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**EDITORIAL**

Although the articles in this issue begin in eighteenth-century Bedfordshire and end in twentieth-century Liverpool their main thrust lies in the United States and Canada. Abraham Lincoln, like W.E. Gladstone, was a natural candidate for the English Nonconformist's ideal Bunhill Fields. In fact Lincoln's political and religious views, like Gladstone's, were curiously difficult for Nonconformists to nail. Nonetheless American Presbyterians had as good a claim as any to Lincoln; in his prime he tended to sit in Presbyterian pews, if he sat in any pews. And South London's skyline was literally inspired by Christ Church Westminster Bridge Road's Lincoln Tower, paid for by American gifts in recognition of Newman Hall's steady support for the Union during the American Civil War. Weighty British Nonconformist ministers felt that they had a particular affinity with their

American counterparts and many in their congregations felt the lure of the land of the free. Richard Carwardine, who is writing a life of Lincoln, and whose paper was first delivered as his inaugural lecture on appointment to a personal chair at the University of Sheffield, reminds us of the *discontinuities* between the British and the American evangelical experience.

Nonconformist history is often a matter of shaping chance material. The contributions of Françoise Deconinck-Brossard, who teaches at the Université de Paris X-Nanterre, and Peter Ackers, of Loughborough University, remind us of that. It can also be a matter of unpicking carefully shaped evidence, as Frederick Hale, of Augsburg College, Minneapolis, demonstrates; for media studies, too, play their barely controllable part in our work.

Members of this society will be grateful for Arthur Macarthur's appreciation of J.M. Ross; all Free Church historians of the mid-twentieth century will turn to Christopher Driver's *Future of the Free Churches* (1962) as a key text; hence Daniel Jenkins's appreciation of a man whose character was defined by his Nonconformist formation.

### **CHRISTOPHER PROUT DRIVER (1 DECEMBER 1932 - 18 FEBRUARY 1997)**

The death of Christopher Driver in February of this year received substantial obituary notices in the national press which reflected his distinguished career as a journalist, editor, poet, musician, and author of several books. For most of his life he was an influential senior member of the *Guardian* newspaper staff but was probably best known to a wider public for his long period as editor of the *Good Food Guide*.

His church connection was mentioned, especially in the *Guardian* itself, but its significance deserves more attention, especially in this *Journal*. He was the son of a Congregational medical missionary in India, who was himself a hymn writer, but, unusually, nearly all his formal education was in a series of main-line Anglican institutions: the Dragon School at Oxford; Rugby, where he ended up as Head Boy; and Christ Church. Not so usually, however, this did not deflect him from his inherited church allegiance. He was prominent in the Congregational Society in Oxford and he helped maintain the continuing Free Church element in the *Guardian* throughout his life. More than that also, in the midst of an exceptionally busy and productive life, he gave a good deal of priority to active and creative membership of one of our churches.

When the *Guardian* moved to London, he joined his wife's family Presbyterian church at Highgate, which quickly joined forces with the neighbouring Congregational church to become part of the United Reformed Church. He soon became church secretary and was largely instrumental in organising the imaginative and complicated move by which the church on the Presbyterian site was sold and adapted as flats and the better located but derelict Congregational church was comprehensively renovated and refurbished to a high standard to provide a new home for the united congregation. He also acquired an attractive

small chamber organ and was influential in persuading Robert Courtney, who had been a fellow-student at Oxford, to become minister. Together, they did a great deal to revive a vigorous and increasingly youthful community in Highgate, in sharp contrast to what happened to several once flourishing churches in inner London. He also found time to serve on the board of Christian Aid.

All this did not prevent him from producing a series of books reflecting his varied interests and doing so right up to the days of his last illness. The most substantial of them was his large volume on *The Exploding University* in 1971 which was based on two years of study and extensive travels and consultations in Britain, America, Japan, and Continental Europe. His later books were more personal, the two on *Pepys at Table* and *John Evelyn, Cook*, displaying his love of cooking, *Music for Love* (1994) that of music, and his volume of his own poems entitled *Strokes* and published very shortly before his death, of poetry. But the book of which readers of this journal should be most fully aware was his earliest, on the *Future of the Free Churches*, (1962) which was written when he was still in his twenties. Thirty-five years after its publication, it reads in many respects as though it were written only the other day and its maturity of judgment and prophetic insight are astonishing. The long section on the much-misunderstood "Image of Puritanism" is of permanent value. It certainly confirms the view, demonstrated in practice throughout Christopher Driver's life, that the most valuable estimates both of the present and future of the Free Churches are made by people who combine responsibility in the wider life of society with personal participation in the daily life of a local congregation.

DANIEL JENKINS

**JOHN MACDONALD ROSS**  
**(31 MARCH 1908 – 27 MARCH 1997)**

When John Ross died on 27 March this Society lost one of its father figures. With long years of service to the Presbyterian Society behind him he became Vice-chairman of the URC Society from its formation until he retired in 1983. In his last years he gave more time to critical studies of the Greek New Testament, publishing articles in technical journals. Reg. Fenn, having taken a service in Golders Green, found John Ross turning the pages at the lectern: "I am just trying to find out what that text really means". John Ross was an exact scholar, diligent in research and trenchant in criticism.

The son of a distinguished civil servant, the quality of his own career in the General Register Office and the Home Office was recognised by his appointment as CBE in 1967. Present once at a wedding service which ignored the niceties of the law, I was reassured by the sight of John Ross two seats in front of me. The two ministers were duly but discreetly called to order. Order was in his bloodstream. Without it, he was in alien country. When the church in Golders Green joined with the Methodists, he found their ways easier to live with than the fumbling search for agreed patterns which characterised the infant URC: "The Methodists keep their promises", he said.

He devoted all his immense ability to the service of that small fellowship in Golders Green as Elder, Session Clerk, and Lay Preacher. He was ordained an elder in 1938. Representing that church in London North Presbytery, and in most years at the General Assembly, he became a leading and formidable figure whose grasp of the issues legal or doctrinal often saved us from confusion. The Statement of Faith accepted by the Church in 1956 after many years of meticulous discussion owed much of its clarity to his incisive contributions. The last Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church published in 1964, he edited. All the skill and experience gathered there he took into wider Church circles – serving on the British Council of Churches from 1952 to 1964 and on the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches from 1964 to 1976. He also played a part in Presbyterian-Anglican conversations and his booklet on “Presbyterian Bishops” (1950) may come in useful in the renewed conversations now beginning in Scotland.

He has left us many such studies covering history, law, and doctrine, all marked by his clear discernment of the issues, coupled with surprising imagination. He could give great themes simple settings, as he did in his *Four Centuries of Scottish Worship* (1972), located in one parish but authoritative over large areas of the Church.

But John Ross was more than all his achievements. With some meeting due he would set his “pinger” so that he could concentrate his mind on what he was reading without worrying about the clock. His treasured clavichord was an icon of his passionate love of music. He wrote comic verse and set it to airs which he stole from the great classics. A car trip round the Glens of Antrim during an Irish Assembly was nearly ruined by dismal weather. John Ross relieved us from tedium by singing one of his compositions about the satisfaction of some ghostly spirit rejoicing in the disposal of his various organs now transplanted into other frames. His home and family were known for the warmth of their hospitality and for the faith and culture with which he and his wife enriched them. Classical scholar, accurate historian, committed administrator, and determined student of the New Testament, John Ross was in all his wide involvement a Christian disciple who walked by faith and gave himself to His Master.

ARTHUR L. MACARTHUR

### JOHN ROSS: A FOOTNOTE

John was meticulous and precise in administration, and these characteristics were carried through to his many hobbies. His drawings and paintings were neat and accurate, reflecting his interest in design and draughtsmanship. He never seemed to be at rest, and carried on with his bookbinding, while talking to guests – and very generously he did some excellent work for friends. His wines were on the whole a success except, I thought, for his cold tea wine! He ventured into spirits which were not too bad considering his expertise on Scotch whiskies. John’s churchmanship was not narrow: he wrote a Presbyterian version of the rosary which, if I can find it, I shall use in his memory.

JEANNE ARMOUR

## PATTERNS OF PREACHING AND WORSHIP AMONG EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DISSENTERS

With so ephemeral an art as preaching, any document giving clues to actual performance in former centuries provides valuable information. Such is the case with two instances of eighteenth-century manuscripts held in Dr. Williams's Library, London:<sup>1</sup> Richard Livett's common-place book, and three collections of sermons.

An eighteenth-century inhabitant of Bedfordshire, Richard Livett, recorded a miscellany of information in his common-place book.<sup>2</sup> Among a jumble of recipes "for to take out Teeth, to find a hare," "A Direction to Send for Tea & Coffee from London", a list of weddings and funerals, a summary of the main books in the Bible, an anthology of Scripture quotations, notes on local history, references to title deeds, and statements of accounts, Richard Livett compiled a list of all the sermons that he heard preached between January 1736 and December 1745.<sup>3</sup> However scarce the data recorded in this unique diary of sermon attendance, it gives a precious insight into the reception of eighteenth-century homiletics and the spirituality of a young Nonconformist layman about whom very scanty biographical information is otherwise available. Tibbutt's assumption that he was a "farmer" seems impossible to confirm, in spite of repeated investigations.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the likelihood that our diarist was the same "Rich. Livett", a "victualler" from Willington, whose marriage licence is mentioned in the Bedfordshire Parish Registers,<sup>5</sup> cannot be ruled out, all the more so as it is in keeping with one of the entries in the common-place book.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of the title, "Those are the text [*sic*] which I have Heard preached from 1735/6", the list also records the dates of the sermons, the places where they were preached, the names of the preachers, and a few memoranda. The table form in which the information is laid out suits modern methods of data processing

1. I cannot commend too highly that haven of quiet research, the obviously ideal place of study for Nonconformist history, for their kind help and efficient assistance over a period of twenty years at least.
2. Dr. Williams's Library, Ms. 24.64.
3. The historian of Bedfordshire Nonconformity, H.G. Tibbutt, must have missed a few pages: in "Heard Whitefield on St. Peter's Green," *Bedfordshire Times & Standard* (6 November, 1959, p. 12), he stated that Livett's list included sermons preached "between January 1736 and November 1744".
4. I am indebted to the archivists of the Bedfordshire Record Office for their efficient assistance in this enquiry.
5. *Bedfordshire Parish Registers*, ed. F.G. Emmison (Bedford, 1937), vol. XIV, p. 98. Besides, the signature to that Richard Livett's marriage licence (BRO: ABM1 [1747]) could well match the handwriting in the commonplace-book.
6. "Ocf<sup>y</sup>e 9th 1744 I Rich<sup>d</sup> Livett in Willington in the County of Bedford maketh [*sic*] Enterry [*sic*] of one Brew-House with one Furnace five Tubs and in the House Two Cellars. I made a fresh Enterry on the 9 day of March 1751/2".

perfectly. Once the difficulty of deciphering the handwriting is overcome, Livett's series of observations fits very well into a database.

