creed (1819-1888), see *CYB*, 1890, p.141. His estate was valued at £15,407.6s.5d.

Brothers' own carbolic dry soap, a powdered version of Lifebuoy, attempted to challenge the Hudson's dominance in this area but achieved little success, much to Lever's own puzzlement: the long-standing Hudson hold on the housewife seemed quite impossible to loosen.¹⁸ Following two generations of Hudson leadership, the family company was in 1908 sold to Lever Brothers: the new owners managed the business as a subsidiary enterprise retaining the Hudson name until 1935 when the West Bromwich and Bank Hall works were closed during a period of severe Unilever rationalisation. Hudson's powders were then produced by Crosfield's at Warrington, an older company taken over by Lever Brothers in 1919, with some lines such as "Hudson's Extract" still being manufactured in small quantities after the Second World War.¹⁹

The growth of Hudson's Soaps reflected the founder's adoption of vigorous nationwide and indeed international advertising when most soap production was only regionally focused. He early established a regular Liverpool to York coach bearing the slogan "A little of Hudson's goes a long way"; his employment of professional artists to design strikingly attractive posters preceded the Pears' firm's purchase for advertising purposes of the Millais painting, "Bubbles"; in his own lifetime, Parisian boulevards would display "*Hudson's Savon Sec, Savon Poudre*";²⁰ and both before and throughout the period of Lever Brothers control, "For Washing Clothes; Hudson's Soap; For Washing Up" was ubiquitous on the curved ends of electric tramcars, as far apart as Rotherham and Devonport.²¹

When the Liverpool factory opened in 1875, Hudson settled at Bache Hall, an eighteenth-century residence in rural surroundings one mile north of the centre of Chester: he greatly extended and, in Victorian terms, improved the property in its structure, farm and pleasure grounds. In less than a decade, he so accommodated himself to his newly adopted city and county as to attain a wide-ranging prominence. He was made a J.P. in 1881; became Chairman of the Liberal Club; subscribed generously to Chester's new Museum of Science and Art and to the North Wales College which would later become part of the University of Wales; and served as a governor of the King's School, founding scholarships to it from the Chester British Schools of which he was president and which he supported financially. He contributed regularly to the funds of the Cheshire Union of Congregational Churches (CUCC), as he continued to do to the South Staffordshire Union; and gave particular aid within the denomination towards the construction of such Cheshire village chapels as Barton, the schools at Great

18 C. Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp.57 and 120.

19 A.E. Musson, *Enterprise in Soap and Chemicals. Joseph Crosfield & Sons Limited 1815-1965* (Manchester 1965), pp.327 and 330f. The Crosfields were a Quaker family originating in Lancaster: some retained that allegiance in Warrington whilst a related branch in Liverpool included prominent Congregationalists.

20 *Chester Chronicle*, 9 August 1884.

21 e.g., J.H. Price (ed.), *The Tramways of South-West England* (Broxbourne n.d. but c1990), p.35. No such advertisements have yet been found to post-date 1932.

Boughton and two new Chester Churches. These latter were at Handbridge on the city's southern boundary where he paid part of the minister's stipend, and at Northgate where he worshipped and funded the employment of a missionary and a Bible Woman for work in the immediate vicinity.

Hudson undertook this local financial commitment despite never, apparently, transferring his church membership from West Bromwich.²² In 1883, his personal contribution comprised some forty per cent of the monies passing through the Northgate accounts; £50 to the County Union; £200 to the LMS, with £20 to its Widows' Fund; £50 to the Zenana Missions among Indian women; and £106 for Northgate's own outreach work which was necessarily terminated after his death in August 1884. By the following January, the church was concerned about an ensuing deficit.

Perhaps most significantly in terms of Congregationalism in the north-west, Hudson was elected the first Chairman of the North Wales English Congregational Union (NWEUCU) at its 1876 inauguration in Chester, serving in this capacity until his death.²³ His gifts here included an initial subscription of £1,000 spread over five years; numerous contributions to site or building funds for churches or manses and to relieve chapel debts; a possibly final gift of £500 towards a replacement Rhyl church where D. Burford Hooke, the first Secretary of the North Wales Union, was now minister; and both £100 towards the church site and a commendation of "the case of the New Congregational Church at Colwyn Bay, believing it to be deserving of the practical help of all who love the cause of Jesus Christ"; he was commemorated there, an apparently favourite place of fellowship, when its permanent building was completed as the Hudson Memorial Church.²⁴

Hudson was prodigal in using his increasing wealth to aid a far broader Congregationalism: although an annual subscriber to the London Missionary Society, his main concern was for the presence and extension of the Christian faith in this country. His gifts frequently took the form of "Challenge Grants", his own example encouraging churches and societies to increase their own contributions: beyond the Cheshire and North Wales of his residence and particular involvement, he aided in Birmingham the new church at Birchfield,²⁵ in Hanley an 1882 rebuilding scheme which received £1,000,²⁶ and many churches more generally

22 *Manual of the Northgate Congregational Church, Chester, 1884 and 1885*, where neither the Members' Lists nor Obituary references to members include Hudson: the Northgate minister, Fred. Barnes, habitually referred to "our friend Mr R. S. Hudson".

23 For Robert Spear Hudson and the North Wales English Congregational Union (hereafter NWEUCU), see the account of the Inaugural Meeting in *Chester Chronicle*, 21 October 1876; NWEUCU *Reports*, 1885; and N. Lemon, "Cross-Border Congregationalism" in *JURCHS* (2006), Vol. 7, No. 8, pp.483-494.

24 NWEUCU *Reports*, 1884, pp.12-14.

25 *CYB*, 1880, p.416. This Hudson donation unusually, perhaps uniquely, is mentioned in a *CYB* Architectural Description.

26 *Cheshire Observer*, 9 August 1884.

placed around the country, the capital not excluded.²⁷ He gave £500 each year to the Home Missionary Society, where his initially anonymous donations totalling £3,000 secured the founding of a Reserve Fund, was equally generous to the English Congregational Chapel Building Society and promised a munificent £20,000 to the Jubilee Fund of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, to be paid in annual instalments. Further, he undertook substantial committee work for these organisations: he represented the CUCC not only on the NWEUCU but nationally on the Council of the Church Aid and Home Missionary Society; was both President of the Chapel Building Society and involved in the formation of the Chapel Extension Committee for London; and was, with Samuel Morley, a Joint Treasurer of the Jubilee Fund. Hudson's personal giving found a parallel in this fellow Congregationalist: the practical chemist and the financial administrator kept the highest standards in the beneficial use of wealth gained from their respective businesses in soap and hosiery.

There was, however, nothing parochial in spirit or action about Hudson's contacts and his personality, nor were other denominations refused his open purse. In West Bromwich, he had been an Improvement Commissioner and on the Board of Guardians, actively promoted the Ragged Schools and was one of the founders of the local Building Society. In Chester, the local Welsh Calvinistic Methodists and the Presbyterian Church of England, this latter almost entirely a congregation of Scots, also enjoyed his benevolence when rebuilding in the 1880s; the 1881 Annual Meeting of the Chester Boatmen's Bethel recorded his provision of soup and bread during the preceding winter's severe frost which brought extreme hardship to boat people by stopping all canal traffic; and he continued an earlier interest with a year's service as President of the Chester Ragged & Industrial Schools.²⁸

A substantial obituary tribute in a local newspaper was written by J.K. Montgomery, minister of Matthew Henry's Chapel from 1860 to 1896: this, the earliest of Chester's Dissenting causes, had by then long been Unitarian. Montgomery, who was involved with Hudson in the management of Chester's British Schools, considered that the layman saw his "neighbour" simply as the needy, without distinction of race, locality or creed: he also reported the Congregationalist's intention to institute a charity fund at West Bromwich having among its trustees one of his own, Unitarian, co-religionists.²⁹ The warm social links between Bache Hall and Eaton Hall, the Duke of Westminster's Cheshire seat, illustrate the high respect in which the Duke apparently held Hudson, the two men necessarily meeting through shared involvement in a number of Chester good causes: despite his Anglican commitment, the Duke was himself a frequent

27 *CYB*, 1886, p.36.

