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Living with heart and mind

Congregational Studies
Conference 2017



Living with heart and mind

**Gary Brady
Paul Lusk
Nathan Munday**

**Congregational Studies Conference
Papers 2017**

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For information on EFCC and previous
Congregational Studies Conference Papers, contact:

The Office Manager,
The Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches,
PO Box 34,
Beverley,
East Yorkshire,
England
HU17 0YY

e-mail: efcc@efcc.karoo.co.uk

Visit the web-site: www.efcc.org.uk

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Many old Congregational writings can be found on the internet, particularly at www.quintapress.com/PDF_Books.html

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The papers are printed in the order in which they were given at the Conference; as usual the contributor is entirely responsible for the views expressed in his papers.



Gary Brady is the minister of Child's Hill Baptist Church in north-west London, and is the chairman of the Evangelical Library.



Paul Lusk lives in retirement in Whitstable, Kent, after a working life spent in helping with community housing projects.



Nathan Munday is a literature student currently working towards a PhD at Cardiff and Aberystwyth Universities.

Foreword

This year's Conference took place in the lecture hall of Dr Williams's Library, an appropriate place to have a lecture about the importance of libraries. Gary Brady gave us an interesting survey of libraries through the ages and the present day benefits we receive from them, even in an increasingly online age where many have predicted the end of the physical book.

We have previously (1996) had a paper on the pamphlet war between John Cotton and Roger Williams in 17th century New England concerning freedom of conscience. Paul Lusk spoke to us about the modern day outworking of Williams's views and questioned whether Christianity should necessarily have a dominant place in law-making. This is a contentious subject and not everyone will agree with his conclusions, but hopefully he has stimulated us to more thought on the issue.

This year is the 300th anniversary of the birth of William Williams, Pantycelyn, Pantycelyn being the name of the farm where he was born (to distinguish him from the many other William Williamses in Wales). Known to the general public for his hymn *Guide me O thou great Jehovah*, sung at Welsh rugby games, his life is so much more interesting for being one of the founders of Calvinistic Methodism, along with Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland.

This year is also the anniversary of the founding of an Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches. We had a short presentation of the background and history of what became *the* Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches. It is planned to expand this presentation for regional meetings in November 2017 which will then be published as a booklet. For this reason it is not included here.

We will meet again, God willing, at Wesley's Chapel and Leysian Mission on 17 March 2018.

Dr Digby L. James

Quinta Church, Weston Rhyn



*The new Evangelical Library opened at Bounds Breen
on 17 April 2010 by Mrs Wendy Sheeham*



Book racking inside the new Evangelical Library

Libraries and their value

The Alan Tovey Memorial Lecture

Gary Brady

Let me begin by thanking those responsible for giving me the opportunity to deliver this lecture. I must say that it is an honour to have my name associated with that of Alan Tovey. It is good to see his widow here, now Mrs Lucy Beale.

I understand that Alan was from Hafodyrynys, only nine miles away from where I grew up, although Cwmbran, it must be said, has a different feel to Hafodyrynys. As a boy we in Cwmbran and Newport used to refer to such places as part of “Welsh Wales”.¹ I recall being up in Welsh Wales with my dad one day when we passed a very compact little soccer field. “That’s where we used to play” my dad said. My father was from Newport and was a keen footballer and a decent one. For a little while (at the end of his career I think, in the early fifties I guess) he was goalkeeper for the Hafodyrynys team.

Definition

And so to libraries. A library can be defined as “a place in which reading materials, such as books, periodicals and newspapers, and often other materials such as musical and video recordings, are kept for use or lending”.² The word can also refer to such a collection of materials, especially when systematically arranged. The word is sometimes used more loosely as in toy library, tool library, even seed library.

Today we are thinking specifically of books, which the original word suggests. Library is from Latin *librarium*. It originally referred to a chest of books. It is interesting to note that the Latin word *liber* can refer to a book or with different inflexion (Lee-ber) a free person (the two decline differently *liber, libri, libro, etc.* and *liber, liberi, libero, etc.*). There is also the adjective *liber, libera, liberum*. It is tempting to give an attractive but false etymology—Library, a place of freedom!

1. Welsh Wales has been defined as “post-industrial South Wales, epitomized by the coal mining valleys that fan out northward from Swansea, Cardiff and Newport”. *Assembling identities*, Sam Wiseman, Cambridge, 2014, 72.

2. The Free Dictionary, an online dictionary.

The Bible

The Bible itself is often spoken of as a library, as it contains 66 books by different authors, from different times and situations, using different styles and genres and originally addressing different audiences. The statement is open to abuse but if we maintain both that the Bible is a library and one book we will not be far from the truth.

In one volume in the Library, 2 Timothy, we read (4:13) Paul's words *When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.* We are not sure what the distinction between scrolls and parchments may be. Clearly Paul wanted books, however. He did not look down on book learning but was keen to use books. It is a fair inference from the verse that reading is important for Christians, especially ministers, and that libraries are potentially a good and useful thing. John Calvin (1509–1564) says the verse refutes “the madness of the fanatics who despise books and condemn all reading and boast only of ... their private inspirations by God” and “commends continual reading to all godly men as a thing from which they can profit.”³ Matthew Henry (1662–1714) adds that we should thank God that he has “given us so many writings of wise and pious men in all ages” and seek “that by reading them our profiting may appear to all.”⁴

In another volume in the Library, Ecclesiastes (in 12:12) is a well known verse that makes a different point *of making many books there is no end.* It is often quoted. Our location today well illustrates the point. The following phrase is often quoted too, usually with a wry smile, *and much study wearies the body!*

Church father Origen (184–253), in his commentary on John, says that it appears to indicate two things—“that we ought not to possess many books, and ... that we ought not to compose many.”⁵ Conscious that he himself is composing a book he is aware of the irony, as others have been addressing the text. He suggests that it is a caution rather than a prohibition, which must be right as Solomon himself was composing a book when he wrote as he did. John Gill (1697–1771) picks out the application well when he says on the place

A man may lay out his money, and fill his library with books, and be very little the better for them; what one writer affirms, another denies; what one seems to have proved clearly, another rises up and points out

3. John Calvin, *NT Commentary Corinthians, Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, eds S W Torrance, T F Torrance, California, 1966, 341.

4. Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the whole Bible*, in loc cit.

5. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume IX, Chapter 2.

his errors and mistakes; and this occasions replies and rejoinders, so that there is no end of these things, and scarce any profit by them; which, without so much trouble, may be found in the writings of wise men, inspired by God, and in which we should rest contented ...⁶

My subject is the value of libraries. I am happy to address it but by way of a disclaimer it is fair to add a caution. In a fallen world, fallen men and women can be harmed as well as helped by libraries. The experience of Richard Baxter (1615–1691) perhaps offers a graphic illustration of the need for caution. On one occasion we learn that as he sat in his study one day

the weight of his greatest folio books broke down three or four of the highest shelves, ... and they fell down on every side of him, and not one of them hit him, except one upon the arm. Whereas the place, the weight, and greatness of the books was such, and his head just under them, that it was a wonder they had not beaten out his brains, or done him an unspeakable mischief.⁷

One shelf just above him apparently held the huge *Polyglot Bible* edited by Bishop Brian Walton (1600–1661), the complete *Works of Augustine of Hippo* (354–440) and several other weighty tomes. The story serves as a reminder that libraries can do harm as well as good.

History⁸

It is apposite to attempt a very brief survey of the history of libraries. It is generally agreed that the earliest were collections of clay tablets gathered and catalogued in Mesopotamia by the Sumerians and their Akkadian and Persian successors. There may have been other early libraries that used less robust materials. If so, they have not survived.

The first explicit reference to an ancient Egyptian library dates back to 1788 BC. A stele exists on which King Neferhotep records his desire “to see the ancient writings of Atum” in the library of the temple at Heliopolis. A famous Egyptian library also existed in the time of Rameses II (d 1213 BC), possibly the Exodus Pharaoh.

It was probably not until the fourth century BC that individuals, such as the Greek philosophers Plato (427–337 BC) and Aristotle (384–322 BC) began to amass personal libraries. A saying is attributed to Plato, though perhaps erroneously, that “a house that has a library in it has a soul”.

6. John Gill, *Exposition on the whole Bible*, in loc cit.

7. *Baxter's Practical Works*, Volume 1, ix.

8. A good introduction to this subject can be found in *The Story of Libraries, Second Edition: From the Invention of Writing to the Computer Age*, Fred Lerner, London, 2009.

We know little about it but the most famous of ancient libraries is the Hellenic one at Alexandria dedicated to the Muses. Established in the third century BC by Ptolemy I (c 367–283 BC), it was part of the Musaeum there. Greatly reduced in the time of Julius Caesar (48 BC) and Aurelian (AD 270) it was tragically destroyed by fire in AD 391 and probably entirely lost when the Muslims invaded Egypt in AD 642.

Roman Emperors commonly founded libraries and in the early years AD libraries were founded not just in Rome but all over the Empire. When Vesuvius erupted in AD 79 a library containing 1800 volumes was destroyed in the Villa of Pisones in Herculaneum.

Christians were early aware of the usefulness of libraries. Bishop Alexander (d 251) founded one in Jerusalem before AD 250 and Origen did the same around the same time in Caesarea. Clement (150–215) used one in Alexandria to quote from nearly 350 authors in his works. Christian Libraries were one of the targets of Diocletian (244–311) when he persecuted Christians. The one in Caesarea survived. We know that Eusebius (263–339) used it to write his Ecclesiastical History and Jerome (347–429) after him.

While the papyrus roll ruled for hundreds of years, by the first century AD, the use of vellum and parchment was coming in, the former being eventually supplanted. The other technological change, famously pioneered by Christians, was the codex or book. By the fourth century AD it had overtaken scrolls in popularity.⁹

In the Mediaeval period libraries began to centre on monasteries and monks became famous for copying manuscripts. In the sixth century one of the first copyright disputes occurred in Ireland, when Columba (521–597) secretly copied a psalter, or perhaps a whole Bible, belonging to Finian (470–549). They took their dispute to High King Diarmait mac Cerbhiall (Dermot McKervil, d 565) who ruled against Columba, saying “to every cow belongs its calf and to every book its copy”. It was one of the reasons Columba left Ireland for Iona.

It was in this period that libraries began to chain their more valuable books in order to keep them from being purloined. One of the largest chained libraries, one that you can still visit today, is in Hereford Cathedral. Another, the first endowed for use outside an institution, is the *Francis Trigge Chained Library* in Grantham, Lincolnshire, established 1598, a forerunner of later public libraries.

9. There is a hilarious sketch on Youtube where a mediaeval monk gets help with the new technology, which he does not quite have the hang of. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQHXSjgQvQ (Accessed March 2017).