Altogether, Livett heard 479 sermons, preached by fifty preachers in twenty-three different places, within a period of ten years – an average of only forty-eight sermons per year. An infrequent churchgoer, by the standards of modern sociology of religion, he did not even celebrate Christmas every year. Thus, 25 December does not appear on the list for 1736, 1737, 1739 or 1743. However, such a reluctance to celebrate popular festivals may denote puritan tradition rather than lukewarm faith. Indeed, when Livett did attend a sermon for Christmas, (e.g. in 1738, 1740, 1741, 1742, 1744) it never happened to coincide with a "sacrament day".

Besides, he only recorded between four and seven yearly occurrences of the Lord's supper. In spite of scanty data, the pattern that emerges here differs slightly from what is well documented in the Established Church. While his Anglican contemporaries could receive communion four or five times a year, for such great festivals as Christmas, Easter or Whitsun,<sup>7</sup> Livett sometimes records monthly sacraments. At the beginning of 1740 for instance, there were three such occasions in three consecutive months (13 January, 10 February and 9 March). Similarly, the year ended with two sacrament days in mid-November and December. That an irregular churchgoer did not note any similar event in April or in the Summer months does not prove that there was no such opportunity then, all the more so as Livett attended sermons more regularly in Winter than in Summer.

Thus, no record is to be found in July of 1736, 1737 or 1739. As for 1741, when Livett did go to church on 12 July, over one month elapsed before he heard a sermon again, on 23 August. A similar pattern of infrequent Summer attendance may be drawn for previous years, as though farm work deterred him more from going to church than the vagaries of the weather. In 1736 for instance, only one sermon interrupted, on 23 August, an almost four-month long break between 17 June and 10 October. Likewise, no preacher was heard between 23 June and 28 August, 1737.

No such gap is to be found in later years, however. One may wonder whether Livett, who had attended open-air revival meetings in Bedford, first with the field-preacher Jacob Rogers,<sup>8</sup> then with George Whitefield, whom he listened to twice on 5 September 1741, experienced a methodist-like conversion on 15 August, 1742, when he wrote: "This is my Sacrament". The single occurrence of the

7. One classic example of such a pattern is to be found in "Archbishop Herring's Visitation Returns, 1743" eds. Sidney Leslie Ollard and P.C. Walker, *Yorkshire Archaeological Society*, LXX, LXXI, LXXII, LXXV, LXXVII, and LXXIX (1928-1931).

8. On Jacob Rogers's "remarkable journey from stiff high churchmanship to a mystical devotion to the interior life," see John Walsh, "The Cambridge Methodists", in *Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Gordon Rupp* (London: SCM Press, 1975), pp. 251-83.

personal pronoun, instead of the usual "sacrament day" is noteworthy, all the more so since the entry is also unique in being underlined. Further traces of intense personal devotion appear on several occasions when Livett notes that he has felt "comforts," (e.g. 23/01/43, 27/03/43, 29/05/43), the only other word ever to be underlined in the table. Such an experience may be the reason why Livett's record of sermon attendance is much better, almost weekly, in the latter part of the list.

Even long before that conversion, however, the diarist often went to church twice on the same day, as if to make up for intermissions. The familiar pattern of morning and evening services, well established since the puritan revolution, might have been enhanced by geography. Except for three rare instances when Livett worshipped in the village where he lived, Willington, he always travelled some distance when he went to church. Admittedly, places like Blunham, which accounts for three fifths of all the items recorded, or Bedford and "Cardington Cotton End" were only a few miles away. Indeed, a sense of fellowship within a close community may be derived from this pattern of proximity worship. That Livett should have felt the need to note that he "bote a pue [sic]" at Blunham "on y<sup>e</sup> 2 day of March 1738-9"<sup>9</sup> gives ample evidence of his membership there. Apparently, however, he did not hesitate to travel, not only within a ten-mile radius to places like Biggleswade, Keysoe, Maulden, Kempston, Clophill, Gamlingay or Great Gransden, but also much further afield to Kingswood (Bucks), so that the whole Sunday must have been devoted to churchgoing.

Sometimes the same minister preached twice a day. Such was often the case with Thomas Craner, the minister at Blunham whom Livett listened to most often. But it could also be true of Samuel Cole at Keysoe on 19 June 1743, for instance. In other circumstances, two different preachers were heard on the same day, as when "2 strangers" came to Bedford on 14 May 1740 for Samuel Sanderson's induction, though Livett "was to [sic] late for the first man."

Interestingly enough, visitors are known as "Mr Webb of Hitchin," "Mr Wayman of Kimbolton", "Mr Condor from Cam[bridge]," or "Mr Brine of London", to quote but a few examples, as if each minister's identity derived from the place that he served. One may therefore wonder whether the "Gent from Northampton" who preached on 31 August, 1739 might have been Philip Doddridge.<sup>10</sup> Such a pattern, of ministers regularly catering for the same congregation, and occasionally visiting neighbouring communities, conveys much greater preaching stability within the network of Dissenting interest than in the

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9. Until 1752, England used the Julian calendar, which marked the New Year on 25 March. Like many of his contemporaries, Livett gave both the old year and the new for dates between 1 January and 25 March. Indeed, the phrase "Lady day" is crammed in between entries in March 1744. Except in direct quotations, all dates have been standardised to the modern style.

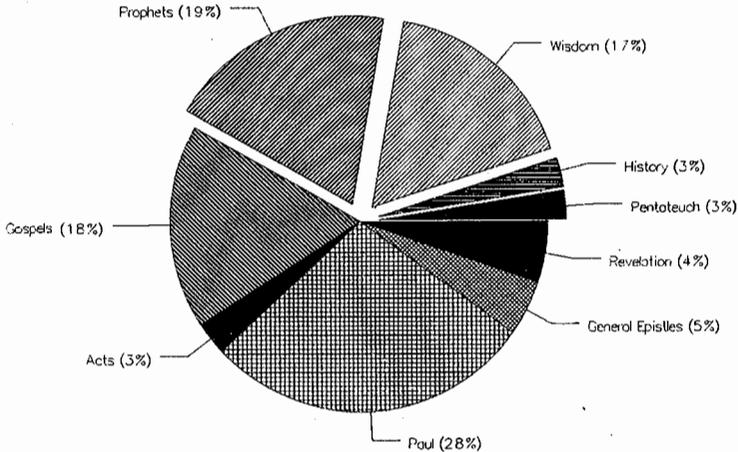
10. The *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge DD (1702-1751)*, ed. Geoffrey F. Nuttall (London: HMSO, 1979) does not provide any clue.

Established Church.<sup>11</sup> Each individual preacher must have exerted considerable influence on his flock. Indeed, Livett seems to have followed Thomas Craner whenever the latter preached elsewhere than at Blunham (e.g. Gamlingay, 06/03/39; Chalton 01/10/45; Biggleswade, 14/02/39, 18/02/39 and 07/09/44; and Maulden 02/03/39 and 16/12/43).

Most of the occasional preachers whom Livett heard were Independents. Among those who have been identified are Ebenezer Chandler, Bunyan's immediate successor at Bedford, and his co-pastor from 1737, Samuel Sanderson;<sup>12</sup> the list also includes Samuel Cole, pastor at Keysoe,<sup>13</sup> John Conder from a famous family of Independents, his friend James Webb from Hitchin (Herts),<sup>14</sup> Thomas Gibbons, minister at Royston, Griffith Rudd from Southill, Thomas Impey "of Stevenage". Like Thomas Craner, Mr. Usley, pastor at Blunham from 1726 to 1737, might be regarded as a local preacher, as well as Paladine Woodard, a Goldington shoemaker from the Blunham congregation who was given leave to preach at Cardington Cotton End from 1741.<sup>15</sup>

However, Livett was also acquainted with quite a few Baptists, notably the well-known author John Brine, and Benjamin Dutton, a correspondent of Whitefield and Doddridge.<sup>16</sup> Besides, when, in 1741, he heard Jacob Rogers at Francis Okely's meeting in Bedford, both preachers had become Baptists. Now, Mr. Craner himself was to defect to the Baptists in 1755, although he was, theoretically at least, an Independent minister for the years under review. As for Lewis Wayman "of Kimbolton" (Cambs), who delivered a sermon at Blunham on 13 February 1739, he ministered to a congregation that had originally been Independent, though it was to become a union of Congregationalists and Baptists in the late eighteenth century.<sup>17</sup> The picture that emerges from such data is not only Livett's

11. I have shown elsewhere how a respectable and conscientious dignitary of the Church of England, John Sharp, preached over almost fifty years a repertoire of approximately fifty sermons to many Anglican congregations in the North of England: see "Eighteenth-Century Sermons and the Age," *Crown and Mitre: Religion and Society in Northern Europe since the Reformation*, ed. Nigel Yates (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1993), pp. 111-114.
12. H.G. Tibbutt has a chapter on "Chandler and Sanderson" in *Bunyan Meeting Bedford 1650-1950* (Bedford: The Trustees of Bunyan Meeting, n.d. [1950]), pp. 24-33.
13. H.G. Tibbutt, *Keysoe Brook End and Keysoe Row Baptist Churches* (Bedford: Foundry Press, 1959), pp. 10-11.
14. See the goldmine for Congregational biography, Surman's "Directory of Congregational History (Ministerial) c.1640-1956," an invaluable card catalogue at Dr. Williams's Library.
15. See H.G. Tibbutt, *Cotton End Old Meeting 1776-1962* (Cotton End Baptist Church, Bedfordshire, 1963), pp. 8-9.
16. H.G. Tibbutt, "Mrs. Dutton's Husband," *Bedfordshire Magazine* 10:74 (1965), pp. 65-7 and "Pattern of Change", pp. 172-3 in *Transaction [sic] of the Congregational History Society* 20 (1965-70).
17. H.G. Tibbutt, "Early Nonconformity in Huntingdonshire (1) Kimbolton," *Records of Huntingdonshire* (Huntingdonshire Local History Society) 1:3 (1967), pp. 40-3.

