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**THE
CONGREGATIONAL
HISTORY
SOCIETY
MAGAZINE**

Volume 7 No 1 Spring 2013

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EDITORIAL

This issue of our magazine takes the reader to Cheltenham, Hampshire and Scotland. We welcome to our magazine David Aldred with his study of the notable 19th century minister, Andrew Morton Brown, whose successor in Cheltenham is our present CHS secretary. The indefatigable Roger Ottewill returns with his insights into Congregational young people in Edwardian Hampshire. The equally tireless Willie MacNaughton offers his personal excursion into the nature of Congregationalism, examining its principles, as an historian must do, through the insights and experience of the churches and people he knows best, in this instance in Scottish Congregationalism.

NEWS AND VIEWS

David Livingstone

The 200th anniversary of the birth of David Livingstone, the explorer and Congregationalist, falls on 19 March 2013. This missionary, physician and anti-slavery campaigner grew up in a Lanarkshire tenement and rose to become a standard bearer for missionary endeavour and enlightened Christian witness to the Victorian world. Blantyre Congregational Church is his spiritual home still.

From the age of ten, Livingstone worked fourteen hours a day, in the cotton works. He had a great desire to learn, and followed this work with two hours of school. He studied medicine at Andersons College (now Strathclyde University), before becoming a missionary with the London Missionary Society.

Livingstone spent 30 years in Africa, and at his death in 1873, at Chitambo's village, in modern Zambia, he had journeyed over 46,000km, mostly walking. His reputation has suffered recently by association with ideas of empire, although he did not support the colonisation of Africa. He remains a hero as a Christian and humanitarian in those parts of Africa which he visited.

Cheshunt Collection

We suspect that some readers may have not seen the correspondence about the sale of items from the collection associated with Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, in the care of the Cheshunt Foundation in Cambridge. A group of six distinguished scholars wrote to the *Times Literary Supplement* to express their concerns. What follows is their original letter which appeared on January 25th,

2013, and extracts from the ensuing correspondence. The letter to the *TLS* is here included:

Sir,—We are anxious about the current status and future of a number of important books forming part of the Cheshunt College collection held at Westminster College, Cambridge. The nucleus of this important historic library was formed by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, among the most prominent of eighteenth-century English evangelicals, and one of the few women to have instituted a new branch of the Christian Church. Lady Huntingdon's personal collection and the books belonging to her college at Trevecka, Breconshire, founded in 1768, were transferred to the library of Cheshunt College, Hertfordshire, the successor to her foundation, in 1792, as was the library of Newport Pagnell Academy in 1850. In 1967 Cheshunt College was amalgamated with Westminster College, Cambridge, and the Cheshunt books and manuscripts were housed there.

The 2012 accounts of the Cheshunt Foundation state that the archive of books and manuscripts "is preserved for its educational value and through reasonable public access to them, as a contribution to the nation's culture, education and social history". The books brought together in 1850 included an important collection of theological works from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, many of a Calvinist persuasion, as well as early editions of works such as Newton's *Principia* and *Optice*. A large number of the books have the bookplate and/or stamp of Cheshunt College, almost 300 have Lady Huntingdon's own bookplate, and many others have been identified as Newport Pagnell books. Some have donation inscriptions of major authors such as Isaac Watts, and others have ownership inscriptions—for example of William Bull, tutor at Newport Pagnell for over thirty years.

In March and April 2012, a large number of these books began appearing in the catalogues of antiquarian booksellers such as Alex and Emily Fotheringham, Blackwell's, Unsworths and Gage Postal Books, and in G. David's bookshop in Cambridge. We were alerted to this fact by people who had seen them or bought them; some are still being advertised online. Examples include Melancthon's *Epistolae* of 1565 with Gabriel Harvey's notes; a Junius/Tremellius Latin bible of 1630; Lady Huntingdon's copy of Bunyan's *Works* of 1767 prefaced by George Whitefield, with annotations by Trevecka students; the first edition of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, donated in 1824 to Cheshunt by James Arundell, one of the trustees.

Neither the Historic Libraries Forum nor the Rare Books and Special Collections, Group of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) were consulted about the sales; CILIP's advice on book disposal was not followed; no major research libraries were approached, not even Cambridge University Library. We wrote to the Director of the Cheshunt Foundation, Dr Janet Tollington, in August, 2012, with a number of questions, and received an evasive and unsatisfactory answer in October; we wrote again in November, and received no reply. We have been unable to obtain a list from Dr Tollington of the books offered for sale or sold, though we have pieced much of the information together from catalogues. The Cheshunt Foundation's accounts for 2012 state that the sales have realized £65,958 and that "more book sale proceeds in 2013 are expected". We have since learned that further books were

sent for sale in December. Dr Tollington, to whom we sent a copy of an earlier version of this letter, has informed us that no further sales are intended, but is still unable or unwilling to provide a list of books sold.

These books have been dispersed in a highly irresponsible manner. The Cheshunt Foundation Governors have destroyed the integrity of a unique collection, apparently without understanding or properly recording what they have done.

Isabel Rivers. School of English and Drama, Queen Mary, University of London.

Clive D Field. School of History and Cultures, University of Birmingham.

Katie Flanagan. Special Collections, Brunel University Library, Uxbridge.

Diarmaid N J Macculloch. St Cross College, Oxford.

Clyde Binfield, Sheffield.

Nicholas Barker, London.

Clive Field also posted the following comments on the **JISC Religious Archives Group** webpage.

It is understood that during the Foundation's financial year ending 30 June 2012, its Governors resolved to sell the historic books and to convert them into income-bearing investments, the income from which is to be used to support the future cost of the Director of the Foundation, which is devoted to theological education for ministry.

This decision only entered the formal public record when the Foundation's 2011–12 report and accounts were filed with the Charity Commission on 30 Oct 2012.

However, the sale of antiquarian books from the Cheshunt collection started no later than March 2012, via the book trade and involving multiple dealers. A consignment of books to the trade occurred as late as December 2012. Many titles are still being offered for sale, including the Cheshunt copy of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, priced £97,500.

Many of the works are of the highest importance in terms of provenance and value, and sometimes not held in Cambridge University Library or other major UK research libraries.

Those research libraries and other interested and knowledgeable parties appear not to have been consulted about the sale, nor, seemingly, did the Foundation seek to follow best practice guidelines for the disposal of heritage assets by charitable organizations.

The Foundation has other heritage assets besides antiquarian books. It has already sold off certain items of antique furniture. However, according to the 2011–12 annual report, the Governors 'have determined that the paintings and archives should be kept as part of the charity legacy'. The archives are of supreme importance, including the archives of Cheshunt College and papers of the Countess of Huntingdon.

On the other hand, the official description of the 'Cheshunt College Archive'—at <http://www.westminster.cam.ac.uk/archives/collections-at-westminster.html>—also makes it clear that it includes some of the Countess's personal books. Since some of these appear to have been sold, it cannot be

certain that the Governors have fully adhered to their stated policy of protecting the 'archives'.

A reply from the Governors of the Cheshunt Foundation was posted on the same website in February.

In 2012, the Cheshunt Foundation sold one consignment of selected antiquarian books. We believe that this was done responsibly and properly. The Cheshunt Governors considered it necessary to sell some of its heritage assets, including some books, so that they might better fulfil all the objects of the charity. There was a need to increase capital investments in order to provide sufficient annual income to sustain the ongoing work of the charity.

The Governors took a decision in principle at their meeting on 15th September 2009 and confirmed the decision to proceed with the sale of selected books on 15th September 2011.

They then took expert advice about which books might be made available for sale and those which should be kept. Prof Stephen Orchard advised the Governors throughout this process. The Governors engaged a respected antiquarian bookseller who had acted on behalf of a number of theological colleges and of the Cheshunt Foundation in the past. His attempts to attract interest in the books from certain potential purchasers, including Cambridge University Library, met with no success.

Sadly the bookseller, acting for the Cheshunt Foundation, died before completing the work. The books that remained in his possession were transferred to another bookseller in November 2012. Because of this circumstance, what was a single (and one-off) sale of selected books has been misinterpreted as a series of sales.

The Governors wish to make it clear that no books from the personal library of the Countess of Huntingdon, nor any parts of her archive, have been sold. That collection remains intact and will continue to be so. The 1767 copy of Bunyan's *Works* that has been sold was not the personal copy of the Countess, it did not form part of her personal library.

The Governors and Director have a list of the books sold and are happy for that to be consulted by anyone who wishes to visit the offices of the Foundation for that purpose.

In February five of the six **original correspondents responded**, disputing almost all the facts as presented by the Governors.

In a number of material respects, neither that statement, nor a further statement which we have since received, fully accords with the facts which we have uncovered.

We have gone to very considerable lengths to ascertain, from authoritative sources, what has happened in the matter of the disposal of antiquarian books by the Cheshunt Foundation.

Since the detail is important, we are attaching to this message the letter which we have recently sent to the Foundation's Director.

While we understand the economic challenges which many academic and theological organizations, whether charitable or not, are facing, and that it may

occasionally be necessary to contemplate some disposal of heritage assets, such disposals need to be handled responsibly, taking account of inherited obligations, best professional practice, and a clearly articulated collection development strategy for the library or archive concerned. In our opinion, none of these criteria have been met by the Cheshunt Foundation.

Dr Clive Field OBE
Professor Isabel Rivers
Rev Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch Kt
Professor Clyde Binfield OBE
Nicolas Barker OBE

Their lengthy and detailed letter to Dr Tollington is attached to the online mailing and again in February the Governors and Director of the Cheshunt Foundation replied to this, reiterating that none of the books sold came from the Countess of Huntington's personal library and archive. They suggest that some confusion about the origin of these books may have arisen because sometimes her personal book plate appears on books which were not actually hers. Again they state that the Countess's personal library and archive are and will remain intact.

The CHS editor considers that clearly the dispersal of the rare books, associated with historic dissent, requires the utmost sensitivity. What is evident is that many, from within and without present day dissent, have a serious interest and should be consulted before decisions are made.

ANDREW MORTON BROWN OF CHELTENHAM AND A WELSH CONNECTION

Andrew Morton Brown, minister of Highbury Congregational Church, Cheltenham and chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1854, has been sadly neglected by the town's historians.¹ A chance reference in volume two of Thomas Rees and John Thomas' *History of the Welsh Independents* (1872) has provided an opportunity to begin to correct this deficiency. The story unfolds:

In April 1859 Barham Chapel (in Beaufort near Ebbw Vale) was opened by Dr Morton Brown of Cheltenham. As the service drew to its conclusion and a collection was taken, an elderly gentleman standing in the vestibule beckoned to one of the collectors, whereupon he produced twenty five sovereigns from each pocket. This moved the collector to tears but on receiving the collection from the pulpit, Dr Morton Brown told the assembled packed congregation not to worry as he explained that the gift had come from George Freeman, 'a rich gentleman' who was a member of his Highbury church congregation. He had followed his minister in secret to the opening and giving generously because 'he likes to do exceptional things like this'.²

Here was a challenge! Why had a Congregational minister from fashionable Cheltenham played such an important rôle in the opening of a chapel in industrial south Wales and why had an elderly member of his congregation followed him? The driving force behind the new chapel was Thomas Rees, a giant of 19th century Welsh nonconformity, especially among the Welsh Independents, in whose biography the passage appeared. Thus began an investigation into these three players in an attempt to understand how and why this little scene had unfolded in a chapel in industrial north Monmouthshire in

¹ This article would not have been written without the assistance of a number of people to whom I give my thanks: John Dixon of Tewkesbury Local History Society, Elaine and Geoff North and Jill Waller of Cheltenham Local History Society, Janet Karn of Tredegar Local Studies Library, Dr Richard Cleaves of Highbury, Richard Watkins of Libanus URC, Ebbw Vale, and the staff at Cheltenham Local Studies Library. This is a revised version of an article which first appeared in the Cheltenham Local History Society's *Journal* 28 (2012).

'Contem Ignotus' *The Golden Decade of a Favoured Town 1843-53* (1884) seemed to set a trend, with 59 pages on the (in)famous Anglican Francis Close, perpetual curate of St Mary's parish church, and six lines on Andrew Morton Brown. G Hart *A History of Cheltenham* (Leicester 1965) has four references. A Bell *Pleasure Town* (Chalfont St Giles 1981) has a chapter on the Wilkinson affair (see below). More recent histories of the town generally lack references to him.

² The story is based on J Thomas *Cofiant Y Parch. T. Rees D.D. Abertawy* [A Biography of the Rev T Rees DD, Swansea] (Dolgellau 1888) 195.

the middle of the 19th century, with the key role being taken by a minister from Cheltenham. The reasons for building the chapel provide a starting point.

Religious Growth in Industrial South-East Wales

As incomers from other parts of Wales and further afield flocked to the heads of the Monmouthshire and Glamorgan valleys from the end of the 18th century, Baptists, Calvinistic Methodists, Independents and Wesleyans competed for members, offering them an alternative way of life to that other, pre-industrial, world of tavern and beer shop, cockfighting and prize fighting. They had some success for in the 1851 religious census the number of attendances on census Sunday (30 March) was 65% of the total population in industrial areas of Monmouthshire, with approximately 75% of the attendances being in chapels.³ Although this figure was much lower than in some rural areas of Wales, where attendances were well over 100% (some people went more than once during the day), they were far higher than equivalent industrial areas in England, where the figure was nearer 10%. Wales was characterised as a nation of chapel goers.

Chapels were springing up largely through the initiatives of the people themselves, particularly those migrating from rural Wales, for the Anglican Church could not respond so quickly to these challenges, being hindered by its status as the established church. Funds to build a chapel and pay its minister came from the chapel members, despite these projects keeping chapels in debt for years and diverting income from family needs, in order to support a wider community of like-minded individuals. Then, from the middle years of the nineteenth century another factor came into the equation—the spread of the English language, either by increasing immigration from across Offa's Dyke and the Irish Sea or by parents failing to pass on the Welsh language to their offspring. If Welsh nonconformity was to survive the onslaught, it had to address this language change.⁴ Into this changing picture, enter the Revd Dr Thomas Rees, the first of the three players in the story, with his mission to save the souls of English speakers, especially in industrial south east Wales.

Thomas Rees (1815–85)

Thomas Rees was born in Llanfynydd in Carmarthenshire and was almost entirely self-taught. He endured only three months schooling, being described as 'slow, clumsy and lazy'. Then he tried his hand at basketmaking, learning from his grandfather, but in the religious revival of 1828 he promised his life to his

3 E T Davies *Religion in the Industrial Revolution in South Wales* (Cardiff 1965) 36.

4 S R Williams *Oes y Byd i'r Iaith Gymraeg: Y Gymraeg yn ardal ddiwydiannol Sir Fynwy yn y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg* [The Everlasting Welsh Language: Welsh in industrial Monmouthshire in the nineteenth century] (Cardiff 1992) 71.

Lord Jesus.⁵ Four years later he began preaching around south west Wales in the traditional way, travelling as an itinerant preacher relying solely on the hospitality of the faithful. In 1835 he became part of that general movement from rural to industrial area, moving to Aberdare to work as a collier, but his health soon failed and then he variously ran a short-lived school, was ordained a minister with the Welsh Independents in 1836, serving as a pastor for a short time in Merthyr, before opening a shop in Aberbargoed in the Rhymni Valley in 1838. All this time he was learning and improving his ability in English, but he was obviously not destined to be a shopkeeper, for he spent a short time in prison for debt as his venture failed. In 1840 he became pastor to a Welsh Independent chapel in Aberdare; two years later he moved to a similar chapel in Llanelli, and in 1849 he became minister of Carmel Chapel in Beaufort, just north of Ebbw Vale.⁶ It is here we can now pick up the Barham Chapel story.

The Building of Barham Chapel

In the same year as he arrived, a cholera epidemic raged along the heads of the valleys. On the one hand this led to the membership of Carmel soaring to 520; 210 being made members on one day in October!⁷ On the other hand, Thomas was also struck down and, as he recovered, he vowed to devote his life to spreading the gospel, 'Everyone is immortal till his work is done', he declared.⁸ Worried that the Welsh Independents were not offering the means of grace to local monoglot English speakers, he began to hold meetings in the hall behind the Refiners Arms in Beaufort, where, incidentally, Carmel Chapel had started fifty years earlier. When he felt that the worshippers needed their own chapel, Thomas adopted the method he had seen in practice in Llanelli in 1839 and which had become the norm for establishing new English congregations; the nucleus was provided by a small group of members moving out from the Welsh chapel.⁹ Ironically this often weakened the mother chapel as it was usually the more aware, affluent and educated members who moved, wishing to improve themselves by entering fully the world of English, now becoming a global language with the expanding British Empire.

The ultimate success of such moves could not just be based on the already stretched finances of the Welsh congregations and so another factor began to

5 J Thomas *Cofiant T Rees* 17.

6 *Welsh Biography Online* (<http://wbo.llgc.org.uk>).

7 T Rees and J Thomas *Hanes Eglwysi Annibynnol Cymru* [A History of Welsh Independent Churches] Vol 1 (Liverpool 1871) 155.