28 *Chester Chronicle*, 22 May 1880 and 26 February 1881.

29 *Cheshire Observer*, 16 August 1884. For John Knowles Montgomery (1816-1908), see *Inquirer*, 1908, pp.614 and 623; and *Essex Hall Year Book*, 1909: I am indebted to Mr Alan Ruston for these Unitarian references.

contributor to local Congregational building funds.³⁰

The full extent of Hudson's continual generosity lies now beyond any accurate investigation: only the vagaries of local newspaper content and perhaps the more formal County Union or other Congregational Reports or histories could rescue from total anonymity his apparently more widespread gifts, whether to churches or to individuals. These latter notably provided crucial support for many needy ministers through necessarily unreported acts so different in manner from his most publicised and munificent offerings.

Although he had for some years received treatment for angina pectoris, Robert Hudson's death on 6 August 1884 at Scarborough, where the family had gone for Mrs Hudson's health, was unexpected. The event occasioned widespread and genuine sadness across Chester. The Town Hall flag was at half mast for some days and business suspended throughout the route of the funeral procession of this prominent citizen, a quite remarkable honour to a Nonconformist in such a strongly Anglican cathedral city. The display of mourning around the pulpit and table at the Northgate Church was agreed at an incomplete Saturday morning Deacons' Meeting at a member's shop, and then confirmed retrospectively and individually after the Sunday morning service. On the day of the funeral, twelve broughams travelled from the house to Chester Cemetery where he was buried from its Nonconformist Chapel. Attending that service were seven Chester ministers besides Congregationalists; the Principal of University College, Aberystwyth; and a NWEUCU representative from Llansantffraid. Hudson had moved comfortably in the circles of Chester's establishment, of both church and society: the Dean of Chester now sent one of the broughams whilst five clergy of the Established Church, the Cathedral precentor among them, were present at the Cemetery.

Unsurprisingly, notices of some detail and with warm praise appeared in denominational publications and Chester and West Bromwich newspapers. They described a goodness, kindness and charity experienced by a wide circle of recipients (*West Bromwich Weekly News*); a princely liberality, wise counsels, and unvarying geniality (NWEUCU); a zeal and munificence in the cause of Home Missions probably never surpassed (CUCC); and qualities as organiser, philanthropist and good Samaritan to the suffering, being remarkably catholic in spirit (*Cheshire Chronicle*). A substantial Obituary Minute originating from the Committee of the CUEW found Robert Spear Hudson's attitude to his wealth in a perception of its being a trust committed to him by Christ.³¹

Hudson's Personal Estate was valued at £295,167.19s.6d.³² His effective will of August 1883 made provision for his family and for the continuance of the Hudson firm: following some years when a family trust would control most assets and the consequent income, the major beneficiary would be his surviving son, Robert

30 An article in *The Congregational Magazine* for May 1881 notes the Duke's "helpful and liberal hand to nonconformists".

31 *CYB*, 1886. p.12.

32 Robert Spear Hudson's Will of 31 August 1883 was proved 8 November 1884.

William Hudson,³³ whenever an eldest grandson of that line attained the age of twenty-one. Failing such direct heir, the alternative division was threefold: to immediate family, to certain named nieces and nephews, and to those charities and institutions already receiving specific bequests.

Robert Spear Hudson's hopes of aiding his chosen evangelical charities after his death engaged three methods which brought mixed results. His Will named six bodies to share in varying proportion a total of £10,000: Congregationalism benefited through its Pastors' Retiring Fund, the Chapel Building Society, and the Manse Loan Fund for Independent Ministers. A wider concern included the London Missionary Society, the Irish Evangelical Society, and the British & Foreign Bible Society. In the year when he made his will, intimations of a failing strength wisely led Hudson to bank with the Treasurer of Chester's Handbridge Church the total sum promised towards the minister's stipend: this money, at £50 per year over a particular coming period, would then be released annually.

A similar treatment, however, was not accorded his promises made earlier and very publicly to the NWEUC at £200 per year, nor to the Jubilee Fund of the Congregational Union: the latter was deficient to the tune of £8,000 at the time of Hudson's death. This money had in fact been allocated in advance by the Treasurers of the Fund to particular churches who, seeking through their own increased giving to meet the challenges set them, anticipated an almost imminent relief to their indebtedness: a Deficiency Fund was therefore established following the 1885 Annual Assembly, designed to ensure that the aims of the Fund in those particulars were in fact met. Samuel Morley again contributed handsomely, others receiving the encouragement to add however modestly to their existing donations.

In addition to this, a legal process was instituted by the executors, who sought authority to allot to various Congregational bodies what Robert Hudson had promised and intended to give, had not death intervened. Whilst the Biblical and Congregational concept of covenant did not appear in the published report of the case, and perhaps not in court either, the argument proposed by those representing the Congregational Union was of this nature: by stipulating that his own promised gift be challenge grants, the donor induced others to contribute financially to achieve their joint goal and thus all, it was claimed, were involved in a legal contract. The action cited the sums promised to the Jubilee Fund, a fund for church extension in London and another for erecting mission halls in or near London: perhaps among others, the Home Missionary Society, the NWEUC and the Handbridge Building Fund also had an interest in the outcome. Heard in May 1885 in the Chancery Division of the High Court of Justice before Mr Justice Pearson who feared the perhaps limitless extent of "a new form of posthumous charity ... a form of charity that was quite bad enough as it was", they were unsuccessful.³⁴

33 R.W. Hudson is described in some press reports as Mr. William Hudson but not, in any found to date, as Mr Robert Hudson: his second name is used here, not least to distinguish him from his father.

34 *The Times*, May 4 1885; NWEUC *Reports*, 1885, p.12; *CYB*, 1886, p.21f.

The wider Hudson family descending from John and Sarah Hudson, their eight children all surviving into maturity, play some continuing part in Congregationalism or are examples of a nineteenth-century upward social success. Cyrus (born 1810) followed his father into the ministry, studying at the Universities of Dublin and Glasgow: his graduate status as M.A. of the latter was quite rare in the Congregationalism of 1841 when he commenced his ministerial work. Following three pastorates, a constitutional nervousness forced the premature close of his formal ministry: out of charge for some years, he died in London in 1871.³⁵ In the following year, his second son Morris Jones Hudson, a Member of the London Stock Exchange who was worth over £40,000 at his death, married a first cousin Sarah Borwick at Marsh Street, Walthamstow.³⁶

An outstanding professional success attended the eldest Hudson brother, Alfred (born 1808), who was initially but unhappily apprenticed to a general practitioner in West Bromwich: he fulfilled his medical ambitions with a catalogue of achievements in Ireland. He had graduated B.A. and M.B. by 1834 at Trinity College, Dublin; undertook general practice at Navan, Meath County, adding meanwhile the superintendency of its Fever Hospital; returned to Dublin in 1854, admitted a Licentiate and later elected Fellow of the College of Physicians; was Physician successively to the Adelaide and the Meath Hospitals from 1858 and 1861 in which latter year he progressed M.D.; President for two years of the King and Queen's College of Physicians in Ireland from 1871; Her Majesty's representative in the General Council of Medical Education; Physician in Ordinary to the Queen in Ireland; and Regius Professor of Physic in Trinity College from 1878 until shortly before his death. The Hudson Scholarship, inaugurated in 1882 at Dublin's Adelaide Hospital, may appear simply to commemorate this distinguished doctor: it in fact resulted from a thousand pound gift made by Robert Hudson through his brother for the purposes of medical education in Ireland.³⁷

Two of the daughters became wives of Congregational ministers, thus Hannah Elizabeth (born 1814) and Mary Anne (born 1815): the latter's husband, Joseph Fletcher's major work was at Christchurch, Hampshire.³⁸ The eldest Hudson sister

35 For Cyrus Hudson (1810-1871), see *CYB*, 1872, pp.326-7.

36 The earliest meeting house antecedent of Marsh Street Church, Walthamstow, was built in 1695 by William Coward, the Coward Trust funding its replacement in 1740. Morris Jones Hudson (1848-1928) had a final address at Bathampton: his funeral service took place at Golders Green Crematorium.