**Figure 1: LIVETT**

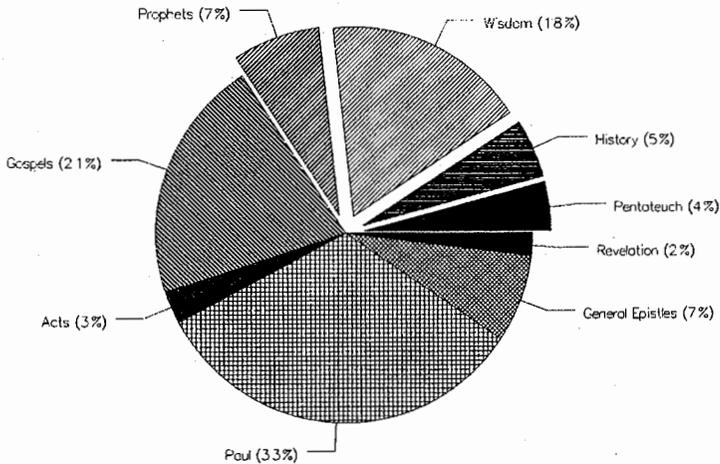
personal attraction to Baptist spirituality, but also a denominational blurring amongst eighteenth-century Dissenters. Witness the spiritual journeys of Jacob Rogers, who seceded from the Church of England to become a field-preacher, then joined the Baptists and later the Moravians,<sup>18</sup> and of his college friend Francis Okely, one of the founders of the Cambridge Methodists, who too joined the Baptists and the Moravians before eventually pledging allegiance to William Law's mystical devotion. Naturally enough, when George Whitefield came to preach on St. Peter's Green, Bedford, Livett went along to listen, twice, to that famous preacher with a difference. Indeed, it may not be a coincidence that on the very same day (5 July 1741), he should have also attended two other sermons, delivered by Rogers and Okely, as if nascent Methodism joined the tradition of Old Dissent within a strong sense of Nonconformity.<sup>19</sup>

Over half of the sermons preached by those Dissenters dealt with New Testament texts (fig. 1). The use of the Bible may be compared with that of a much larger compilation, Letsome's *Preacher's Assistant*,<sup>20</sup> which provides data about

18 John Walsh, "The Cambridge Methodists", pp. 272-83.

19. In a detailed analysis of the complex relationships between old Dissent and the Revival, Geoffrey F. Nuttall convincingly argues that, although Methodism was first objected to in many Dissenting circles, there were "Evangelicals before the Revival, which ... they welcomed when it came": see "Methodism and the Old Dissent: Some Perspectives," *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society* 2:8 (October 1981), 248-58.

20. Sampson Letsome, *The Preacher's Assistant, In Two Parts. Part I. A Series of the Texts of All the Sermons & Discourses Preached upon, and Published since the Restoration to the Present Time. Part II, An Historical Register of all the Authors in the Series, containing, A Succinct View of their Several Works.* (London: for the Author, 1753).

**Figure 2: LETSOME**

sermons preached for almost a century after the Restoration (fig. 2). Livett, whose aim was to record the texts on which he heard sermons, might have liked to know that, on the whole, he attended a typical sample of eighteenth-century preaching, except for a higher than average number of discourses based on the Prophets and the Book of Revelation. Particularly representative features include the prevalence of New Testament quotations – that should for ever dispel any preconceived ideas about a “puritanical” bias,<sup>21</sup> the insistence on wisdom literature, hence, probably, on “practical” or moral subjects,<sup>22</sup> and the fondness for Pauline epistles. In this respect, Bedfordshire Dissenting ministers seem to have differed little from their contemporaries.

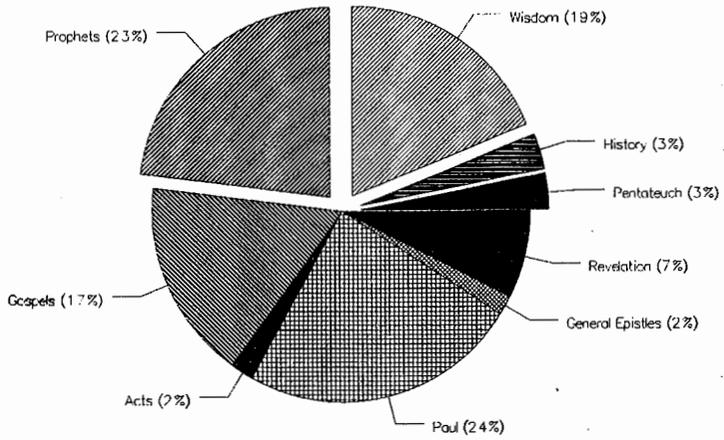
Two of the preachers listed by Livett stand out, in that the number of references to them may be regarded as statistically significant. Thomas Craner’s use of the Bible (fig. 3) overemphasizes the predilection for the Prophets and the Book of Revelation. As for Paladine Woodard (fig. 4),<sup>23</sup> he may be characterised by his disproportionately frequent references to Pauline epistles.

21. Armand Himy concludes *Le Puritanisme* (Paris: P.U.F., “Que sais-je?”) with some remarks on the puritan bias for the Old Testament.

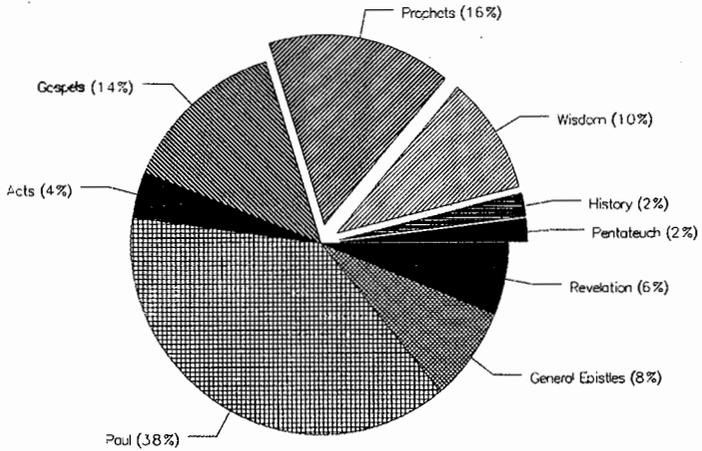
22. I have shown elsewhere the link between frequent references to wisdom literature and “practical” subjects: see “L’Ecriture dans la prédication anglaise,” *Le Siècle des Lumières et la Bible* (Paris: Beauchesne, collection “Bible de tous les temps”, 1986), 523-43.

23. Here again, a computerised analysis of Livett’s manuscript disproves H.G. Tibbutt’s pioneering, but manual, account of the document in *Cotton End Old Meeting*: Livett heard Mr Wood[w]ard preach fifty, not thirty-nine, times altogether.

**Figure 3: CRANER**



**Figure 4: WOODARD**



Similar trends may also be produced, almost as a caricature, from a survey of three collections of eighteenth-century Nonconformist manuscript sermons, also held at Dr. Williams's Library. More than one third of Caleb Fleming's title-page references,<sup>24</sup> as well as Peter Emans's bound volumes<sup>25</sup> refer to Pauline texts. In the latter's corpus, Old Testament references are limited to wisdom and prophetic literature, with no quotation at all to the Pentateuch, historical books, or Revelation. The same applies to John Kiddell's sixteen booklets.<sup>26</sup> A preaching pattern seems to come to light there, with approximately three quarters of sermons actually preached on New Testament texts, and a complete disregard for whole sections of Scripture. One may wonder whether such an impoverishment of Biblical readings may not have contributed to what has been described as the early eighteenth-century decline of Old Dissent, thus foreshadowing the rise of Unitarianism, and also paving the way to the Methodist revival. Even though idiosyncrasies have to be allowed for, and the statistical significance of relatively small numbers needs qualification, the very repetition of the paradigm may be regarded as representative.

Indeed, the common practice of preaching the same sermon several times,<sup>27</sup> often with alternative texts, enhances the trend. For instance, the sixteen sermon manuscripts of the Devon minister John Kiddell (1720-1810) provide ninety-three Biblical references, as well as evidence of fifty-seven deliveries. If all occurrences are taken into account, quotations from wisdom literature and Pauline epistles represent 27 per cent and 29 per cent of all texts, as against 18 per cent and 23 per cent respectively when only the first lesson is considered (fig. 5). It does not come as a great surprise to learn that he turned Socinian.<sup>28</sup>

In like manner, Peter Emans (1737?-1810), who first ministered at Ipswich, Suffolk, then at Dorking, Surrey, left and became a Unitarian; thereafter he preached at Nottingham, and Coventry where he was co-pastor from 1777 and pastor from 1785.<sup>29</sup> He has left two neatly bound volumes of forty-six sermons in all, an adequate repertoire to cover the needs of a whole year. As usual, he carefully wrote the date and place of preaching. The evidence to be drawn from his notes shows that he delivered these sermons over 260 times, an average of seven uses per sermon, although some texts were repeated more than others, of

24. Mss. 24.44.

25. Modern octavo mss. 28.53.

26. Mss. 28.52 (1-16).

27. On that common practice, see my paper on "Eighteenth-Century Sermons and the Age", pp. 111-112.

28. See Surman's "Directory of Congregational Biography," with an undocumented claim that "under [him] Socinianism froze the cause to death", and W.P. Authers, *The Tiverton Congregational Church 1660-1960* (Tiverton: Tiverton Congregational Church, n.d. [1960?]), pp. 22-3.