The invention of printing had its own impact, increasing the number of books and the ease with which they could be reproduced. Before 1602, *The Bodleian Library* was refounded in Oxford through Thomas Bodley (1545–1613).¹⁰ Other early libraries include *Norwich City Library* (1608) and *Chetham's Library*, Manchester, (founded through Sir Humphrey Chetham 1580–1653) which claims to be the oldest public library in the English-speaking world (1653). Other early town libraries are Ipswich (1612) Bristol (1613–15) and Leicester (1632). *The British Library* was established 1753.

Categories

One can think of various types of library—public, private, mobile, national, school, church, specialist, personal, etc.

I have had experience of most of these—from the mobile library that used to come to our housing estate in the sixties¹¹ through being a school librarian in a comprehensive school to the *Hugh Owen Library*, Aberystwyth University, as an undergraduate, which I confess was not visited enough.¹²

Then there are the national libraries in Wales and London. The *National Library of Wales*, Aberystwyth (another copyright library) is an excellent resource.¹³

As for the *British Library* two reminiscences. I once went to consult *The intercession of Christ* by 19th century Reformed Presbyterian Thomas Houston (1804–1882) of Knockbracken. The copy was largely uncut. I had to send it back to the librarians to deal with. It struck me as rather sad to think of a book sat in the Library since 1882 or whenever (over a hundred years) and never read. It was a little exciting too to be reading it for the first time, as old as it was.¹⁴

10. Today one of six copyright libraries in the British Isles, ie one entitled to a free copy of every book published in the UK. The six are: The Bodleian Libraries of the University of Oxford, Cambridge University Library, The National Library of Scotland, The Library of Trinity College, Dublin, The National Library of Wales and the British Library in London..

11. Where I learned to devour the *William* books of Richmal Crompton (1890–1969) and first discovered detective novels.

12. Here I discovered *Punch* magazine and the *Tin Tin* comics of Georges Remi (1907–1983). I used to like to close the library with the phrase “time gentlemen please”.

13. It was in that Library that one day I discovered that there are not only bibliographies but bibliographies of bibliographies. One inevitably wonders if there are bibliographies of bibliographies of bibliographies (there are! Aksel G S Josephson (1860–1944) was the pioneer here).

14. When a book is bound, trimming is the final thing done (or not done) so its leaves can be turned. A sheet folded in quarto has folds at the spine and across the top, so the top folds must be trimmed. A signature (a section that contains text) folded in octavo or greater may also require that the other two sides be trimmed. Deckle Edge or Uncut books are sometimes of special interest to booksellers.

Another time, who should I sit next to but well known polymath and atheist Jonathan Miller. As I researched the life of a 19th Century Baptist called James Harvey (1826–1893) in *From Suffolk Lad to London Merchant*—his conversion, how he served the Lord in part by arguing with rationalists, etc, next to me sat a notorious atheist. I wanted to point out the irony but resisted.¹⁵

I should also say something about church libraries, a mixed blessing in my experience. We had one in my home church in Wales. I remember borrowing a two volume Gospel Standard set *Sermons of J K Popham* (1847–1937).¹⁶ I recall helping to catalogue the Library. My pastor used to say certain books we were given were for “the poison cupboard”. I recall *The Jesus of history* by T R Glover (1869–1943) being one put in there.¹⁷

We have a church library in Childs Hill, that is used only from time to time. Just recently a former member came back to London from Nigeria eager to read. She fished out by herself the peerless *Holiness* by J C Ryle (1816–1900) which she soon finished and *More than conquerors* on Revelation by William Hendriksen (1900–1982). Last Sunday she asked for a good book on eschatology. I was able to locate a rather grubby copy of a little book from 1970 *The Momentous event* by W J Grier (1902–1983)—not approved by everyone perhaps but one that explains the Amillennial position very well.¹⁸

Anyway, today I want us to think chiefly of the value of personal and specialist libraries.

Personal libraries

A recent report by *Aviva* insurers suggested that around 6.5m people in Britain (1-in-10) do not own any printed books. In the 18–24 age range, the number increases to 1-in-5. Although the report sounds alarm bells, *Sunday Times* literary editor, Andrew Holgate, said he was not surprised at the figure and being positive declared that “at least that means 90% of homes do have books”.¹⁹ It may also be the case that some are taking in their information by other means.

15. It also took some self-control when he wandered off not to take a pencil and write in his notebook “There is a God”, “God is great” or “Eternity”—those were the alternatives I considered.

16. James Kidwell Popham was the 19th century High Calvinist pastor of Galeed Strict Baptist, Brighton who wrote against Moody and Sankey. The church I attended was not at all Hyper-Calvinist.

17. Glover’s book was first published in 1917. Terrot Reavely Glover, a classics lecturer, was a Baptist and an Anti-supernaturalist.

18. *Holiness* was first published in 1877, *More than conquerors* in 1939 and *The Momentous event* in 1970.

19. See article here www.ibtimes.co.uk/1-10-people-do-not-own-single-book-uk-households-have-8-web-connected-devices-1602428 (Accessed March 2017).

I grew up in the sixties in a household with few books. What books we did have made quite an impact. There was the 1958 *Waverley Encyclopedia* edited by Gordon Stowell (b. 1928), later supplemented by a *Collins Modern Encyclopedia in Colour* (1969) and an almost complete set of the multi-volume *Children's Encyclopedia* (one of the post-1943 sets) published under the name Arthur Mee (1875–1943). Religious books were few and far between so I remember well the Watchtower publication *From paradise lost to paradise regained* especially the pictures and W L Emmerson's Adventist work *The Bible Speaks*.²⁰ It was only when I was converted at the age of 12 that I discovered that both my parents owned Bibles.

Once I became a Christian, I began to gather my own personal library. The first Christian book I read was F B Meyer (1847–1929) on *Paul A servant of Jesus Christ* in a Lakeland Publications paperback. When I began to gather a personal library of good Christian books there was much talk about the importance of having hardbacks. These are more expensive, of course, but more durable. If you are not careful, some paperbacks can fall apart on a first read.

I remember shelling out the extra cash to buy *The Welsh Revival of 1904* by Dr Eifion Evans in hardback. I am glad I did that. It is a very enlightening book that I still have.²¹ But then pursuing my policy I went next for Yale scholar Jaroslav Pelikan (1923–2006)'s *Spirit Versus Structure: Luther and the Institutions of the Church*. I struggled through it but this academic work is not really for teenagers.

I did better with paperbacks such as J C Ryle *Five English Reformers*²² and Brian Edwards' mid-seventies EP biographies of William Tyndale (1494–1536) and John Newton (1725–1807) *God's Outlaw* and *Through many dangers*. I also really appreciated a little book by Dr G Coleman Luck (1913–1976) *The Bible book by book*.²³ It is an introduction to Bible synthesis, which involves reading whole books of the Bible through at a time. It was when I started doing this as a University student that I recalled that I had just the book to help me.

Throughout my student years I took advantage of Banner of Truth Trust reduced prices and such like and once I became a minister the

20. Not recommended these volumes from 1958 and 1949 respectively were accessed March 2017 in these locations: www.strictlygentleel.co.uk/paradise/1958_From_Paradise_Lost_To_Paradise_Regained.pdf and <https://archive.org/details/W.L.EmmersonTheBibleSpeaksContainingOneHundredAndForty-oneReadings>. I also seem to recall Uncle Arthur's Bedtime stories another Adventist title but aimed at children.

21. This appeared in 1969. The year before Brynmor Pierce Jones (1925–1999) who I later came to know had published *The King's Champions*. He always referred to Dr Evans' book, a little aggrieved, as "the official version" (ie with the focus on Evan Roberts).

22. Published by the Banner of Truth Trust from 1961.

23. Dr Luck was a Moody Bible Institute professor and his book first appeared in 1955.

church was happy to help me in securing the tools of my trade. Prior to the birth of my fifth son I was persuaded to move my library from the manse to the church. This has not been a happy arrangement. I most often work at home so I am not seeing my library on a daily basis and so lack the familiarity with it that would make it more useful. Further, as expected, it is not unusual for me to lose track of a book's whereabouts. Is it in the chapel or at home? Perhaps if I had begun with this arrangement it would be less difficult.

In more recent years there has been a revolution in the online availability of good books and I am in a sort of halfway house where many of the books I consult I have only in electronic form—on *esword*, *online* or on my *kindle*. Something I have found useful is to maintain a virtual library at *Librarything*. I have only catalogued about 800 volumes so far but it means that I have an easily accessible record of books, religious and secular, that I own or once owned.²⁴

Christians who want to maintain a personal library today probably fall into three broad categories. Many especially younger men use *Logos* software or something similar so that most of their books are in electronic form. The advantage here is that such libraries are highly portable and easily searched.²⁵

Everything printed from 1475–1700 can be accessed through *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) if you have the access (anyone in Wales can do this through the National Library). Most items from 1700–1800 are also available from Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO).²⁶ There will always be a need for conventional books but for younger men this will increasingly be the way to go, making private (as well as public) libraries much less crucial than they were, though, I want to argue, still necessary.

At the other end of things are those who deal almost exclusively in conventional books. My father-in-law, Geoff Thomas, has recently retired and moved out of the manse he occupied for over 50 years where he amassed a huge library of thousands of volumes. His story perhaps includes some cautionary advice for those who take the conventional route. The story often told by students of the library that is sinking due to the weight of its books is apparently an urban myth but books can cause structural damage, especially if stored in private homes. Most of my father-in-law's volumes were kept on the first floor and there does appear to be some structural damage. He also has the problem where

24. For e-sword see www.e-sword.net/ and for Librarything, www.librarything.com. Kindle is an Amazon product www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B0r86FESVC.

25. See www.logos.com

26. See eebo.chadwyck.com/home and gale.cengage.co.uk

to house the collection next. Many have had to go into storage for now. S M Houghton (1899–1987) who was such a help to the Banner of Truth in its early days, had a library of 30,000 volumes. He had to resort to using chicken sheds in his garden to store them all!

In George Orwell's novel *Keep the aspидistra flying* he refers to bookseller Mr Cheeseman whose favourite way of acquiring stock "was to buy up the libraries of people who had just died, especially clergymen. Whenever a clergyman died Mr Cheeseman was on the spot with the promptness of a vulture. Clergymen, he explained to Gordon, so often have good libraries and ignorant widows."²⁷ Whether my old minister, Derek Garwood, was aware of that quotation or simply the fact, he made valiant efforts to overcome that problem before he died but to no avail. Thankfully most of the books went to the Library now owned by *Union* in Bridgend. If we are looking at things with a financial eye, the truth is that personal libraries need to be dispersed before we die not after!

Specialist libraries

There are all sorts of specialist libraries. Obviously our interest is theological and Christian. ABTAPL (*The Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries*) was originally formed to be the UK member of an international Association of Theological Libraries set up in 1954, following a meeting convened by the WCC under UNESCO auspices.