8 J Thomas *Cofiant T Rees* 185–86.

9 A H Williams 'Y Dr Thomas Rees a'r achosion Seisnig' ['Dr Thomas Rees and the English causes'] *Y Cofiadur* [The Recorder (the Journal of the Welsh Independent History Society)] Vol 40 (1975) 3–4 (<http://www.welshjournals.llgc.org.uk>).

appear—the need for financial backing from wealthy supporters in England. It also soon became apparent that the need to build English language chapels was so great that individual initiatives were not enough—a properly-funded movement was urgently needed. This was becoming all the more pressing, as Thomas Rees feared that unless the Welsh Independents took up that challenge, in sixty years' time they would have disappeared, squeezed out by the other denominations, including the England-based Primitive Methodists who were spreading rapidly in the south Wales valleys.¹⁰ As a result he played a key role in organising a meeting in February 1854 at Carmel, which led to the setting up of a local branch of the Congregational Home Missions' Society for Welsh and English churches in Monmouthshire.¹¹ He even had to fight anti-Welsh prejudice, as many in the English-based society remained sceptical fearing 'the overheated zeal for the Welsh language'.¹² On the other hand Thomas Rees and his supporters took the view that in 'those districts where the Welsh language has been supplanted by the English tongue, the inhabitants have absolutely degenerated in body and mind and religion' and thus it was his mission to preserve God-fearing Welsh attitudes and save souls, if not the language.¹³

From its outset this initiative relied heavily on funding from wealthy English Congregationalists: WD and HO Wills, the Bristol tobacco merchants, Samuel Morley of Nottingham, 'The Philanthropic Merchant' and greatest wool manufacturer of his age, John Crossley, the Halifax carpet manufacturer, who were all bracketed in Thomas Rees's eyes with George Freeman of Cheltenham. Another Englishman, Thomas Thompson, once of Bath but then living near Chepstow, promised £100 for two years and was appointed treasurer of the society. Four chapels in south Wales, including Barham Chapel with its school room, were built before the scheme was replaced by a larger scheme in 1860.¹⁴ Barham cost £1200, mostly collected by Thomas Rees himself; the chapel taking its name from Thomas Thompson's mother-in-law, Lady Barham, another English

10. Ibid 4. Within a mile of Carmel the following chapels had already been opened: Bethesda Welsh Calvinistic Methodist (1818–1986), Ebenezer Primitive Methodist (1825–1976), Bethel English Wesleyan (1832–present), Soar Welsh Baptist (1851– now the Church on the Rise [since 2005, see <http://churchontherise.org.uk>]). St David's Anglican church opened only in 1892. (K Thomas 'A Rash of Chapels' in the *Newsletter of Capel: The Chapels' Heritage Society* 14 [August 1990] np [<http://www.capeli.org.uk>]).

11. A H Williams 'Y Dr Thomas Rees' 6.

12. Ibid 14.

13. Quotation by Dr E P Jones addressing a conference of harpists at Llanofor near Abergavenny in 1869, taken from S R Williams 'Iaith Y Nefoedd: Anghydfuriaeth a'r Gymraeg yn Sir Fynwy yn y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg' ['Heaven's language: Nonconformity and Welsh in Monmouthshire in the nineteenth century'] *Y Traethodydd* [The Essayist], Vol 142 (1987) 217 (<http://www.welshjournals.llgc.org.uk>).

14. A H Williams 'Y Dr Thomas Rees' 16.

benefactor who contributed just fifty guineas on this occasion, but who had already enjoyed a wider fame in Wales by financing six English language chapels on the Gower peninsula west of Swansea.¹⁵ Her aristocratic name, no doubt, added prestige to the cause, but it stood in stark contrast to the Old Testament names favoured by the founders of chapels in Wales, as Welsh Nonconformists traditionally identified themselves with the children of Israel. So it was here in April 1859 that the Scotsman Andrew Morton Brown from Cheltenham found himself playing a key role in the opening ceremony. We must now cross the River Severn and search for the reasons why he might have been invited.

Andrew Morton Brown (1812–79)

A full evaluation of his significant contribution to Congregationalism and Cheltenham's social, political and religious life awaits a later study, but hopefully this investigation can begin to redress the neglect. It was his misfortune to have been active in the town during some of the key years of Francis Close's influence as 'the Pope of Cheltenham' (1826–56), which has tended to keep him in the shadows, although he served his congregation and town for nearly a quarter of a century after Close's departure for Carlisle.

Andrew Morton Brown's background was very different from that of Thomas Rees. Born near Kilmarnock, he was educated at both Glasgow and Edinburgh universities. His career with the Congregationalists began with his working as a missionary in the east end of London before moving to Overton in Hampshire and then in 1837 to Poole in Dorset. In 1843 he accepted a call to Cheltenham. Here a small Congregational cause had been established, which in 1827 had become sufficiently strong to purchase an existing chapel building for £1,300, naming it Highbury after the London home of one of the sponsors, Thomas Wilson.¹⁶ Andrew Morton Brown was a popular preacher, although perhaps not in the same league of popularity as Francis Close. The 1851 religious census recorded that 466 worshippers and 174 Sunday School scholars attended Highbury on the morning of 30 March, with 470 attendances in the evening; the average attendance was given as 500 with 150 scholars. In contrast, Francis Close packed 2000 into St Mary's parish church for morning worship with 150 scholars attending Sunday School (these figures were obviously rounded).¹⁷ In 1852 Andrew's popularity led to the opening of a new 1200 seater Highbury chapel to replace the original.¹⁸ Two years later he had become sufficiently

15. I H John Barham *Congregational Church, Beaufort 1857–1957* (Aberdare 1957) 3.

16. S Blake *Cheltenham Churches and Chapels AD773–1883* (Cheltenham 1979) 9–10.

17. A Munden 'The Religious Census of 1851' *Cheltenham Local History Society Journal* Vol 21 (2005) 42, 44.

18. W Ansell *One Hundred Years of Congregationalism in Cheltenham: Highbury 1827–1927* (Cheltenham 1927) 29.

well-known to be elected chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales at the young age of 42; Thomas Rees became chairman elect only in the year of his death in 1885.¹⁹ Andrew's theology was mainstream nineteenth-century Congregationalism; the grace of God through Jesus Christ was available to all; it was more liberal and intellectual than other brands of evangelicalism and it was all-inclusive.

Despite the many differences with Francis Close, they could be found working together on a number of causes. They were both evangelicals in their approach to religion; they both spoke largely to Cheltenham's middle classes but had deep concerns for the poor, encouraging the building of more churches and chapels, providing education for children, supporting the temperance movement and the anti-tobacco society.²⁰ But fundamental differences remained. Francis Close was a conservative who generally wanted to defend an existing social order, but Andrew Morton Brown was a reformer, in politics a staunch Liberal and in religion Free Church, arguing many times against the established Anglican Church and its privileged political position. He supported the setting up of the Literary and Philosophy Institute in the Promenade in 1843 and the YMCA in 1855.²¹ He played a prominent part in the Boys' Industrial School in Albert Street and for many years entertained the town's cabmen to a tea party, persuading a hundred subscribers to support the establishment of a benefit society for them in 1873.²² This was a group of men who at that time were held in very low esteem by the population at large.

The status of Andrew Morton Brown as an influential leader in the town is evidenced by the Revd FW Wilkinson affair. Wilkinson, a tutor of religion at Cheltenham College, proposed a vote of thanks to the rationalist George Dawson of Birmingham who gave a lecture in December 1847 to the Literary and Philosophy Institute on 'The Characteristics and Tendencies of the Modern Age', although the college tutor made it clear he did not agree with the arguments put forward. Nevertheless, his action caused uproar amongst the college's directors and Wilkinson was forced to resign. Andrew Morton Brown

19. Ibid 31 and fn 6 above respectively.

20. Francis Close was behind the building of four Anglican churches in Cheltenham (A Munden *A Cheltenham Gamaliel: Dean Close of Cheltenham* [Cheltenham 1997] 29–35). Andrew Morton Brown's efforts lay chiefly outside the town in local villages: Bishop's Cleeve, Northleach, Oxenton, The Reddings and only Gas Green in the town, (Ansell *One Hundred Years* 26–32 *passim*). Similarly, Francis Close worked to improve the education of both the poor and the middle classes (Munden *A Cheltenham Gamaliel* 35–45); in 1860 more than 1000 children were attending schools associated with Dr Morton Brown's chapels (Ansell *One Hundred Years* 33).

21. Ansell *One Hundred Years* 27, 32.

22. For the school *Cheltenham Annuaire* 1858 xxi; for the cabmen *Cheltenham Examiner* 5 March 1873 2.

was a vice-president of the Institute and so sprang to Wilkinson's defence. He led the Nonconformist and rationalist attack on the Anglican 'non-intellectual ruling class' that seemed to be governing Cheltenham and its college, seeing Francis Close's influence behind the whole affair. Public opinion split into two factions and the weekly newspapers supported the two sides with enthusiasm. Although Wilkinson's reinstatement was not secured, the Morton Brown party appealed to the prime minister, Lord John Russell, and succeeded in gaining a church living in the gift of the Crown for Wilkinson in Derby. So Andrew felt vindicated in his battle with Cheltenham's Anglican establishment and his leadership qualities became apparent for all to acknowledge, whether they supported him or not.²³

If Francis Close was known as 'the Pope of Cheltenham', Andrew Morton Brown 'to his friends was almost a bishop'.²⁴ On the day of his funeral in July 1879 all the town's shops closed and the cortège stretched half a mile, as it made its way from his home to the cemetery; it was said to have been the longest such procession ever seen in the town.²⁵ 'Cheltenham has lost one of its most notable, most valuable, most highly valued men, and the vacant place cannot be soon occupied by another' was one of the many public tributes to him.²⁶ Even today, his memorial still remains one of the most impressive in the town's cemetery.

George Freeman (1780–1869)

George Freeman was a typical, self-made man of his era, amassing a fortune as a lace manufacturer, first in Nottingham and then Tewkesbury. He left the latter place in 1846 and moved to Cheltenham to live out the rest of his days in the fashionable spa town as a gentleman of private means, living at 6 Bayhill Villas, an opulent period villa, not far from The Promenade. The 1851 census recorded him as a bachelor fund-holder born in Leicestershire, living with two unmarried nieces aged thirty and twenty five and two servants.²⁷ His age was given as seventy and so he clearly appeared to have been an elderly gentleman in Barham Chapel on that day in April 1859.

Like his minister, he was a reformer in politics and a dissenter in religion, having been elected to serve on Tewkesbury's reformed town council as the

23. This account is based on Bell *Pleasure Town* 52–7 and Hart *A History of Cheltenham* 248–9.

24. Ansell *One Hundred Years* 33. Interestingly, in 1858 Thomas Rees was also described as 'Esgob Y Cendl' ['The Bishop of Beaufort'] (Williams 'Y Dr Thomas Rees a'r achosion Seisnig' 11).

25. *Cheltenham Looker On* 26 July 1879 475.

26. *Cheltenham Examiner* 23 March 1879.

27. National Archives HO129/344 by courtesy of Jill Waller.

result of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1832.²⁸ In 1836 he chaired an open meeting in Tewkesbury in an unsuccessful attempt to oppose a parish rate for repairs to the towns' abbey.²⁹ He was accepted into membership of Tewkesbury's Congregational Church in 1839, transferring his membership to Highbury on his arrival in the spa town.³⁰ Although it was said he became childlike in old age, and feared dying in poverty in the union workhouse, his generosity to Congregationalism belies this assertion. He contributed generously to the costs of the new building for Highbury, but his greater generosity was to join the illustrious list of English benefactors who supported the English language cause of the Welsh Independents. This seems to have begun at Barham Chapel and then to have continued for the rest of his life. His fifty sovereigns in the collection on that day seem to have marked the first of an untold number of donations to the cause. George gave at least £2500 to support chapel building at a time when it was said £250 was sufficient to build a chapel in Monmouthshire.³¹ In addition he contributed unknown amounts to support retired preachers and to pay Thomas Rees' expenses as he travelled indefatigably around England and Wales to raise more funds. 'Here is a man who loves our nation although he is not one of us', was Thomas's eulogy to him.³²

Why might Andrew Morton Brown have been invited to open Barham Chapel?

There is no clear answer to this question but the search has not only thrown light on a neglected character from 19th century Cheltenham, but has made it possible to offer suggestions. It seems quite likely that Thomas Rees came to know Andrew Morton Brown through the Congregational Union. Thomas first spoke at a meeting in London in 1856.³³ Then in 1858 he became the first Welsh clergyman to address the union, which in that year was held in Halifax; his paper on the Congregational churches of Wales assumed his audience was completely ignorant of their history and current situation—another example where language was perceived to be a barrier.³⁴ As we have noted, Andrew became the union's chairman the following year. He was still relatively young and very

28. J Bennett (ed) *Tewkesbury Yearly Register and Magazine* Vol I (Tewkesbury 1840) 256.

29. *Ibid* 273.

30. Gloucestershire Archives D5510/1/1 and D12407 respectively.

31. A H Williams 'Y Dr Thomas Rees' 16.

32. J Thomas *Cofiant T Rees* 196.

33. A H Williams 'Y Dr Thomas Rees' 11.

34. T Rees 'The Congregational Churches of Wales: a paper read at the Congregational Union of England and Wales held at Halifax October 1858' in T Rees *Miscellaneous Papers on Subjects Relating to Wales* (London 1867) 70–82.

enthusiastic to spread its principles and was gaining a reputation as a principal player at chapel openings. 'Did a chapel require opening, or a congregation need assistance? He was there.'³⁵ Random references in the *Cheltenham Examiner* record at later dates his speaking at the laying of the foundation stone of Brunswick Road Baptist Chapel in Gloucester in 1872 and at the re-opening of Drybrook Chapel five years later.³⁶ With fifty guineas donated by Thomas Thompson to pay for a guest speaker at the opening of Barham Chapel (two-thirds the annual stipend of many Nonconformist ministers), Thomas Rees probably thought Andrew Morton Brown could be influential in giving his campaign a boost.³⁷ Ifor John, Barham Chapel's historian, suggests it was through the influence of Thomas Thompson that Andrew was secured for the opening ceremony, for they already knew each other through the Congregational Union.³⁸ But how did George Freeman fit in? Were his fifty sovereigns an attempt to return most of this money to pay off some of the debt of the newly-built chapel? Andrew's explanation as recorded in the opening story appears a little thin when one considers George Freeman was around eighty years old; that there was only one railway line open at that date by which he could have followed his minister to Beaufort and this left a six mile road journey from the station. Add to this the infrequency of the trains, and it seems hardly likely that George Freeman decided to follow Andrew 'in secret' and that his decision was based on a chance overheard conversation only the day before it happened. The explanation to the congregation also seemed rather too well-argued to have been spontaneous. It would be entirely consistent with Andrew Morton Brown's character to arrange for George Freeman to be there and make the donation, even though at present this remains speculation.

Final Words

With the benefit of hindsight it seems Andrew Morton Brown was unwittingly taking part in an unnecessary venture. Already some Welsh language chapels were naturally changing to English, as continuing immigration from other parts of Great Britain led to language change, obviating the need for a separate movement. But Thomas Rees and his supporters were driven by the conviction that irreligious English ways would undermine the predominantly religious Welsh character. However, even contemporaries questioned the movement by the Welsh denominations to establish English language causes. 'This is not to evangelise the English, but to anglicise the Welsh', wrote a sceptical Welsh

35. Ansell *One Hundred Years* 33.

36. *Cheltenham Examiner* 11 September 1872 and 11 July 1877 respectively.

37. J Thomas *Cofiant T Rees* 196.

38. John *Barham Congregational Church* 3.

Independent minister in 1864.³⁹ But for Thomas Rees the souls of men, women and children were ultimately more important than the future of the Welsh language, '(We) have to take things as they are and do the best with them'.⁴⁰ Welsh Independents needed to be there building chapels to secure their future as a denomination. And so the chapels multiplied. Barham was one of the more successful. After a shaky start, which saw closure for two weeks in the following November as the membership split, it was rebuilt in 1886; survived a disastrous fire in 1892; numbered a hundred and fifty members after the religious revival of 1904 and closed only in 2000 when its congregation combined with Libanus chapel in Ebbw Vale, which continues to flourish.⁴¹ Subsequently the building has been demolished. In turn, Thomas Rees's own Carmel Chapel lost its Welsh services in the 1970s and today stands forlorn and disused—the two neighbours serving as a microcosm of Welsh nonconformity into the twenty first century. As for Andrew Morton Brown, his memory lives on in the room named after him in Highbury Chapel in Cheltenham. For the wider number of people who are interested in the history of Congregationalism, this story of a Welsh connection has, I hope, begun to re-establish the achievements of an outstanding nonconformist leader of mid-19th century Cheltenham society.

David Aldred

39. Revd D Hughes at the quarterly meeting of the Welsh Independents of Monmouthshire in 1864, quoted in S R Williams 'Iaith Y Nefoedd' 218–9.

40. Rees and Thomas *Hanes Eglwysi Annibynnol Cymru* 232.

41. John Barham *Congregational Church* 7–8 and personal communication from Richard Watkins.

CONGREGATIONALISM AND THE YOUNG IN THE EDWARDIAN ERA: A HAMPSHIRE PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

Judging by the amount of time devoted to children and young people at gatherings of the Hampshire Congregational Union (HCU) during the Edwardian era, it is evident that they were seen, not surprisingly, as a crucial responsibility for churches collectively as well as individually. For example, at the 1908 autumn gathering of the HCU held in Bournemouth, the topic of a public meeting was work amongst this age group and specifically the ‘problem of how to deal with the young.’ In his opening remarks the chairman of the HCU, Mr H.M. Gilbert, ‘emphasised the supreme importance of the subject.’¹ The commitment of the HCU was also reflected in the fact that it had a Sunday School Department, renamed Young People’s Department in 1908 to indicate its expanded remit. The activities of the Department were diligently recorded in its annual reports, including the work of a lending library. As with church membership, copious statistics covering many aspects of provision for the young were collected and published (see Appendix 1). These included, for a number of years, league tables showing, for example, the six schools having the largest average attendances and the largest number of scholars joining the church. Other functions of the Department encompassed highlighting the challenges churches faced in meeting the spiritual and related needs of children and young people and disseminating good practice, by means of literature, training events and conferences. The Secretary of the Department was the pastor of one of the larger churches in the HCU, with a particular interest in and an aptitude for work with children and young people (see Appendix 2).² The activities of the Department were overseen by a committee of pastors and lay people.