29. Surman's "Directory of Congregational Biography."

Figure 5: KIDDELL

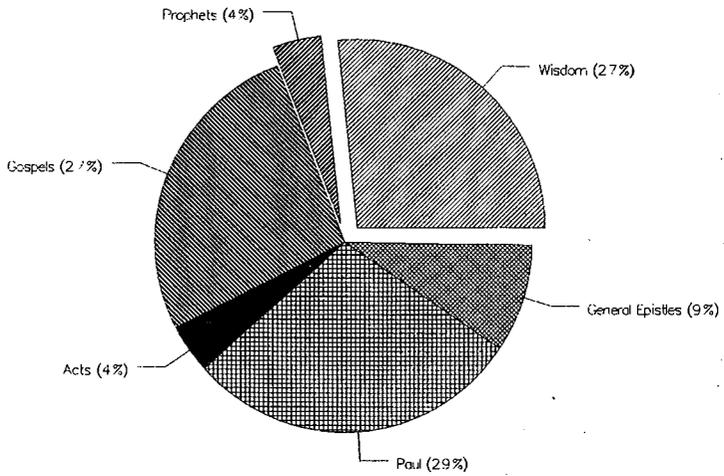
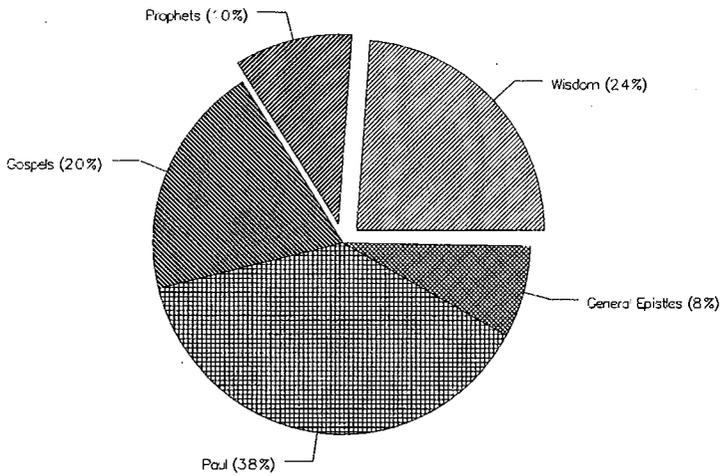


Figure 6: EMANS



course. There are even a few instances of posthumous delivery at Oldbury.<sup>30</sup> Anyway, Emans's most popular texts included, not only *Isa* 56:6, but also *Eccl* 12:1, *Prov* 14:9 and 22:2, *Rom* 13:14 and 2:4. Accordingly, the total number of occurrences highlights the preacher's taste for wisdom literature, Pauline epistles and "practical" applications (fig. 6). Actually, he stated in one of his *exordia* that "the Proverbs of Solomon... compose one of the most valuable books in the Bible, as it contains a compleat [*sic*] Body of Morality, instructing us in every Part of our Duty, both to God, to our Fellow Creatures, & to ourselves."<sup>31</sup>

Strangely enough, Emans's manuscripts may have been designed for publication rather than private use. Between two sermons in the second volume is an appeal to the reader against an accusation of plagiarism:

Before I compos'd these two Discourses I read Maclaurin's Sermon on the same Text, which so highly pleased me that I immediately resolved to make a Sermon on the Subject. As the Justness of his Manner & Strength of his Arguments had made a strong Impression upon my Mind I hesitated not as far as my Memory would carry me to make Use of the same Method & to alledge the same Arguments: under each of which the same Thoughts & similar Expressions offered themselves to my Mind, whiwh, being under no Apprehension of being accused of endeavouring to raise my own Reputation by the Labours of others I without Reserve or Artifice committed to writing. To exculpate myself from the heinous Crime of Plagiarism I have submit [*sic*] my Sermons to a Comparison, upon which I doubt not there will be found a Difference of Expression & accidental Omissions as will plainly demonstrate I neither transcribed nor servilely [*sic*] imitated. Read attentively & judge with Candour, I will freely stand by your DECISIONS.

P. Emans.

N.B. I composed these Discourses  
before I left Debenham at which  
Time no Charge of Idleness or  
Levity had been fixed upon me.<sup>32</sup>

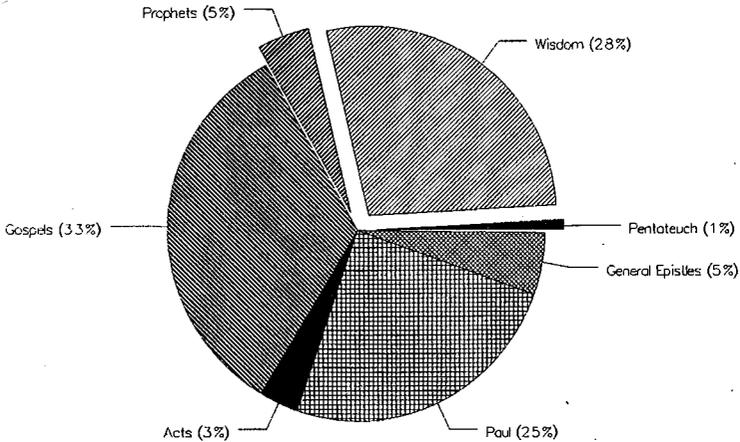
Indeed, Emans's sermons on *James* 1:4 and 1:13 look like a patchwork of phrases borrowed *verbatim* from the beginning of John M'Laurin's sermon "The Sins of Men not Chargeable on God", preached *ca.* 1720.<sup>33</sup> Emans's conclusion comes directly from p.49, "That God has proposed very rational temporal motives against sin." Like many a cheater, Emans sometimes changes a few words here and there, as in the definition of unlawful pleasures, "procured by wrong means", according

30. The dates are written in a different hand (16/05/1813 and 23/05/1813 for Sermon I, 1; 30/04/1813 for no. 3; no. 5 on 04/04/1812 [the numbering is mine]). The borrower is likely to be Timothy Davis, pastor at Oldbury from 1812 to 1845.

31. Sermon no. 3, n.p.

32. Vol. II, between sermons 38 and 39. The layout of the quotation attempts to transcribe the arrangement of the manuscript as accurately as possible.

33. For convenience's sake, an edition of 1802 has been used: John M'Laurin [or Maclaurin], *Sermons & Essays*, ed. John Gillies (London: W. Baynes, 1802), pp. 26-72.

**Figure 7: FLEMING**

to M'Laurin, and by "unlawful means" in Emans – which, incidentally, adds a stylistically clumsy repetition. Obviously, Emans was not following the advice given by the famous Northampton minister, Philip Doddridge: "Never borrow the words of others."<sup>34</sup> In Emans's defence, it can be argued that if he did compose these sermons while he was at Debenham, he was probably not much older than twenty-one. In point of fact, the first delivery to be recorded for these two texts is precisely at Debenham, in 1758. The mistake may be ascribed to youthful indiscretion. Besides, no copyright law protected literary work at the time, and plagiarism is well documented, even among famous writers in the Established Church.<sup>35</sup> After all, such compilations as Letsome's *Preacher's Assistant* and its successor, John Cooke's 1783 edition,<sup>36</sup> were designed for the benefit of those preachers who might like to find inspiration in their predecessors' work.

The polemicist Caleb Fleming's fifty-seven manuscript sermons follow the same patterns of preaching, albeit more painstakingly. Soon rumoured to be a Socinian, he shared his colleagues' liking for Pauline and wisdom literature (fig. 7).

34. *Lectures on Preaching* (London: Ogle, Duncan & Co., 1821), p. 74.

35. Even though some of the details of Lansing van de Heyden Hammond's arguments in *Laurence Sterne's Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (New Haven: Yale University P, 1948) have now been questioned, the reality of Yorick's plagiarism is in no doubt.

36. *The Preacher's Assistant, (After the Manner of Mr. Letsome), Containing a Series of the Texts of sermons and Discourses Published Either Singly, or in volumes, by Divines of the Church of England, and by the Dissenting Clergy, since the Restoration to the Present Time, Specifying Also the Several Authors Alphabetically Arranged Under Each Text – with the Size, Date, Occasion, or Subject-matter of Each Sermon or Discourse* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1783).

Like them, he used his sermons several times, though not as extensively. Over the years, he repeated his discourses in different places, hence the notion of "travelling discourses]."<sup>37</sup> Not only did he then provide alternative Scripture quotations, but he even changed the title on the fly-leaf of the sermon. Moreover, his drafts display many alterations, even with sermons that were preached only once,<sup>38</sup> as if composition had not been an easy task for him. Quite understandably, some booklets bear the mention "to be written over fair."<sup>39</sup> Besides, one may wonder whether references to volume numbers that have been pencilled in<sup>40</sup> hint at a design for publication.