They provide an online directory that lists some 53 such libraries here in London and another 400 elsewhere in the British Isles.²⁸ Some of these are of lesser interest²⁹ but some are worth mentioning

- *The London Library* (with a million volumes all told)³⁰
- *The Huguenot Library* in nearby Gower Street³¹
- *The Lambeth Palace Library*, which since 1996 has included the bulk of the largely Puritan *Sion College Library*³²
- *The Bible Society Library*, Oxford³³
- *The Angus Library and archive* for Baptist history, Oxford³⁴
- *Tyndale House Library*, Cambridge (42,000 volumes)³⁵

27. See Chapter 10 of the 1936 novel.

28. www.newman.ac.uk/abtapl/database/contents.html (Accessed March 2017). There are 30 in Oxford, 20 in Cambridge, 29 in Scotland, 17 in Ireland and 8 each in N Ireland and Wales.

29. University libraries, local public libraries, Roman Catholic ones and others to do with other religions and sects.

30. www.londonlibrary.co.uk

31. www.huguenotsociety.org.uk/library-and-archive.html

32. www.lambethpalacelibrary.org

33. www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-us/our-history/archives-at-cambridge

34. theangus.rpc.ox.ac.uk

35. www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/library

- *The Gospel Standard Baptist Library*, Hove³⁶
- *The Gladstone Library*, Hawarden, North Wales³⁷
- The various Wesley libraries in Bristol, London and Oxford

Dr Williams Library³⁸

To look at two more libraries in a little detail, you probably know that the library in which this lecture is being given was established by the will of Welsh born Presbyterian Dissenter Dr Daniel Williams (1643–1716). After serving in Ireland he became a leading London nonconformist minister. When he died he left instructions to his trustees to turn his private collection into a public library available for nonconformist ministers, tutors and students in the City of London. The library first opened in Red Cross Street, Cripplegate in 1730, largely due to the selfless efforts of his trustees who contributed and raised the necessary funds to build and equip a separate library building.

The collections were greatly enlarged over the years with many important gifts of books, manuscripts and portraits, so that the original 7600 books now form only a small part of the library which goes well beyond Puritanism to cover all sorts of biblical subjects, church history and more.

In 1865 the *Metropolitan Railway* bought the Red Cross Street premises and after a temporary stay at No.8, Queen Square, there was a move to a new building in Grafton Street in 1873. In 1889 the then Trustees acquired University Hall, Gordon Square, where the Library opened in 1890, where it has been ever since. *The Congregational Library* is also housed there. Last year, 2016, marked the tercentenary of the Trust and a new history was prepared by Dr Williams's Research Fellow, Dr Alan Argent.³⁹

The Library currently has about 250,000 volumes and about 150 periodical runs. It adds about a thousand volumes a year and 80 periodicals. Special collections include a 17th Century French Protestant theology one.⁴⁰ There are also manuscript collections, including those of Roger Morrice (1628–1702); the Westminster

36. www.gospelstandard.org.uk/Library

37. www.gladstoneslibrary.org The Gladstone Library is residential

38. For more on Dr Williams's Library see dwl.ac.uk

39. The building's designer was the winner of an architectural competition, Thomas Leverton Donaldson (1795–1885), Professor of Architecture at University College, London. It was built in 1848–49 as University Hall to mark the passing of the 1844 Dissenters' Chapels Act. The premises were shared by Manchester New College from 1853, which acquired the lease in 1882. When the college (now Harris Manchester College) moved to Oxford in 1889, the building was acquired from its trustees by Dr Williams's Trust.

40. There are also Unitarian collections under the names Theophilus Lindsey (1723–1808) and Joseph Priestley (1733–1804); Christopher Walton's Theosophical Library; Norman H Baynes'

Assembly minutes; Richard Baxter's letters and diaries, etc and manuscripts of George Herbert (1593–1633).

The Evangelical Library⁴¹

It has been my privilege to be on the board of the Evangelical Library many years, latterly as chair. The Library's founder was London Strict Baptist businessman Geoffrey Williams (1886–1975) who founded it as the *Beddington Free Grace Library* in 1933. His vision for the library began with the accumulation in his Beddington home, 12 miles from London, of a private collection of Reformed and Puritan evangelical classics but he soon developed a vision fuelled by a double realisation. First, the anomaly that a Protestant nation that by then possessed a variety of specialist information libraries yet lacked a national repository for the best Protestant evangelical literature. At the same time, there was the growing realisation that many excellent evangelical works were fast disappearing from the public domain. Puritan and Reformed literature was being banished from theological libraries and ministers studies with alacrity.

So Geoffrey Williams set himself the task of reclaiming as many volumes as possible as a heritage for future generations. The silver lining in it all was that at the time original works, some very rare, were turning up on barrows in street markets and similar places at rock bottom prices. Williams systematically scoured the length and breadth of the country pursuing a wide range of important books for the collection. His tireless efforts were richly rewarded and today from the acorn of that original collection a rich oak has grown.

A crucial moment was when in 1938 Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981) was made aware of the Library.⁴² He immediately saw how it tuned in with his own burning desire for what we may call the three R's: Restoration of God's Word at the heart of the Christian community, Reformation of the church that teaches that Word and, ultimately, Revival of the people brought about by a personal relationship with Christ.

Lloyd-Jones was keen to bring the Library to central London and in 1944, even though the country was still at war, this happened. The first location was Gloucester Road, South Kensington but in 1946 the Library was installed in an old school building on Chiltern Street near Baker

Byzantine Library; the G H Lewes & George Eliot Library; and the New College, London, Library.

41. For more on The Evangelical Library see evangelical-library.org.uk.

42. This happened through a Welsh speaking Calvinistic Methodist minister Eliseus Howell (1893–1969)

Street Tube station. An attractive location in many ways, it was possible to have use of the building on very reasonable terms. As the years went by problems became apparent, however, with draughts and leaks and great difficulties heating the place. The second and third floor location was also a problem for some although it was possible to install a lift latterly.

Eventually, it was agreed that a move was necessary and after several options were explored a move was made near the end of 2009 to a brand new double unit with parking spaces in North London, near Bounds Green Tube Station. The new location has proved a great asset, maintaining the London connection but escaping damp conditions, a potentially unsympathetic landlord and the congestion zone.

The Library currently has about 80,000 volumes and about 60 periodical runs, including a complete run of the now defunct *Christian Herald* magazine. It adds volumes as and when it can (about 500 annually) and takes in about a hundred periodicals. There is a small manuscript collection that includes letters from A W Pink (1886–1962), letters to George Whitefield (1714–1770) and what appear to be sermons by Philip Henry (1631–1696). There is also an interesting portrait collection. The Library now houses the archive of the *London Institute for Contemporary Christianity* and has recently agreed to house *The Strict Baptist Historical Society* collection of 5,000 books, several periodicals and 350 church minute books, account books, etc. from over a hundred churches. We hope shortly to receive a collection of about 5,000 books originally kept in Grove Chapel, Camberwell but that have been in Australia for over 25 years.

Value

Having spoken about libraries for a while let me conclude by addressing the question of their value. In days gone by *The Evangelical Library Bulletin* would invariably carry the slogan *Preservation information circulation*. These words highlight very helpfully what it is about libraries that makes them valuable. Let us think about libraries under these headings.

Preservation

Libraries are valuable because they preserve books and their contents. One of the great things libraries do is to preserve treasures from the past. To use a picture, we can think of the books produced down the ages, a figure something over the 135 million mark, as akin to the multitude of species of flora and fauna with which God populated the

world in the beginning. We know that many of the species are now extinct but great efforts are being made to keep any more from being lost. This is being done on the basis that we do not know fully how useful each may be in days to come.

Librarians are engaged in part in a similar task—like so many Noahs they are seeking to preserve, in readable form, the books that have been written. We should be thankful that such work goes on. Many books have been lost. The Bible refers to some, such as *The Book of Jasher* or *The Visions of Iddo the Seer*.⁴³ There are many, many more of these, especially from ancient times. On rare occasions one is found tucked away somewhere or on a palimpsest. To know such works exist is tantalising.

There are also some cases where only one or two copies of an original book survive. Thankfully, if one good copy survives more can easily be reproduced and often are.

Information

Libraries are valuable further because they inform people of the existence of these preserved books and what they contain. Once books have been preserved people can be informed of their existence. Library catalogues are a fascinating source of knowledge that inform us firstly of what types of book exist and then of the books themselves.

Imagine someone seeing that there is a classification biblical hermeneutics or systematic theology, for example. That may be the first thing to alert them to the existence of such items. I recall a time when I did not know what a thesaurus was. The moment I discovered what it is was a great moment for me. Something similar happened with systematic theology. The first one I was aware of was that by Augustus H Strong (1836–1921) and the first one I began to read was that by Louis Berkhof (1873–1957). Reading Berkhof, to quote Keats, made me feel “like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes he star’d at the Pacific”.⁴⁴

Once you know a certain type or genre of books exists you can begin to find out who has written in that area. I remember a friend when I was in seminary who would deliberately scan the library shelves finding out what existed. Of course, one can take advantage of electronic search methods these days. What a help that is.

If the question is raised as to what advantage libraries have over bookshops, let me illustrate. Say I want books on the priesthood of all believers. If I go to the Amazon store and search what books they have

43. See 2 Samuel 1:18 and 2 Chronicles 9:29, etc.

44. See *On first looking into Chapman’s Homer*.

on this subject I can find at least twenty possible titles though several are no longer in print. If I go, on the other hand, to the OCLC (Online Computer Library Centre)'s Worldcatalogue there are a lot more books listed—hundreds. I can see that as far back as 1521 Jerome Emser (1477–1527) wrote on the subject in German. I thus have a potentially more thorough grasp of what has actually been written.⁴⁵

Circulation

Libraries are valuable finally because they circulate news of the books they have preserved and their contents. Circulation goes on not only by means of books being picked up and read but also by them being quoted or footnoted or listed in bibliographies. It is sometimes not until a book appears in that context that some people realise it exists.

I read recently Iain Murray's new biography of J C Ryle *Prepared to stand alone*. In one of the footnotes I saw a reference to a book by Penelope Fitzgerald on *The Knox brothers* (1997) a biography of her father and his three brothers. Now I chose to download the book in electronic form rather than using a library but it was Iain Murray's footnote that alerted me to its existence.⁴⁶

Application

I am a preacher so it is right that we at least end with an application. What do we do about libraries?

1. Do support them, especially Christian ones. As you can imagine, they are constantly in need of funds. Join the *Evangelical Library*. Even if you do not use it, you are still helping support it.

2. Use libraries. Use their catalogues (many are online these days). Find out what is available. Do not remain in ignorance.

3. Gather your own library if you can and help others build theirs. I was most gratified to hear one of my sons say recently that now he is off to University he wants to start forming his own library.

4. Pray for them. Andrew Bonar (1810–1892) really appreciated the collection of books in his study. Indeed at times he was concerned that

45. See www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=priesthood+of+all+believers and www.worldcat.org/search?qt=worldcat_org_bks&q=priesthood+of+all+believers&fq=dt%3Abks (Both accessed March 2017).

46. Footnotes can be misleading, of course. I heard of a man once who read an interesting article on the Psalms that included a reference to a book in German called *Die Psalmen* by Berthold Seemann, the Psalms. When he got hold of the book, it turned out to be called *Die Palmen* by Berthold Seemann, and was actually all about palms!