37 For Alfred Hudson (1808-1880), see *The Times*, 23 November 1880; *British Medical Journal*, 27 November 1880; and J. Little, "A sketch of the life and work of the late Dr. Alfred Hudson" in *Dublin Journal of Medical Science* (1882), Vol. LXXIV, No. 127, pp.1-9. In the latter, footnote a on p.1 describes the gift to Dr. Hudson as from "his brother, Mr. Henry (sic) Hudson, of Chester". I am indebted to Mr R. Mills of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland for help concerning references to Dr Alfred Hudson.

38 For Joseph Fletcher (1817-1876), see *CYB*, 1877, pp.362-4. His father, Joseph Fletcher, D.D. (1784-1843), was first President and Theological Tutor at the Blackburn Independent Academy.

Jane (born 1807) was married to George Borwick, founder of the Baking Powder firm bearing his name although this drysalt was quite probably another invention of the West Bromwich chemist:³⁹ their children included Alfred, a Lloyd's Underwriter;⁴⁰ Sarah, the wife of Morris Hudson; Charlotte whose husband Arnold Thomas became a Gloucestershire Colliery Proprietor, magistrate and one of Robert Spear Hudson's executors; and Robert Hudson Borwick, who with his brother Joseph Cooksey Borwick succeeded their father in the family firm whilst he became in turn Sir Robert (knight in 1902, baronet in 1916) and the first Baron Borwick of Hawkshead (1922).⁴¹ Rebecca (born 1811) and Frances (born 1817) both married West Bromwich men, the former Joseph Cooksey, a Land Surveyor and Mine Agent, and the latter William Henry Phillips, a local grocer.⁴² The extended Hudson family from West Bromwich thus became a generation later spread across southern Britain from Gloucestershire to Essex whilst sons of Cyrus and Rebecca were respectively in America and South Africa: its members exhibited the range of professional and social success beloved of Victorian business people.

The immediate family of Robert Spear Hudson deserves further exploration, although appearing at times elusive, at others nationally recorded. In February 1854 and within Congregationalism, Robert Hudson married Mary Bell at the Crescent Chapel, Everton Brow, Liverpool: Mary was born in Chetwynd near Newport, Shropshire, where her father Samuel Bell, later described as an Agent, was in 1841 a farmer. Crescent's March Church Meeting, under John Kelly whose pastorate lasted forty-four years, heard the letter "transferring Mary Hudson to the church at West Bromwich", Revd. W. Creed being its Pastor.⁴³ Mary, the mother

39 M.M. Meanders, *Journey Down the Golden Mile - West Bromwich* (West Bromwich, 1991), p.14. George Borwick (1806-1889), later of Walthamstow, was born in Cartmel and died at Torquay where he was buried: before developing the Baking Powder business, he was the proprietor of the "Heath Academy for the Sons of Gentlemen" in West Bromwich.

40 Alfred Hudson Borwick's fourth son, Leonard Borwick (1868-1925), studied pianoforte in Frankfurt under Clara Schumann, was a soloist of international repute and is remembered through the prestigious Borwick Prize at the Royal School of Music. See *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 4 (London 2001), p.48; and H.P. Greene, "Leonard Borwick, Some Personal Reflections" in *Music & Letters* (1926), pp.17-24.

41 For Robert Hudson Borwick (1845-1936), see *The Times*, 29 January 1936. The manner of Lord Borwick's obtaining the title, one of David Lloyd George's alleged "sales" of such honours, was mentioned pejoratively in a Commons debate about proposals for reform of the House of Lords: see *Hansard*, 16 March 1999, Column 978.

42 William Henry Phillips and his eight younger siblings were all baptised by John Hudson of Mares Green between 1813 and 1834.

43 *Crescent Chapel, Church Meeting Minutes 1854-1866*: Lancashire Record Office, CULi/6/4. For John Kelly (1801-1876), see *CYB*, 1877, pp.384-7.

of two sons and three daughters, died in the 1860s:⁴⁴ Hudson then, in April 1868, married Emily Frances Gilroy in Donnybrook, Dublin, his second wife perhaps being sister to Mrs Alfred Hudson.⁴⁵

Mary Evangeline, Robert Hudson's eldest daughter born 1855, had by 1883 married Arthur Frederic Fynn and was in 1891 living in Falmouth with a house staff numbering seven.⁴⁶ The first son was [Robert] William Hudson, born 1856: a Cambridge graduate, he put his scientific studies to business use, first working with, and then succeeding, his father in the family firm whose active leadership he shared with its long-term principal manager Edward Pershouse.⁴⁷ William married Gerda Johnson at St Paul's Church, Penge, in 1886.⁴⁸ Samuel Bell Hudson, born 1857, died in West Bromwich of peritonitis aged 20, two years after his family's removal to Chester: he was perhaps a return visitor or may have commenced work there in the family firm. Both sons were educated until 1874 at the then still new Tettenhall College, the older for four years and his brother for six.⁴⁹ Twin daughters were born in 1859 and were educated in Christchurch, Hampshire, by their uncle, Joseph Fletcher, despite the supposed earlier closure of Fletcher's school:⁵⁰ in 1880, Annie Elizabeth married Walter Spencer, recently a Deputy Minor Canon of Chester Cathedral and now to become Vicar of Sapiston, Suffolk;⁵¹ a decade later, Emily Jane married John MacGillyCuddy, Barrister-at Law, the future owner of Glenflesk Castle, Killarney and the third son of The MacGillyCuddy of The Reeks, County Kerry.⁵² Chester had remained the home of

44 An erroneous IGI entry claims her death as in 1860 but she features in the 1861 Census: her death registration, like the burial records for Mayer's Green, has yet to be located.

45 Emily Hudson's background is confused: J. Little, *op. cit.*, and the *Anglo-Celt* for 1 May 1846, combine to make Peter Gilroy, M.D., of Meath the father-in-law of Dr. Hudson: an IGI entry names Emily's father as Peter Gilroy. Emily's 1881 Census entry claims her birthplace as Co. Meath, but those for 1871 and 1891 as Clones, Monaghan.

46 The record of this marriage has yet to be traced: Arthur Fynn was described on both the Birth (1885) and Marriage (1907) Certificates for his elder daughter Daphne as "Gentleman". Daphne Fynn married at St Martin-in-the-Fields, London in 1907 a perhaps unrelated Robert Bertram Hudson from a Kentish farming family.

47 Edward Pershouse was from West Bromwich and accompanied the 1875 expansion to Bank Hall.

48 The witnesses included Harold Steward Rathbone (1858-1929), founder of the Della Robbia Pottery, Birkenhead. Gerda Marian Johnson (c1858-1932) was Liverpool born and daughter of a Surveyor: Robert Hudson's reported address appears already to be Danesfield, for which see later.

49 I am indebted to Mr L.N. Chown for these Tettenhall College details.

50 The 1871 Census notes seven girl pupils: *CYB* 1877, p.363 states Fletcher's school closed in 1868.

51 For Walter Spencer (1849-1922), see e.g. *Crockford's Clerical Directory* 1921-1922, p.1413. Spencer's following ministry was in Coventry until 1889, after which he held no further church appointments.