The concern of the HCU for the young was replicated at the local level with the Sunday school and contingent organisations, such as the Band of Hope,

¹ I am very grateful to Professor Hugh McLeod for some insightful observations on an earlier version of this paper. *Lyminster Chronicle* (hereafter *LC*) October 8, 1908.

² For the purposes of this paper, a child became a young person during their early to mid teens. By then many Sunday school scholars would have already left day school and started employment. This, of course, would have introduced them to new peer groups and exposed them to other influences, not all of which would have been supportive of church affiliation.

Christian Endeavour and Young Peoples' Institutes, being a widespread and usually high profile feature of church life. Indeed, it was very unusual for a Congregational church, regardless of size and whether a village chapel or large town church, not to have a Sunday school. In many respects this is understandable given that work with the young symbolised the investment of churches in their future. They also facilitated engagement with a wider section of the community than was often possible by other means.

Although all denominations saw themselves as having a special responsibility for the young and were anxious to lay spiritual foundations on which they could build at later stages of a person's life, some Congregationalists saw their churches, rather arrogantly perhaps, as being ideally placed for this work. For example, in addressing the 1906 autumn meeting of the HCU, Mr J. Thomas of Newport (Isle of Wight) claimed that 'there was ... no denominational order that was more suited to teach and gather into their churches the children belonging to them and to those who were outside.'³ This claim suggests that the principles espoused by Congregationalists, such as freedom of conscience and simplicity of worship, were seen as being especially appealing to children and young people as they matured.

That said in some communities there were Sunday School Unions to facilitate collaboration between Free Church Sunday schools, thereby symbolising the ecumenical dimension of this aspect of church activity. As an example, the Romsey and District Sunday School Union, established in November 1897, had by 1904 21 members comprising 2 un-denominational; 5 Baptist; 4 Wesleyan Methodist; 6 Primitive Methodist; and 4 Congregational Sunday schools. In addition to an annual meeting, during the year it held four conventions in different locations, 'such gatherings acted as a stimulus and proved to be a great blessing to those who took part'.⁴ As reported in 1907, the meetings served as 'an inspiration for greater and more devoted service by those involved' in the member schools.⁵ Discussion was frequently triggered by papers on a variety of subjects, including the relationship between the Band of Hope and the Sunday school; the work of the International Bible Reading Association; and the reform of the Sunday school, a theme examined in greater depth at a later stage in this article. The Union also organised a visiting scheme in order to observe and report on what was happening in each school. As recorded at the 1908 annual meeting of the Union:

We have once again to gratefully acknowledge the splendid work done by the representative visitors in visiting all the affiliated schools during the past year. Speaking generally, the quarterly visits have been faithfully made, and the reports of these visits have been most interesting at our quarterly meetings. Your committee would take this opportunity of its

3 *Romsey Advertiser* (hereafter *RA*) 2 November 1906.

4 *RA* 22 January 1904.

5 *Hampshire Independent* (hereafter *HI*) 19 January 1907.

expressing its best thanks to the visitors for their energetic and kindly service.⁶

Although not explicitly stated, it would seem that at least one of the main purposes of the visits was the identification and dissemination of good practice.

In what follows it is proposed to review in more detail some of the reasons why the work amongst the young attracted such attention and the purposes attached to it; how children were incorporated into the life of the church; and some of the problems and issues that preoccupied those directly involved with this sphere of outreach and Christian training during the Edwardian era. In using Hampshire as the geographical focus for the study it is not intended to imply that there was anything particularly unique or special about the county. It is simply to facilitate the adoption of a more local focus where, as Robbins suggests, “church history” really comes to life.⁷

Reasons and Purposes

As has already been indicated, a key reason for children’s work within churches was to secure the future and, even the survival, of congregations. When speaking as a guest at the 1912 annual Sunday School meeting of London Street Congregational Church in Basingstoke a past pastor, Alfred Capes Tarbolton, put it like this: ‘the key to the future lay very largely with the laying of the foundations of Christian faith and knowledge in the youngest minds.’⁸ While as William Baker Rowe, pastor of Alresford Congregational Church, pointed out at his recognition meeting in 1903 ‘they looked to the Sunday school as a nursery to furnish members’ for their church.⁹ Indeed, ‘nursery’ was a term frequently used in this context. For example, David Benyon, the newly appointed pastor of Freemantle Congregational Church, in his contribution to the annual meeting of Andover’s Congregational Sunday School in 1901, commented that just as schools ‘were the nurseries of the nation ... Sunday schools should be the nurseries of the church.’¹⁰ The argument was put even more forcefully by Robert Skinner, pastor of Ringwood Congregational Church, in what he had to say at the anniversary of London Street’s Sunday School in 1914:

Whenever there was a weak, neglected Sunday School, very soon there would be a weak neglected Church; but wherever there was strong Sunday School—as he was delighted to discover there was here—they would have in the coming days a strong Church.¹¹

6 *HI* 19 January 1908.

7 K Robbins, *England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales: The Christian Church 1900–2000* (Oxford 2008) 22.

8 *Hants and Berks Gazette* (hereafter *HBG*) 6 April 1912.

9 *Hampshire Chronicle* 7 March 1903.

10 *Andover Advertiser* (hereafter *AA*) 15 November 1901.

11 *HBG* 11 April 1914.

There was also the related point that in giving priority to their Sunday schools churches 'were influencing the parents of tomorrow.'¹²

Not surprisingly, the transmission of Christian beliefs and practices and indeed Congregational mores from one generation to another was seen as a key rationale for children's work. In his report for 1903 Hugh Ross Williamson, Secretary of the Sunday School Department of the HCU and pastor of Abbey Congregational Church in Romsey, contended that:

We must stir ourselves to do more, and that not only in a spiritual direction in winning our scholars for Christ, but in educating them in the principles for which we as Protestant Independents stand.¹³

Thus, in his mind, there was a clear need to use Sunday schools to promote a particular brand of Christianity as well as secure conversions and future church members.

Put a little differently, one of the guest speakers at the 1908 annual meeting of the Romsey and District Sunday School Union, Rev A.J. Edwards of Salisbury, observed that 'they who were engaged in ... [Sunday school] work were "Bible-centric." The Bible was the revelation of God to them—no Bible, no revelation!' He went on to argue that they needed 'to cultivate the habit of prayer, and to create the atmosphere of conversion.'¹⁴ Thus, in his eyes, Sunday school work needed to be guided by traditional Evangelical tenets of 'Biblicism' and 'conversionism.'¹⁵ For Edwards, the spiritual dimension was paramount.

By now, of course, the earlier secular role of equipping children with basic literacy and numeracy skills had been transferred from Sunday schools to day schools.¹⁶ In the words of Stephen Orchard, 'having lost a role as primary educators in skills and knowledge Sunday Schools and their sponsoring churches moved into the area of religious development, with a particular emphasis on exploring childhood experience.'¹⁷

Another consideration was equipping children with the resources they needed to 'fight the good fight' in a world where secularism and materialism were on the march. In referring to the 'welfare of youths and maidens' during a talk given at the 1906 autumn gathering of the HCU, William Melville Harris,

¹² RA 2 November 1906.

¹³ *Annual Report of HCU for 1903* Hampshire Record Office (hereafter HRO) 127M94/62/48 34.

¹⁴ HI 19 January 1908.

¹⁵ D Bebbington *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London 1989) 3.

¹⁶ For an elaboration of this point, see S Green *Religion in the Age of Decline* (Cambridge 1996) 214.

¹⁷ S Orchard 'Sunday Schools: Some Reflections' in *The Sunday School Movement: Studies in the Growth and Decline of Sunday Schools* (eds) by S Orchard and J Briggs (Milton Keynes 2007) xiii.

from the Headquarters of the Congregational Union of England and Wales (CUEW) at Memorial Hall in London, observed that:

... the church and teachers should make them desire to win higher victories than the world offered, and attain that abundance of life that Jesus our Lord came to offer. When a child was ready and spirited for battle they must not reprove the fighting spirit within him; it was rather their duty to show him the field where he might win everlasting and eternal victories.¹⁸

Although not specifically mentioned on this occasion he undoubtedly had in mind the need for young people to be armed with appropriate weapons for resisting the world, the flesh and the Devil. In 1901 some worldly evils or 'lions' that had to be fought 'in our journey through life' were identified as 'laziness, selfishness, falsehood, temper and procrastination' by John Draper, Andover's Congregational pastor, at a Sunday School anniversary meeting in Whitchurch.¹⁹

At the autumn gathering of the HCU in 1909, Arthur Wilson, Young People's Secretary for the Worcestershire Congregational Union, sought to provide a comprehensive exposition of the purposes of young people's societies. In his view they were 'the establishment of a Christlike character, the training of intelligent church members, and the affording of assistance in the making of good and useful citizens.' These he saw as 'ministering to the spiritual, intellectual and social sides of ... [the] nature' of young people.²⁰ Thus, seeking to develop well rounded personalities was seen as a legitimate goal.

It is noteworthy that citizenship and, its corollary, participation in politics were frequent refrains. At a young people's meeting held as part of the 1904 autumn gathering of the HCU, Mr Ernest Lane of Bournemouth:

... emphasised the importance of the proper recognition of responsibility in the matter of citizenship. It should be part of the religion of every young man and woman, because they must eventually have voices in the matter. "I don't bother my head about politics" was the confession of many a young man, but they ought to bother their heads. They ought surely to use the franchise to the glory of God.

His ideal was a church organisation for young people which aimed:

at producing spiritually sound, intellectually strong, and morally mighty men and women. It should develop useful advocates of the Christian position and

18 RA 2 November 1906. William Melville Harris (1862–1939) studied at Mansfield College from 1898 to 1901 and then served as pastor of Caroline Street Congregational Church, Longton, in Lancashire until 1906. Between 1906 and 1908 he was Special Commissioner on the Work of Sunday Schools and Young People for the National Sunday School Union and from 1908 to 1918 Secretary of the Young People's Department of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

19 AA 5 July 1901.

20 HBG 16 October 1909.

faithful adherents and workers for the Church. It should annihilate the notion ... that politics and Christianity had no connection. It should train a body of young people well informed with regard to matters pertaining to the State and capable of becoming useful instruments for the bettering of human life.²¹

Similarly, in 1909, the guest speaker at Andover Congregational Church's Sunday School anniversary meeting, Rev Joseph Sellicks from Newbury, made reference to its role in 'turning out good and useful citizens for their nation.'²² In his eyes there was little difference between Sunday schools and day schools in this respect at least.

While the fostering of citizenship could be regarded as a worthy objective there was inevitably the danger that in time a somewhat worldly goal of this kind might come to take precedence over the spiritual. This has parallels with Dominic Erdozain's argument concerning the institutional church that 'a practical, this-worldly theology of salvation-by-recreation quietly occluded the classical and explicit soteriology (doctrine of salvation) of the "parent" organisations'.²³ In the case of citizenship, there was the possibility that the discussion of political issues would crowd out more devotional activities such as prayer meetings and bible studies.

That said churches were anxious not to alienate young people. They recognised and wanted to capitalise on their vitality and enthusiasm. In short, they were seen as a vital resource. Here the sentiments of Ernest Thompson, the newly appointed pastor of Petersfield Congregational Church, expressed at his public recognition service in 1903, are particularly apposite. 'He had great hope of the young people connected with the church ... He believed they had a reserve of unutilised energy ... and it was his most anxious desire that they should be brought into the service of the church.'²⁴ No doubt such views would have been commonplace. They reflected the conviction that the ultimate purpose of work with children and young people was that of training future church members and Christian workers.

Means

In seeking to realise the goals of children's work, by the Edwardian era few would have taken issue with the view that 'There was only one place for the Sunday School today, and that was in the midst of the church.'²⁵ What, however, did this mean in practice and in what ways was the Sunday school integrated

21 *Southampton Times and Hampshire Express* (hereafter *STHE*) 15 October 1904.

22 *AA* 19 November 1909.

23 D Erdozain *The Problem of Pleasure* (Woodbridge 2010) 38.

24 *Hants and Sussex News* (hereafter *HSN*) 15 July 1903.

25 *RA* 2 November 1906.

with church life more generally? Moreover, to what extent were other organisations needed to build upon the work of the Sunday school?

Congregationalists accepted infant baptism and consequently this was seen as an initial point of contact between children, their families and the local church. At the 1912 autumn meeting of the HCU Mr Alfred Peach, the Chairman, took up this theme:

... he pointed out the necessity for discharging their duty to the child who was admitted to the church by baptism, and of keeping a watchful eye on the parents, that the child might take its place as a conscious member of the body to which it belonged. He suggested the establishment of the cradle roll in the Church as well as in the Sunday school.²⁶

By this time, cradle rolls were, in fact, an established feature of many Congregational churches and were seen as the 'agency by which the youngest children are entered on the school records as prospective scholars.'²⁷

Once children were old enough for the Sunday school they were registered as scholars and their attendance was closely monitored. It is noteworthy, however, that as with church membership there was often considerable movement of scholars into and out of the Sunday school. In its Report for 1909, the HCU's Committee for Work among the Young gave as an example an unnamed small Sunday school in a large town with 95 scholars in 1908 and 88 in 1909, but losing 52 children during the year and gaining 45. As a consequence this meant 'enormous work for the school secretary and no little additional difficulty for the teachers.'²⁸

For much of the year the work of the Sunday school would have continued unobtrusively. As it was put by Mr Barber, Secretary of Andover Congregational Sunday School, 'During the year [1907] they had not gone in for any startling events, but steady, quiet and faithful service had been rendered.'²⁹ Nonetheless, there were events that were designed to ensure that due recognition was given to the contribution of the Sunday school, in particular those associated with the annual celebration of its anniversary. This generally involved special Sunday services, often with visiting preachers and contributions from the children in the form of music and recitations. On the following day there was frequently a public meeting at which the Sunday school secretary, treasurer and superintendent would assess the previous year and external speakers would comment on aspects of Sunday school work more generally. Additional events included prize-givings; outings and similar treats for the children and their teachers; and in many churches an annual toy service. There might also be

26 *Hampshire Telegraph* (hereafter *HT*) 4 October 1912.

27 *The British Congregationalist* (hereafter *TBC*) 1 February 1912, 89.

28 *Annual Report of the HCU for 1909* HRO 127M94/62/54 44.

29 *AA* 15 November 1907.

occasions when missionary work was brought to the attention of children. Thus, it was recognised that Sunday schools, like churches in general, required the stimulus of special events. So, again using Andover as an example, in 1913 ‘the features of their [Sunday] school year were a new year gathering, the toy service, the splendid anniversary in June, and a flower service in July.’³⁰ All of this required a considerable amount of organisation and as Orchard points out, ‘the governance and bureaucracy required in any one community to organise 300 children and their teachers in adequate accommodation with appropriate resources was not only found but replicated again and again.’³¹ For Congregationalists, as well as members of other denominations, such comments had a particular resonance.

Arguably, if children’s work was to have a high profile, it was useful to have a pastor who had a particular calling in this respect. Examples from Edwardian Hampshire include Robert Skinner of Ringwood, who spoke at his ordination of ‘the work he would endeavour to carry out during his pastorate, especially amongst young people’;³² Francis Cooper of Sarisbury Green, who had been a teacher for many years before entering the ministry and whose ‘interest in the young remained with him to the end, and both to the Young People’s Committee of the HCU, and the LMS Auxiliary ... he rendered valuable service’;³³ Henry Perkins of Albion Congregational Church in Southampton whose ‘sermonettes were model children’s addresses’;³⁴ Alfred Clegg of Boscombe who, as a result of his earlier training in elocution, loved preparing ‘his Sunday School children ... [for] plays and pageants’;³⁵ William Cuthbertson of Crondall who ‘gave himself devotedly in his various spheres of service to work amongst the young who warmly appreciated and reciprocated these efforts to his great encouragement’;³⁶ and Robert Howarth of Ripley who, like Cooper, had been a schoolmaster prior to entering the ministry and for whom ‘the children were ... his special care ... being in the Sunday school twice on every Sunday, and the Shield of Honour in the National Sunday School Scripture examinations was won year after year by these scholars.’³⁷

At the farewell soiree for Alexander Grieve, just prior to his departure from Romsey, Mr Fryer, the Sunday school superintendent, gave the following testimony:

30 *AA* 5 December 1913.

31 Orchard *Sunday Schools* xiv.

32 *HI* 19 October 1912.

33 *Congregational Year Book* (hereafter *CYB*) (1918) 126.

34 *CYB* (1913) 182.

35 *CYB* (1964/5) 437.

36 *CYB* (1938) 655.

37 *CYB* (1941) 402.

The officers, teachers and scholars felt they had in Mr Grieve a great friend who had taken a great interest in their work, and even in the youngest of their scholars ... He had always been ready with words of counsel ... and ... had been a great help to the teachers in their work ... On behalf of the scholars he felt he could not speak too thankfully for the good work he had done and the great interest he always took in preparing ... [them] for the[ir] examinations. They rejoiced that Mr Grieve had not only been of great help in training the scholars intellectually, but especially of the tokens they had lately had of the great spiritual help he had been.