LIBRARIES AND THEIR VALUE



A lecture in the Evangelical Library

he thought too much of them. He realised their usefulness. He noted in his Diary on Monday 12 November 1855

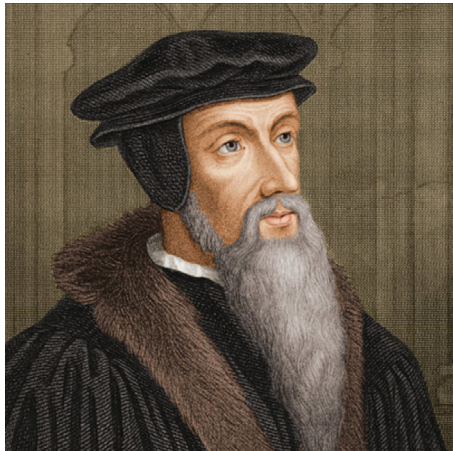
Led to-day to notice that all my books, my many suitable and profitable books that come to help my study and suggest what I might preach, as well as those papers, and the like, that stir up the soul, are all part of God's calling of me. By these He carries on what He began, and so by every verse of Scripture which He gives me the heart to feel.⁴⁷

Be thankful for your own library and for others like the *Evangelical Library* and the *Dr Williams's*. Give thanks to God for them. Pray they will be provided for and be used in a way that will bring glory to God.

47. Andrew Bonar *Diary and Letters* Marjory Bonar in loc. cit.



Statues of Roger Williams in Providence, Rhode Island (left) (the book in his left hand is titled Soul Liberty) and on the Freedom (Reformation) Wall in Geneva



Theodosius (left) and John Calvin (right)

Living in a Pluralist Society

Paul Lusk

Introduction

At home I have an old document, signed by the Rev. Basil H Sims, to certify that I was baptised when I was eight months old in the Congregational Church in Whitley Bay. 32 years later I was baptised—or rebaptised, depending on your point of view—this time in a church in Liverpool. It was there in Belvidere Road Reformed Baptist church, under the Ministry of Stuart Olyott, that I became a believer when, after a great struggle, I submitted my life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Belvidere I met Digby and Marianne, and Digby introduced me to Roger Williams, who will appear later in this talk. Later, I moved to Worcester and to Wood Green Baptist church where the pastor was Paul Mallard. There started to be talk in Baptist circles about the dangers of pluralism, after Don Carson's book *The Gagging of God*¹ came out. I approached Paul to say that surely a pluralistic society is consistent with what we believe as Baptists. He went off to his library and gave me a copy of Leonard Verduin's fantastic book, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren*. These two introductions, to Leonard Verduin and to Roger Williams, really set me on this trail of examining the Christian view of the pluralistic society. I gave talks on pluralism in various places and wrote about it in evangelical newspapers. Then Christian Institute and Christian Concern started coming on the scene. I decided I'd better try and write something about this and not just give the odd talk, so the fruit of all that, many years later, is my book *The Jesus Candidate: political religion in a secular age*.²

I hope that your fellowship with Digby survives what I am now about to say, because you may not like it and I'm quite prepared for you to discuss, debate, disagree. In fact at the end if you don't discuss debate and disagree I'll do the talk again because I think you won't have understood it. So if I'm controversial I assume that was the purpose of inviting me and if not you'll have to discuss it with Digby.

1. Don Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

2. James Paul Lusk, *The Jesus Candidate: political religion in a secular age* (London: Ekklesia, 2017)

Living in a pluralistic society is the title of this talk. So what we mean by pluralism? 200 years ago if we had been here in this building, and talked about pluralism in Christian circles, we would have meant a Church of England minister having more than one living. That was called pluralism. It was generally frowned upon. Now I don't think we'd struggle with that. All Church of England clergy have numerous ministries to deal with these days.

In Christian circles today, pluralism might mean any of the following three things.

First a pluralistic *theology* means that there are many ways to God: for example, a claim that Islam, Hinduism and Christianity all represent equally valid ways to God. Let me hasten to reassure you am not going to lecture on that version of pluralism. I'm a conservative evangelical. I believe that we come to God through Christ alone and I've no problem in sharing that with anybody but I don't think it's what you expect to hear in the conference.

Second pluralism can be a *description* of a society being one with many cultures, ethnicities, faiths, and so on—in this sense 'pluralism' may simply convey a fact about a society.

Third 'pluralism' may be an *assertion* that diverse groups can and should enjoy equality before the law. A pluralistic society is a society based on this claim.

If we reflect on these last two, let's take the example of South Africa. Up to sometime in the 1990s it was a pluralistic society in the sense that there were different African nations, there were white people, there were Indians, there were Jews. It was a diverse society. But it was not a society where those groups enjoyed equality. It was based on the domination of one group. Then with the rise of Nelson Mandela to the presidency it changed. It became based on what the principle that all have equality in voting, all should have equality in workplace and in social affairs, and so on. So it went from being a '*descriptively*' plural society to be an '*assertively*' pluralist society.

Now you may question this. You may think: there isn't this equality in truth, is there? One group still has massive wealth, the ones with education have more power and so on. So is it really pluralism? It's a good question and I think what it brings out is that pluralism in this sense is an *aspiration*. It is never fully fulfilled but it is a target that a society is striving to reach. It is what we could call a normative idea. The society is based on the norm, the aspiration; the ideal that people should enjoy this equality before the law. This is the focus of this talk.

We here live in a society where *we are expected to strive for the principle that all groups have equality before the law*. I'm going to discuss how as Christians we might evaluate that claim and live out our Christianity in relation to that claim now.

Let me say I'm not a theologian. I'm not a church minister. I hope I'm a well taught student of the Bible. But my primary interest in my work life is with communities. I've worked on citizen projects, particularly with housing and community control. Academically my main interest is politics and I basically speak to you as somebody with a strong interest in politics. If anybody wants to leave, I won't take offence, because I know that people vary in their comfort and willingness to discuss political issues.

So where we can find the answer to this question of how to live in a society based on this 'assertive' pluralism? We start with the Bible. I think if we look at the New Testament we see that our Lord says that his kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). We read in Romans 13 that the church is called to be submissive to the state. There is room for debate about what that amounts to. It's good to remember that submission is not necessarily the same as obedience, but generally speaking the church was called to be submissive to the state—and that meant to the pagan Roman state. It was an anti-Christian state. In the New Testament soldiers ask 'what should we do?' Are they told to lay down their arms and stop serving Rome? No, they are told to do their job honestly and not rob people. Tax collectors likewise: 'what are we to do? Are we to give up our career collecting taxes for the hated Roman state?' No. Just don't steal from people (Luke 3:14). The followers of Jesus are told to pay taxes because it's Cæsar's image on the money (Mark 12:16). Our Lord tells his followers that they are not to be like the princes of the Gentiles, who exercise authority over them. You are to be different; you are to be servants (Matthew 20:25–28). As we move into the early church period, as we saw in our second reading, Paul says to the church: regulate your own business. Don't go running to the state to tell you how to run your business. You're quite capable of doing it yourselves. Decide your own membership. Don't have people—choose not to have people—in your fellowship who do not walk the Christian way. But, by the way, I didn't mean you not to mingle with thieves and the sexually immoral and so on, in every day society. That would be to leave the world behind. Of course (Paul says) we mingle in our day-to-day life with non-Christians: with all sorts of people. But in our churches we manage our own business.

This was the model for the early church. At the end of the second century, the church father Tertullian, wrote to his fellow citizens in his *Apology*: ‘We sail with you, we fight with you, we till the ground with you, and in like manner we unite with you in our trading’.³ Addressing the political authorities, Tertullian said that ‘To the emperor we render such reverential homage as is lawful for us and good for him.’⁴

In the early church we frequently find people saying ‘we respect Caesar’, ‘we honour the Emperor’, ‘we obey the Emperor’, but we don’t regard him as God. This was a problem, because the Emperor in the Roman system was based on the idea that people had to pray, worship and offer sacrifice to the Emperor. But Tertullian says ‘it is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature that every man should worship according to his own convictions.’⁵ So the early Christians said: we respect and obey the state, but with the right to worship as we choose and so we are not going to worship the Emperor. By the way, we can only have that right to worship as we choose on as long as everybody else has the right to worship as *they* choose. That principle gives us the liberty to worship.

So we see a church in the New Testament and in its early history that honours the state, worships as it chooses, says that everybody has that right to worship as they choose, and mingles with the wider society in commerce, and in the military, in agriculture, and so on. It is a church that is recognisably comfortable with what we now call a pluralist society. The Roman Empire had very little idea of a pluralist society. They were all supposed to worship the Emperor. But the church is saying in terms we could now easily recognise, that it is comfortable with the pluralist society. It’s a radical proposition. Most states in most of history have been based on the idea that the ruler is God or has a personal mandate from God. That’s the basis of what political theories call legitimacy. The state has said it enjoys personal contact with the gods. Either the rulers are gods, or, as George Balandier, anthropologist, put it, kinsmen of the gods. Rulers have what’s often called the mandate of heaven. If you go to Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, in the centre of the city in a park you’ll find a Buddhist shrine to various rulers and then beside that a shrine to Ho Chi Minh—someone who, though Communist, has been venerated and worshipped. But the early church breaks with this normal historical pattern that the ruler is a god. It says we worship God as God. We obey

3. ch xlii

4. Letter to Scapula ch 3

5. Letter to Scapula ch 2

the ruler as ruler, and the two are not one and the same thing. In the New Testament and then in early church history, we see no suggestion that Christians should seek to control the state.

So, here's this church, it's free, it mingles with the population, it's radical in breaking the link between God and the state, of breaking the idea that the rulers of the state *are* God, and therefore I'd suggest we can find authority there for the idea of pluralism.

However, a lot of water has passed under the bridge since then—or to quote a line from a great play, a lot of blood has passed under the bridge.⁶ We have the problem of 1,200 years or so of Christendom, which has shaped our society and history of much of the world enormously. Then we have the Reformation. We have Christian states formed after the Reformation, under Protestant rule, and we have states around the world, the American state for example, based on separation of church and state but still largely at least nominally Christian.

So the question is now in the light of Scripture and in the light of our history, as conservative evangelicals how do we evaluate a society founded on this aspiration that all enjoy equal status before the law. How do we witness in a society where the values of pluralism drive much public debate, often to the distress of conservative Christians and how does this evaluation frame our contribution to public life?

I'm going to give an initial framework for that discussion. It is a really important discussion for evangelicals to have. I'm going to set out what I think are some principles that can take us forward with that discussion.

I'm going to say there are two challenges now. I'm going to suggest that I can really only see to possible ways forward. I'm going to suggest that there are resources in the Bible and in church history which can help us, but above all, also help our neighbours, help that wider community, understand how we got to where we are and how they are to analyse what are really increasingly challenging issues.

So first of all, there are two challenges for us as summed up as:

- the end of the Christian majority, and
- the rise of the religious right.