The lack of more interesting documents may be partly due to the Dissenting tradition of extemporisation. Thus, the surviving traces of Philip Doddridge's unpublished sermons are brief summaries or detailed plans in shorthand, precisely the kind of notes that would help structure improvised speech.<sup>41</sup> His figure stands out even more conspicuously above other contemporary Dissenters. Yet the modern historian is grateful to catch a glimpse of the spiritual reality in the pulpit and pew through documents that arguably provide more accurate indices of genuine homiletics than printed works.<sup>42</sup>

FRANÇOISE DECONINCK-BROSSARD

### ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND THE EVANGELICAL ROOTS OF AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE

From the very founding of the Republic, American politicians have been troubled by religion. Though the First Amendment of the Federal constitution prohibits an established church, the nation's political leaders have had to operate with at least one eye on organised religion. They have seen clergy from Timothy Dwight to Jerry Falwell, from Lyman Beecher to Pat Robertson taking their churches into battle, whether to end Sunday mail deliveries, abolish slavery, prohibit liquor, promote public education, suppress gambling, advance civil rights, or limit abortion. Many have felt the lash of the religious tongue. On Thomas Jefferson's election to the vice-presidency a Congregational minister prayed: "O Lord, bestow upon the vice-president a double portion of thy grace, *for Thou knowest he needs it!*" In 1896, on the Sunday before William Jennings Bryan and his radical free-silver programme plunged to electoral defeat, many Protestant

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37. Nos. 3 and 39.

38. E.g. no. 24.

39. E.g. nos. 41, 35, 16.

40. E.g. "vol. 3" on 46, and "vol. 2" on no. 13.

41. Mss. 24.179 (5-7) and Dr. Williams's Library.

42. For the distinction between printed and unpublished sermons, see Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (Oxford U P, 1986), pp. 4-5.

clergy pointedly preached on the text, "Thou shalt not steal". The Catholic presidential nominees of the Democratic party, Al Smith in 1928 and John Kennedy in 1960, were only the most distinguished targets of Protestant opprobrium. "Can a man be a Loyal Roman Catholic and a Good President of the United States?" a Dallas Baptist minister asked about Kennedy.<sup>1</sup> It was hardly the mark of an open mind.

Equally, the holders of secular office have not confined themselves to secular themes. It is not simply that they have agreed with George Washington, that "[o]f all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports."<sup>2</sup> It has had even more to do with their exercising power in a nation that has understood its destiny in religious terms. Lofty, providentialist, millennialist eloquence has been a common feature of presidential addresses, whether in promoting domestic reform or defining the nation's role in the wider world. At a more prosaic level, too, vote-seeking politicians have readily played the religious card, alert to the continuing capacity of sectarian commitments and antagonisms – rooted in the Protestant Reformation, but redefined in each generation – to shape political animosities and loyalties. And they have sought to clothe themselves in a godlier garb than their opponents. In his last presidential election, we encountered the incumbent, George Bush, unconvincingly outraged at the absence of "the three letter word God" from the Democrats' platform. This was the same George Bush who in the presidential primaries in 1988 had tussled irresolutely with the tension between the principle of the first Amendment and the reality of religion in public life. Asked in a television interview about his wartime experience of baling out of his plane into the Pacific Ocean, he reflected on his situation: "There I was setting a world record for paddling a raft. At such moments of danger you go back to basics: your home, your family, your values, your religion ... and the separation of church and state."

Historical study of the intersection of American religion and politics, broadly understood, has been curiously uneven. Twenty-five years ago, when my interest in it began to develop, it had attracted relatively little scholarship, mostly focussed on a limited range of problems and periods: the political consequences of religious awakening in the era of the Revolution; the separation of church and state in the early republic; the visceral energy of fundamentalist, Prohibitionist, anti-Darwinian religion in the early twentieth century; and examinations of how religion and ethnicity have shaped voters' loyalties.

Twenty-five years on, the picture has certainly changed. The emergence of a New Christian Right in the late 1970s, and the political salience of conservative religion since, have dramatically underlined the importance of the religious strain in American politics. Yet the cascade of new publications in the field over the last

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1. A. James Reichley, *Religion in American Public Life* (Washington, D.C., 1985), 178, 210.
  2. R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York, 1994), 71.

two decades has been directed very largely at recent events, leaving many historiographical blind spots. The politics of the 1920s, for example, are commonly explained as an expression of fundamentalist-modernist-Catholic conflicts, and yet the conventional history of the Great Depression and New Deal, apart from a few references to eye-catching individuals on the radical right, mystifyingly imply that Americans had overnight shed their religious agenda. Though fundamentalist churches retreated from political life for most of the twentieth century, mainstream churches remained loyal to a tradition of political engagement. Religion was there, for instance, in the conservative politics of race, as well as for the reformist politics of civil rights. It was there, largely ignored by historians, in the politics of labour and of management. It was there, too, in the shaping of the Cold War, one of the greatest syncretising forces in American religious history.

## II

My intention is twofold. I want to suggest how American evangelical religion in the early republic exerted a formative influence on the nation's political culture. This was a pivotal movement in American political development, whose outcome would have long-term consequences for the public life of the country. My parallel purpose is to show how these religious realities acted as both constraints, and supports in the political career of the greatest president of this era, Abraham Lincoln. For all the scholarly attention paid to Lincoln, his political relationship to evangelical America is largely ignored. My aim is to open out an inviting line of inquiry.

This is not in itself to challenge the conventional historical wisdom about the sixteenth president's personal faith. In no modern, scholarly account of Lincoln's life is there any suggestion that he subscribed to evangelical Protestant beliefs or that an evangelical creed informed his political actions. Yet the many thousands of works on Lincoln (outnumbered only by those on Jesus Christ) provide us with a rich, often bizarre accumulation of interpretative possibilities. Ever since the first appreciations appeared, in the form of the hundreds of sermons delivered immediately after his assassination, Lincoln has been appropriated by almost every religious tradition.

One of Lincoln's first biographers, Josiah Holland, a pious New Englander, portrayed him as a profoundly serious Christian who, before leaving Illinois for Washington in 1861, told a colleague: "I know there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming, and I know that His Hand is in it. If he has a place and work for me – and I think He has – I believe I am ready. ... I know I am right because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it, and Christ is God." Holland described a Lincoln whose faith deepened as the carnage of the Civil War worsened. His portrait of a devout, orthodox Christian was to provide the model for a subsequent tide of celebratory, homiletic literature.

But others equally well acquainted with Lincoln were astonished by Holland's

portrayal. Billy Herndon, Lincoln's law partner for twenty-one years, recalled how, while Mary Todd Lincoln and the rest of the family attended church, he and Lincoln would spend Sunday mornings at their office in Springfield discussing legal cases and swapping profane stories, many of them quite unfit for polite Christian company. Herndon marshalled his own and others' recollections to show that Lincoln was no orthodox Christian, but rather an infidel or deist. These materials later provided the basis for the most bitterly denounced of all biographies, that by Ward Hill Lamon, which appeared in 1872. Lamon, another close Springfield friend of Lincoln and the president's occasional bodyguard, presented the public with an unromantic picture of a man who enjoyed dirty stories far more than he did religious consolation. Lamon attributed Lincoln's "black fits" – his bouts of melancholia – to the influences upon him as a young man in New Salem and Springfield, the writings of Tom Paine and Constantine Volney, which "enlisted him on the side of unbelief". If people got the impression that Lincoln was a man of orthodox Christian faith, Lamon insisted, it was only because his political ambition had led him to hide his essentially "deistic convictions" (and in that context, deism took on the status of unbelief).

Since the time when Holland and Lamon staked out the ground of battle there has been a continuing tussle for Lincoln's soul, with religious champions of every hue claiming him as their own. Those persuaded that he was at heart a Quaker, loyal to the faith of his Virginia ancestors, have had to confront those maintaining that Lincoln was converted at a Methodist meeting in Springfield when he was thirty. Those who claim that the bedrock of his thinking derived from his parents' Baptist creed are opposed by Unitarians convinced that, crucially, Lincoln never subscribed to the deity of Christ. Those who attach the highest significance to the Presbyterian connections of his wife encounter others who find in Lincoln's denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment hard evidence of a Universalist creed.

More preposterous are the claims that the young Lincoln had been baptized into the Catholic Church by Jesuit missionaries to Illinois; that he was a thoroughgoing Freemason; and, still more absurd, that he and Mrs. Lincoln were full subscribers to Spiritualism during his presidential years. This last claim was most forcefully made many years later by a medium, Mrs. Nettie Maynard, who told of being asked to the White House to hold séances and who invited the credit for most of the president's wise war-time decisions. There is no doubt that a few mediums did visit the White House, but Lincoln himself is said to have commented that the advice he received from the spirits, "was as contradictory as the voices of his own Cabinet, of whose meetings the séances reminded him."

Lincoln's presidential campaign manager in 1860, David Davis, described his friend as "the most reticent, secretive man I ever saw or expect to see." Lincoln was indeed a man who did not wear his religion on his sleeve, and this reticence encouraged the proliferation of speculative and untenable claims about his faith. When the imaginative accretions are stripped away we are left with a limited number of unchallengeable facts. We know that Lincoln was born into a Baptist settlement in Kentucky, that his parents were predestinarian Baptists, and that their

beliefs shaped the family home. We know that he had a detailed knowledge of the scriptures, on which he readily drew in private conversation and public speaking. It is clear that he was uncomfortable with the sectarian chauvinism rife in early Indiana and Illinois. We know that after the death of his young son Eddie in 1850, he attended the First Presbyterian Church in Springfield, where Mrs. Lincoln was a member; and that in Washington the president regularly worshipped at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. Yet he made no public profession of faith, was not baptised and did not become a communicating member of any church – a reflection of his antipathy to man-made creeds. More than once he said he would wholeheartedly join any church that made its only condition for membership Christ's summary of the law of love to God and to one's neighbour.<sup>3</sup>

The essential elements of Lincoln's faith, as it had matured by the end of his life, seem to have included: first, a fatalism, even resignation, before the unfathomable purposes of the Almighty, whose will must prevail; secondly, faith in God's justice and mercy in His Relations with mankind; and thirdly, confidence in American destiny under God, conditional on the nation's readiness to atone for any defiance of God's justice. Lincoln's melancholic fatalism came at least in part from the predestinarian Calvinist influences of his childhood, and is captured in his lifelong love of William Knox's poem "Mortality", a fourteen-verse rumination on *Ecclesiastes* and *Job*, which Lincoln memorised and took pleasure in reciting:

Oh! Why should the spirit of mortal be proud?  
 Like a fast-flitting meteor, a fast flying cloud,  
 A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,  
 He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

Tis the twink of an eye, tis the draught of a breath,  
 From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,  
 From the gilded saloon, to the bier and the shroud, –  
 Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud.