The most notable of these tokens was 'the [higher] number of scholars being admitted into church fellowship' than had previously been the case.³⁸

It is probable that these examples were by no means exceptional and for many pastors the work of the Sunday school received a high priority, with the weekly preparation of teachers being to the fore. Moreover, there were also instances of pastor's wives contributing to this vitally important task. For example, in the case of Ernest Franks, the pastor of Gosport Congregational Church from 1908 to 1917 and Secretary of the Young People's Department of the HCU (see Appendix 2), not only did he take 'a great interest in the Sunday school, especially from the intellectual side of the work', but due to her experience in the mission field prior to her marriage, Mrs Franks also played an important role in the training of teachers.³⁹ In addition, Franks and his wife contributed a great deal to the promotion of work amongst the young throughout the county.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the majority of Sunday school teachers tended to be women. Something of the qualities they brought to Sunday school work can be gained from those highlighted at a presentation made to Mrs Catherine Edney in 1912 for her 'faithful and devoted service' to London Street Sunday School for over forty years. As it was put in an address contained in a leather bound album, her 'genial presence ... kindly disposition and ... deep interest' had contributed much to the high standards the school had attained.⁴⁰ Clearly, Mrs Edney's contribution was outstanding, but it was emblematic of the part played by many women in this sphere of church life. The preponderance of female Sunday school teachers could, of course, be seen as one reason for more girls becoming church members. In this way, the female bias in church membership was sustained. However, with an all male pastorate, there were countervailing influences at work, and it could be said that young men did have potential role models.

38 RA 23 July 1909.

39 R Ottewill "The Woman of the Manse: Recognising the Contribution of the Wives of Congregational Pastors in Edwardian Hampshire" *Congregational History Society Magazine* 6(6) (2012) 315–6.

40 HBG 6 April 1912.

While women's nurturing and teaching skills were in great demand, in keeping with the norms of the period they were often excluded from leadership roles within the Sunday school. For example, in 1906 at Avenue Congregational Church in Southampton, even though 15 out of 24 teachers were female, the posts of Sunday school superintendent, secretary, treasurer, auditor, organist and librarian were all held by men.

Although Sunday schools made the greatest contribution to the work amongst children and young people, they were generally regarded as a necessary but not a sufficient means for enabling churches to fulfil their mission in this sphere. Many Congregational churches supplemented their Sunday schools with branches of the Band of Hope, the leading temperance organisation for young people, and Christian Endeavour, while some established companies of the Boys' Brigade and the Girls' Brigade. Towards the end of the period under review there was also a substantial increase in the number of guilds, leagues, clubs and institutes for young people, generally at the expense of Christian Endeavour societies.⁴¹ As an example, it was reported in 1909 that:

A Christian Guild has just been started in connection with Bitterne Congregational Church in place of the Christian Endeavour, which has been discontinued. It is hoped that the new institution will attract a larger number of members of all ages. There was a discussion on Socialism at the inaugural meeting last week, and "The place of music in Divine worship" was the subject ... this week, a well attended meeting entering with interest into the discussion which followed.⁴²

It would seem that here the change was prompted by the desire to shift from an overly spiritual emphasis to one where a broader range of topics and activities, some of an overtly secular nature, could be embraced.

Many of these newer organisations were intended for older children and were seen as a means of maintaining contact with them as their involvement in the Sunday school waned. To some extent, they were in competition with church affiliated Men's Own Brotherhoods and Mutual Improvement Societies, which often had a greater appeal for many young people. Of course, the ultimate goal of all these bodies was church membership. At the very least, it was hoped that they would enable young people to retain their links with a church. In the case of many, however, even this was a forlorn hope and one amongst a number of issues that Congregationalists, in tandem with members of other denominations, faced.

⁴¹ In the model constitution for Christian Endeavour societies, their primary role was defined as an organised effort 'to promote the earnest Christian life among its members, to increase their mutual acquaintance, and to make them more useful in the service of God.' F Clark, 'Christian Endeavour' in J Hastings (ed) *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh 1910) 571.

⁴² *HI* 23 January 1909.

Issues

Although the need for, and importance of work with, children and young people was well recognised, it was by no means unproblematic. Five issues in particular were to the fore. These were the recruitment and training of Sunday school teachers and lay leaders of young people's organisations; the mode of instruction and type of activities provided; the loss of many young people once they were too old for Sunday school; engagement with parents; and the provision of adequate accommodation.

For many churches the task of finding suitable teachers and leaders was an ongoing one. The situation at Andover, as reported in 1907, would have been replicated elsewhere: 'The staff of teachers had been thinned by the removal and unavoidable relinquishing of service by teachers whom they could ill afford to lose.'⁴³ Overall, however, as the data in Appendix 1 indicate, there was a steady increase in the total number of Sunday school teachers throughout the period leading up to the First World War. Moreover, there is no suggestion that, as Green found in late Victorian West Yorkshire, middle-class social and pedagogical influence was absent from Sunday schools.⁴⁴

However, a steady supply of teachers did not guarantee a successful Sunday school. Teachers needed the requisite skills and attributes. On this subject Green quotes from a *Halifax and District Congregational Magazine* of 1888. This referred to the 'inferior quality of teaching power in our schools.'⁴⁵ While equivalent comments have not been found for Edwardian Hampshire it seems likely that teachers varied considerably in their abilities. Competent teaching required not simply innate attributes and empathy with children but also the application of effective and engaging teaching methods, an issue that became of increasing concern during the Edwardian era. In the words of Reginald Thompson, pastor of London Street Congregational Church, at the 1908 spring meeting of the HCU, it was necessary for teachers to make 'the instruction given as bright and attractive as possible so as to enlist the sympathy and attention of their scholars'. In the language of today, the teaching needed to be 'scholar centred'. He went on to elaborate on the requirements for each age group:

... scholars between five and eight years of age were in the pictorial age and advocated more repetition of the Bible stories. Between eight and fourteen the students were in the receptive age, when it was hardly possible to overtax their receptive faculty. The average child at this time of life could learn more than they could be taught and it was during this period that teachers should prepare their lessons with great care and impart instruction on a more scientific basis. Lessons

43 AA 15 November 1907.

44 Green *Religion* 217.

45 W Scales "Reasons for Failure" *Halifax and District Congregational Magazine* 6(5) (1888) 98 quoted in Green *Religion* 217.

must be made more interesting, as it was cruel and absurd to expect the scholars to give their attention unless the teachers made it worth their while. After 14 years of age it was opportune for the teachers to impart instruction in the definite principles of their belief as Christians.⁴⁶

While one might take issue with some of the detail, it is clear that considerable thought underlay this exposition of a developmental or graded approach to Sunday school teaching. It was undoubtedly intended to serve as an antidote to the potential boredom on the part of scholars induced by too much emphasis on rote learning and the teaching of large groups composed of scholars from a wide age range.

The promotion of what were labelled 'new methods' became the major preoccupation of the HCU's Committee for Work among the Young towards the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. As reported in 1910, 'One of its chief aims ... [was] to educate the Churches and Schools of the County in the matter of Sunday School Reform.' A major influence behind the reform movement was the Canadian, George Hamilton Archibald. He had been greatly impressed by the view of the American educationalist John Dewey that education should be activity based and felt that such a principle should be applied to Sunday schools and not simply to day schools. With the support and encouragement of George Cadbury, Archibald was able to promulgate his educational philosophy in the United Kingdom, where it had a considerable impact on many nonconformists, especially Congregationalists.

On his [Archibald's] arrival in 1902 the almost universal norm had been to crowd large numbers of children of all ages together, seating them on uncomfortable backless benches and exhorting them to just listen. Archibald had begun by something as simple as changing the furniture. Then he had gone on to engage children in the activity of learning, training teachers to know both their Bibles and their child psychology. But his emphasis was never just on learning. It was primarily on spiritual growth; on learning to be, not just to know.⁴⁷

An initial step in the application of Archibald's ideas was to establish a primary department for younger children, under the age of 10, within the Sunday school. As an indication of its commitment to this change, in 1909 the HCU appointed Miss Peach as a primary specialist in school work. She was described as 'a lady of such manifest ability, of such independence and depth of thought, of such gracious manner in instructing the ignorant.'⁴⁸ By 1913, it was reported that 27 schools had primary departments and five were fully graded.⁴⁹

46 *Hampshire Post* 1 May 1908.

47 J Priestly 'The Lumber Merchant and the Chocolate King: The Contributions of George Hamilton Archibald and George Cadbury to the Sunday School Movement in England and Wales' in *Sunday School Movement* (eds) Orchard and Briggs 136.

48 *Annual Report of the HCU for 1909* HRO 127M94/62/54 38-9.

49 *Annual Report of the HCU for 1913* HRO 127M94/62/58 33.

The training of teachers, as opposed to the provision of weekly preparation classes, was also seen as an essential ingredient in the successful adoption of 'new methods'. To this end the HCU organised conferences and training events. One of the most notable was an Easter conference held at Gosport in 1912 'to promote improvement in both the method and matter of teaching'.⁵⁰ The choice of location was significant since Gosport Congregational Church was one of the first to adopt in full the 'new methods' and had invested in new premises, the Nicholson Memorial Hall, to facilitate their application. Opened in 1910, the pastor Ernest Franks explained that 'they felt it their duty to have some place there for their work and their services, and they had built these rooms especially that the modern methods of education in Sunday Schools might be carried out.'⁵¹ Thus, at the Easter conference, delegates 'were able to see a fully-graded School at work on Sunday afternoon in a suite of rooms specially and admirably designed for the purpose.'⁵²

Another reason for moving from, in the language of contemporary educational development, 'surface learning' to 'deep learning' was to increase the likelihood of scholars having a life changing or conversion experience.⁵³ Indeed, there was some criticism of Christian Endeavour societies for failing to develop a mature faith. It was argued that spiritual progress required active engagement with Biblical narratives and their interpretation as opposed to passively accepting them without question.

There was also recognition in certain quarters that whatever was taught formally needed to be reinforced by model behaviour on the part of the teachers. The previously mentioned William Melville Harris, who was to become 'a key figure in Archibald's enterprise', put it this way during his talk at the autumn meeting of the HCU in 1906: 'The best moral is the unspoken one that is lived before the child.'⁵⁴ In so doing he was echoing, Mr Charles Burt, who had made the point at the annual meeting of the Romsey and District Sunday School Union in 1904, that teachers 'had to influence the lives of ... [their] scholars for good, and this they could do by their lives.'⁵⁵ Here there was a tacit acknowledgment of the need to give attention to what became known in the second half of the twentieth century as the 'hidden curriculum.' Applying a definition of the educationalist Derek Rowntree, the 'hidden curriculum' consisted of all the beliefs, values, understandings and patterns of behaviour that

50 *Annual Report of the HCU for 1912* HRO 127M94/62/57 33.

51 *HT* 30 September 1910.

52 *Annual Report of the HCU for 1912* HRO 127M94/62/57 33.

53 See J Biggs *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (SHRE and Open University Press, 1999) for the distinction between 'surface' and 'deep' learning.

54 *RA* 2 November 1906.

55 *RA* 22 January 1904.

were transmitted to Sunday school scholars not through the formal teaching they received but unconsciously through what was implicitly required of them.⁵⁶ If there was a mismatch between the formal and hidden curricula then the latter was more likely to prevail. This undoubtedly meant that all those associated with the Sunday school, teachers and officers alike, literally had to practice what they preached.

A further issue and one of the biggest challenges for churches was the failure to convert substantial numbers of Sunday school scholars into regular church attendees. As Doreen Rosman argues, 'neither the parents, who sent their children to Sunday School with what Sarah Williams has called 'dogged determination', nor the children themselves regarded churchgoing as a logical corollary of Sunday School attendance.'⁵⁷ This was a topic to which speakers at Sunday school events constantly returned. Addressing the annual meeting of Andover's Congregational Sunday School in 1903, Hugh Ross Williamson suggested that one of the great problems facing the church 'was how to keep those they had and how to retain them so that they should be brought into the fellowship of the Christian church.'⁵⁸ Similarly, the Secretary of London Street Sunday School made explicit reference to the question of 'how are we to retain our scholars when they arrive at the ages of 14 and 15' in his report presented at the annual meeting of the School held in 1908. He went on to mention, with a hint of frustration, 'the astonishing fact that a very great proportion of those who are outside our Churches were once scholars in our Sunday Schools.'⁵⁹

Not surprisingly, there was also an acute recognition of the problem at county level.

The serious point in our report [for 1907] concerns the leakage between the School and the Church. Only 108 scholars have joined the Church during the year ... It has saddened us to think that some of our workers have even yet not realized that our Sunday schools are meant to be the door into the Church. The difficulty of evangelizing and bringing back those that slip away in youth is enormous. In youth the heart is more impressionable than at any other time ...⁶⁰

While in 1912 at the spring meeting of the HCU, Alfred Peach posed the question: 'while twenty and thirty per cent of the Sunday scholars were lost to the Church could it be said they were doing their work efficiently?'⁶¹ The basis of his calculation is not entirely clear, but he was undoubtedly much

⁵⁶ D Rowntree *A Dictionary of Education* (London 1981) 115.

⁵⁷ D Rosman, 'Sunday Schools and Social Change in the Twentieth Century' in *Sunday School Movement* Orchard and Briggs (eds) 151. Quote from Sarah Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c1880-1939* (Oxford, 1999) 7.

⁵⁸ *AA* 20 November 1903.

⁵⁹ *HBG* 11 April 1908.

⁶⁰ *Annual Report of the HCU for 1907* HRO 127M94/62/52 47.

⁶¹ *HT* 4 October 1912.

preoccupied with the need for churches to find some way of staunching the haemorrhage of young people.

Most, if not all, churches were aware of the problem and constantly looking for effective ways of addressing it. These met with varying degrees of success. For example, at Above Bar Congregational Church's 250th anniversary celebrations in 1912 the comment was made that 'The Minister's Bible class for young men was a great help towards retaining young men in the church ...'⁶² For London Street's Sunday School Secretary, 'one of the ways, if not the best way of solving the problem' lay in the concept of the institutional church namely using the plethora of satellite organisations to ensure that the church was meeting all of the needs of young people, social and intellectual, as well as spiritual.⁶³ While at Overton, it was reported in 1906 that:

The Church had kept up its reputation as a Young People's Church during the year, frequently there are 35 young men, excluding those who are Church Members, present at the Evening service; the Services of Song and the Working parties have maintained the interest of the young people of the Church, the Christian Endeavour has had a good attendance throughout the year.⁶⁴

Perhaps this was a church where the aspiration expressed at the annual meeting of the Romsey and District Sunday School Union in 1909 that 'their church life should be so warm that next to their home the scholars should love it' was fully realised.⁶⁵ However, the regularity with which the issue of the loss of young people surfaced indicated that any 'solutions' were only palliatives and churches, such as Overton, were the exceptions rather than the rule.

A related issue concerned the parents of Sunday school scholars. Although the provision of Sunday schools was seen as a means of having contact with families, who would not normally have any dealings with the church, the question of how best to interest and engage with such parents was by no means straightforward. At the autumn gathering of the HCU in 1910 the problem was forcefully articulated by Mr Percy Randall of Above Bar Congregational Church. In the course of his opening address at an afternoon 'conference' on the theme of "The Scholar with no Christian Home", he:

... deplored the fact that some 80 per cent of the children who pass through the Sunday Schools become lost to the churches which have matured them. His experiences as a Sunday School Superintendent had convinced him that their work with regard to these scholars who came from non-Christian homes was almost entirely a failure as far as bringing them into the church was concerned ... Broadly speaking, where the home and Sunday School were pulling together on the child, success followed their efforts as teachers, but where the home and

62 *STHE* 30 November 1912.

63 *HBG* 11 April 1908.

64 *Annual Report of the HCU for 1906* HRO 127M94/62/51 27.

65 *RA* 15 January 1909.

the Sunday School pulled in two different directions the home—the non-Christian home—won ...

It is probable that in most, if not all, non-Christian homes children would have been brought up to regard Sunday school attendance as a 'right of passage'. Put another way, it was something their parents had experienced and it was a process they were expected to endure, rather than enjoy. Since they were being socialised into certain 'Christian' values which had universal applicability, such as respect, honesty and kindness, it was good for them.

For Randall and those who thought like him, in order to address the problem of non-Christian home children there would need to be 'greater love and self-sacrifice on the part of the teachers', who would be expected 'to devote all of their spare time to Sunday School work.' It would also be necessary to throw open 'Christian homes ... for the use of Sunday School teachers and their scholars', thereby enabling non-Christian home children to 'be brought under more constant Christian influence than was possible in existing conditions.'⁶⁶

Clearly this was a somewhat idealistic response to a particularly challenging situation. Arguably, a more realistic approach was to organise events specifically for the parents of Sunday school children, in the hope that some who were not closely attached to the church would attend. Thus, teas and entertainments for parents and friends of scholars were a regular feature of Sunday school life. At one such event organised by London Street Sunday School in early 1911, the visiting speaker George Saunders, pastor of Above Bar Congregational Church, observed that 'Teachers did feel the need of co-operation on the part of fathers and mothers in their effort to bring their boys and girls to Jesus Christ.'⁶⁷ Not surprisingly, the evangelistic dimension of Sunday school work was seen as a joint effort and to this end teachers and church members more generally were encouraged to maintain links with scholars and their families during the week. In the words of Ernest Franks, 'they wanted to infuse into the Church members an evangelistic zeal which should cause them to give up their time to paying visits to the homes of non-Christian people.'⁶⁸

Notwithstanding the challenges they faced, it could be argued that some Sunday schools were the victims of their own success as increases in the number of scholars, coupled with the adoption of 'new methods', meant that the accommodation at their disposal was no longer fit for purpose. In other words, the space available was insufficient and/or not well suited to more innovative approaches to instructing the scholars. It is noticeable that this led a number of

66 *LC* 6 October 1910.