Logically, I suggest, there are two alternative ways forward: neither, perhaps, particularly easy to stomach. Option 1 is to defend a pluralistic society, in which case the state is neutral in matters of faith. Option

6. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf?* (Edward Albee)

2 is to say that neutrality is impossible, in which case we follow the direction of the religious right.

First, let us consider *the end of the Christian majority*. In the 2001 census 72% of people, when asked their religion, said they were Christian. By 2011 that figure had fallen to 59%. In 2012, from a different source, not the census but the authoritative British social attitudes survey, 46% described themselves as Christian. Now fairly obviously that can't in truth have fallen by 13 percentage points in the year. When people are asked questions they interpret, they put it in a context. But it seems very likely that, by the next census in 2021, there will be a minority of self-described Christians. Some of that slack is taken up by Islam, but Muslims are 6% of the population. (Interestingly, when people are asked how many Muslims there are in Britain they say 20%. 6% is the actual proportion of Muslims in the population at the moment.) The group that is rising is those who say they are of no religion—the 'nones'. The same is happening in America.

Now how do we evaluate that? Some of us in this room may think 'great, because people are telling the truth'. Some of us might say this is the end not of Christianity but of nominalism, of people saying they are Christians when what they mean is they are white British, their grandparents went to Church etc. But there is a political impact of this, and it does greatly colour the issue about pluralism.

Let me illustrate this. Abraham Kuyper, was prime minister of the Netherlands in the first decade of the 20th century. He was a great church leader, minister, journalist, a huge figure in the history of their Christian political thought. He disestablished the Dutch Reformed Church. He introduced what he called the separation of church and state. He was a great admirer of American separation. He brought about something he called pluriformity, a form of pluralism. But he also said that blasphemy must remain illegal, because the basis of the legitimacy of the state is the Christian God endorsing the state. So for him essentially what pluralism meant is that no one Christian denomination was established. Catholicism and the various forms of Protestantism enjoyed equality before the law and were funded to provide education and various other services: remnants of this still remain in the Netherlands. So what pluralism has meant up to now mainly has been tolerance. It has meant from a position of Christian domination the various Christian denominations tolerate each other and the Christian state tolerates dissent—atheism, Judaism, etc. Now pluralism as tolerance no longer works. There is no longer a dominant

position from which others may be tolerated, or if there is a dominant position, maybe it's agnosticism or atheism. So we need something more robust if we think that pluralism is a New Testament model.

John Stevens, director of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) spoke about this need at the conference of Affinity (another fellowship of Evangelicals) a few weeks ago. He said

Christian campaigning organisations have fought a long war of attrition against the dismantling of a pseudo-Christian state, especially with regard to the liberalisation of sexual morality, but have failed to recognise that this battle was lost long before governments introduced the relevant legislative changes. Christianity was rendered implausible as the basis for civic life and the legal framework because it no longer exercised any hold on the hearts and minds of the people. Very often this was a failure of the church itself, whether because of its failings, abuses, pride, presumption, bigotry, intolerance, or tolerance of false teaching which thought it could advocate for morality without faith. This inevitably raises the question of whether Christians' rights and liberties are being restricted or whether Christians need to reassess what the Bible requires of them. Christians in the UK need to return to a genuinely biblical political philosophy, shorn of the mistaken assumptions of Christendom, which see the state as a vehicle for the enforcement of the morality of the church.

This brings us to the second challenge, the rise of the religious right. In Britain this particularly means the "campaigning organisations" that John is referring to. These are the Christian Institute and Christian Concern, which share an ideology with the American religious right. The religious right calls for cultural war against a pluralistic society. It seeks to mobilise us to campaign to restore a Christian state—or if that is not possible, to resist the alternative. It says that Christians are marginalised in a pluralistic society. Alongside the religious right, there are other forces heading in roughly the same direction. There's a movement called Radical Orthodoxy, which is broadly Catholic, and closely linked with the Labour Party and particularly a movement called Blue Labour. There is Michael Sandel, a very popular philosopher often on the radio. He says that modern liberalism has failed to meet spiritual yearning. He calls for politics to go back to roots in Aristotle and the search for a common good. So there is a range of forces that are critical of a pluralist society. The religious right particularly seeks to mobilise evangelicals.

Rousas J Rushdoony was the founder of the movement called Christian Reconstructionism, an American Presbyterian writing in the 60s and 70s. He laid the intellectual foundation for the religious right when he said that ‘no society exists without a religious foundation, or without a law system which codifies the morality of its religion.’⁷ He sees the secular state as impossible—that in fact it is just humanism as a new religion. The decline of the Judaeo-Christian state is the rise of the humanistic state which will persecute Christians. That is the key argument which underpins the thinking of the religious right organisations. The Christian Institute—the Newcastle-based evangelical pressure group—says that ‘to fail to privilege one religion would be for the state positively to endorse either a secular humanistic philosophy, which results in atheism, or a multifaith philosophy which is opposed by faithful people in all religions.’⁸ This follows Rushdoony in thinking that the state *must* have a religion. If it chooses not to have religion what it’s actually doing is putting forward atheism and secular humanism as its religion. So the Institute’s basic position is that Christianity must remain privileged in the legal system and the Church of England must remain established. We must defend the establishment, but the key thing is that we must protect this nominally Christian state. But where are the Christians these days? The established church is in decline; for the religious right project to work it must gain the active support of evangelicals, including the independent evangelicals.

It is difficult to read the religious right argument in the New Testament. It is justified by looking back to the Old Testament, the ground where Rushdoony stood: Mosaic law is normative and therefore all the laws and punishments of the Torah need to be legislated. That, in Rushdoony’s thought, is what a Christian social and political order should seek to achieve. The religious right sees the New Testament period and the time of the early church as a period of transition, leading to Christendom. Christendom is where the early church, under Rome, was headed. Some say that when Jesus said ‘my kingdom is not of this earth’ he meant not *yet*.⁹ He was looking forward to this time of the church establishment. So how did this come about? Well, people blame the Emperor Constantine. Constantine legalised the Christian church. He restored properties that had been stolen from it. He did meddle

7. R. J. Rushdoony, *Institutes of biblical law* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1973), pp4–5.

8. www.christian.org.uk/who-we-are/what-we-believe/christianity-and-the-state/

9. North and DeMar, *Christian Reconstruction: what it is, what it isn't* (Tyler, Texas: Institute of Christian Economics, 1991), p34.

in church affairs, and set himself up to determine theological disputes. But Constantine never established Christianity as the religion of the empire. This happened in AD 380, under Theodosius, when the edict of Thessalonica declared Christianity to be the religion of the Roman Empire. Christianity was defined as what was taught by the Bishops in Rome and Alexandria. That was recognised as Catholic Christianity. All others were heretics, who had conventicles, not churches, and were subject to punishment. Over the next 60 years the Catholic Church received legal and financial privilege, tax privilege and immunity from secular law. Pagan temples were suppressed, and the death penalty for defiance was introduced. This was when the established church became the key intermediary between the government of the state and daily life in the cities, in the provinces and in rural areas. Here is what a leading historian about the church is it became established under Christendom:

The medieval church was a state. It had all the apparatus of the state: laws and law-courts, taxes and tax-collectors, a great administrative machine, power of life and death over the citizens of Christendom and their enemies within and without. It was the state at its highest power.¹⁰

At the start of the 16th century, Christians rediscovered the Bible, and the church started to climb out of Christendom. Therefore the church starts to cease to be a state and begin its journey to being the New Testament church—a voluntary association of believers. The early reformers—Zwingli, Luther, Calvin—continued with the territorial church. That inevitably overlaps with the state, because the church must be recognised by the state, the state says that everybody must be a member of the church, and the church must struggle to control the religion authorised by the state. Really they all knew, and Luther famously struggled with this, that truly the church had to be the confessional church, or the gathered church. It should be an association of believers. Over the next hundred years, the church struggled with making that transition. But that does leave a question: in the 16th and 17th-century Christians struggled with the question of what is the state for. One key question here is: is the role of the state to uphold true religion? Oliver Cromwell believed it was, and struggled desperately with how he was to do that. The other question which relates to that, if we have a gathered church, a confessional church, can members of the church take part in the business of the state, or is it, as Muslims would

10. R W Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), pp17–18

say, *haram*, forbidden for Christians to do that. There were different points of view. Early Congregationalism wrestled with this issue. The point of it is that there are really two alternatives. Either Christians must take power in the state, and hold power, so that true religion can be enforced, or Christians live at arm's length from the state, forming communities that are tolerated, at best, by state, such as the Mennonites in the Low Countries—where they ran their own affairs but agreed to be left alone after the exchange of some money.

Now, one man found a way out of this: Roger Williams, the subject of a great paper by the Chairman of this conference 20 years ago. Roger Williams was an Anglican clergyman. He had contact with the early Baptists in 1620/1630s England. He was a respected scholar. He went to Massachusetts ten years after the Pilgrim Fathers. Here he found himself in the theocratic political system established by John Cotton, a Congregationalist theocracy. It was believed that the state had to uphold true religion. The state recognised the true churches. Citizenship and its rights were confined to members of those churches. Roger Williams fell out badly with John Cotton and the theocrats of New England. Firstly, he did not agree with the idea about recognising the true church and the true religion from the state's point of view. Also, he thought they didn't really own New England, because they had stolen it from the Indians and they should have negotiated with the Indians to buy the land. John Cotton and company didn't like that, and Roger Williams was thrown out of Massachusetts. He lived with the Indians for a period. He learnt their language and became an expert on Indian languages. He bought land, he founded the state of Rhode Island. He needed to get a Royal Charter for that state and he arrived in England in the first years of the Civil War, where the relationship of church and state is the issue of the hour. And he wrote *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution Discussed*. A fantastic book available only on Google digitised edition for most people, with a few libraries having original copies.

So, this great quote that opens it, which is well known,

God requireth not a uniformity of religion to be enacted and enforced in any civil state; which enforced uniformity, sooner or later, is the greater occasion of civil war, ravishing of conscience, persecution of Jesus Christ in his servants, and of the hypocrisy and destruction of millions of souls.

Roger Williams, 1644

Now Williams is sometimes said to have developed the idea of the separation of church and state. I'm not sure that he ever actually used that term, though that is the concept which is attributed to him.

Two key things I think that enabled Roger Williams to make his breakthrough. First of all, John Cotton said

A subject without godliness will not be *bonus vir*, a good man, and a magistrate, except he see godliness preserved, will not be *bonus magistratus*.

The government *must* be run by Christians, because they are the only people who are good. What Williams says on this is brilliant,

... a good garment, a good house, a good sword, a good ship. I also add, a good city, a good company or corporation, a good husband, father, master. Hence also we say, a good physician, a good lawyer, a good seaman, a good merchant, a good pilot for such or such a shore or harbour: that is, morally, civilly good, in their several civil respects and employments.