Lincoln's sense of justice in the relations between God and mankind, a perspective which led him to repudiate the doctrine of eternal damnation, was reflected in another of his favourite verses, about the Indian Johnny Kongapod:

Here lies poor Johnny Kongapod.  
 Have mercy on him, gracious God,  
 As he would do if he was God  
 And you were Johnny Kongapod.

Lincoln's belief in American national destiny expressed itself variously during the war. Urging the nation to see the hand of God in the events afflicting his "almost chosen people", he came to see the conflict as God's judgment on the whole nation for the evil of slavery, and, in his Second Inaugural, called for atonement and reformation carried out without malice and in a spirit of charity.

Taken together this hardly amounted to a conventional evangelical theology –

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3. Lincoln's Presbyterian connexions are explored in William J. Wolf, *The Almost Chosen People: A Study of the Religion of Abraham Lincoln*, 80-87, 126-7.

certainly not the Christ-centred, revival-promoting, Arminianised Calvinism that defined the American Protestant mainstream. Indeed, on the only occasion in his life when Lincoln made a public statement about his personal faith he carefully avoided a ringing endorsement of popular evangelical religion. This was in 1846, when he ran for Congress as a Whig in the Seventh District of Illinois. His Democratic opponent was Peter Cartwright, a popular, combative and formidable Methodist circuit-rider. Cartwright had for over four decades pursued a remarkable career in the border and western states as a demotic revivalist and denominational chauvinist. His form of religious enthusiasm and sectarianism repelled Lincoln, who in the final days of the campaign discovered that the Democrats were slyly circulating charges that he was “an open scoffer at Christianity”. Lincoln responded with a handbill. “That I am not a member of any Christian Church,” he wrote, “is true; but I have never denied the truth of the Scriptures; and I have never spoken with intentional disrespect of religion in general, or of any denomination of Christians in particular.” He conceded that he had once believed “that the human mind is impelled to action, or held in rest by some power, over which the mind itself has no control.” But he had, he insisted, stopped arguing this fatalist doctrine five years earlier.<sup>4</sup>

Cartwright’s actions and Lincoln’s response hint at a political cosmos profoundly shaped by popular religious culture, and especially by its most potent element, evangelical Protestantism. When Lincoln wrote in the handbill that “I do not think I could myself, be brought to support a man for office, whom I knew to be an open ... scoffer at religion”, and that “[no] man has the right ... thus to insult the feelings ... of the community in which he may live,” he recognised both the social grip of religion and the duty of politicians to respect the religious sensibilities of voters. Lincoln’s words prompt the question: how exactly did evangelical religion shape American political culture not only in the immediate context of the 1840s – the era of mature party competition between Whigs and Democrats – but in the early years of the subsequent “third party system”, when the continuing, but southern-oriented Democrats faced an insurgent, crusading Republican party? And if evangelicalism was as important as I suggest, how did Lincoln, who was not an evangelical but was a consummate reader of political opinion, relate to it, not only in securing election, but in exercising presidential power?

### III

The social power of religion and its capacity to shape political culture is dramatically revealed in the United States in the early republic. Thanks to successive waves of revival over the first third of the nineteenth century – the era of what is known as the Second Great Awakening – American evangelical

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4. Benjamin P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography* (New York, 1952), 100-9; Abraham Lincoln, “Handbill Replying to Charges of Infidelity”, 31 July 1846, and Abraham Lincoln to Allen N. Ford, 11 August 1846, in Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (9 vols. New Brunswick, N.J., 1953-55), 1: 382-4.

Protestant churches grew by leaps and bounds. The dismantling of formal church establishments opened the way to a free market in religion and the proliferation of denominations, advantaging those churches most flexible in organisation, most revivalist in means, most Arminianised in theology and most attentive to the demands of plain folk. By 1850 the largest Protestant families - Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists - claimed a total "population" of members and "hearers" of some nine or ten million, or one out of three Americans. No wonder that one foreign visitor concluded that "the spirit of the evangelical system is in sufficient power to give to religious opinion and sentiment the complete ascendant in society."<sup>5</sup>

The climactic years of that Awakening coincided with the emergence of a recognisably modern mass democratic political system rooted in white manhood suffrage and whose features included incessant campaigning, professional party managers, and highly disciplined political parties which reached into every corner of the country. Evangelicals sought to come to terms with the new order and establish the proper limits to their civic duty. A minority of political quietists aimed to keep the world of the spirit firmly separate from that of politics, stressing personal holiness and what they took to be Christ's instruction not to interfere with political institutions. For many of these, politics was a supreme irrelevance in an era of adventist expectation, when Christ would return at any moment "to cleanse his sanctuary". (During one presidential campaign a Kentucky canvasser found himself in heated discussion with a millenarian who was sure that human society was about to end. When the adventist declared, "I tell you my friend, you are going to be defeated: Christ is coming to take the reins of government before the next inauguration", the politician replied: "I'll bet one hundred dollars he can't carry Kentucky.")<sup>6</sup>

The majority of evangelicals, however, subscribed to a view of political duty which drew on a Calvinist understanding of politics as a means of introducing God's kingdom, and on a perception of the state as a moral being. Those who shared this "Reformed" approach stressed the public responsibilities of Christians. They urged them to vote to secure the election of good men and to lobby for laws consistent with the nation's special status as a Christian republic. They were anxious about many of the political innovations in Jacksonian America, particularly the threat to republicanism and individual conscience represented by tight party discipline, the subordination of principle to spoils of office, and the tumult of mass elections in which judicious reflection yielded to name-calling, lies and drunkenness. But whatever their anxieties, these evangelicals were determined to purify political life, not withdraw from it.

By mid-century, indeed, most male evangelical Protestants were deeply involved in politics. They attended rallies, avidly read political papers, and

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5. James Dixon, *Personal Narrative of a Tour Through a Part of the United States and Canada ...* (New York, 1849), 143 and *passim*.
  6. Jonathan K. Peck, *Luther Peck and His Five Sons* (Cincinnati, 1897), 216.

canvassed for particular candidates. As Charles Finney, the premier revivalist of his age, explained: "No one can possibly be ... religious without concerning himself to a greater or lesser extent with the affairs of human government." Ministers were often energetic partisans. In 1844 a Democratic congressman flourished a letter to a bookseller from a Whig clergyman passionate for Henry Clay's victory in the presidential election: "Sir: Please send 1 dozen Village Hymns, 6 Bibles, 1 dozen Church Psalmodes, 2 dozen Clay Minstrels [the Whig campaign songbook], Your affectionate Christian brother, Rev. N.B.C. PS, Send the Clay Minstrels by all means – the others I can wait for till after the election."<sup>7</sup>

The new political arrangements were themselves deeply influenced by the democratic revivalist culture of the Second Great Awakening – by evangelicals' language, models of operation, religious sensibilities and moral imperatives. The party managers who fashioned what is known as the "second party system" from the 1820s to the 1850s sought to build national political coalitions out of elements whose primary loyalties were local and regional. It was the churches, their newspapers and their national benevolent societies which best showed how local enthusiasm could be channelled to build a sense of community extending beyond the locality. Party strategists also saw that religious passions could provide a basis for political loyalty. They invited ministers to offer prayers at party conventions; their songs incorporated the language and tunes of Protestant hymnody; they played "recognition" politics by running candidates known to be attached to influential denominations; they replicated the evangelicals' mind-set of a world sharply divided between irreconcilable forces; the revivalists' antitheses of grace and sin, heaven and hell informed politicians' appeals to voters to choose between two moral orders, between political salvation and the works of the Devil.<sup>8</sup>

There is no more vivid illustration of the symbiosis or synergy of the two worlds of religion and politics than the public career of William Gannaway Brownlow, "the Fighting Parson" of Tennessee. As editor of the *Knoxville Whig* and a renowned local preacher, Brownlow combined devoted Whiggery, unyielding Methodist sectarianism, anti-Popery, total self-belief and an unrivalled polemical ability (calling to mind a hybrid of Ian Paisley and Kelvin McKenzie – though in his shadow Paisley appears a consensualist and McKenzie a slave of nuanced complexity). Many of Brownlow's most vicious thrusts were directed at the Baptists – a sectarian conflict made all the more intense by each denomination's vision of itself as the natural church of the common people. Angry debates over complete immersion and infant baptism reached a crescendo in the early and mid-1850s, as Brownlow engaged in a poisonous controversy with Elder James R.

7. Charles G. Finney, *The Necessity of Human Government* (1841); John Wentworth, *Speech of Mr. Wentworth of Illinois* [U.S. House of Representatives, April 1844] (n.p., [1844]).
8. Richard Carwardine, "Religious Revival and Political Renewal in Antebellum America", in Jane Garnett and Colin Matthew, eds., *Revival and Religion since 1700: Essays for John Walsh* (London, 1993), 127-52.

Graves, the editor of the *Tennessee Baptist* and a confirmed Democrat. At first sight this seems no more than an archaic and knockabout contest in a provincial backwater; it is all too easy to miss its deeper cultural and political significance.<sup>9</sup>

Graves's attacks on Methodism for its crypto-Romanist theology, autocratic church government and debauchery of women appeared as *The Great Iron Wheel; or, Republicanism Backwards and Christianity Reversed*. Brownlow's even more bellicose riposte was *The Great Iron Wheel Examined; or, Its False Spokes Extracted, and an Exhibition of Elder Graves, Its Builder*. Graves, whom he had earlier called in the columns of the *Knoxville Whig* a "little red-faced, small whiskered dandy" and a "loathsome blackguard", he now termed "the dirty ear-wig of Baptist exclusiveness", a "blotch upon the Christian community", and "an offensive smell". Brownlow protested – unconvincingly – that he had been unwilling at first "to bandy epithets with an inflated *gasometer*", but the time had come for a response to this "*Hindoo leader* of the warlike wing of his Church".