52 Mary Evangeline Hudson was at school in Birkenhead in 1871 with two MacGillyCuddy sisters.

the two Emily Hudsons throughout the 1880s, when both names are found on the Northgate Church's subscription lists for the County Union, the Zenana Mission and the Dorcas Society. Hudson's widow maintained some contributions in 1897 but Congregational activity by this family may well have ceased before her death in Chester in July 1901, aged 89: she was buried from the local parish church.

As was intended, the Hudson business ultimately descended to (Robert) William Hudson, on the coming of age of his own first son. With no younger family interest in soap, William Hudson in 1908 now sold the firm for one million pounds to the ever-expanding Lever Brothers.

Before this however, William Hudson had already built three major residences: he represented the age of the *nouveaux riches*, those second or third generation manufacturers, merchants or extractors whose status demanded ever grander country and London houses, wherever were their factories or industrial bases.⁵³ In 1891, Edward Ould of the Liverpool architects Grayson & Ould planned for Hudson a large Elizabethan-style mansion on the Wirral at Bidston Court, a most notable Victorian essay in half-timbered design.⁵⁴ From 1891 to 1901, Hudson rebuilt Danesfield near Medmenham in Buckinghamshire in a confident Tudor Gothic at a time when his contemporaries' nearby houses were mostly Classical. Its architect was W.H. Romaine-Walker, whose work over a full half-century included additions and remodelling, of interiors and gardens as well as buildings, at the Tate Gallery, Westminster Cathedral, Chatsworth House and numerous country estates.⁵⁵ He again deviated from the Classical style by providing for Hudson an appropriate London residence; Stanhope House, Park Lane, was a "fanciful late Gothic mansion".⁵⁶

But Hudson's use of wealth was not simply self-indulgent. He may well have been the "socialist millionaire" or "Radical capitalist in Lancashire" who provided election and other financial support for Henry Hyde Champion, the early and at times maverick Socialist:⁵⁷ he certainly had contact with William Morris, the philosopher and designer, regarding both political ideas and artistic commissions; and his artistic connections included Conrad Dressler whose kiln at Medmenham was established with Hudson's support. Although the manner was rather different from that of his father, he significantly benefited others, during his Wirral years by financing the 1894 restoration of Bidston Mill, the first windmill in the country to be thus preserved; and when living ultimately in Monaco, by bearing the

53 J. M. Crook, *The Rise of the Nouveaux Riches* (London 1999), *passim*.

54 So Edward Hubbard, quoted in J.M. Robinson, *Guide to the Country Houses of the North West* (London 1988), p.10.

55 William Henry Romaine-Walker (1854-1940) was for five years articled to George Edmund Street.

56 This paragraph's architectural descriptions and assessment depend on J.M. Crook, *op cit.*, and N. Pevsner, *Buckinghamshire* (Harmondsworth 1960).

57 The Socialist connections mentioned here follow John Barnes, "Gentleman Crusader: Henry Hyde Champion in the Early Socialist Movement" in *History Workshop Journal* (2005), Vol. 60. No. 1, pp.116-138.

maintenance costs of a hospital in Cannes during the First War: he also gave £10,000 for scholarships for the children of his adopted principality.

Robert Spear Hudson, eponymous grandson of the founder, followed Eton and Oxford with a career first in diplomacy and then in politics: this latter, as Conservative M.P. successively for Whitehaven and Southport, brought government office in Agriculture and Fisheries, cabinet rank with the Second World War "Dig for Victory" campaign, and a Viscounty in 1952. His obituary in *The Times* ignored the Hudson firm, save to say that he came from a family "which had been enriched by the manufacture of soap".⁵⁸

John Hudson's vigorous Congregationalism was variously shared, extended and abandoned by his succeeding family. Whereas the denomination's manses sheltered three of Robert's siblings, either as minister or minister's wife, not one of his own children seems to have married within Nonconformity. His son William had shown some early Congregational commitment, laying memorial stones at High Street, West Bromwich in May 1878 and for Chester's Northgate Sunday Schools in 1880: he was then listed at least twice as subscribing to the CUCC, was co-representative with his father for the Cheshire Union at the NWEUC in 1882 and mirrored his father's wider concerns with aid to or attendance at special functions of the Chester City Mission and the Ebenezer Baptist Chapel. Nonetheless, he was very unlikely to have retained a similar spiritual home, if there were any, when he lived in Monaco: in any event, his marriage was within an Anglican setting. Cyrus and Robert Hudson chose for their sons a Congregational schooling at Silcoates and Tettenhall respectively, placing the family within the nineteenth-century Dissenting aspiration towards an educational and social achievement akin to but different from that of the established middle classes: later Hudsons and also Borwicks preferred more traditional routes for their sons' advancement rather more in keeping with their new social status.

Leaving aside the overt denominationalism of Robert Spear Hudson and his Chester household and that of his ministerial brothers-in-law and the Fletcher daughters, the wider family's continuing Congregational involvement or interest may have been left in their generation to two of his nephews. Alfred Borwick (1836-1897) was amongst new trustees appointed at Walthamstow in anticipation of planning for a new church, John Tarring's Marsh Street building being opened in 1871.⁵⁹ the family however was represented in membership there only until 1885. His sister Sarah's husband Morris, both son and grandson to Congregational ministers, maintained contact with his old school, Silcoates, where this Hudson's generosity included endowing prizes for both Scripture and Shakespeare: among his gifts of paintings were some by Charles March Gere, R.A., the stepson of a

58 For Robert William Hudson (1856-1938), see *The Times*, 16 June 1938; for Robert Spear Hudson (1886-1957), First Viscount Hudson of Pewsey, *The Times*, 4, 6, 7, 11 and 12 February 1957, and *O.D.N.B.*

59 *Vestiges No. 62*, Vestry House Museum Walthamstow (1965). I am indebted to Mrs Winifred Ellingham for help with various items of Walthamstow import.

Cooksey cousin. Correspondence with a headmaster found Hudson, shortly before his death, describing himself as religiously “not orthodox”, a reader of the *Hibbert Journal* and having a keen interest in modern Biblical scholarship. He and his wife maintained a household devotional life and here remained at least a residual Congregational connection.⁶⁰ Later family Obituary or Reference Book entries to Hudson descendents lack all mention of religious allegiance.

The Congregational life of Robert Spear Hudson reads like a catalogue of distributed aid: to church extension, maintenance, foundation and relief; for evangelism in even the difficult circumstances of North Wales or Ireland; in provision for the future. He displayed similar characteristics to some fellow-Congregationalists: Robert Spear would have recognised in the later man his own generosity towards all sorts and conditions of individuals and institutions, both within and beyond their native denomination; William Lever, less a chemist than a marketing businessman whose involvement in soap post-dated Hudson’s death, shared his committed, generous and practical Christianity of both ecclesiastical and ethical activity. Leverhulme’s extensive benefactions however, immeasurably enhanced by his successor Trustees, more particularly emphasised the social, communal and educational rather than Hudson’s denominational focus.⁶¹

A still unresolved Irish connection spans a full half-century. It starts when both Alfred and Cyrus studied at the University of Dublin, each then proceeding to Glasgow: the Dissenting disabilities were then still in force in England. Alfred’s distinguished Irish medical career, his own first and Robert’s second marriages to Irish brides and Irish husbands for Emily Jane and perhaps Mary Evangeline may all simply be coincidences rather than connected consequences: in any event, Robert Hudson not surprisingly supported the Irish Evangelical Society. A tangible memorial to those Irish links, and to his feeling for encouragement and reward, remains today in the medical scholarships in Dublin.