A subject, a magistrate, may be a good subject, a good magistrate, in respect of civil or moral goodness, which thousands want; and where it is, it is commendable and beautiful, though godliness, spiritual goodness, which is infinitely more beautiful, be wanting.

... the sovereign, original, and foundation of civil power lies in the people ... a people may erect and establish what form of government seems to them most meet for their civil condition.

So he says you can be a good politician, a good ruler, because you are honest and good at your job, whether you're a Christian or not. He observed the government of the Indians and he knew how they governed themselves. He thought you could have perfectly good government without Christians in charge.

That raised the question also put by John Cotton: if we don't have Christian government, how is government justified? Williams answer is 'the sovereign original and foundation of civil power lies in the people.' A people may erect and establish what form of government seems to them most fit for their condition.

I would suggest that Williams invented liberalism 50 years before John Locke. Two ideas are central to this.

First is the concept of what's since been called *the priority of the right over the good*. The job of the state is not to decide what's good. The

job of the state is to do its job competently and preserve the liberty for others to decide what is good. Williams's main concern was the freedom of the church, what is called soul liberty. As the church we have the right to decide what we in Bible find to be good. That means everybody else has the right to find their own way to what is good. It's not for the state to say what's good.

Second is the question of what makes the state legitimate. It is not rule by God or endorsement by a religion, it's the consent of the people.

Williams's model of the relationship of church and state—the separation of the two and the prohibition of establishment—drove the growth of Christianity in America in the 19th century, mainly through the Methodist and Baptist churches.¹¹ This apparent success inspired Kuyper's model of separation of church and state. But in the recent century, to bring us up-to-date, there is a crisis in this idea of the pluralistic society. That particularly comes from America, where some judgments in the Supreme Court in the middle of the 20th century saw separation of church and state as meaning no state funding could go to religiously-based education.¹² This mainly concerned claims against Catholics, so most of the Protestants were quite relaxed. This goes much further than the European model, where we have state funded religious education. We find anxiety over whether we are removing the spiritual content from our politics, as expressed for example from a Catholic perspective by Richard John Neuhaus¹³ and by the popular philosopher Michael Sandel.¹⁴

There is a lot of talk now about the common good and whether we should pursue the common good. I think there's a problem for Christians in that because we believe that no one is good but God. If the state starts determining, through the political process, what is good and what is not, that is a threat to the liberty of the church. So, to return to what I said before, I think there are two alternative ways forward and I think if we are to follow in the footsteps of Roger Williams, if we are to say pluralism is a biblical provision, to examine where we are now and move forward from there, then I think we say the state is properly neutral in matters of faith. Liberal secular pluralism in politics, I suggest, is a Christian idea founded on the need

11. See Mark Noll, *America's God, from Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: OUP, 2002).

12. *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1, 8 (1947); *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1970).

13. Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984).

14. Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap Press, 1996), pp4–6

to protect the purity of the church. It is for individuals and groups to decide what is good. It is not for the state or the political process to decide what is good. Now there are proper anxieties about this. None of this is easy. Does it mean that Christians cannot be in politics? Of course not. Roger Williams was a great statesman. It means that Christians enter politics to provide good government, to protect liberty for the sake of truth, a rather vulnerable property, as we know these days. Roger Williams asks: what is the difference between a Christian politician and a non-Christian politician? The difference, he says, is a Christian politician does his job to the glory of God. So I think we need politicians who will say, I'm a Christian, I do my job for the glory of God, and I'm not here to evangelise, though obviously I want to, but that's not what I'm in politics for. I'm not here to make laws which make other people into Christians. I'm here to do a good job of government for the sake of the community.

I can only see one other option, which is that neutrality is impossible. This is the position of the religious right. This is illustrated by Rev. David Holloway, a trustee of the Christian Institute, who writes:

When the church fails to influence society and its rules and regulations so that they conform as much as possible to God's will, the result is not happy neutrality. Rather the result is a nasty 'spiritual and psychological slum'.¹⁵

So, he says the job of Christians is to go out there and make rules to make the rest of society more godly. I don't recognise that as being the New Testament picture. I don't believe that people are saved by rule-keeping. I don't believe that God calls us to keep rules. I believe we keep God's rules out of love for God, but a loveless rule-keeping is not at what God calls for. What Mr Holloway asserts is that people who are not Christians (though they may say they are) will benefit from rule-making which is going to make a more Christian society. Once you start on that road somebody is going to come along and promote Christian rule-making for people who are not Christians. What will happen? What will happen is that non-Christian politicians will come along and say to these non-Christians: I'll make Christian rules for you. That's how you end up with, among other things, Donald Trump, offering to give power to Christians and keep Muslims out. I'm not

15. David Holloway, *Church and State in the New Millennium* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), p.2.

here to evaluate Donald Trump. I am illustrating the dangers of this road that the religious right wants to take us on. They say that tolerance is possible only from a position of dominant Christianity. They claim to represent a Christian majority which doesn't exist, or if it does exist, is purely nominal. They want to revive a Christian state. They see secular law as persecuting Christians. They demand that Christians be privileged in the legal system. I think that is morality without faith, as John Stevens puts it.

So the case I put to you is that Christians today are to be pluralists who defend the proper neutrality of the state.

As a final thought, John Calvin said,

it were a very idle occupation for private men to discuss what would be the best form of polity in the place where they live, seeing these deliberations cannot have any influence in determining any public matter.¹⁶

Now we live in a democracy and we all have the right to a deliberate on 'the best form of polity'. If we are to be submissive to the state we need to make a contribution to discussion that is going to be most important over the next few years, about 'British values'. We have important news for people from the Bible, from Christian history. We really understand this history. We are the product of this history. Let us explain to our neighbours what this history is, what they have, how they got to where they are with a liberal pluralist secular political system. Let us give glory to God by proclaiming these truths.

16. John Calvin, 'Of civil government', ch 20 para 8 in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

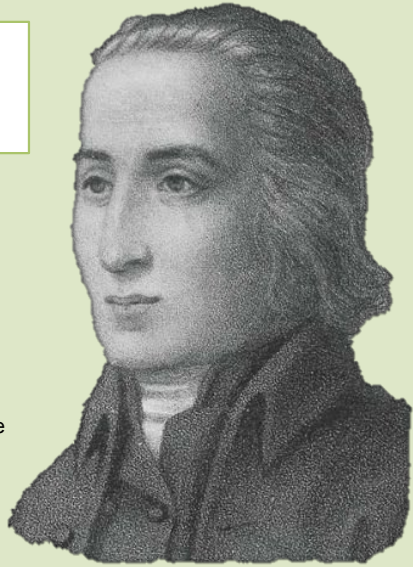
Pantycelyn

1717–1791

‘Ni byddaf farw, ond byw; a
mynegaf weithredoedd
yr ARGLWYDD.’

Psalm / Salm 118:17

‘I shall not die but live, and declare the
works of the Lord.’



William Williams's grave at Llandoverly

Pantycelyn 300th

Nathan Llywelyn Munday

‘I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord’¹

Introduction

In 1799, Thomas Charles of Bala included a letter in his new magazine called *Y Trysorfa Ysbrydol* (The Spiritual Treasury).² It is a letter written by the dying William Williams Pantycelyn (1717–1791) to a younger pastor and theologian. He tells Thomas how, in his old age, he had become intimate with his Saviour. This letter summarises the deep, experiential, Christ-centred religion that Pantycelyn not only experienced, but propagated in a Wales that had become a bastion of a new, revolutionary, Holy Spirit-fuelled movement in the eighteenth century—Calvinistic Methodism. As an old man, Pantycelyn had acquired the status of a Cambrian quasi-Poet laureate with titles such as the ‘Per Ganiedydd’ or ‘Sweet Singer’, ‘Salmydd’ / ‘Psalmist’, and the simple ‘Pantycelyn’—an old tradition where you were named from where you came from. Pantycelyn was the farmhouse where he lived all his life; it is near Llandovery, in the heart of Carmarthenshire. This year marks three hundred years since his birth.

Who was Pantycelyn? Pantycelyn has often been called the ‘third most important leader of the Welsh Methodist Revival’.³ Trained as a physician,⁴ he soon became a healer of ‘spiritual ailments’ when he felt the call to the ministry in 1740.⁵ Although a powerful preacher, ‘Seiat’ Leader, farmer, tea-seller, poet, theologian, organiser, peace-maker, and minister, his hymns remain his primary legacy—publishing over 850 in Welsh and 120 in English.⁶ These hymns provided the Welsh

1. Psalm 118:17.

2. ‘Llythyr oddi wrth y diweddar Barchedig Mr W. Williams o Bant y Celyn, yn Sir Gaerfyrddin, at y Parchedig T. Charles o’r Bala, ychydig o amser cyn ei farwolaeth’ in *Trysorfa Ysbrydol yn cynnwys Amrywiaeth o Bethau ar Amcan Crefyddol, yn Athrawiaethol, yn Annogaethol, yn Hanesiol &c.*, Rhif II, June 1799 (Caerleon: W.C. Jones, 1799), pp. 90–93.

3. D. Ben Rees, ‘Aspects of the Early Years of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism’, *Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymdeithas Hanes y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd*, Number 29–30 (2005–06), 5–24, p. 10.

4. Eifion Evans, *Bread of Heaven* (Bridgend: Bryntirion Press, 2010), p.18.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

6. Seiat—This was the Methodist Experience Meeting where Christians would gather and share their spiritual experiences under the careful eye of a ‘Seiat Leader’ who would be a more

with a means of articulating their religious experience in a language that they could understand: Carmarthenshire dialect mixed with the accompanying folk and ballad tunes appealed to the people, whilst the evangelical nature of the poetry articulated the personal, as well as the collective, revival experience in Wales.⁷ I shared in a recent article how he seemed to be speaking to me and even articulating my own spiritual experiences even though he'd been dead for years! The hymns are intimate in tone; they reveal, or utter, a desire for a closer communion with God; they emphasise that the hymn-writer is the sinner saved by grace and they are always Christ-centred.

I have known Pantycelyn for a long time. I first met him in my grandfather's (R.B. Higham) study in Llansamlet, where a portrait of him hung. My grandfather subsequently introduced me to him. But it was not until I was older that I realised the reason why I was so fond of Pantycelyn. It dawned on me that the motley crew of Methodists were in fact young men and women. Most of them were my age. Pantycelyn suddenly changed from this unerring, out-of-reach, Moses-like figure into someone the same age as me. Yes, they were saints who felt their sin and often struggled.

We are very privileged this afternoon. I do not want this lecture to be a hagiography or a biography. Not only are we remembering the three hundredth anniversary of this man, but he will also, in a way, be speaking to us himself. From this letter, and all his hymns, I want you to hear his beliefs. I want you to hear what Jesus meant to him and I want Pantycelyn's vision of Jesus to be our vision of Jesus as well. Some of you may be familiar with his work; some of you are less familiar. In one sense, it does not matter. He has written this letter for all of us in the language of Canaan (that is why Charles published it.)⁸ I am a young Christian, many of you are older and are serving Him like Pantycelyn did. This letter has the tone of an epistle and it gives us a glimpse into the spiritual mind of the Calvinistic Methodists. Like

experienced Christian. Dr Alethius in *Theomemphus* is such a character and Pantycelyn himself was well-known for being a very good leader in the various Seiat meetings. The emphasis in these meetings was always on personal spiritual experiences. See Eifion Evans, *Fire in the Thatch* (Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1996), chapter 7.