67 *HBG* 28 January 1911.

68 *LC* 6 October 1910.

churches to embark on building projects which were intended, at least in part, to address this need.

One example was the Nicholson Memorial Hall in Gosport, to which reference has already been made. Another was Albion Congregational Church in Southampton. At the foundation stone laying for the Church Building Extension Scheme, Mr J. Thomas, the Sunday School Superintendent explained that due to 'the continued increase and improvement in the Sunday school ... the number of scholars had completely outgrown their accommodation.' The new building was:

.... [to] consist of a north entrance block, with corridors to general and elementary schools in the basement, an entrance hall on the ground floor, and on the top floor a new library, with a lift for the easier carriage of books to the lower floors.⁶⁹

Another of the speakers congratulated the Church on the grounds 'that in a populous district like theirs, at time when, perhaps, the general tendency was to avoid and think less of religion ... their requirements had so increased.' He went on to observe that 'they were engaged in a work which contributed towards the building up of the children's character.'⁷⁰

Nor were building projects by any means the exclusive preserve of large town churches. In rural areas, churches and chapels extended their premises to have more accommodation for children's work. At East Meon, a much needed schoolroom was erected in 1903. At the laying of the foundation stone, Mrs J. Gammon expressed the hope 'that the children instructed within that building would in early life be led to Christ'.⁷¹ A year later it was reported that 'the value of the New Schoolroom ... [was] greatly appreciated'.⁷² A further example is provided by the previously mentioned Overton Congregational Church which built a primary classroom in 1913 and had raised the necessary funds in full by 1914.

Thus, notwithstanding the very real concerns over teaching methods, the relatively small numbers of Sunday school scholars who became church members and the most effective means of engaging with the 'non-church' parents of scholars, building projects and increases in the number of Sunday school teachers indicate that the overall situation was not perhaps as dire as some observers might suggest. Indeed, for optimists, there was still, in contemporary parlance, 'everything to play for.' While many would have concurred with, and drawn comfort from, the comment of Ebenezer Hitchcock, pastor of Andover Congregational Church and a guest speaker at the annual meeting of the

69 *HI* 13 July 1907.

70 *HI* 13 July 1907.

71 *HSN* 22 April 1903.

72 *Annual Report of the HCU for 1903* HRO 127M94/62/48 22.

Romsey and District Sunday School Union in 1904, that ‘the wealth of the good which was done by the Sunday schools was beyond all calculation.’⁷³

Conclusion

For Edwardian Congregationalists the Sunday school remained one of the pre-eminent institutions of frontline Christian work. It continued to serve large numbers of children and provided churches with a potential channel of communication to families with whom they might otherwise have no contact. Sunday school anniversaries and prize-givings were ‘red letter’ events in the church calendar and were celebrated with great fanfare, often attracting considerable press coverage in which individual scholars might well be mentioned by name.

However, notwithstanding the high profile of work with the young, it was not without its challenges. Although considerable resources, both human and material, were invested in the work, doubts were frequently raised as to its efficacy and viability. In the main, these were prompted by concern over the relatively small numbers of Sunday school scholars who became regular attendees at church services as they became older, let alone church members. This, of course, gave rise to a considerable degree of heart searching in an attempt to identify the reasons and to assess the longer term implications. It also stimulated a certain amount of experimentation and innovation. This could be disturbing and controversial and, as is often the case with changes in educational practice, it was difficult to assess the results. Certainly, there is little evidence that new methods produced any increase in the number of scholars becoming church members. Nonetheless, it was essential that Sunday schools kept up with any changes in the practices of day schools to avoid the danger of unfavourable comparisons being made. As it was put by Ernest Franks in 1912 at the annual conference of the County Union Secretaries for the Young People’s Department of the CUEW:

Sunday-schools ... were waking up to the necessity of being more in line with educational consciousness, and we should look in a more thoughtful manner to see the principles upon which we ought to base that improvement. The Sunday-school should be conducted in the way with which young people were familiar in day schools.⁷⁴

At the same time, they had to find ways of countering, in words used by London Street’s Sunday School Secretary in his report for 1913: ‘the spirit of the age—the modern feeling of restlessness, the competition, and the growing disregard for the Sabbath.’⁷⁵

73 *RA* 22 January 1904.

74 *TBC* 14 November 1912 840.

75 *Basingstoke Congregational Magazine* (April 1913) 3.

Some Congregational churches were, of course, more effective in doing this than others. Why this should have been the case is difficult to determine. In human terms, it was often a particular combination of circumstances which led to a church being particularly attractive to the young. One element was undoubtedly the personality of the pastor and his ability to relate to those in this age group through his preaching and the interest he took in them. Another factor was probably peer pressure, with some churches having a core of committed young people who others sought to emulate. How far siblings or parents played a part is a moot point, with the evidence from Hampshire suggesting that their influence was not as great as might be expected. Whatever else, churches were well aware of the necessity of persevering with this aspect of their ministry in order to secure their futures.

Appendix I: Statistical Data Published by the Sunday School Department of the HCU 1901–1914.

Year	Schools	Scholars	Av Att M		Av Att A		Teachers	TCM%		SSCM
			No	%	No	%				
1901	95	13400	4653	n.r.	9500	58.2	1386	1211	88	208
1902	97	13963	4753	34.0	9886	70.8	1268	n.r.	89	146
1903	106	14233	4799	34.0	9855	70.0	1462	n.r.	86	171
1904	107	14477	4593	31.0	10862	75.0	1521	1302	85	157
1905	107	14625	4703	n.r.	10028	n.r.	1493	n.r.	83	196
1906	107	14246	4581	n.r.	9465	n.r.	1464	1231	84	167
1907	111	14417	n.r.	32.2	n.r.	69.6	1471	1266	86	108
1908	n.r.	14718	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	1530	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.
1909	117	14435	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	1545	n.r.	86	134
1910	119	14618	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	1569	1281	81	101
1911	119	14380	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	1620	n.r.	n.r.	111
1912	121	14247	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	1686	n.r.	n.r.	119
1913	121	14046	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	1775	n.r.	n.r.	129

Notes and Key

The figures include those for Congregational Sunday schools on the Isle of Wight as well as mainland Hampshire and from 1903 the Channel Islands.

n.r. = not reported

Av Att M = Average attendance in the morning

Av Att A = Average attendance in the afternoon

TCM = Teachers who were church members

% = Percentage of teachers who were church members.

SSCM = Number of Sunday School scholars becoming church members

Appendix 2: Secretaries of the HCU Sunday School/Young Person's Department 1901-1914

Period	Name	Church
1901-1904	Hugh Ross Williamson	Abbey Cong'l Church, Romsey
1904-1907	Robert Teasdale	Gosport Congregational Church
1907 -1909	Leonard Dowsett	Havant Congregational Church
1909-1911	Ernest Franks	Gosport Congregational Church
1911-1914	Edward Kirby	Havant Congregational Church

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THE PRINCIPLES OF SCOTTISH CONGREGATIONALISM EXAMINED IN THEIR HISTORICAL SETTING

Congregationalism

Congregationalism is that form of Church polity which rests on the independence and autonomy of each local church. It professes to represent the principle of democracy in Church government, a polity which is held to follow from its fundamental belief in Christ as the sole head of His Church. All the members of the Church, being Christians, are 'priests unto God'. Where two or three such meet in Christ's name He is in their midst guiding their thoughts and inspiring their actions, and each such community, duly constituted with its officers, is regarded as an outcrop and representative of the Church Universal. It is held that the system is primitive in that it represents the earliest form of Church order. It requires a very high standard of Christian devotion to maintain it, though it is admitted that in practice it has fallen sometimes sadly below that ideal.¹

Note the last sentence. I believe it was Karl Barth who when asked which was the best form of church polity replied "*Congregationalism*" and then went on to say that he did not expect to see it realised this side of the Kingdom of Heaven. A sentiment similar to that of a Scottish Congregational minister who stated in 1867:

"I have sometimes thought, that I have heard just a little too much about our principles, and seen too little of their practical outcome".²

Mea culpa. After nearly fifty-odd years of association with Scottish Congregationalism I stand before you as a guilty man, a failure, only too aware that it is one thing 'to talk the talk' and another to 'walk the walk'. Also, nowadays I approach the subject of church polity from a different perspective, in that I have come to the conclusion that Jesus did not consciously set out to found the Church. I can understand how it came into being, how it arose out of the desire of men and women seeking to follow Jesus to have fellowship with one another but any polity adopted thereafter is for me secondary to our response to God's love as revealed in the values and attitudes Jesus embodied in his life and teaching.

Their intention was not to form a party, but to promote real religion

Scottish Congregationalism's founding fathers did not set out to form a new

¹ *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Second Edition 1983) 332.

² *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (Edinburgh 1867) 185.

religious denomination, to adopt a particular form of church polity, but rather to address religious destitution in Scotland, to win men and women for Christ. One thing simply led to another and eventually they found themselves outwith the Presbyterian fold and embracing Congregationalism.

An early missionary movement on behalf of the neglected masses at home was the Edinburgh Tract Society, instituted mainly through the exertions of John Campbell³ in 1793. Campbell had enjoyed the benefit of a good education but afterwards engaged in trade as an ironmonger in the Grassmarket.

There was not, perhaps, *another* tradesman in Scotland who occupied a similar position with himself. No man in the University, nor in the pulpits of Edinburgh, was so early or so intimately acquainted with English Churchmen or Dissenters, who originated the great Societies which are now the glory of Britain. What Mr. Newton⁴ wrote to him in 1793,—“I constitute you my *agent* at Edinburgh, and solicit to be your agent in London,”—was a compliment paid by not a few of the fathers and founders of the *liberal things* devised under the evening sun of the eighteenth century.⁵

He was in Edinburgh the living model of a city-missionary, a district visitor, a Scripture reader, a tract distributor, and a Sabbath school originator long before Christians had learned to unite themselves in societies to promote these objects. His warehouse was the only repository in Edinburgh for religious tracts and periodicals, and became a sort of house of call, or point of reunion, for all who took an interest in the kingdom of Christ.⁶

Among the ventures promoted by Campbell and others, which eventually led to the adoption of Congregational principles, were interdenominational missionary societies, Sabbath schools independent of official church supervision, lay preaching, the non-sectarian Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home. One such venture was the Tabernacle, Edinburgh, opened in 1798 as an experiment in providing for those outwith the influence of the Gospel in large centres of population. Initially its promoters remained members of the Church of Scotland but a change in denominational loyalty became apparent with Greville Ewing's⁷ resignation from that body in December 1798. Thereafter, around twelve of the individuals principally involved in the Tabernacle and S.P.G.H. resolved to form themselves into a Congregational Church, the first of many fashioned to a similar plan and owing their inception to the generosity of Robert Haldane.⁸ It was asserted that:

3 For John Campbell (1766–1840) see W D McNaughton *The Scottish Congregational Ministry 1794–1993* (Glasgow 1993) 23.

4 John Newton (1725–1807).

5 R Philip *The Life, Times, and Missionary Enterprises of the Rev. John Campbell* (1841) 94–95, as quoted by N Gray in *Greville Ewing Architect of Scottish Congregationalism* PhD Thesis 2 Vols Edinburgh, 1961.

6 A Haldane *Memoirs of the Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey, and His Brother, James Alexander Haldane* (1852) 124.

7 For Greville Ewing (1767–1841) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 43.

8 For Robert Haldane (1764–1842) see A Haldane *Memoirs*.

The form of church government is what has been called Congregational. It is exercised in the presence of the church itself, by its pastor and church officers, and with the consent of its members, independent of any other jurisdiction ... A strict discipline also is maintained. The characters of all persons admitted as church members are particularly examined, and great numbers have been rejected, either from ignorance of the Gospel, or from not appearing to maintain a becoming walk and conversation ... the church members are exhorted to watch over each other in love; if anyone be overtaken in a fault, he is reproved, but if convicted of departing from the faith of the Gospel, or deliberate immorality, or ... continued indulgence in sin, he is put away; and restored only upon certain proofs of repentance. Such regulations, we believe, to be according to Scripture, and calculated to promote edification.⁹

The chief principle which influenced the minds of the brethren who, I¹⁰ believe, constituted the majority of the small company first associated for the observance of divine ordinances in the Circus, was the indispensable necessity of the people of God being separated in religious fellowship from all such societies as permitted unbelievers to continue in their communion.¹¹

The indigenous nature of Scottish Congregationalism

The indigenous nature of Scottish Congregationalism cannot be questioned, in the sense that its principles were adopted of necessity and spontaneously in order to give expression to the spiritual convictions and aspirations of individuals who had been enlivened spiritually, to whom spirituality and freedom of church-life had become a necessity. Its progenitors were guided by two main principles, the principle that the churches of Christ should be composed of believers in Christ and that every church should be free to manage its own affairs in accordance with the teaching of Scripture. At the same time, however, the churches that arose reveal a desire to adhere as closely as possible to the customs and usage of their former connections. The times of meeting and order of public worship underwent little or no change, and the casual hearer could detect little difference in this respect with worship in a Presbyterian church. The only real exceptions to this concerned the observance of the Lord's Supper, celebrated by most Congregational churches on the first day of each week as part of the normal service, and the weekly meeting where church business was transacted along with appropriate devotional exercises.

Decided and intelligent Congregationalists

In addition to the above, a special ministry of the Gospel was held from the

⁹ R. Haldane *Address to the Public, Concerning Political Opinions and Plans Lately Adopted to Promote Religion in Scotland, &c. &c.* (Edinburgh 1800) 72–73.

¹⁰ For John Aikman (1770–1834) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 4.

¹¹ A. Haldane *Memoirs* 233. See W. Innes *Reasons for Separating from the Church of Scotland* (Dundee, 1804) for the first full and concise reasoning by a Scottish Congregationalist for relinquishing Presbyterian sentiments and leaving the Church of Scotland.

outset by the early Independents and the need to obtain a suitable supply of ministers for the Tabernacle and evangelists for the S.P.G.H. led Robert Haldane to establish a seminary in which the first class of twenty-eight students met under the care of Ewing in January 1799. They were all Presbyterian in sentiment but by the completion of their studies all had become “decided and intelligent Congregationalists” under the charge of the S.P.G.H.¹²

An ever present tension between theory and practice

Earlier forms of Scottish Independency, such as the Bereans, Old Scots Independents and Glasites, had insisted on a believers’ church and purity of communion, and were determined to reproduce the fellowship of the apostolic church by imitating every practice to be found in the New Testament churches, all of which resulted in division, through lack of forbearance. Such forces were at work within Congregationalism from an early date and Greville Ewing, for one, was well aware of the dangers inherent in the slavish imitation of scripture precedent in attempting to construct a form of church order. We find him totally rejecting the extreme Glasite and Sandemanian position in 1798:

Another grievous blunder ... which seems to be admitted throughout as a principle, is, (not merely that our churches must be exactly copied from what may be called the apostolic model, or the general result of their precept and practice), but that whatever circumstances can be found to have attended one or two of the churches then, ought to belong to all churches now ... That the primitive churches generally had, because, from their multitudes, they needed, a plurality of elders, may be true; that all numerous churches yet should have a similar plurality, may be true also. But must this be the case absolutely in every church?¹³

In such attempts to construct a form of church order, the order and constitution of the church tended to become of supreme importance, “to be regarded as the end of Christian fellowship and not as the means of Christian edification and Christian effort”.¹⁴ As a result, the mark of the true church was no longer evangelistic activity, and individuals were “more anxious about the internal arrangement of a church, than about the means of gathering in THE CHURCH—UNIVERSAL”.¹⁵ In the process, individuals often forgot to exercise scriptural love. Forbearance tended to be overlooked or, as in the case of Sandemanianism, despised; “When any ... are conscious that they walk in any respect contrary to that rule by which the first churches of the saints were regulated; they are convicted by the testimony of their own conscience, that they are unscriptural ... no Disciple can remain in (them) without sin”.¹⁶

12 A Haldane *Memoirs* 248.

13 *Missionary Magazine* (Edinburgh 1798) 465–466.

14 H Escott *A History of Scottish Congregationalism* (Glasgow 1960) 42.

15 *Missionary Magazine* (Edinburgh 1798) 465.

16 R Sandeman *Copy of a Letter in Answer to a Question Enquiring the Meaning of a Certain Expression in a Book Entitled “Christian Songs”* (1772) 4.