Robert Hudson’s environment, although surrounded by great wealth, was the first-generation, responsible world of the Nonconformist Conscience: alongside his friendships with Anglican Deans or establishment Dukes, he reportedly followed a simple style of living; in his semi-retirement, he pursued horticultural and agricultural interests in the grounds and farm of Bache Hall, and offered trees for the 1883 landscaping in front of the Northgate Church. His son William, however, followed the second-generation manufacturing or industrialist trend for style, and even continental residence: these successor families had moved away from their roots and from any previous concentration on self-sufficiency or production to become *rentiers*, no longer active residents within local communities. Robert’s Nonconformist identification with Gladstone’s Liberalism

60 I am grateful to Mr H. Smith, the Old Silcoatsians’ Association, for providing much useful information concerning the Hudsons’ Silcoates connection.

61 C. Binfield in D.J. Jeremy (1988), *op cit.*, p.131, notes the range of Lever’s Congregational benefactions and also that Lever himself never became the member of a Congregational church.

then passed through William's idealistic Socialism to a grandson's Conservatism, where success was rewarded with national honours: his nephew, Robert Hudson Borwick's peerage appeared to illustrate how more completely had the days of the Nonconformist Conscience passed from the wider Hudson family.

This intriguing story claims one home background in a West Bromwich manse: its numerous children and their various marriages, both within and on the borders of Congregationalism, produced an inventiveness in the fields of science, religion and philanthropy that brought major changes to personal and domestic life for millions in Britain and indeed across the world.

NIGEL LEMON

REVIEWS

The Apostolic Fathers: An Essential Guide. By Clayton N. Jefford. Edinburgh: Abingdon Press/Alban Books, 2006. £8.99. Pp. 133. ISBN 0-68734-204-X.

This is a short, readable and workmanlike introduction to those early Christian writings which are grouped together as the work of the Apostolic Fathers: *The Epistle of Barnabas*, *1 and 2 Clement*, *The Didache*, *The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch*, *The Epistle to Diognetus*, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *The Epistle of Polycarp* and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

These are enormously varied texts. *The Didache* reflects a form of Christianity which is close to Judaism; *Barnabas*, on the other hand, anticipates later anti-semitism. *1 Clement* and *Ignatius* argue strongly for the role of bishops. *The Letter to Diognetus* is a short tract, closer to later apologetic writing. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* and his epistle developed a tradition of martyrdom in which the martyr was revered as *type* of Christ. *The Shepherd* is unlike anything in the canon, and yet it was regarded as close to scripture, by Origen among others.

Clayton N. Jefford packs a good deal into a mere 133 pages. For each work he offers a likely context, a survey of connections to scripture, the implicit and explicit theological ideas to be found and the church structures which are assumed. He also considers how each contributes more generally to the patristic tradition.

These texts are not well known, which is a pity. *The Didache* was actually hailed in a radio programme last year as a new discovery which undermined the credibility of the New Testament! Of course *Da Vinci Code* revelations are hugely popular, but this media trumpeting did seem excessive. But what it shows all too clearly is that contemporary debates about Christianity are conducted on both sides by those who seem to lack informed historical imagination. Far too many Christians think that scripture is self-contained and somehow above history; that Chalcedonian Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity can be read from its pages by those who have a robust faith. The literature of the Apostolic Fathers, because it is unfamiliar, makes the reader realise how strange to us early Christianity is. It therefore, in a subtle way, makes us aware of how we might, through sheer over-familiarity, misread the scriptures. We know what they say, or so we think, but then, when we compare them with *Ignatius* or *Clement*, we find that perhaps they do not say quite what we thought they did.

The Church reflected in these various texts is not a unified body. There are struggles and disagreements about authority, about interpretation, about mission. There is evidence of real strife. *Ignatius* struggles against Docetism, *Hermas* is concerned with purity and sin, *1 Clement* looks at disorder in the Church of Corinth, which has learnt little, apparently, since Paul's visits several decades earlier. Clayton Jefford rightly makes the point that it is a little easier to understand the doctrinal and ecclesial controversies that shaped what we now call orthodoxy, by being acquainted with this literature.

We also begin to see something of what shaped the early Christian imagination. I have always found elements of this material moving and spiritually helpful, and my one problem with Clayton Jefford's introduction is that he seems not to appreciate the sheer poetry of some of this literature. Ignatius's plea to be allowed to "imitate the passion of my God" is a language of the heart which reveals more about the martyr motif in Christian spirituality than any historical treatise. Polycarp's heavenly voice urging him to "Be strong and play the man" is recalled by Hugh Latimer as he comforts Nicholas Ridley before their martyrdom in Oxford.

This is a book to have on the shelf and available for those beginning to read Church history, alongside the excellent Penguin Early Christian Writings which has the texts in readable and accessible English.

ANGELA TILBY

Our Sovereign Refuge: The Pastoral Theology of Theodore Beza. By Shawn D. Wright. Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004. Studies in Christian History and Thought. £24.99. Pp. xviii + 307. ISBN 1 84227 252 7.

In 1558, John Calvin invited a thirty-nine year old Greek tutor based at Lausanne to join him in the work of Reformation at Geneva. Thus began Theodore Beza's association with that city. He became lecturer in theology, Rector of the Academy and, indeed, he became Calvin's successor on the latter's death in 1563. To say that he is the neglected thinker of the Reformed tradition is, perhaps, to exaggerate. Yet he is better known among the Reformed of Europe in general and in his native France in particular than he is in the English-speaking world where, until recently, the primary text discussing his life was Henry Baird's biography, published in 1899, which in any case gave little prominence to his thought. Alongside this it must be confessed that Beza's work has long been dismissed because of a tendency towards the rationalistic, over-systematic and even scholastic. Such an argument emerged as early as the seventeenth century, though it became more entrenched in the twentieth century following Karl Barth's rediscovery and dynamic use of Calvin. There can be little doubt that Beza was a systematician, or for that matter that he gave prominence in his work both to metaphysical conceptualisation and to the authority of the patristic thinkers. Nevertheless, none of these constituted his primary concern which was to promote and assist the living of the faithful Christian life particularly in a period of intense testing and persecution. Shawn Wright's book, then, is much to be welcomed because in some small way it gives to Calvin's successor the prominence he deserves while also correcting misconceptions about Beza which have tended to dominate scholarly discussion about this third generation reformer.

Though packed full of detail and based on meticulous and careful reading of what is an extensive Bezan *corpus*, the main thesis of the book is straightforward. Beza's primary concern was to maintain the sovereignty of God. This was no mere scholastic concern, nor was Beza driven by a sense of the importance of doctrinal

orthodoxy (though this certainly was a concern of his). Rather, for Beza, this was the key to the Christian life. Thus his work is dominated by this one concern that God's sovereignty is a necessary axiom for salvation and for the assurance of salvation. For Beza, all people were destined either for heaven or hell and the role of the Christian was to stand firm in a life which was lived within the ongoing battle fought between God and Satan. This battle appeared to be all too real for Beza as he contemplated the plague which was ravaging Europe, the Catholic armies besieging Geneva, the Lutheran antagonism towards particular Reformed teaching, the precariousness of the Genevan Academy and the martyrdom of his fellow French Protestants at the hands of the Catholic establishment in that land. For Beza only a sovereign God could help, and in this way the doctrine of God's sovereignty was employed in order to comfort and assist struggling Christians.

Alongside demonstrating the pastoral nature of Beza's theology, Dr Wright goes to great lengths to refute two particular accusations levelled against Beza. The first is that he corrupted Calvin's doctrine through a scholastic method. Instead of this, Dr Wright avers, all Beza's work, whether systematic theology, polemical treatise or pastoral writing, was concerned with hearing God speak from the Bible. Beza was, then, no scholastic. Rather he was a humanist, keen to study the original sources, advanced in the use of persuasive rhetoric but grounded too in the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*. As such he was not the one who perverted Calvin's simple, biblical teaching through metaphysical speculation and an enforced theological system. Instead Beza was Calvin's natural successor in the task of expounding the scriptures in each generation.