Thus in the early and mid-1850s, as Graves explained, the West and South was "one great battlefield", and in some areas the conflict between Baptists and Methodists had considerable repercussions for party politics. A young Methodist preacher who entered Clinton circuit in eastern Tennessee in 1854 later recalled that the animus between the two churches constituted "the bitterest denominational prejudice I have ever known anywhere"; in Clinton itself, "they had Methodist and Baptist Churches, schools, taverns, stores, blacksmith shops, and ferries across the river. Like the Jews and Samaritans, they had no dealings with each other whatever." Significantly, he found that "most of the Methodists were Whigs, and most of the Baptists were Democrats", and the preachers of both groups were also political leaders.<sup>10</sup>

Zeb Vance of North Carolina also knew that religious conflict could provide markers on the political grid. Once, in the backwoods when running for congress, he was asked by the elderly leader of his audience to what church he belonged. Vance replied uncertainly. "Well, you see, my grandfather came from Scotland, and you know everybody there is a Presbyterian." No one stirred. "But my grandmother came from England, and over there everybody belongs to the Episcopal church." Again, no response. "But my father was born in this country in a Methodist settlement, and so he grew up a Methodist." There was still no positive reaction, so Vance concluded: "But my good old mother was a Baptist, and it's my opinion that a man has got to go under the water to get to heaven." The leader seized his hand and said, "Boys, he'll do good and you may vote for him[;] I thought he looked like a Baptist."<sup>11</sup>

9. Richard Carwardine, "Unity, Pluralism and the Spiritual Market-Place: Interdenominational Competition in the Early American Republic" in Robert Swanson, ed., *Unity and Diversity in the Church: Studies in Church History* vol. 32 (Oxford, 1996), 320-31.

10. F. Richardson, *From Sunrise to Sunset: Reminiscence* (Bristol, Tenn., 1890), 107-8.

11. D.B. Parker, "I Thought He Looked Like a Baptist", *The State*, July 1987, 7.

These evangelicals' party attachments were not random. The conflict between Baptists and Methodists in the southern hill country points to competing attitudes towards community "improvement" and the encroaching national market; Methodists in general (and Brownlow in particular) were more strongly identified than Baptists with Whiggish enterprise in moral and economic affairs. More generally, Democrats, championing religious pluralism and a Jeffersonian, neutral state, offered a home to a variety of "outsider" religious groups, including Catholics, and evangelical Protestants who had suffered at the hands of the recently disestablished churches. Whigs, by contrast, made a bid for the support of evangelicals who welcomed a government that would regulate social behaviour and maintain moral standards in public life by providing state-funded education and promoting temperance reform in a society afflicted by huge *per capita* consumption of alcohol. Whigs commonly portrayed their opponents as atheists and religious perverts, the allies of Mormons, freethinkers and Catholics. In successive elections in the 1840s Whigs made much of their credentials as "the Christian party." This posed the occasional difficulty, as in 1844, when they chose as their presidential candidate the old reprobate Henry Clay, who had twice duelled with pistols and had a passion for card games. Judging that voters would be less forgiving than Clay's wife (who, when asked if she was not upset by her husband's gambling, replied "Oh no, he almost always wins") the party significantly chose as his running-mate the nation's most illustrious lay evangelical, Theodore J. Frelinghuysen, a man more at home on the religious platform than the political hustings.<sup>12</sup>

This, then, was the political setting in which Lincoln sought and held office. As a Whig who was not a conventional Protestant, he learnt to tread carefully. In 1834, three years before his campaign against Peter Cartwright, he had failed to secure the Whig nomination for the same congressional seat. He offered a fascinating explanation of his defeat. "It was", he wrote, "everywhere contended that no Christian ought to go for me, because I belonged to no church, [and] was suspected of being a deist." He judged, too, that his embarrassing involvement in an absurd duel with James Shields, to be fought with "Cavalry broad swords of the largest size", also alienated Christian support. These influences, he concluded, "were very strong" and "levied a tax of considerable per cent upon my strength throughout the religious community."<sup>13</sup>

#### IV

This sensitivity to Protestant influence was as strikingly evident in the stance of the new Republican party of the 1850s as it had been with its Whig predecessor. The party's ideological glue was its hostility to the extension of slavery

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12. Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven, 1993), 71-89.

13. Wolf, *The Almost Chosen People*, 59-62, 69-70; Lincoln to Martin S. Morris, 26 March 1843, Basler, ed., *Collected Works of Lincoln*, I: 320.

westwards, and that issue lay at the heart of its appeal in 1860, when its hopes of victory in the presidential election were underscored by the disarray amongst its opponents. But Republican publicists proved as alert as their Whig predecessors to the benefits of presenting their candidate and platform as embodiments of Protestant virtue. The first of eighteen different biographies of Lincoln appeared in Chicago on the day after his nomination. Convention dictated that Lincoln remain silent during the campaign, but Republican publicists succeeded in elevating a mute candidate into a moral talisman by stressing three elements in particular which showed him "worthy of the holy cause": he represented sound religion; he was incorruptibly honest; and his antislavery credentials were beyond reproach.<sup>14</sup>

First, Republicans presented Lincoln as a candidate rooted in sound Protestant orthodoxy: "a regular attendant" and "pew-holder ... of the Presbyterian church n Springfield, to which Mrs. Lincoln belongs." They celebrated a man of blameless behaviour, one who never used profane language, did not gamble, and avoided intoxicating liquor. In all this there was just enough truth to defend Republican editors against the charge of perjury. Though not the paragon they presented, Lincoln did indeed shun alcohol and tobacco, took care not to blaspheme, and extolled and practised self-control, self-improvement and industry – virtues deeply admired by Whig-Republican evangelicals. Most important, Republican spin-doctors kept Lincoln clear of the taint of infidelity, so troublesome to him in the 1840s, and projected him as a leader destined to deliver the nation "from the rule of a Godless ... Administration."<sup>15</sup> Simultaneously they took the offensive, as had the Whigs before them, castigating Democrats, and specifically their northern standard-bearer Stephen Douglas, for their moral shortcomings and subordination to Catholic influence. Douglas they presented as a renegade from New England Puritanism, a moral leper and a drunk, who had married a Catholic wife, visited Rome and – allegedly – submitted to the Pope.<sup>16</sup>

Republicans' anti-Catholicism played upon a number of related fears: the ecclesiastical anxieties of staunch Protestants who branded Rome as an Antichrist; the social phobia of those native-born who equated Catholicism with an Irish dram-shop culture of "blackguardism, riot and soul-sickening blasphemy"; and the political antipathy of antislavery reformers who linked the Roman Church with the southern Slave Power as subverters of the republic's liberties. The Republican platform did not specifically mention Catholicism, but it did not have to. Many of the party's speakers and candidates were known anti-Romanists, while Republican newspapers insisted, as did the Cincinnati paper, the *Rail Splitter*, that only a vote for Lincoln would keep "this Government ... in Protestant control."<sup>17</sup> By these

14. *Chicago Press and Tribune*, 15, 16 May 1860.

15. Scripps, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 165; *Chicago Press and Tribune*, 21, 23 May 1860; William E. Barton, *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1920), 76-7; *New York Tribune*, 15 June 1860.

16. *Steubenville Herald*, quoted in the Cincinnati *Railsplitter*, 1 August 1860.

17. *Railsplitter*, 12 September, 3 October 1860.

means they won over enough ultra-Protestants from other parties to give the presidency to Lincoln, who thus benefited from an anti-Catholic animus of whose exploitation he almost certainly disapproved.

In attacking political corruption the Republicans found an easy target in the Democratic administration of James Buchanan, president since 1857, especially after dishonesty in Kansas affairs and in government contracts had been exposed by a congressional committee in June 1860. Republican editors tapped into a long Whig tradition of casting the opposition party as a redeemer and purifier, and revelled in a rich language of moral outrage against a government of “parasites and bloodsuckers” who had jeopardised “the very existence of the Republic.” The times demanded a new Luther; Lincoln was the man for the hour. Across the North, Republicans extolled Lincoln’s integrity. Ex-congressman Joshua Giddings, a radical Presbyterian, set the tone in a speech that declared that “every beat” of the candidate’s “heart was a throb of sincerity and truth”. In the Illinois circuit courts Lincoln had developed a reputation for incorruptible integrity: he was “Honest Abe”, the lawyer who never lied. (In 1850, in a lecture to young men, he noted the “vague popular belief that lawyers are necessarily dishonest”; he told them: “Resolve to be honest at all events; and if ... you can not be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without a lawyer. Choose some other occupation.”).<sup>18</sup>

Lincoln the conspicuous opponent of slavery joined Lincoln the orthodox Christian and Lincoln the incorruptible statesman to complete the Republicans’ appeal as the party of righteousness. Their spokesmen set the antislavery battle in a gospel context, appealing for Christian soldiers to take up arms in what George Washington Julian described as “a fight ... between God and the Devil – between heaven and hell!” Republican stump speakers vouched for Lincoln’s resolute opposition to the extension of slavery, the ethical underpinnings of his position having been set out in the memorable peroration of his Cooper Union speech of February 1860: “Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.”<sup>19</sup>

If Republicans in 1860 promoted themselves and Lincoln as the embodiment of uncorrupted evangelical Protestantism, and if their opponents jeered at them for claiming to be “the *moral* and *Christian party*”, the question arises: how far did northern evangelicals support that party? There is little doubt that Republicans took over from the Whigs most evangelical voters in New England and its mid-western diaspora, as well as almost all the smaller, earnestly antislavery groups (including the Quakers); they also won over significant numbers of mainstream Methodists and Baptists. But northern evangelical churches were certainly not uniformly Republican. Lincoln’s main opponents in these free states – John Bell and Stephen Douglas – also won Protestant support by appealing to older church allegiances.<sup>20</sup>

18. *Cincinnati Gazette*, 26 March 1858; *New York Tribune*, 16 May, 25 June 1860; *Chicago Press and Tribune*, 23 May 1860.