The Peanuts cartoon springs to mind where Snoopy is sitting on top of his doghouse, writing furiously. Charlie Brown asks, “*What are you writing?*” Snoopy answers, “*It’s a book on theology*”. Charlie Brown persists, “*And what are you going to call it?*” Snoopy looks up and replies, “*The title will be. **Have You Ever Considered That You Might Be Wrong?***”

The need for Forbearance

The disruptive teachings of Glas¹⁷ and Sandeman¹⁸ began to make themselves increasingly felt within the young churches from around 1804 and in 1807 William Ballantine¹⁹ published a pamphlet²⁰ which was widely circulated by Robert Haldane as representing his own views. This document struck at the entire order of the public worship of the churches and the debate mushroomed into a bitter dispute, in which “to train pious men for the ministry—to have public collections for the support of Gospel ordinances—for ministers to wear black clothes—was pronounced anti-Christian. Various other novelties were zealously enforced ... [and] those who would not embrace these things, were accused of opposing the cause of God”.²¹ Sensing that if the normal pastoral ministry be replaced with a system of uneducated plurality the lively young churches would fossilise like Ballantine’s, “a desert of empty pews, enough to chill the spirits of an Archangel”,²² Ewing asserted “the Word of God is the only authority which we are bound to obey, in our Christian fellowship. But our heavenly Father has not thought it proper to give a minute detail of the formation and practice of his primitive churches”.²³ If the followers of Christ cannot exercise forbearance and recognise sincerely held differences of opinion, they “establish a tyranny of opinion, which binds the conscience, where Christ hath left it free; which intimidates every objector, or excludes him from

17 For John Glas (1695–1773) see *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (Edinburgh 1993) 364.

18 For Robert Sandeman (1718–1771) see *Dictionary* 744.

19 For William Ballantine (d.1836) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 10.

20 W Ballantine *A Treatise on the Elder’s Office: showing the Qualifications of Elders, and how the First Churches obtained them; also, their Appointment, Duties and Maintenance; the Necessity of a Presbytery in every Church, and Exhortation, and the Observance of every Church Ordinance on the Lord’s Day, in order, amongst other ends, to the obtaining of Elders* (Edinburgh 1807).

21 J J Matheson *A Memoir of Greville Ewing* (London 1843) 327–328.

22 *General Account of Congregationalism in Scotland from 1798 to 1848 and Particular Accounts Referring to Separate Counties* (hereafter GACS) Typescript, no date (c.1848) Section 10, p11.

23 G Ewing *An Attempt Towards a Statement of the Doctrine of Scriptures on Some Disputed Points Respecting the Constitution, Governments, Worship and Discipline of the Church of Christ* (Glasgow 1807) Preface.

communion; and denounces all other churches as ignorant, superstitious, prejudiced and corrupt”.²⁴ Words that we ignore at our peril!

The trouble came to a head with Robert Haldane, Congregationalist by circumstance rather than conviction, becoming a Baptist in 1808. The ‘new views’ provoked “contention, strife of words, and divisions”²⁵ and Robert lent all his weight to advocating Baptist views. In the process, he felt it his duty to withdraw his financial assistance to those who did not share his views. The fact that he held the purse strings of the S.P.G.H., the seminary, had built many of the buildings in which Congregationalists worshipped, or given substantial loans for the erection of these buildings, meant that his decision had tremendous implications for those who did not share his views. Some had to vacate buildings and others were faced with the prospect of having to repay their debts immediately.²⁶ “Many of the Churches were poor and if they had hitherto been unable to support their Pastors, much less were they able to do so now that they were divided in sentiment, and fewer in number.”²⁷

No doubt some adopted the new ideas out of inexperienced rashness, but the apparent anarchy that prevailed in the churches resulted in an odium being attached to attempts to establish true and Scriptural fellowship and serves to highlight the high standard of Christian devotion required to maintain what Congregationalists regard as the earliest form of Church order.

The continued need for decided and intelligent Congregationalists

In its essence Christianity is following Christ, that is, it is a way of living based on the values and attitudes Jesus embodied in his life and teaching, and our Congregational forbearers regarded the desire to follow Christ as the sole requirement of church membership. All members were believed to have a part to play in the body and ‘the ministry’ was seen as a necessity to enable the broader ministry of the Church—“in order to build up the body of Christ” [Ephesians

24 Ewing *An Attempt* 4.

25 GACS Section 1, p27.

26 (W Orme) *London Christian Instructor* (1819) 784. Orme speaks of the “immediate payment” of debts and states, “A moderate man would have acted in many respects differently; but Mr. Haldane neither built up nor pulled down with moderation”. Ross states that Haldane, “in several instances ... acted considerably and liberally towards those in financial trouble, in some cases remitting part of their debt and in others making the terms of repayment as easy as possible”. J Ross *A History of Congregational Independency in Scotland* (Glasgow 1900) 82. Ross follows Alexander Haldane (cf. A Haldane *Memoirs* 366f.) who is at pains to show that the charge that Haldane distressed the churches is without foundation. GACS, *passim*, however, reveals that the distress caused cannot be lightly dismissed. Cp. Gray *Greville Ewing* Vol 2, p334f.

27 GACS Section 1, pp.27–28.

4.12]. Hence, the demise of Haldane's seminary led to an awareness of the need for the churches to facilitate ministerial education. A meeting was held in March 1811,²⁸ attended by twenty-eight ministers and the lay-representative of one vacant charge, and where letters of support were received from another twenty-three ministers. The meeting agreed to form the Glasgow Theological Academy and Greville Ewing and Ralph Wardlaw²⁹ were appointed to serve as tutors. Individuals proposed for receiving education had to be "recommended by their pastors with the consent of their respective churches, as known to possess good natural talents and decided piety, along with those qualities of Christian temper which the Scriptures require in those who devote themselves to the ministry of the Word".³⁰ Sound procedure!

Thirty-one years later, the Academy's Committee were able to assert, "the cause of God in connexion with the Congregational churches in this country, is ... sustained and extended, chiefly through the instrumentality which this Academy regularly supplies. ... [And] what would have been its [the ministry's] present condition, if this institution had not existed ... What would have been in that case the very limited influence of the churches ... How utterly unprepared and unprovided must they have been ... In bearing testimony for Scriptural independence and purity of communion,—in pleading for these principles, not in word only, but in deed and truth".³¹ Nearly one hundred and fifty years later, similar thoughts concerning the importance of the Scottish Congregational College and its alumni in the life of Scottish Congregationalism were expressed to me by Nelson Gray.³²

A non-denominational Congregational Union of Scotland

Twenty months or so after the Theological Academy's birth, the Congregational Union was formed in 1812 by representatives of the churches throughout Scotland:³³ its object being "the relief of Congregational Churches in Scotland, united in the faith and hope of the Gospel, who, from their poverty, the fewness of their numbers, or from debt upon their places of worship, are unable to provide for the Ministration of the word of God, in that way, which would tend most to their edification, and the eternal happiness of those around them".³⁴ The Union's aim was twofold: church aid and home mission. From the outset,

28 *Glasgow Theological Academy Minutes, 1811–1842* Manuscript.

29 Ralph Wardlaw (1779–1853) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 166.

30 *Glasgow Theological Academy Minutes, 1811–1842* Manuscript.

31 *Report of the Committee of Management of the Theological Academy at Glasgow* (Glasgow 1842) 3.

32 For William Robert Nelson Gray (1923–1999) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 211.

33 *Missionary Magazine* (Edinburgh 1812) 470–471.

34 *Annual Report of the Congregational Union of Scotland* (Edinburgh 1813) 4.

reports of the Union show every pastor regarded as an evangelist and every church a home-mission agency.³⁵ Its founders had no thought of creating a *denominational* institution, in the sense that it should be inclusive or representative of all Congregational churches in Scotland. The institution did not comprise of every Congregational church in Scotland, but simply belonged to such as chose to join, and the fifty-five congregations who did join initially did so out of the will to survive. Their common necessity introduced them to the advantages of interdependence.³⁶

Emancipation?

The Academy sought to provide an educated ministry for the young churches and the Union sought to provide an agency through which an educated ministry might be used to best advantage. But it is difficult to completely agree with Alexander's³⁷ assertion that, "Haldane's withdrawal was about the best thing that could have happened to the denomination at large, as, by closing up an artificial source of strength, it threw the churches upon their internal resources, and taught them to look for success more steadfastly and exclusively to the soundness of their principles, the activity of their efforts, the purity of their character ..."³⁸

Haldane was indeed a formidable individual on whose patronage much depended but his departure did not entirely alter the ethos in which Scottish Congregationalism tended to exist; he had directed the life of the churches through the S.P.G.H., the seminary, loans and grants, and a similar *modus operandi* persisted to a degree under other individuals.

Nelson Gray describes Greville Ewing as the "Architect of Scottish Congregationalism"³⁹ and there can be little doubt that Ewing's influence was considerable through the Academy and the Union, as was that of others such as Ralph Wardlaw, John Aikman,⁴⁰ John Watson,⁴¹ William McGavin⁴² and Robert Kinniburgh,⁴³ all of whom were of a social class far removed from the vast

35 *Annual Report of the Congregational Union of Scotland* 1813 onwards.

36 Fifty-five churches joined the Union at its inception and by 1824 it consisted of seventy-eight churches. Over the years the number increased, always remaining around one hundred until 1896.

37 For William Lindsay Alexander (1808–1884), see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 5.

38 W L Alexander *Memoir of the Rev. John Watson* (Edinburgh 1845) 101–102.

39 Gray *Greville Ewing*.

40 For John Aikman (1770–1834) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 4.

41 For John Watson (1777–1844) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 167. Secretary of the Congregational Union 1812–1844.

42 For William McGavin (1773–1832) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 90.

43 For Robert Kinniburgh (1780–1851) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 78.

majority of Scottish Congregationalists. Indeed, an interesting cameo of a few of the individuals who, with Ewing, could be said to have comprised a kind of Congregational aristocracy is presented by Ewing's wife when she writes, "Last Monday, we ended the year [1827], very happily indeed. Mr. Erskine of Linlathen,⁴⁴ was with us, and staid all night. Mr. Cunningham of Lainshaw,⁴⁵ and Dr. Wardlaw dined; Mr. McGavin and several other friends, came to tea".⁴⁶ On the other hand we read, "The country pastors felt towards him [Ewing] as a father, and drew spirituality from his sanctified genius. He had learned during his itinerancies what a pastor's life in the country was, and he entered into the peculiar difficulties of their position with deep sympathy. No one in his hearing would have ventured to speak slightly of them".⁴⁷

Scottish Congregationalism now functioned within a benevolent patriarchal ethos funded by the richer churches and brethren.

Theological Ethos

The belief that no formulation of the Christian faith can be made binding upon the conscience of the Christian and that the rule of action should be "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity", is indeed noble. But what is essential and what is non-essential? Where did men like Ewing and Wardlaw draw the line?

The forefathers of Scottish Congregationalism were moderate Calvinists who accepted the doctrine of limited atonement in full conformity with the Westminster Confession's statements on divine sovereignty and the doctrine of election. Arminianizing tendencies were strongly resisted. For example, the West Port Chapel, Dundee, in 1828, excluded Thomas Erskine, described many years later as "the most significant figure in Scottish theological thought in the quarter of a century preceding the Disruption—and perhaps the nineteenth century",⁴⁸ from participating in the Lord's Supper, most certainly because of his work, *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*,⁴⁹ advocating a doctrine of universal atonement. Further public repudiation of his views followed with the publication of a work⁵⁰ by David Russell,⁵¹ minister of the West Port Church,

44 Thomas Erskine of Linlathen (1788–1870).

45 For William Cunningham of Lainshaw (c.1776–1849) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 32.

46 Matheson *Greville Ewing* 514.

47 *Scottish Congregationalist* (1882) 115.

48 A L Drummond & J Bulloch *The Scottish Church, 1688–1843* (Edinburgh 1973) 194.

49 T Erskine *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel: in Three Essays* (Edinburgh 1828)

50 D Russell *The Way of Salvation* (Dundee 1829).

51 For David Russell (1779–1848) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 140.

and another⁵² by John Arthur,⁵³ minister of Helensburgh Congregational Church, and acceptance of Erskine's resignation as President of the Committee of Management of the Glasgow Theological Academy in 1830.⁵⁴

Twelve years later, John Kirk,⁵⁵ minister of the Hamilton Congregational Church, published a series of addresses entitled *The Way of Life Made Plain*,⁵⁶ arguing that "not only did Jesus die for every man, but that God's Spirit strives with every man, and that they who yield are saved, and those who resist are unsaved",⁵⁷ an opinion strenuously opposed by his former tutor, Ralph Wardlaw, doyen of moderate Calvinists in Scotland. The following year the Evangelical Union was formed with James Morison⁵⁸ proclaiming the Three Universalities—God loves all; Christ died for all; the Holy Spirit strives with all, and thereafter we find Wardlaw writing in March 1844 of "a heretical tendency" among the students, "springing up from the Morisonian controversy".⁵⁹ As each church was free and independent of others in regard to the religious doctrine it might hold or teach, those who opposed Kirk's assertion made use of the churches' two instruments for common action—the Academy and the Union. The Academy's students had three questions put to them,⁶⁰ and nine students were expelled as a result of their answers. About a month later seven of them applied to the Committee of the Congregational Union to be employed as preachers connected with the Union, but were refused. Shortly after, as a result of correspondence on the subject of Kirk's views, the four Glasgow churches found they could no longer continue to hold fellowship with the churches in Hamilton, Bellshill, Bridgeton, Cambuslang and Ardrossan, and the Congregational churches in Aberdeen likewise found they could no longer hold fellowship with the churches in Blackhills and Printfield.

The nascent Evangelical Union benefited tremendously from the events outlined above and around fifty years later the vast majority of Scottish Congregational churches united with the Evangelical Union to form the Congregational Union of Scotland in 1896. Arminianism had become the norm in Scottish Congregationalism and perhaps it should also be noted that many

52 J Arthur *An Examination and Refutation of the Unscriptural Principles and Sentiments advocated by Mr. Erskine in his Essay to "Extracts of Letters to a Christian Friend"* (Dundee 1830).

53 For John Arthur (1794–1884) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 9.

54 *Glasgow Theological Academy Minutes, 1811–1842*, Manuscript.

55 For John Kirk (1813–1886) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 78.

56 J Kirk *The Way of Life Made Plain* (Glasgow 1842).

57 F Ferguson *A History of The Evangelical Union* (Glasgow 1876) 281.

58 For James Morison (1816–1893) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 112.

59 W L Alexander *Memoirs of The Life and Writings of Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.* (Edinburgh 1856) 421–422.

60 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (Glasgow 1844) 269.

within the churches today, and many outwith, now subscribe to Socinian or Unitarian thinking; reject the doctrines of the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ, the Fall, the Atonement, and eternal punishment, have no formal creed, and consider reason and conscience to be the criteria of belief and practice. We do well to remind ourselves that creeds and dogmas “must never be thought of as anything more than provisional statements of where we now are in the business of making sense of our experience. To imagine that they are literally true and fixed for all time is to limit God”.⁶¹

Ministerial Recognition

A custom prevailed among Scottish Congregational churches:

that when ministers were invited to attend an ordination or induction service they claimed the liberty of satisfying themselves by personal interview or by perusal of the statement the minister-elect intended to make at the service as to whether they could ‘recognise’ him as a brother minister. The right was used only in cases of ministers called by a church of whom the invited ministers had but little knowledge, or whose belief and teaching they had doubt. In most cases the ministers present had opportunities of personally knowing the teaching of the minister-elect, either as a student of the Theological Hall or by his being accredited by other ministers in whom they had confidence.⁶²

Sadly, none of the ministers who took part in James Cranbrook’s⁶³ introductory services to Albany Street Chapel, Edinburgh, in January 1865,⁶⁴ exercised the above right. Cranbrook, who had at one time been a Unitarian minister, began to express theological opinions which were seen as bringing Scottish Congregationalism into disrepute:⁶⁵ the denial of the role of the supernatural in answering prayer being alien to many Congregationalists and Presbyterians.⁶⁶ His fellow ministers in Edinburgh “suspended ministerial communion” with Cranbrook, in an attempt “to show that in his teaching Mr. Cranbrook was alone to be held responsible for the views he expressed, and that no Congregationalists, except those who might signify their adherence to his doctrines, were to be held as sympathising with him”⁶⁷ and, in April 1866, the Committee of the Union cancelled an invitation to Cranbrook to give an address at the forthcoming Annual Meetings. Thereafter, at the Annual Meeting in May a motion was carried unanimously, stating there had been “an

61 T M Willshaw in *Expository Times* (Edinburgh 2000) 99.

62 Ross *Cong Independency in Scotland* 162.

63 For James Cranbrook (1818–1869) see McNaughton *Scottish Cong Ministry* 30

64 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1865) 61.

65 J Cranbrook *Divine Providence in relation to Prayer and Plagues* (Edinburgh 1865). Cf. *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1866) 13; (1867) 125–126.

66 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1866) 13–20, 81–84, 118–121, 247–251, 277–285, 310–317. Cp. *Evangelical Repository* (December 1865) 150.

67 Ross *Cong Independency in Scotland* 160–162.

irregularity in the proceedings of the Committee” which they deeply regretted. For some, the Committee’s action had involved a breach of courtesy towards Cranbrook, the Albany Street Church, and “a violation of the Constitution of the Union”. However, the next day the Meeting passed, by a large majority, a vote of confidence in the Committee which to all intents and purposes nullified the previous motion.⁶⁸ Cranbrook resigned the charge in February 1867.⁶⁹

The Fallout

The 1866 Annual Meetings were held in Edinburgh and, according to Escott, most of those present when the first motion was passed were connected with the Albany Street Church:

the proceeding disclosed a defect in the constitution of the Union by the absence of any definition of qualifications of those entitled to vote at the annual meetings. Membership of the Union had been loosely described as that of churches or members of churches in fellowship with each other agreeing to promote its objects and contributing to its funds; but inasmuch as the business was transacted by individuals present, there was no provision for ascertaining whether they attended and voted as representing themselves or the churches to which they belonged, and as in either case it was not possible at the time to ascertain whether they had been contributors or not, any vote taken at the annual meeting had but little value or significance as expressing the minds of the supporters of the Union generally. It was not until 1887, however, that any attempt was made to secure a voting constituency of the Union. In that year ... an addition was made to the constitution providing that the annual meeting should consist of (1) the pastor of each contributing church, (2) of one representative where the membership of the church was under 200, (3) of a third where the membership was over 200, and (4) of an additional representative, irrespective of the number of its members, of a church sending not less than £40 a year to the funds of the Union.⁷⁰

Reflection

I asked at the outset that the following be noted: “[Congregationalism] requires a very high standard of Christian devotion to maintain it, though it is admitted that in practice it has fallen sometimes sadly below that ideal”. Since my ordination, just short of forty years ago, the statistics relating to Scottish Congregationalism have changed dramatically and one wonders what part was played by the failure to maintain a high standard of Christian devotion. For example:

68 *Annual Report of the Congregational Union of Scotland* (1866) 4–6.