The second accusation concerns Beza's teaching of predestination. Like his revered teacher and predecessor Calvin, Beza in fact rarely referred to this teaching and tended to do so mostly in his polemical works where he was responding to the way in which others had referred to it. For Beza, predestination was not an issue in itself. It possessed significance only in relation to the God whose sovereign will rules time and space.

Dr Wright is a sympathetic analyst. For him, the historian's primary responsibility is to understand the context from which the subject emerged rather than turn too easily to anachronistic, modern (and postmodern) criticisms of an age and logic which could not have known of contemporary models of debate. He commands a remarkable grasp of the Bezan corpus, and he is keen to let Beza's voice be heard. This leads to long (and occasionally tedious) quotations. Indeed, the whole book retains the feel of a doctoral dissertation. Nevertheless, it also retains a lucidity, and the reader who ploughs through it will reap rewards in understanding the third generation of Reformers and the inevitable transition from Reformation zeal to Reformed orthodoxy.

ROBERT POPE

Peace, Toleration and Decay: The Ecclesiology of Later Stuart Dissent. By Martin Sutherland. Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 2003. Studies in Evangelical History and Thought. £19.99. Pp. xxii + 215. ISBN 1-84227-752-0.

This volume is among the most recent in a rich and wide-ranging series of studies on evangelical history and thought published by the Paternoster Press. It extends chronologically within a broad spectrum from the early Protestant Reformation era down to the mid-twentieth century. Glancing at the list of works already published the series has produced stimulating studies on the background to and role of evangelicalism. This volume similarly follows the same theme and pattern but concentrates on the fortunes of late Stuart Nonconformity and their consequences. It aims to re-examine the structure of English Dissenting communities and the challenges they encountered, chiefly in the post-Restoration period, and places this new tradition in its line of development forward from the early Puritan tradition and evangelicalism.

The author provides closely-argued and well-structured examination of the role of Dissent, concentrating mainly on the career and achievements of John Howe, Presbyterian minister and Dissenting leader and author, who has not received the attention he deserves. Doubtless, he commanded a prominent place in the era in which Dissenting traditions were being threatened following the collapse of Puritan rule in 1660. The reasons for disunity and the decline of Dissent are examined, particularly in the early decades of the eighteenth century extending beyond the years leading to the Toleration Act (1689). Central to the discussion of declining fortunes is the career of John Howe. His involvement in Dissenting activity is both interesting and crucial, chiefly because he placed emphasis on "irenic ecclesiology" which had an impact on eighteenth-century Dissenting leaders.

The volume is divided into eight chapters, Howe's career and achievements being examined in the main body of the book. After discussing the foundations of the religious establishment in his age and the fortunes of Dissent before and after the Restoration, Sutherland examines his Dissenting aspirations against the background of his early days at Cambridge and Oxford. Influences upon him there were deep-seated, but his contact with Cambridge Platonists left no mark on his theology. His experiences as vicar of Great Torrington in Devon and as Household Chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, as well as his early correspondence with the celebrated Richard Baxter, confirmed Howe in his religious views and helped him to mature. He had endured the storms of the 1650s, and further tensions were to perplex him in the years following the Restoration. From 1662, the year when he was ejected by the Act of Uniformity, down to the 1670s he became prominent in English Nonconformist circles. His writings played a significant part in clarifying his beliefs following his appointment in 1671 as Chaplain to Lord Massereene in Antrim.

In chronological sequence, each chapter traces the fortunes of religious Dissent as interpreted chiefly in the life of John Howe, whose role was crucial in promoting Dissenting thought in the late seventeenth century. It was a period

which proved to be crucially important and damaging to English Dissent, a period when instability featured prominently in politics and religion. The first chapter sets the scene, concentrating on ecclesiology – defined in this volume as a study of the nature and purpose of the Christian Church – in the late Stuart era. Chapters 3 and 4 examine Howe’s early writings in an age, after the Restoration settlement, when different interpretations of theological cultures intensified and were reflected mainly in the immanence of God and the “visible” Church projected in Anglican theology, and the “invisible church” and a transcendental God identified with Dissenting sects. Both *The Blessedness of the Righteous* (1668) and *The Living Temple* (1675) set the background to his theological views. He advocated tolerance and comprehension, and later in his career he unsuccessfully attempted to unite Independents and Presbyterians.

The discussion then proceeds to examine Howe’s principal writings after his ejection in 1662 under the Act of Uniformity from his Torrington parish, as well as new approaches to invisibilist concepts based on tolerance and unity which were adopted by him during the Exclusion Crisis (1678-83). Then follows a discussion of John Locke’s views and of the impact of Richard Baxter on Howe’s thinking and on post-Revolution Dissenting thought in the 1690s. Howe was regarded by both as an “ecclesiological innovator orthodox in piety and doctrine”. The latter chapters draw strands together leading to an examination of the rift which widened between Dissenting sects and the Church – between the need for comprehension and the failure to achieve it. Howe stressed the role of individual conscience in religious matters at a time, in early eighteenth-century England, when debates occurred concerning models of religiosity in the visible and invisible church.

This study is a welcome addition to a series which stimulates the mind when considering aspects of religion as the bases of debate in the modern world. In the past, late seventeenth-century England has never attracted the attention of historians or theologians to the same extent as the more popular and arguably more dynamic earlier decades, but Sutherland places the Dissenting ethos, its problems and complexities in the forefront of religious development in the years before the fundamental changes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This volume is a positive contribution to the study of Puritanism and Dissent in one of the most central and challenging eras in their development. It was this Dissent, however, which, in due course, created a new radical force in the society and politics of modern British history.

J. GWYNFOR JONES

Authority and Order: John Wesley and his Preachers. By Adrian Burdon. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. £40.99. Pp. 124. ISBN 0-7546-5454-0.

Adrian Burdon writes as one of Mr Wesley’s Preachers at a time when the possibility of a closer relationship between the Methodist Church and the Church of England is again under active consideration. He is concerned that any possible

unity should not “be created by Methodism returning to the Church [of England] but by both coming together as equal partners in something new and distinctive”. To help both Anglicans and many others understand why and how Methodism got to where it is today, he seeks to explore the distinctive history of the Methodist Church through a consideration of the development of the ordained ministry under the authoritarian direction of its founding father, John Wesley.

Methodism is in the process of considering the incorporation of the historic episcopate into its structures. Related questions under review are the structure of ministry, particularly ordained, the nature of authority, and what constitutes good order. As a result, the author’s detailed study of John Wesley’s struggles within himself and with friends and foes concerning the need to appoint Assistants, their role as preachers rather than ministers of the sacrament, the nature of their ordination, and the source and execution of his authority over them, all have contemporary resonance if not also relevance.

For the author, “The image left by John Wesley, on the mind, is of a man driven by a vision. He was single-minded in the pursuit of the demands of that vision”. Wesley was obsessed with the social and spiritual needs of the unchurched masses of the eighteenth century and the failure of the Church of England to meet that need. He felt both called to challenge and revitalise the Church of England and to respond to that need himself. He argued that he had received an ordinary calling to be a Priest in the Church of England, but that he had also received an extraordinary calling to the work of an evangelist. As a result, Adrian Burdon argues that “Wesley never intended to create a church separate from the Church of England,” and that he “never acknowledged that he had stepped beyond the bounds of that Church”. But at the same time, nothing was permitted to stand in the way of his vision.