7. E. Wyn James, 'The Evolution of the Welsh Hymn' in Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes (eds.), *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 245. His three major collections are *Caniadau y Rhai sydd ar y Môr o Wydr...i Frenin y Saint* ('The Songs of Those who are on the Sea of Glass ... to the Saints' King') (1762); *Ffarwel Weledig, Groesaw Anweledig Bethau* ('Farewell Visible, Welcome Invisible Things') (1763-9); *Gloria in Excelsis: neu Hymnau o Fawl i Dduw a'r Oen* ('Gloria in Excelsis: Or Hymns of Praise to God and the Lamb') (1771-2).
8. Evans, *Bread of Heaven*, p. 10. This is what Pantycelyn calls the language that the citizens of the kingdom of heaven speak to one another.

Paul, Pantycelyn is writing to a young pastor. He's only got a week or so before he enters that realm where he will see Jesus face to face. Let's hear what he has to say.

The Great Physician

The letter begins:

Accept these lines from one who cannot converse with you face to face. I have been very ill, beyond all hopes of living, to my own mind, and in the opinion of others; and yet for some secret purpose of the Lord, I am alive so far [...] I have taken a great deal of doctors' medicines without the slightest benefit [...] nor did anything serve to assuage my pain and check my sickness until the Lord Himself became a doctor of medicine to me; and that came to pass in consequence of the Church taking my case in hand, and calling aloud at the door of his shop, and he, according to his promise, heard it; and I have this moment faith to believe that one earnest prayer has more efficacy than all the doctors in the world.⁹

Christ is the great Physician. Notice his creative vision here: Christ is there with him as the Physician who has called in on him. He did not go to Christ but the Lord Himself 'passed by'.¹⁰ The dying Pantycelyn knows his time is coming to an end because he too had been an apothecary. As he writes these lines, he was probably remembering his own conversion which not only brought him from death unto life but also changed him from being a healer of bodies into a physician of souls.

Let's go back in our minds to those days when he was an apothecary. The story begins in 1738. This, as many of you may know, was an important year. Pantycelyn would later describe it as the 'breaking out of light like a fresh dawn'. John Wesley would be 'strangely warmed' in Aldersgate street; Daniel Rowland would experience an outpouring of the Holy Spirit during a communion service in Llangeitho. But our story sees a young Pantycelyn, a twenty-one year old to be precise, walking home from his medical studies near Brecon. A twenty-four year old preacher is standing on a tombstone outside Talgarth Church. The man has a Bible in his hand and he is preaching powerfully. His name is Howell Harris; he is an Oxford

9. Most of the letter is a translation by the Eifion Evans in his excellent new book *Bread of Heaven*, pp. 321–322.

10. Luke 18:37: 'So they told him (a blind man) that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by'.

runaway who has felt an increasing burden for the Welsh. According to Thomas Charles:

When the Lord called him [Pantycelyn] by grace, he gave himself fully to the work of sacred ministry. On his way home from the Academy, a.d. 1738, he was called while listening to Mr H. Harris preaching his important message after the service in Talgarth churchyard.¹¹

Converted and called. Pantycelyn later said:

I'll not forget the spot, the ground
Where wine flowed to my soul's foul wounds,
From heaven's store in endless spate,
My wound to heal, my dread, abate.¹²

He would also document this change in his Pilgrim's Progress-like semi-autobiographical poem called *Theomemphus* where 'Theomison' (hater-of-God) to 'Theomemphus' (seeker-after-God) tells of the moment that the burden of his sin rolled away:

Dedwyddwch ddaeth o'r diwedd, y fath ddedwyddwch yw
Nas cair mewn un creadur ag sydd tan nefoedd Duw;
Maddeuant rhad o bechod, pob rhyw bechodau 'nghyd,
Rhai ffaidd, mwya' aflan a glywad yn y byd.¹³

Bliss came at last to Theo, its nature all sublime,
Not found in earthly creatures, nor in the realms of time;
For sin a full forgiveness, for sins of deepest dye,
A pardon freely given, by God who cannot lie.

Declaring the Works of the Lord

But the letter continues:

And I believe that some hundreds of prayers were offered up for me in this illness. In answer to these prayers a verse came to my mind with such force that, for the moment, I believed I was going to rise; and the

11. Thomas Charles, 'Buchwedd a Marwolaeth y Parch William Williams, o Bant y Celyn, Sir Gaerfyrddin, *Trysorfa, &c.*, (January 1813), p. 445.

12. Eifion Evans, *Pursued by God: A Selective Translation with notes of the Welsh religious classic, Theomemphus by William Williams of Pantycelyn* (Bridgend: Bryntirion, 1996), p. 17. Originally taken from Williams's *Aleluja* (1744).

13. Gomer Morgan Roberts (ed.), *Gweithiau Pantycelyn, Volume 1* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964), p.253/Stanza 5 and Evans, *Pursued by God*, p. 96.

verse was Psalm 118:17, 'I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord.'¹⁴

This verse from Psalm 118 is a good summary of Pantycelyn's life; all his work declares what God had done for him. He did this through preaching and hymn-writing. I'll begin with his preaching. Unfortunately, people always assume that it was Harris and Rowlands that preached and Pantycelyn wrote the hymns. It is important to remember that they were all, first and foremost, fishers of men.¹⁵ Harris once described Pantycelyn as a great fisherman whose nets were bursting. Here is an overview from Harris's diary in 1743:

[11 Feb] I went toward Llanwrtyd ... there I heard how Brother Rowland and Brother Williams had been beaten and abused much indeed ... Brother Williams preached on Luke 7:47: he showed the difference between Christ in the head and Christ in the heart ... My soul was inflamed with love in listening ... The spirit of Brother Rowland is fallen on Brother Williams. O! What earnestness had he! [12 July] In the chapel, Brother Williams opened 2 Cor.4. He was amazingly helped, uncommon power. [6 Oct] Souls are daily taken by Brother Williams in the Gospel Net. [2 Dec] Brother Williams preached on Exodus 15:25. He spiritualised the Israelite's journey. There came very great power indeed, and there was crying out. Blessed be God for the love and gifts given Brother Williams. [7 Dec] Hearing how the Lord was with Brother Williams in an uncommon manner. [20 Dec] I heard Brother Williams preaching home and gloriously on the New Jerusalem.¹⁶

Wow! What a year! O for such times again! It is important that we as modern evangelicals do not lose sight of what Methodist preaching was. Careful exposition of the text, yes, an awareness of the particular needs of the congregation, yes, appropriate oratory, yes. BUT the preacher was relying on divine assistance, as Eifion Evans once stated: 'an attending unction only supplied by the Holy Spirit to make the message effective.'

Pantycelyn also 'declared the works of the Lord' through his hymns which served as a kind of catechism. I cannot go through a thousand hymns with you this afternoon but as we continue through the letter, there is evidence of some of the main themes that arise in the hymnody.

14. Evans, *Bread of Heaven*, p. 321.

15. Matthew 4:19: 'Then He said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."'

16. See Evans, *Bread of Heaven*, p. 32.

Christ

Let us continue through the letter:

I have come to see that true religion consists of three parts: First, true light respecting the plan of salvation ; God's eternal covenant with His Son to pay the debt of believing sinners, all the truths of the new Covenant by which He becomes all in all in creation, in all-embracing providence, and in redemption.¹⁷

Christ is the muse. Some of you will be aware that Howell Harris slipped into what has been called Patripassianism, the belief that God the Father died on the cross. Pantycelyn responded by writing a very long poem called *Golwg ar Deyrnas Crist / A View of Christ's Kingdom* where the plan of salvation wrought by Christ's work is emphasised.¹⁸ The poem begins with Christ as Creator (John 1:1–3, Colossians 1:16). The poet articulates a wonder at a God who 'in a moment' could create twenty-thousand planets as well as the smallest grain of sand:¹⁹

'R un peth i'r *Iah* tragwyddol sy â'r gallu yn ei law,
I roddi bod mewn munud (a ddywedo fe a ddaw)
I ugain mil o fydoedd sy'n cerdded yn eu rhod,
Neu i un o'r tywod mana' a welodd neb erio'd. (GDC, 47/2)

The same to *Jah* eternal, with His all-powerful hand
To give birth in a moment (His word is a command)
To twenty-thousand planets that tread the distant sky,
As to create the smallest sand seen by mortal eye.

Pantycelyn uses the image of a telescope and imagines looking through the narrow end towards space with its stars before looking through the other end, viewing the grains of sand on the floor. Later in the poem Pantycelyn takes that image of the star-creating Christ who, as a willing Lord, humbled himself by coming down to the sands as a Saviour of men:

O! gariad heb ei gymar! gras yn ymgrymu 'lawr,
Er creü sêr difesur, cofleidio llwch y llawr!

17. Ibid., p. 322.

18. William Williams 'Golwg ar Deyrnas Crist' in Gomer Morgan Roberts, *Gweithiau William Williams Pantycelyn*, Volume 1 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964). All further references to 'Golwg ar Deyrnas Crist' are from this edition and are subsequently translated from Robert Jones (trans.), *A View of the Kingdom of Christ; or, Christ is all and in all. A poem by way of exposition of Col. iii. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 25* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1878).

19. This discussion on Pantycelyn as star-gazer is also included in an upcoming article with the *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English*.

PANTYCELYN 30OTH

Yn marw tros blant Adda ag eto oedd yn byw
Yn wrthryfelwyr eon ymlaen yn erbyn Duw. (GDC, 54/8)

O love without its equal, what condescending grace,
That He who stars created yet should earth's dust embrace,
To die for Adam's children who still defend the rod,
And lived in bold rebellion against th' Almighty God.

Everything relates to, or illustrates, the grand narrative of redemption. The poet juxtaposes the stars with the grains of dust; their sheer contrast reminding him of Christ's humiliating experience. However, he does not stop there: the poet then combines the dual idea of dust (or sand) and stars which, in space, create shooting stars—a further manifestation or representation of the 'Light of the World':²⁰

Chwi sêr, sy heibio ei gilydd yn 'hedeg fel y wawr,
Mewn funud fach yn saethu goleuni o'r nen i lawr,
Cyhoeddwch trwy holl natur, yn llawen nid yn drist,
Mai'r hwn rodd bod ich gynta' a elwid Iesu Grist. (GDC, 56/2)

Ye stars each other passing, expounding as the dawn,
That in a moment shooting light from the heaven's down,
Proclaim throughout all nature, and joyfully proclaim
Him who first gave you being and Jesus Christ His name.