69 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1867) 125.

70 Escott *Scottish Congregationalism* 100.

	1975 ⁷¹	2013 ⁷²
Churches	112	37
Pastors in Charges	79	28
Members	21,535	1,839
Ministers in Professional, Chaplaincy Work, etc.	14	1

Just how Congregational are we in practice? “All the members of the Church, being Christians, are ‘priests unto God’. Where two or three such meet in Christ’s name He is in their midst guiding their thoughts and inspiring their actions ...” How well has this ‘priesthood’ played its part in sharing the *good news* down through the years; how well-attended have Church Meetings been, how much of Church life, with varying emphasis, has been delegated to Trustees, Managers, Deacons and Ministers, and how many conscious or unconscious personal agendas have been pursued? It is easy for a Congregational Church to cease to be so by default, to be supplanted by the behaviour of a formidable individual or sect, to forget scriptural love and despise forbearance.

Then again, to a degree the churches have become Minister-orientated rather than Christo-centric. This is far from the ideal in which ‘the ministry’ is seen as a necessity to enable the broader ministry of the Church—“in order to build up”.

And what of the Scottish Congregational ‘ministry’ itself, is it composed of “decided and intelligent Congregationalists”? Up until the advent of the United Reformed Church in Scotland the Scottish Congregational ‘ministry’ was an educated one, overwhelmingly indigenous and of Congregational lineage.

1975⁷³

Lineage & Training of Ministers in charges

Scottish Congregational College [& University in many cases]	57	72%
English or Welsh Congregational Colleges	10	12.5%
Congregational Union of England & Wales / Ireland Exams	6	7.5%
Miscellaneous Colleges or Universities	5	6%
One Irishman—Training unknown	1	1%

Since the departure from the Congregational Union of Scotland of many of the churches now comprising the Congregational Federation in Scotland, this is no longer the case due to numerous factors.

71 *Year Book of the Congregational Union of Scotland 1974–76* (Glasgow) 206.

72 *The Congregational Federation Year Book 2013* (Nottingham 2013).

73 *Year Book of the Congregational Union of Scotland 1974–76* (Glasgow) 42–46.

2013⁷⁴

Lineage & Training of Ministers in charges

No Training or Unrecognised Training	11	39%
Congregational Federation Integrated Training Course	8	29%
Scottish Congregational College	3	11%
Miscellaneous Colleges or Universities	3	11%
Student on Congregational Federation Integrated Training Course	2	7%
English Congregational College	1	3%

It could be argued that the pendulum appears to have swung from an educated 'ministry', overwhelmingly indigenous and of Congregational lineage to one of Congregationalists by circumstance rather than conviction.

I was taught that history never repeats itself and this is true. I also believe that an institution without some sense of from whence it came is to a degree disorientated.

74 Miscellaneous Sources.

W D McNaughton

Books for Congregationalists

Manual of Congregational Principles by RW Dale,

The Atonement by RW Dale,

Visible Saints: The Congregational Way 1640–1660 by Geoffrey F Nuttall

Studies in English Dissent by Geoffrey F Nuttall

Christian Fellowship or The Church Member's Guide by John Angell James

The Anxious Inquirer by John Angell James

Thomas Barnes of Farnworth and the Quinta: A Chronicle of a Life by Jennifer Barnes

Quinta Press, Meadow View, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 7RN 01691 778659

E-mail info@quintapress.com; web-site: www.quintapress.com

Readers of this journal will be interested in some of the draft books being worked on. If you visit the web-site and click on the PDF Books link you will find draft versions of many books by important Congregationalists of the past, including John Cotton, Richard Mather, William Jay, John Angell James, RW Dale and PT Forsyth.

Also Edmund Calamy's 1702, 1713 and 1727 volumes of Richard Baxter's *Life and Times* detailing the ministers ejected in 1662 (these 3 volumes were the basis of AG Matthew *Calamy Revised*).

Click on the Whitefield link and there are further links to sermons of George Whitefield never yet reprinted and a new edition of his Journals that is more complete than that currently available.

There are many other titles too numerous to mention.

REVIEWS

***The Honest Heretique. The life and Work of William Erbery (1604–1654).* By John I Morgans. Y Lolfa, Talybont, Ceredigion 2012. Pp 415. Paperback £14.95. ISBN 978-1-84771-485-5.**

William Erbery (Erbury), a fierce opponent of Archbishop Laud and his ceremonial tendencies, became vicar of St Mary's Cardiff in 1633 (his curate there was Walter Cradock). He set up conventicles in the town, was tried before the Court of High Commission and was forced to resign from the ministry of the Church of England. He then founded the first Congregational church in Cardiff in 1640, only a year after the gathered church at Llanfaches, the first Congregational church in Wales, was formed. Indeed it is likely that Erbery came under the influence of William Wroth of Llanfaches when the former was a curate at Newport. During the Civil War, he fled to Windsor and was helped by his fellow Welshman, the Presbyterian Christopher Love whom he had converted in Cardiff. Erbery became an army chaplain and came to know several leaders among the Independent churches of London.

John Morgans explains in the preface that this study originated in a suggestion made by Pennar Davies when Morgans was a ministerial student some 50 years ago. Pennar believed that William Erbery was a neglected puritan hero, although Geoffrey Nuttall had dismissed him as unworthy of serious historical reflection. The general view of historians suggested that Erbery was, in some way, deranged, which condition revealed itself in his writings, although the latter also showed "flashes of wit" and telling insight. The verdict of the pioneer historian of Welsh puritanism, Thomas Richards, was more encouraging. He saw Erbery as "wonderfully versatile but somewhat unbalanced". Morgans began and persisted with his historical and theological researches and eventually succeeded with his thesis in 1968.

Returning seriously to this radical in the present century, Morgans argues that Erbery "rocked the boat" and has been unfairly seen through the eyes of his contemporary detractors as a "schismatic, a turbulent antinomian, a heretic and a blasphemer", and even "a madman, probably buried in bedlam". In this book, Morgans intends that Erbery should speak for himself by including extracts from all his writings from 1639, when he was an orthodox Calvinist, to 1654, when he had embraced antinomian, egalitarian and millenarian ideas. Morgans hopes that his readers will be enabled to decide for themselves whether his subject was unbalanced and "ill of his whimsies" or rather he was truly "an intellectual and moral giant". Modern historians tend to share Morgans' own view.

He provides an introduction to Erbery's life and work, which itself includes several sizeable quotations from 17th century documents. Interestingly after Erbery's death, his widow and daughter became Quakers, perhaps led to that position by William's own faith and theology. The book also contains an essay by Morgans on Erbery's contribution to Christian thinking.

By far the largest part of this book is devoted to extracts from Erbery's publications. Each is accompanied by brief introductory notes to the tract or treatise. The book also contains endnotes, a bibliography, a general index and an index to Erbery's writings. The title *An Honest Heretique* derives from the tract of that name which Erbery published in 1652 and which offered a systematic expression of his faith.

Alan Argent

***Tabernacle United Reformed Church, Llanvaches* by Shem H. Morgan, Llanvaches United Reformed Church, 2011. Pp 67. Paperback £3.50. No ISBN. Copies can be obtained from Mr. Roger George, Woodstock, Llanvaches, Caldicott, Gwent, NP26 3AY.**

Shem H Morgan, who was minister of Tabernacle United Reformed Church, Llanvaches from 1983 to 1997, wrote a history of the church in 1989 to mark the 350th anniversary of the beginning of the cause. He has now republished the book in a more attractive format bringing the story up to date. It is good to have a detailed account of the 1989 anniversary celebrations and the work of the church up to the induction in 2010 of the present minister, who also serves as URC Training Officer, South Wales. Colour photographs and extracts of church meeting minutes from 1875 to 1944 add to the interest of the book.

The church was formed by William Wroth, rector of the parishes of Llanfihangel Rhosied (Rogiet) and Llanvaches in Monmouthshire. He experienced a spiritual awakening at the age of fifty and, as puritans did not hold with clergy having more than one living, he resigned that of Llanfihangel Rhosied (Rogiet) in 1626. Following his conversion, Wroth became a renowned puritan preacher and at times his congregations were so large that he had to preach in the churchyard. His zeal led to his being summoned before the Court of the High Commission in London. In 1633 he refused to read in church the Book of Sports, reissued by Charles 1. Although the Bishop of Llandaff reported in 1638 that Wroth 'hath submitted and conformed', his submission was only temporary for in November 1639 he founded a conventicle in his parish. He continued to minister at the conventicle and possibly also at the church until his death in 1641. He had formed the first puritan church in Wales which became known as 'the Church of Llanvaches'. *The Records of a Church of Christ in Bristol*

1640 to 1687 (the Broadmead Records) noted that ‘for the powerfulness and effectiveness of his preaching with the exemplary holiness of his life [he] was called the Apostle of Wales.’ He foresaw the coming of the Civil War and prayed that ‘he might never hear drum beat in order thereto’ and his prayer was granted because ‘he was by the Lord laid asleep before the war.’

The 1664 Conventicle Act made it illegal for any dissenting minister to preach to more than five people but its provisions were ignored and regular secret services were held in the Llanvaches area. The first chapel known as the ‘Meeting House’ was built between 1689 and 1700 not in the parish of Llanvaches but at Carrow Hill in the neighbouring parish of St Brides. According to oral tradition, the church wished to have its own burial ground and, as it was unable to purchase extra land adjoining the meeting house, it built a new ‘Tabernacle’ in Llanvaches in 1802.

Tabernacle Church benefited from the Welsh Revival of 1904–6 and its minister, Rev W J Price, became one of its leaders in Monmouthshire. The church, along with Gilgal (Methodist) and Bethany (Baptist), witnessed a re-awakening among the people. At the close of 1906 the membership of Tabernacle Church had doubled from 22 to 44 and the adherents were ‘numerous’. The spiritual fervour prompted the congregation to renovate and refurbish the church. The wooden forms on the ground floor were replaced by new pews, a new organ was purchased and the interior of the church was decorated.

The re-issue of Shem Morgan’s book is to be welcomed. The reviewer hopes that were it ever to be reprinted, it might be possible to include, in an appendix, such annual church membership figures that are available for the church.

Michael J. Collis

Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World.

By Kathleen Lynch. Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp 336.

Hardback £60. ISBN 978-0-19-964393-6

Deprived of the comfort of sins being forgiven by a priest, and tortured by the concept of predestined salvation or damnation, all Protestants were forced into greater self-reliance in their quest for comfort and assurance. This was a particularly traumatic experience for people in mid 17th century England when the horrors and upheaval of revolution must have compounded uncertainties and feelings of isolation.

As a response, and partly as a substitute for the confessional, 17th century Protestants were encouraged to compose narratives telling of their struggle to achieve a secure faith and speculating on their prospects for a good death. These autobiographies, which proliferated in the middle of the century, form the basis

of Kathleen Lynch's study. They describe a conversion not from Catholicism to Protestantism, but from conventional forms of worship to a more experiential worship. Lynch relates this process to a split within the Church of England between those who had an abstract understanding of predestination and those who insisted on a more experimental application.

She effectively illustrates the diverse range of figures whose narratives found their way into print, from those with a modest social background like the visionary Sarah Wright to Charles I himself. She places these autobiographies in their historical context, seeing their increasing number during and after the civil wars as a reaction to the massive disruptions which people experienced either through the death of close relatives or the divisions within families and communities during the 1640s. Under these circumstances, many people saw their own relationship with God as their sole source of comfort. However, on a more positive note, she records a big increase in the number of autobiographic narratives written from 1653. Lynch links this to the start of the Protectorate and the optimism which this engendered in many radicals.

Perhaps the most interesting theme of this book is the emphasis placed on the public and social nature of these autobiographies. Where before historians had regarded them as examples of private thoughts and accounts put to paper, except for the more celebrated autobiographers such as Bunyan, Lynch suggests that these narratives were designed to be read by others and, in this way, they played an important role in developing ideas within religious communities—particularly in the absence of strong and specific direction from a priest. So these accounts can be seen as a public contribution to theological debate and an important influence on the direction of Protestant thought in Britain and America. She stresses the combination of external and internal factors and “how an intensely personal and individualised examination of experience” formed the basis of a collective identity. It was an inward looking process but one with a strong institutional relevance.

In a period of profound instability, there was a fundamentally radical and destabilising element in the diaries in that so many different people were making contributions to theological discussion.

There is also an almost self-congratulatory feeling to many of the autobiographies as the writer describes their tortured path and determined forbearance against despair in the long journey towards ultimate spiritual health. Lynch describes how most of these accounts were extremely formulaic and mechanical, starting with the admission of terrible sins—Wright admitted to terrible self-destructive acts such as attempted drowning, strangling, stabbing and deliberate falls “all in terror that she was the chiefest of sinners”—then the questioning of a mechanical faith, through finally to a more secure and assured faith.

Nevertheless, some autobiographers gained a considerable public following. Sarah Wright's visionary narrations, for example, were so popular that they were repeatedly re-printed over the following 20 years. Her example was followed by many other women whose visionary experiences found their way into print. In fact, this was one of the few ways in which women could play a public role within their religious communities. There is also an interesting link created between this experiential form of religious belief and the emerging experimentalism in science during the 17th century.

Lynch also gives us an insight into the role of printers who through either ideological commitment or commercial instincts, played a crucial part in elevating the contemporary importance of these narratives, either putting together anthologies of narratives from the public or promoting the works of more celebrated writers.

In the chapter on Bunyan's "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners", Lynch shows that although this book follows the same general structure of earlier narratives, it represents an altogether more sophisticated and less mechanical account of the author's spiritual struggles. Bunyan's conversion and assurance of salvation is neither sudden nor final. The doubts and moments of despair continue throughout the account in a rollercoaster of emotions. In the end his only certainty is in the commitment to serve God and to accept that his hope of salvation is in His hands, "to leap off the ladder even blindfold into Eternitie To venture for thy Name".

The difference between Bunyan's and earlier narrations can be explained partly through the motive behind writing the book. Where most narrations were focused on self-reassurance, "Grace Abounding" was written in prison with the specific intention of offering guidance and reassurance to Bunyan's Bedford church.

Lynch devotes the final chapter to Baxter's *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696). This is fundamentally different from the previous narratives in being less personal and not focused on Baxter's own struggles to achieve assurance. In fact, Baxter takes the view that it is "somewhat unsavoury" to focus on his own spiritual journey when it is no more remarkable than that of others. *Reliquiae Baxterianae* is far more centred on the momentous political and religious changes going on around him and Lynch sees in this an important stage in the development of early modern biography with its greater focus on public affairs.

This is not a comprehensive history of autobiographies in the 17th century and we should all probably be pretty relieved about that. Far more interestingly it gives a fascinating insight into the psychological motives behind these accounts and helps us to understand their deeply human significance seeking "corroboration and company as much as (and perhaps even more than) eternal salvation".

***Brethren or Sectaries? Richard Baxter on the Congregationalists.* By John Coffey. The Congregational Lecture 2012. £3.00. The Congregational Memorial Hall Trust (1978) Ltd, London. ISSN 093-181X**

The 2012 Congregational Lecture is a fine addition to the series. The lecturer's learning is worn lightly and the reader is soon drawn into the fascinating world of Commonwealth and Restoration Puritanism. Perhaps too soon, for a brief explanation of Baxter's importance and that of John Owen and Philip Nye and their fellows would help. Indeed one first meets Nye on page 9, where his importance is assumed, but one only learns that his Christian name is Philip on page 12. Yet I must not carp. After all, this was a lecture and time and space are not limitless.

However that omission of the first name begs the question. Who is this lecture for? It begins with an outline of previous academic treatments of Baxter and states that in recent years the "soft-focus, ecumenical Baxter" has been replaced by "a fiercer, more angular and polemical figure". Fair enough, and I do not doubt that "Baxter the ecumenist and Baxter the polemicist were one and the same", as Coffey asserts. Indeed Baxter was willing to praise those Congregational ministers whom he labelled "moderate Independents" but he did not always clarify what he meant by this term. If, by it, he meant those Independents who accepted parish livings, as Coffey allows, and those who were willing to co-operate in the Associations, favoured by Baxter, then the Restoration ecclesiastical settlement ensured that they were thrust into separation from the national Church, along with those of their brethren who had remained aloof from the parish system (as well as Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers etc.). Were these Independents then really moderate or rather were they, like Baxter's particular enemy, Nye at Acton, in acceptance of the benefits of a parish living without being ready to serve all the parishioners? Coffey does not explore this question, choosing to concentrate on Baxter's published writings.

Indeed Baxter's view of the Savoy Declaration of 1658 as arising from a "factional" and divisive conference is interesting. Did he really hope to include some of these Independents in a national church? He may have had hopes which they, led by Owen who is usually judged by scholars to be far from radical, did not entertain.