Of particular interest is the author’s exploration of Wesley’s understanding of episcopacy, which the latter asserted was based on historical precedents. Wesley argued that he acted in the capacity of the *scriptural episcopos* of the people called Methodists. With this as the guiding principle, the appointment and commissioning of Assistants, the nature of their role as preachers, and the developing pressure for them to exercise a sacramental ministry, are all thoroughly discussed. What emerges as the most prominent characteristic is Wesley’s pragmatism in responding to calls from newly-independent America, Scotland and Ireland for ministers of the Word and Sacrament. He was adamant that ordination by prayer and the laying on of hands must precede administering communion – but he contended that he was ordaining Methodist preachers not Anglican Presbyters. (Wesley strongly resisted all attempts by the growing Methodist Societies to become independent of the Church of England.) The discussion concludes with a detailed comparison of the text of the Book of Common Prayer and Wesley’s liturgy in order to decipher the nature of the early Methodist ordination service.

What becomes particularly clear in this book is John Wesley’s autocratic approach to authority and leadership. In many ways, Methodism today would regard itself as a democratic church with authority vested in the representative

bodies of Conference, Synod, Circuit Meeting and Church Council. Wesley would have had no truck with this. His Assistants related to him personally and they were left in no doubt as to how they were expected to respond to his controlling hand. His authority ultimately came from God, but whereas in the early days it had been communicated through the Anglican Rubric, Canons and Thirty-nine Articles, it later came from his special calling and evangelistic task. The call was to be tested by the fruits of the work. While Wesley met his preachers in Conference, it was not an opportunity for debate and discussion. They either accepted his authority or left his connexion. There was no middle way.

This book takes a clearly defined area of the life and work of the charismatic founder of the Methodist Church and explores it in a thorough, well-researched and readable way. It will help Methodists and non-Methodists alike to understand why some aspects of modern Methodism, which has its own distinctive characteristics, are as they are. I would, however, have welcomed more exploration of the "Implications for understanding the nature and practice of authority and order in modern Methodism...with particular reference to the covenant for unity between English Methodists and the Church of England". There are many similarities (as well as differences) between the world in which we live today and that of John Wesley and any guidance from the past on how we can "serve the present age" is certainly helpful.

PETER M. BRANT.

Dame Sarah's Legacy: A History of the Lady Hewley Trust. By Richard Potts. York: The Lady Hewley Trust, 2005. £7.99. Pp. 192. ISBN 978-0-9551588-0-3.

This is a full account to date of an important early eighteenth-century charity from which many generations of Dissenters have benefited. It is written by the honorary archivist of Westminster College, Cambridge, who has set the account within the religious history of the times and within the history of York where the Hewleys lived and where the charity is still administered.

Sarah, Lady Hewley, was the only daughter and heiress of Robert Woolrich, an Ipswich lawyer. She brought her father's wealth, mainly in North Yorkshire landed estates, to her marriage in 1649 to a York lawyer and sometime MP. She used it as a widow to build and endow almshouses for ten poor people in York and to endow a charity for "poor and godly preachers of Christ's Holy Gospel, their widows, poor places to encourage and promote the preaching of Christ's Holy Gospel, provide exhibitions to assist in the education...of young men designed for the ministry...[and] for the relief of godly persons in distress." Preference was to be given to those living in York, Yorkshire and the "Northern Counties" but not to the exclusion of others. The foundation trust deeds are dated 1705 and 1707.

Sir John Hewley owed his knighthood to his support for the restoration of King Charles II, but he had taken Parliament's side in the Civil War and he and his wife attended the ministry of Edward Bowles, one of four Presbyterian ministers appointed to York during the Commonwealth. The Hewleys hoped for a

comprehensive church and were gravely disappointed when the King reneged on his promise of religious toleration. They took an ejected minister, Thomas Coulton, as their chaplain and built a private chapel in the loft of their house. They gave material support to Dissenters in the penal years before toleration and Sir John was active during the Exclusion Parliaments which sought to bar the Catholic Duke of York from the succession. Yet they maintained good relations with their Anglican neighbours and both are buried in the chancel of St Saviourgate church, not in the burial ground of the nearby Presbyterian church which they built after 1688. They are good examples of those Presbyterians who never quite gave up on the hope of a broader Church of England and meanwhile openly supported those excluded for conscience sake. This is one of the most revealing and interesting parts of the book.

It is matched much later by the reminder that in the early nineteenth century the Hewley Trust became the original focus of the legal challenge to Unitarian control of certain charitable assets claimed by orthodox Nonconformists. The eventual success of George Hadfield MP and others in dislodging the Unitarian trustees of the Lady Hewley charity led to the wider contest over the ownership of older places of worship where the beliefs of the founders and the present worshippers appeared to be at variance, a dispute finally resolved by the Dissenters' Chapels Act of 1844. The long drawn out legal argument over the Lady Hewley Trust, which was in chancery from 1830 to 1849 in consequence, is well summarized. From about 1760, the Trust had fallen into the hands of a small group of inter-related Unitarian families. Quite how this happened is unclear but it led to arguments over the failure to elect Independents and what was seen as over generous financial support for the Unitarian minister of the St Saviourgate chapel and the exclusive support for Unitarian ministerial students. From 1849, the trustees have been Baptist, Congregational, Presbyterian and (now) URC.

The chapter on the history of the development of the almshouses is perhaps of less general interest, but railway travellers may like to remember when they pass through the fine portico of York railway station that it is built on the original site of the Lady Hewley almshouses. They were rebuilt (appropriately) in St Saviourgate, suffering subsidence in time from Roman and medieval drains. The chapter on the landed estates is again mainly of local interest, but is a reminder that charities drawing income from land on the whole prospered more than those (like the Coward Trust) whose founders put their faith in Bank of England stock. The Hewley Trust benefited especially from the Eston estate, which provided much of the iron ore on which Middlesborough's prosperity was built and some of the land on which the growing town's population was housed.

The concluding chapter offers a broad distinction of the policies followed in making grants over the years. Just how did one safely ship small sums of money around even the northern counties in the eighteenth century (though by 1715 beneficiaries as far away as Lewes and Wisbech were being reached)? And how were the deserving discovered and chosen? Simple statements of need became sophisticated claim forms only from 1880, but ministers not doing their duty, say, were always liable to be struck of the list. Distress in the cotton districts in the

1860s led to additional support. “Godly persons in distress” included women and women ministerial candidates’ claims were admitted from 1928 and women ministers’ from 1946. “Poor places” from 1910 became churches without a settled minister. Presbyterian ministers in rural areas from the 1930s received a “special driving grant” – could other ministers not afford cars? – and all beneficiaries got £1 extra in 1945 to celebrate Victory. The “Northern Counties” were extended to Derbyshire and Cheshire after 1849, and claims from elsewhere were not excluded but taken last. An appendix shows payments in the various categories by decade – nearly £1m was given out in total between 1991 and 2000, for example – though this exceptionally large amount and other marked variations between decades and categories are not explained. It is staggering to learn that £3m has been distributed in the three hundred years since the charity began.

The book is well illustrated and the clarity of the writing and careful referencing are matched by good design and presentation. Its modest cost is surprising but members of the society, and of other religious history societies, can obtain it for even less (£6.99) by writing to Mrs Margaret Thompson at Westminster College, Cambridge, CB3 0AA.

JOHN HANDBY THOMPSON

Baptism, Church and Society in Modern Britain: From the Evangelical Revival to “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry”. By David M. Thompson. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2005. Studies in Christian History and Thought. £19.99. Pp. xvi + 203. ISBN 1 84227 393 0.

This study on the continuities and changes in the theology of baptism in the various British denominations started life as the Hulsean Lectures in 1983-84, and those of us who were not able to hear them as lectures can be very grateful that a printed and updated version is now available.