One stanza notes that the 'sons of Adam' are 'lower than the dust' (GDC, 53/5) but Christ, who is star-creator, embraces the dust (GDC, 54/8)—all Methodists would have known that 'dust' was the stuff that humanity would be made from.

The hymns are saturated with the crucified Saviour. It is Jesus who died on the cross and not the Father. I will go through one hymn with you which, to me, presents one of the greatest images of Christ as atoning sacrifice:

Mi dafla' maich oddi ar fy ngwar	My load of sin I now cast down
Wrth deimlo dwyfol loes;	Before such pain divine;
Euogrwydd fel mynyddoedd byd	Mountains of guilt Thy cross transforms
Dry'n ganu wrth dy groes.	To glorious songs sublime.

20. John 8:12. "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the Light of the World. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

Os edrych wnaf i'r dwyrain draw, Os edrych wnaf i'r de, Ymhlith a fu, neu ynteu ddaw, 'Does debyg iddo fe.	Where'er I look, to east or south, To earth's far distant rim, Through ages past or yet to come, There's none like unto Him.
Fe roes ei ddwylo pur ar led, Fe wisgodd goron ddrain Er mwyn i'r brwnt gael bod yn wyn Fel hyfryd liain main.	His hands so pure were stretched out wide, A crown of thorns He wore, That vilest sinners might become As linen white and pure.
Esgyn a wnaeth i entrych nef I eiriol dros y gwan; Fe sugna f'enaid innau'n lân I'w fynwes yn y man.	Ascended now to heaven on high To plead there for the weak; Soon to His bosom He will clasp My soul in succour sweet.
Ac yna caf fod gydag ef Pan êl y byd ar dân, Ac edrych yn ei hyfryd wedd, Gan' harddach nag o'r blaen	With Him above I then shall be When all the world's ablaze, And on His lovely countenance With growing joy I'll gaze.

The whole idea of this hymn stems from Isaiah 1:18: "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool." Notice the word in the last line of the first stanza: 'canu'. Pantycelyn uses this word masterfully. Originally, in Welsh, it means 'to bleach'. But it can also mean 'singing'. Both words fit the line. The pilgrim figure can lose his burden under the shadow of Calvary; his sins will be bleached and he will also be filled with that joy unspeakable, full of glory, which turns into song. The second stanza is inspired by the Song of Solomon and how the pilgrim years after the Beloved. Throughout the hymn, Pantycelyn fuses the Song of Songs, Psalms, and Isaiah which ultimately leads to the beautiful truth that we have in 1 Corinthians 13 where we shall see Christ face to face.

Christ is also portrayed as conqueror. This hymn has been translated by Bobi Jones:

In Eden—sad indeed that day—
My countless blessings fled away,
My crown fell in disgrace.
But on victorious Calvary

That crown was won again for me—
My life shall all be praise.

Faith, see the place, and see the tree
Where heaven's Prince, instead of me,
Was nailed to bear my shame.
Bruised was the dragon by the Son,
Though two had wounds, there conquered One—
And Jesus was His name.

The speaker imagines two scenes and he contrasts the loss and the gain of that crown. The first stanza is a statement which ends in praise. The second stanza is a little more experiential. The speaker instructs his weak faith to gaze at Calvary. What does faith see? Firstly, it sees the atoning, sacrificial, Lamb of God who was nailed 'instead of me'. Then his spiritual imagination sees the great battle between Christ and Satan which ultimately leads to Christ as triumphant, conquering Hero.

Christ is not only conqueror but he is also coming again which, in Pantycelyn's post-millennial view, would be heralded by the Jubilee. Pantycelyn saw natural phenomena as primary evidence for this. Throughout the early 1770s, the Northern Lights were being seen in the southern parts of Britain. Soon after, Pantycelyn wrote his prose work *Aurora Borealis* (1774), which begins by discussing the scientific theories surrounding the Northern Lights, mentioning 'sun beams', 'the new science of electricity', 'ether' and 'weather' as possible causes.²¹ He then moves on to the cloudy and fiery pillar in Exodus and the Genesis Rainbow, stating that the *Aurora* is another phenomenon given by God. Natural phenomena such as this often inspired Methodist hymns and sermons. On 16 May 1746, Howel Harris wrote in his diary: 'At midnight when I would see lightning in the sky or the Northern Lights, my soul would be ready to burst my body with joy being in hopes Christ was coming to judgement'. When Williams saw the light he said that: 'As the Northern Lights spread across the sky, so also the Gospel in time will cover the Earth as well'.²² In this postmillennial context, we can see the Northern Lights in Hymns such as this one written around the 1770s:

21. The full title of the work is: *Aurora Borealis: NEU, Y GOLEUNI yn y Gogledd, fel arwydd o Lwyddiant yr EFENGYL yn y Dyddiau Diweddaf; (New, Shekinah'r Mil Blynnyddoedd:) Mewn dull o Lythyr oddi wrth ERMENEUS y Lladmerydd, at AGRUPNUS y Gwyliedydd, (Aurora Borealis: or the LIGHT in the North, as a sign of the Success of the GOSPEL in the Last Days, (or, The Shekinah of the Thousand Years:) in the form of a Letter from ERMENEUS the Interpreter, to AGRUPNUS the Watchman).*

22. *Aurora Borealis*, pp. 177, 179.

O'er the gloomy hills of darkness
Look, my soul, be still and gaze;
All the promises do travail
With a glorious day of grace
Blessed Jubil, &c.
Let thy *glorious morning dawn*.

Kingdoms wide that sit in darkness,
Let them have *the glorious light*,
And from Eastern coast to Western
May *the morning* chase the night,
And redemption,
Freely purchased, win the day.

May the glorious day approaching
End their night of sin and shame,
And the everlasting gospel,
Spread abroad thy holy name
O'er the borders
Of the great Immanuel's land!

Fly abroad thou mighty gospel,
Win and conquer, never cease;
May thy lasting wide dominion
Multiply and still increase!
Sway thy sceptre,
Saviour, all the world around.

(*GWP*, 428)

The language of this hymn glows with the Northern Lights. The juxtaposition between dark and light throughout emphasises that Pantycelyn's pilgrim looks up and is reminded of the 'ultimate truth' or the Gospel message for the darkened world had seen a great light.²³

Pantycelyn strove to highlight the importance of Christ is all in all. That's the umbrella theme as it were. Let's return to the letter and see if we can see any more themes.

Jesu Lover of my Soul

[...] but now in this affliction of mine, I have come to see that I am very defective in a subject not less magnificent than the other, that is, being in intimate fellowship with God in all our dealings with the world and in

23. Isaiah 9:2, John 8:12 and 12:46.

all the exercises and ordinances of religion. We find that the saints of old had attained this under the old Covenant. Abram is said to be the friend, as if God and he consulted each other and whispered secrets into each other's ears [...]²⁴

We are tapping in here to the experiential nature of Pantycelyn's religion. In the Bible, we are told how Abraham could stand side by side with the Lord and be able to plead with him for a city.²⁵ They were familiar to one another. This was a God whom he was not only friends with but with whom he pursued an intimate love relationship with. This is not the language of brotherhood. This is the language of lovers. Are you disturbed by this? He has biblical license for such language and a whole book which documents the relationship between the bridegroom and the bride. His hymns are saturated with the Songs of Solomon. Christ is the only object of his desire:

Mae ei law aswy fawr ei grym,
O dan fy mhen, nid ofna id dim;
Ei ddeheu sydd yn fy mawrhau,
A phob cysuron pur di-drai.

Ei bresenoldeb sydd yn dod
I mi â'r pleser mwya' erioed

His powerful left hand
Is under my head: I need not fear;
His right hand elevates me
With pure, unceasing solace.

His presence brings me
The greatest pleasure I have experienced.

The Psalmist longed for this intimacy in Psalm 84. Like the Psalmist, who longs to be with those swallows nesting in the altar, Pantycelyn longs to be near his Saviour:

P'am Arglwydd, caiff yr adar mân
I wneud ei trigfan dawel
O fewn dy dŷ, a mhinnau'n mhell
O'th sanctaidd babell araul?

Why, Lord, may the smallest birds
Make their little sanctuaries
In thy house, and I feel so far
From thy holy dwelling place?

For Pantycelyn, God's presence was the greatest pleasure. You see, they had experienced something like those walkers in Luke 24—burning hearts which can only be echoed, ever so slightly, in our own human desires. But, the letter continues ...

24. Evans, *Bread of Heaven*, p. 322.

25. Genesis 18.

Pilgrim in a desert land

The dying hymn writer has nearly reached the end of his pilgrimage—Canaan is very near. He writes:

You will understand that though I am somewhat better as regards the pain from which I have suffered, I am still but weak and feeble, and very helpless; and I have but little hope that I will ever be able to go out much, if at all, again; because I am seventy years of age. Think what a disappointment it must be to a man who has travelled nearly three thousand miles every year for over 50 years to be now without moving more than 40 feet in a day—from the fireside to bed. This is how my God wishes to deal with me, and it is well ...²⁶

In his mind, he was probably imagining the hills around his Carmarthenshire home. The beautiful surroundings of his home county fuelled his spiritual imagination. Wales could be Israel and he was always a Pilgrim in a desert land. As we have already seen in his sermons, the image of the traveller or pilgrim dominates his hymnody. When I was working on Pantycelyn's hymns I lost count how many times the word *Pererin*/Pilgrim is used. The idea was that we are passing through this world, we are sojourners and we must not make our roots here. Fortunately one of the greatest pilgrim hymns has been translated for us:

A pilgrim in a desert land,
I wander far and wide,
Expecting *I may* sometime come
Close to my Father's side.

Ahead of me I think I hear
Sounds of a heavenly choir,
A conquering host already gone
Through tempest, flood and fire.

Come, Holy Spirit, fire by night,
Pillar of cloud by day;
Lead for *I* dare not take a step
Unless *Thou* show the way.

So prone am I when on my own
To stray from side to side,

26. Evans, *Bread of Heaven*, p. 322.

I need, each step to Paradise,
My God to be *my* guide.

I have a yearning for that land,
Where the unnumbered throng
Extol the death on Calvary
In heaven's unending song.

His vision was a great host of people, like the Israelites, travelling towards Canaan. This was no small number. Notice how the perspective in this hymns changes. The I-Thou is always dominant and the possessive pronouns are everywhere.

I hope that this short lecture has given you a brief overview of the main themes of his hymns: the person of Christ, the image of the lover, and the image of the traveller. Pantycelyn was a man who declared the works of God. Not in a general way but usually he highlighted how God had first worked, and was working, in him.

Conclusion

I finish with the words of his letters as an encouragement to you who are serving our Redeemer. The letter concludes:

My dear, dear brother, work while it is day; the night will overtake you, as it has overtaken me, so that you will neither be able to travel or preach [...] Give my regards to all the brethren. I do not think I shall see them all now until the Great Day [...] My greatest advice is that you love our Great Lord, who took on flesh to redeem sinners like you and I. I trust that you are in good health my dear brother. May God bless your ministry more and more Amen. From a brother who loves you in the Lord.

W. Williams

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