At one point Coffey refers to "the populist ecclesiology of radical Independents" (page 8), without stating who these radicals might be nor, more importantly, without explaining the epithet "populist" in this context. Is he suggesting that the polity of holding church meetings in autonomous gathered churches was a conscious attempt to win over people in general to their cause, just as a politician might try to convert the populace to his own ideological

stance? The Congregationalists believed and argued strongly that their ecclesiology derived from and reflected the pattern of the apostolic churches in the New Testament. They did not expect, in an age of hierarchy and of the Calvinist elect, to win over the majority, although Reformation in practice always involved a move away from clericalism and an empowering of the laity.

Yet, given all these provocations and reservations, I am grateful for this lecture and hope that the readers of this magazine will read it with close attention, as it deserves.

Joseph Meadows

The Cockermonth Congregational Church Book (1651-c1765). Edited by R B Wordsworth. Record series XXI. Pp xxvi + 172. Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society 2012. Paperback £30 post free. Available from I D Caruana, 10 Peter Street, Carlisle, Cumbria, CU3 8QP. ISBN 978 1873124 55 0.

Cockermonth Congregational Church began life on Thursday, 2nd October, 1651 when seven men attested to their faith in a shared covenant. The church's foundation was owed to the instigation of Thomas Larkham, then described as "Pastor of the Church of Christ at Tavistock in Devon", revealing the close links in the mid-17th century between Congregationalists in different parts of the country.

This well produced transcription of the Cockermonth church book, now held in the Whitehaven office of the Cumbria Archives Service, is to the credit of its editor, Robert Wordsworth, and to the society which has published it. In addition to the transcription of the church book, it contains both bibliography and index and also ten illustrations. Furthermore we have a register of baptisms (clearly infants or young children for the most part), a register of members, with men and women in parallel columns, a register of late members, including four who were "Dismiss" and nineteen whose membership was "Revoked" or deemed to have been "Apostatised", of whom nine were later "restored again"—all of which indicates that church discipline was employed. The register of members includes both the pastor and his wife, Dorothy, implying that ministers today should not see themselves as above or apart from their members but very much part of the church membership.

The helpful introduction (intended, one suspects, for the interested reader rather than the academic) explains the genre of the church book, lists various details relating to the manuscript, reveals the church book's value as a historical source, and finally offers the reader a biographical summary of the first pastor

George Larkham, Thomas's son. Thomas Larkham himself had migrated with his family to New England in early 1640, experiencing awkward relations with the ministers there. However on his return to the west country in early 1643 he became a parliamentary army chaplain and, later at Tavistock, imposed New England discipline (ie Congregational) onto his parish. George probably travelled to New England also but he graduated at Oxford in 1651. George Larkham was among those who attended the Savoy Conference in 1658, held at the Savoy Palace. Led by John Owen, the conference produced the Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order.

George Larkham was the compiler of the manuscript journal or church book from 1651 to 1700, in which year he died. Probably the earliest entries were written from notes, transferred to the manuscript at some point in the Restoration period when nonconformists were subject to persecution. In the early 1660s Larkham himself was ejected from the parish living at Cockermouth and only returned from Yorkshire to Cumberland in 1668. The entries in the church book, after Larkham's death, are scant to 1706 and then follows a gap of 59 years, with no entries, until 1765 when a new meeting house was opened. A few further notes carry the story on to 1771.

The transcribed church book throws light on not only the internal life of the fellowship but also the links between Larkham's church and other Independent churches, and its relations with Quakers. It is a welcome addition to the printed sources of information about the emergence and survival of Congregational churches at a time of suffering.

Alan Argent

***Bedford's Victorian Pilgrim: William Hale White in Context.* By Michael Brealey. Pp [xx] + 426. Studies in Christian History and Thought. Paternoster, Milton Keynes 2012. Paperback £24.99. ISBN 978-84227-734-8.**

As the book's title infers, William Hale White (1831–1913) was born in Bedford and attended Bunyan Meeting there. He was expected to become a dissenting minister but, instead entered the civil service and, writing under the pseudonym of Mark Rutherford, he published several works of fiction which gained many admirers and are still read today.

In writing this biography and critical study, Michael Brealey has consulted manuscripts not only in this country—in Bedford, London, Oxford, Cambridge, Reading, Sussex, Leeds and Hatfield House—but also in Harvard and especially in the University of British Columbia. In addition, readers of this magazine may like to know that he has made profitable use of the online version of the Surman biographical index.

Hale White had a strong nonconformist background, his father being a devotee of Bunyan Meeting and his mother's family at the centre of life in Lion Walk Congregational Church, Colchester. According to Brealey, Rutherford's "growing estrangement from his Dissenting heritage", as described in *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* (1881), has resulted in a misrepresentation of Hale White's own life in previous studies. Detailed investigation is needed to separate the author from his fictional creation.

At the age of 17 White became a student at Cheshunt College, and gained a London BA in 1850. In 1851 he moved to New College, London, to train for the Congregational ministry which move he later called "the great blunder of my life". He developed a taste for the works of Wordsworth, Ruskin, Tennyson and Carlyle in preference to the college course and, with two others, he was expelled from New in April 1852, allegedly for having unorthodox views on scriptural authority. The issue received wide press coverage, both in nonconformist and national newspapers.

Brealey contends, against the convention, that White did not lose his faith. Rather, he argues, White continued to affirm a faith, a view he supports in part from careful study in the Cheshunt and New College, London collections. In London, Hale White attended The King's Weigh House to hear the sermons of Thomas Binney and Fetter Lane Chapel where Caleb Morris preached. He supplied a Unitarian chapel in Sussex for a year and preached occasionally in Congregational and Unitarian chapels. In 1856 he was married in Kentish Town Congregational Church but eventually he abandoned attendance at any church. Nevertheless he remained fixated on the Bible and, in his fiction, the confession of truth was a recurrent theme.

Certainly William Hale White remains a fascinating character, given that his changing views appeared to mirror or to prefigure a growing challenge to Victorian religion as a whole, and not just to nonconformity. Brealey's book deserves to be read by any serious student of the period.

Thomas Wright

***Mansfield: Portrait of an Oxford College* Edited by Stephen Blundell and Michael Freedon, Photographs by Keiko Ikeuchi ISBN 978-1-906507-49-7**

This portrait of Mansfield College was first proposed in 2011, the year of the college's 125th anniversary, and includes everything from history and architecture to caricatures and college soups. As the former principal, Dr Diana Walford, explains in her preface, it is a "jigsaw" put together to create a picture of a college which has meant a lot to many people, especially those within the dissenting tradition. The text is illustrated by many fine, new photographs,

together with items from the Mansfield archive. Amongst those items reproduced is even a letter from a professor informing a student he has reported him for being on the way to the river when he should have been at a communion service!

This is a book to browse rather than read from cover to cover, but it will bring back memories and be an attractive souvenir for anyone who has been involved in the life of the college.

Lesley Dean

***Elsie Chamberlain. The Independent life of a Woman Minister.* By Alan Argent. Equinox Publishing, Sheffield 2013. Pp xii + 271. Hardback £60. ISBN 978-1-184553-931-3.**

It is a well-known fact that clerical biography is dying, perhaps dead. That may be why this biography slipped into an academic series devoted to Gender, Theology and Spirituality “through an honest engagement with embodied knowing and critical praxis”. Elsie Chamberlain would have dealt vigorously with such language and Alan Argent’s book is in fact a well-paced and clearly written narrative, as straightforward and interesting for readers who might be coy about critical praxis as it should be instructive for students of Problems of Patriarchy, and Ritual Making Women (to draw from two titles on offer).

Elsie Chamberlain (1910–1991) ranks with Maude Royden (1876–1956), Constance Coltman (1889–1969), and Muriel Paulden (1892–1975), three women of the previous generation, as a pioneer in ministry of Word and Sacrament. The first was an Anglican, the second was originally Presbyterian, but it was Congregationalism which released and recognised the vocation of all four. Theirs are stories of ministry in its wholeness, however much their gender and generation have made it easier to tell them partially as contributions to Women’s Studies. Alan Argent’s prime merit is that he does both.

His subject was the first woman chaplain in the Armed Forces, the first ordained woman on the staff of the BBC’s Religious Broadcasting, the first (indeed only) woman chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. The Forces, the BBC, and the Congregational Union were differing expressions of establishment, each with its hierarchy, hard enough to join, much harder to beat. An ecclesiastical celebrity in the 1950s, and as much of a household name as such people still were in those years, in the 1970s she was to the forefront of the Congregational Federation, less of a household name but still to be celebrated. Dr Argent’s “Independent Life of a Woman Minister” (the perfect sub-title) does not replace Janette Williams’s much shorter *First Lady of the Pulpit* (1993)—it lacks the latter’s telling illustrations and it skirts round the

domestic chemistry of a decidedly unusual household—but it sets her account satisfyingly in context, enlarging on articles published in this *Magazine*.

Elsie Chamberlain could only have been a Congregationalist. Her formation was suggestively Congregational: an Anglican father (an unsung hero?), a dominating Congregational mother (one of 173 female Church Secretaries in 1930), the upward social mobility (from Canonbury to Muswell Hill in the 1920s, as father rose in the General Post Office), the good education (Dame Alice Owen's and Channing Girls). The mindset was Congregational; left leaning (one brother was a Labour MP, 1945–50), intelligent but not intellectual, with Elsie instinctively good at sport, music, and design, without applying herself single-mindedly to any one of them. This was a perfect breeding ground for Congregational ministry and one of Elsie's ministers recognised the ministerial spark in her.

The preparation for her ministry was providentially eccentric. She was one of three women reading for a theology degree at King's College London (1936–9). The ethos was overwhelmingly, if intelligently, Anglican. There she began her lifelong friendship with Margaret Wedgwood Benn and there she met her husband, the Anglican ordinand who is the almost unsung hero of this story. Then she worked in war-time Liverpool with Muriel Paulden. This fitted her temperament and played to her strengths as Mansfield College, her likeliest alternative route to ministry, would not have done.

Pastoral ministry was her forte. Each of her churches grew in membership, each remembered her lovingly, and the heroic quality of her incessant pastoral trouble-shooting in the last years of her life is one of the most moving features of this book. Here she was at her contradictory, generous best.

It is the contradictions, and their consistency, which most strike the reader. Her longest and most satisfying ministry was with the BBC, surely as Byzantine then as now. Her RAF chaplaincy was cut short by ill-health, but what would this imperious critic of hierarchy have made of it? Perhaps that was her secret. She was as imperious as any hierarch. She succeeded thanks to the connivance of pillars of the establishment (an Air Minister, a Lord Chancellor, even—it seems—the Palace) in subverting the establishment. She would have made a most masterful bishop. Indeed, her pastoral style was a model of *episcopate*, not least because she was no team player. Her judgement was instinctive, as erratic as it could be pastorally expert. She was a surprisingly poor chairman (that word still prevailed in her lifetime), notwithstanding her ability to enthuse others. Her friendships were numerous, eclectic, and across the board.

So no wonder she was a self-confessed “ecumaniac”, a word she rather tiresomely made her own. She had an instinctively Congregational commitment to the idea of ecumenism, and she moved for years in ecumenical circles, but she seems to have had no concept of structures and their necessity. She equated

structures too easily with uniformity (that alluring soundbite, “unity not uniformity”, has much to answer for) and she had little interest in or understanding of the nuts and bolts which ecumenical structures need if they are to work. Consequently her own realistic and creative vision came across as hopelessly simplistic. Consumed by enthusiastic bustle for God, driven increasingly by the loneliness which fell on her after her husband’s death, she lacked the time and inclination to listen to, let alone take seriously, the subtle and flexible arguments voiced in the Churches Unity Commission and the Churches Council for Covenanting. A love of heritage is no substitute for a knowledge of history. Would it have helped had she been a better historian than she was? Might a dose of Mansfield have enabled her to engage with John Huxtable, a very different person but as instinctive a Congregationalist as he was an ecclesiastic and as pastorally committed as she was?

Readers of a certain age will linger over the parting of Congregational ways in the 1970s. In 1972 Congregationalism suffered what had once seemed to be the occupational hazard of Methodism and Presbyterianism. It makes for frustrating reading. Elsie Chamberlain came late to that parting of friends but she was inevitably prominent in it. Its participants were proved right, yet nothing worked out quite as they had prayed for or predicted. Some friendships continued. That with Kenneth and Millicent Slack is heartwarming. So is the assistance given to North Street, Taunton, by John Murray and Owen Butler, two United Reformed ministers who represented the best in the Congregational ministry of Elsie’s own generation. It is the merit of Alan Argent’s book that he allows his readers to mull over all these points and reach their own conclusions about an independent minister whom he regards, quite rightly, as a heroine.

Clyde Binfield

***The Story of the Moderators.* By David R Peel. United Reformed Church 2012. Pp [vi] + 128. Paperback £9.99. ISBN 978-0-85346-289-7.**

This little book is subtitled “The Origin, Development and Future of the Office of Moderator in Congregationalism (1919–1972) and the United Reformed Church (1972–2010)”. Peel has arranged his material into two parts, the first dealing with “The Evolution of Moderators” and the second and larger entitled “1972–2010: Rapid Change and Irreconcilable Demands”. He notes the importance of “the arch-wangler of Nonconformity”, J D Jones, in the introduction of moderators to Congregationalism in 1919, following the model of Baptist superintendents, and the unpopularity of moderators with some leading Congregationalists for decades. He also notes that, despite the fact that

the first moderators in principle might have been laymen or ministers, no layperson was ever appointed. The first woman moderator was Janet Sowerbutts who became the URC's Thames North moderator as recently as 1990.

Peel points out that the moderators' role has been changing ever since they were first created in 1919. However some ministers increasingly feel that the moderators have become more managerial and less pastoral. Yet he believes that "it is abundantly clear" that the task of caring for ministers and churches is as necessary now as it was then. Many churches are "terminally ill" and need to be loved "to death". Others have a future but require nurturing ministry. Peel maintains that the URC should continue to affirm the "translocal" ministry of the moderators. He does not favour the moderators being replaced by regional executive officers, although he concedes the need for change and wants the moderators to become "instruments of change".

This is a contribution to current debate, rather than a historical study, although aspects of the latter are evident. How successful it will prove to be remains to be seen.

***Sola Scriptura: the Achilles Heel of the Reformed Tradition*, by David Peel. Free to Believe 2012. Pp 44. Booklet £9.99. Available from M Camroux, 35 Arundel Rd, Cheam, Surrey, SM2 6EU.**

Here Peel offers something of a personal exploration of faith. He explains that, when young, he was driven into scientific study by revelation. He sees both science and faith as providing positive outcomes for persons and communities. With regards to the Bible, he shows that Protestants no longer see scriptural authority as the Reformers did. We do not, for instance, understand slavery or social hierarchy, as they did. Yet, he argues, the Bible does possess an enduring value for individual Christians and "the Christian movement". Rather, for readers of this magazine and others like it, in particular, he states that "while we need historians so that the dead can be heard it is among the living that the final decisions have to be taken concerning the adequacy of Christian beliefs and practice".

Peel concludes by affirming that the Bible is a human text which has been inspirational (mostly for noble ends). It puts the reader in touch with Jesus and with the Hebrew learning that informed his teaching. He sees the Bible's authority as its relation of God's disclosure of himself outside and inside Jesus. "It is a story rather than a record and its purpose is to awaken faith, aid understanding and grant hope".

***Church Growth in Britain 1980 to the Present.* Edited by D Goodhew. Ashgate Contemporary Ecclesiology Series. Ashgate, Farnham 2012. Pp xiv + 265. Paperback £17.99. ISBN 978-1-4094-2576-2.**

This is an academic study with contributions from fifteen scholars, some theologians, some sociologists and some historians. Perhaps half of them are ordained and, although some are Anglicans, we meet here Baptists and Pentecostals too. As with any collection of essays, the quality of the contributions varies.

After the introduction, the book is arranged into three parts, dealing with the mainstream churches, new churches, and Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Chapters concentrate on the Church of England in London, East End Catholicism, Baptist growth, cathedrals and reverse mission into the UK. Among the new churches we find discussions of black churches, African Pentecostalism, Fresh Expressions and church planting in the Church of England, and studies of churches in York and Birmingham.

David Goodhew allows that decline has occurred but concludes that since 1980 substantial growth has also occurred. Much of that growth has been in London, among black, Asian and ethnic minorities, although growth does extend across the country. Recognition of that growth, he writes, demands “a sea-change in academic study (including theology), in wider society and in the churches themselves—which have too often been fixated by decline”.

This is a valuable series of essays but one which leaves this reader wanting more detail or perhaps different case studies. For instance, homosexual friends might wonder why the churches do not make a more overt attempt to encompass them, by addressing their spiritual needs. Women clergy might understand the apparent success in the diocese of London differently from that stated here. Readers of this magazine, in the main Congregationalists, might be disappointed that their contributions to witness have not been noticed and Quakers and Salvationists might feel similarly overlooked.

Yet churches have closed and are still closing but, as this book reminds us, they are opening too and the older denominations are involved in both these developments.

Mary Kemp

Secretary:

Rev. Dr Richard Cleaves
17 Carlton Street
Cheltenham
GL52 6AG
richard.cleaves@blueyonder.co.uk

Editor and Reviews Editor:

Dr A Argent
125 Sudbourne Road
London
SW2 5AF
alan.argent1@btopenworld.com

Treasurer:

Rev. C J Damp
Bunyan Meeting
Mill Street
Bedford
MK40 3EU

Librarian

Pat Hurry
Bunyan Meeting
Mill Street
Bedford
MK40 3EU
pathurry@fsmail.net

Distribution:

Peter I Young
24 Daisy Dormer Court
Trinity Gardens
London
SW9 8DW
piy@live.co.uk

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