The author begins by examining both the theology and practice of baptism in the eighteenth century, and this breadth of approach, taking seriously not only what theologians believed and thought they were teaching about baptism, but also what people in practice were thinking and doing, is characteristic of the whole discussion. A parallel chapter towards the end of the book explicitly presents a similar examination of the practice of baptism in various communities in the twentieth century, showing both how the changing theologies, which are discussed in detail, and the continuing affective reaction to baptism take different shapes and also show marked continuities. It is the mark of a good communicator that very complex and detailed material can be presented without the main theme being lost, and without the reader getting confused by the vast quantity of material. Dr Thompson manages to lead us through some detailed examination of texts and of at times heated arguments, without ever losing us on the way, and without making too many assumptions about the readers’ prior knowledge.

It is a particular delight to see that the discussion of Britain is held to include the Christian communities of Scotland and Ireland in their own distinctiveness,

though I was left wondering if the marked lack of discussion of Wales in comparison was because there was not as much distinctive about the Welsh context, or if such material as there is is only available in Welsh.

The various Christian communities are sympathetically discussed, and the variety of positions within both paedobaptist and believer baptist traditions are explored. The ways in which arguments about the nature of baptism take different shapes in these contexts is made clear, and it is especially helpful that writers from within the traditions, as well as commentators from outside traditions, are used to explore the various positions which emerged.

As an exercise in clear, detailed and non-confusing history, this is masterly. But it goes further than that. It is also a helpful instruction in the actual issues rather than the ones that are often assumed to be central to the discussion about the nature and practice of the rite of baptism. By examining the changing practice, the writer leads us carefully through what baptism means to people, not just to the theologies that get attached to it. In showing that the wider social context, as well as changing perceptions of the nature of individuality, have their impact in the way people think about and practice baptism, Dr Thompson reminds us that a church practice does not take place in the study, but in the real lives of men, women and children as they work at making sense of faith in their daily world.

In his final chapter, which deals in particular with *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, he ends with a plea, well substantiated by the argument he has presented, that far from being a cause of divisions, we should be able to find theologies and practices of baptism that will bring the church together for worship and mission. For this, and the indications of such a way forward that the discussion presents, as much as for the history itself, this is a book to value.

RUTH GOULDBOURNE

These Hundred Years: A History of Christ Well - Manselton United Reformed Church, 1906-2006. By Robert Pope. Swansea: Christ Well, 2006. £5.00. Pp. 112. ISBN 1-90486-40-1. Available from Christ Well, 124-136 Manselton Road, Swansea, SA5 8PW, £6.00 including p. & p.

By any token, the past hundred years have been significant in the history of the nation and the world, and the Congregational/United Reformed Church in Manselton, Swansea, has existed throughout that century. Robert Pope, with characteristic clarity and objectivity, has presented the story of the church carefully integrated within the wider context. Not surprisingly for a Church historian, he has also set his story in the context of the longer and wider history of the Church, both United Reformed and ecumenically. Here is the account of a dedicated people, clearly seen to be seeking to witness to the Gospel of Christ with relevance in the varied contexts in which it has been placed at every stage of its life – and, at least from the human point of view, being seemingly quite successful in doing that.

In Congregational/United Reformed Church terms this has always been a large

congregation – it began with a membership of 208 and as late as 1972 touched 400 – and even though its statistics reflect the general decline in church membership in recent decades, it still records 113 members today. Particularly significant is the period 1989-1998 when, courageously deciding to demolish its decaying buildings completely and rebuild, the church lived “without walls” for nine years, discovering new ways of being church during that period. Tables of ministers, officers, world development projects and statistics add to the value of the book, as do many well-chosen photographs – though it might have been more helpful if some of these had been dated so that the reader might see where they fitted into the narrative. As always Dr. Pope’s style is lucid and readable. His well-researched book deserves to be read more widely than by the members of the church within which he himself was brought up, came to faith and discovered his ministerial vocation.

C. KEITH FORECAST

The Theology of the Christian Life in J. I. Packer’s Thought: Theological Anthropology, Theological Method, and the Doctrine of Sanctification. By Don J. Payne. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2006. Studies in Evangelical History and Thought. £24.99. Pp. xix + 321. ISBN 1-84227-397-3.

James Packer is rightly regarded as one of the most influential writers of evangelical thought during the later twentieth century. Both as a teacher and writer he has done much to shape today’s evangelical Christianity, especially in the United States, where his twin emphases of giving priority to Scripture and godliness have helped draw together two sides of an evangelical divide. For him theology and godliness stand together, though he makes clear that experience of the Spirit must be validated by Scripture and in the outworking of a person’s life. Theology, to be pastorally relevant, needs to take into account the doctrine of Christian experience. Packer has done much to popularise the Reformed or Puritan position, and he in turn has been much influenced by John Calvin, John Owen and Richard Baxter. By 1997 over three million copies of his books had been sold, from the book that made his name in evangelical circles, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (1958) to the extremely popular *Knowing God* (1973), and to the recently published four volume collection of his shorter writings.

In this closely argued book, Don J. Payne examines Packer’s theology critically, yet always with respect for one whose contribution to Christian life and theology has been substantial. He argues that assumptions about the Christian life “are directly and profoundly shaped by other areas of theology”, in particular by theological anthropology and theological method (or hermeneutics). As Payne points out, Packer’s school of evangelicalism has reacted against those “who appealed to anthropology in their move away from the ‘fundamentals’ of the Christian faith since the Enlightenment”. Consequently, he suggests that the

formative influence of theological anthropology on piety may not be recognised by those who embrace an evangelical piety. Accordingly, Payne subjects Packer's doctrine of sanctification to a thorough investigation in the light of these two fields and, not surprisingly, he reveals a number of inconsistencies and tensions between his rationalism and his experimentalism. I note a number of these tensions.

Packer's understanding of piety is that it is achieved through God's grace but involves a continuous battle against indwelling sin and is marked by frustration, rather than being brought to an end through a conscious reliance on the Holy Spirit. This, he suggests, may be Packer's reaction against those holiness or sanctification teachings expounded by the Keswick and other similar movements. As Payne points out, this piety seems more a "grim endeavour" than seeing God's grace as a vibrant and liberating force. This Payne contrasts with Packer's doctrine of creation that he suggests is world affirming.

In his study of Packer's theological anthropology, Payne studies the *imago Dei* in particular and concludes that, for Packer, human beings are able to know God because we are thinking, feeling, relating, loving beings, just as God is Himself. Yet, on the other hand, Packer sees humanity as corrupted by sin, and consequently the human will needs to be renewed or liberated, but this depends (according to Packer) upon the illumination of the mind. Payne wonders what implication this has for people of impaired faculties. If theological anthropology speaks of Christ as representing perfect humanity through his Incarnation, Packer has a utilitarian view of this, seeing the Incarnation as a means to the end for an efficacious forensic atonement, and suggesting that Christ does not touch the fallen human experience directly. He further notes that Packer hardly acknowledges the role of Jesus Christ for the epistemological process of knowing God. Payne also suggests that Packer's approach to the Scriptural text "poses a hermeneutical dualism in which the Word of God is theoretically divisible from the effect that seems inherent to its nature as the Word of God". His final concern is that Packer's individualistic and rationalistic theology, with its Puritan/Princeton emphasis, does not address those epistemological issues that have been raised in a post-modern world.

Payne's argument is gracious yet challenging, but it is derived from a study of Packer's numerous writings rather than from a theological *magnum opus* that Packer has unfortunately never written. While he notes Packer's claim that his theology has not changed over the years, he notes that in his later writings he has taken on board the challenges and the necessity of hermeneutics. One rather hopes that Packer might respond with that *magnum opus* that has long been desired.

Payne's book is not easy to read, but it is a book that studies the theological writings and method of one of the most influential Christian writers of our time, to whom several generations of Christians are indebted. Furthermore, it is a book that demonstrates the wider but often unseen influence of theological anthropology and hermeneutics on theology itself.

ROGER L. BROWN