19. *Albany Argus*, 26 September 1860; *New York Tribune*, 12 June 1860; *Albany Evening Journal*, 22 September 1860; *Ohio State Journal*, 25 June 1860.

20. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*, 296-307.

Lincoln himself was well aware of this complexity. Commenting on a recent canvass of Springfield voters, which included the names of the city's clergymen, he said: "Here are twenty-three, ministers of different denominations, and all of them are against me but three; and here are a great many prominent members of the churches, a very large majority of whom are against me." How, he asked, could God-fearing men so misread the Bible as not to care whether slavery was voted up or down?<sup>21</sup>

What significance did Lincoln, with his celebrated "seismographic" political sense, attach to this evidence? And what did Springfield, situated in the centre of Illinois, tell him about the wider electoral picture in the state and in the North? Like Indiana and Ohio, the northern counties of Illinois had been colonized by migrants from New England and the wider Northeast; further south the settlers had migrated largely from the border slave states. The upshot was a clash of cultures. Drawn from the ranks of non-slaveholders, the southern folk (according to Thomas Ford, Governor of Illinois) regarded the more prosperous farmers and merchants of the northern areas with great suspicion, judging that the "genuine Yankee was a miserly, dishonest, selfish getter of money, void of hospitality, or any of the kindlier feelings of human nature." For their part northerners regarded the southerner as "a lazy, and ignorant animal, but little in advance of the savage state; one who was content to squat in a log-cabin, with a large family of ill-fed and ill-clothed, idle, ignorant children."<sup>22</sup>

This sectional chauvinism was reinforced by religious antagonism. An important element of conflict during the early years of statehood was the clash between the rough, uneducated gospel pioneers, travelling on foot or by horse, unpaid and ready to suffer chronic physical hardship in the cause of Christ; and a new breed of college-trained, well-dressed, more sophisticated ministers. The conflict took on a sectional character since these more polished preachers came largely from the North and East. Peter Cartwright described his first encounter with them: "I had never seen a Yankee, and I heard dismal stories about them. ... It was said they lived almost entirely on pumpkins, molasses, fat meat, and ... tea; moreover, that they could not bear loud and zealous sermons, and were always criticising us poor backwoods preachers." An old Baptist, one "Daddy" Briggs, maintained that the richness of God's grace "tuck in the isles of the sea and the uttermost part of the 'yeth'. It embraced the Esquimaux and the Hottentots, and some go so fur as to suppose it takes in these poor benighted Yankees; but *I* don't go that fur."<sup>23</sup>

Lincoln was no stranger to these conflicting cultures, which co-existed in the

21. Barton, *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, 114-27.

22. Thomas Ford, *A History of Illinois from Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847* (Chicago, 1854), 279-82.

23. Joseph Gillespie, *Recollections of Early Illinois and Her Noted Men* (Chicago, 1880), 6; Ford, *A History of Illinois*, 105.

central counties of the state. As an attender at Springfield's First Presbyterian Church, he knew well the conservative views of those with strong ties to the South, and equally well knew the Yankee, antislavery origins of the Second Presbyterian Church. He certainly would have grasped what these outlooks meant for voting behaviour. Sadly, Lincoln's canvass returns no longer survive, but the identity of two of his three first supporters is clear enough. Both were college-trained Yankees, one of whom, Lincoln's Baptist neighbour and friend, Noyes W. Miner, spent election day in 1860 working for Lincoln at the polls, doing, in his wife's words, "the hardest day's work he ever did challenging votes and trying to keep things straight."<sup>24</sup>

Lincoln knew the political geography of Illinois well enough to judge that, whatever the weakness of Republicanism within Springfield's churches, the party was much more buoyant in the faster-growing northern counties of the state, where Yankee influences were strong. There Congregationalists, Presbyterians and especially Methodists, the largest denomination in the state, fervently endorsed Republican freesoil principles.

In the event Republicans extended their hold on the evangelical vote in 1860. Appealing to those Protestants who stressed conscience, disciplined obedience to the higher law, and social responsibility, the party was uniquely effective in capturing Protestant energies for the cause of political antislavery and civic purification. These pious Republicans went further than previous evangelicals in identifying the arrival of God's kingdom with the success of a particular political party. Twenty years ago the historian Eric Foner wrote: "The view of the Republican party as the political expression of pietistic Protestantism can hardly encompass a figure like Lincoln, who was southern-born and whose religious beliefs were akin to the deism of ... Thomas Paine ... According to the aggregate data, Lincoln should have been a pro-slavery Democrat. At best he was a historical accident."<sup>25</sup> Foner was right to stress that economic interest and bitter anti-southern feeling were important elements of the Republican mix. A party that wins a presidential election must do so as an institutional and philosophical amalgam. But his judgment misses the point that without the moral imperatives of evangelical Protestantism the Republican party would have been less energetic, less visionary, less indignant, less self-righteous – and less successful. Lincoln's candidacy, far from being in tension with the party's Protestant morality, served its purposes admirably well.

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24. Newton Bateman and Paul Selby, eds., *Illinois Historical* (Chicago, 1910), 215; Palmer, *Personal Recollections*, 48-51; Conkling, *Historical Data Concerning the Second Presbyterian Church*, 3: 8-22; Mary Hill Miner, typescript "Recollections", Mary Hill Miner Papers, 4, 6, Illinois State Historical Society.
  25. Eric Foner, "The Causes of the American Civil War", *Civil War History* (September 1974), 201.

## V

As president, Lincoln's relations with evangelicals deserve to be better understood. Soon after his election Lincoln was told by the Congregational minister Julian Sturtevant that "thousands and tens of thousands of religious men" spoke his name "with affection and hope"; and in the main the story of the Civil War is one of the consolidation of that alliance between the Union's chief executive and evangelical opinion.<sup>26</sup> The experience of war, which visited both public and personal tragedies on Lincoln, inevitably brought the president face-to-face with questions of ultimate reality. We cannot be sure how far his cultivation of the company and support of prominent evangelicals had to do with his own spiritual journeying. But we can be certain that he recognised in church leaders a way of both reaching and reading a wider public opinion. Mainstream evangelicals like Matthew Simpson, the widely influential Methodist bishop and one of Lincoln's favourite preachers, acted as a two-way channel: as a broadcaster of the administration's purposes, and as a sounding board that allowed Lincoln to listen to the voice of the people in what the president himself described as a people's war. During the dark days of 1862, when Noyes Miner told him that "Christian people all over the country are praying for you as they never prayed for a mortal man before," Lincoln replied: "this is an encouraging thought for me. If I were not sustained by the prayers of God's people I could not endure this constant pressure. I should give up hoping for success."<sup>27</sup>

Historians have identified a variety of sources of Lincoln's political authority during the war: the congressional Republican party, the Cabinet, the apparatus of patronage, the state governors, the Union army, and indeed Lincoln's own personal qualities, especially his far-from-fatalistic determination, his pragmatism and his timing. But what also needs to be emphasised is Lincoln's success, notwithstanding his unorthodox religious views and southern roots, in harnessing the forces of organised Protestantism and in articulating the North's moral purposes. Northern victory depended on the Union's not succumbing to mounting war-weariness. Public opinion mattered: despite the war, local, state and national elections continued to be contested, and the two-party system survived. What helped keep the Union going, both on the home front and on the battlefield, was a sense of purpose and republican vision that owed much to evangelical America.

Most evangelicals, regardless of their party allegiance, held an exalted view of the Union and the Constitution, seeing them as instruments of the moral government of God, and treating disunion and secession as sins in the eyes of the Lord. Lincoln, too, believed America's republican institutions, defences of civil and religious liberty, to have been divinely inspired; in his insistence that "those

26. Julian Sturtevant to Abraham Lincoln, 2 December 1860, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

27. Robert D. Clark, *The Life of Matthew Simpson* (New York, 1956), 221-44; Miner, "Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln", 45-6.

nations only are blest whose God is the Lord," he aligned himself with those evangelicals most convinced of their nation's millennial role and of the moral obligation involved in defending the Union.

Most of these evangelicals, too, were committed to securing the end of slavery; even those who had shunned abolitionism before the war came increasingly to explain Union setbacks in the field as a judgment on the nation's greatest sin. Lincoln found himself repeatedly under fire from the radicals for his timidity and pragmatism – especially for overturning John Frémont's and David Hunter's military proclamations against rebel slaveholders and for his toying with plans for re-settling African Americans in central America. But the overwhelming majority of Union evangelicals outside the border states heartily welcomed his Emancipation Proclamation.

Thus northern evangelicals, whatever their anxieties and criticisms, generally sustained Lincoln with messages of support throughout the low months of 1862 and 1863. Then in 1864 the Republicans, having renominated Lincoln, incorporated into their platform the two matters on which there was a broad evangelical consensus – the promise of a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery and a determination to continue hostilities until all Confederates were brought back under the federal government. After Sherman's success at Atlanta Gilbert Haven believed that:

The Church should unite as one man ... Let her once more march to the ballot-box, an army of Christ, with the banners of the Cross, and deposit ... a million ... votes to [Lincoln] her true representative, and she will give the last blow to the reeling fiend.

The outcome was an increase over 1860 in the proportion of evangelicals who supported Lincoln, a vindication of the claim of the principal Methodist newspaper that: "There probably never was an election in all our history into which the religious element entered so largely, and nearly all on one side."<sup>28</sup>

Lincoln as political candidate travelled a long way between 1843, when his alleged religious deficiencies cost him the Whig nomination, and 1864, when evangelicals toasted him and played their part in his re-election. As chief executive, Lincoln enjoyed the support of a broad coalition of evangelicals, one which bound in New England social radicals and southern-born racial traditionalists like Parson Brownlow. The process by which a Kentucky-born non-evangelical became in the presidency the agent of neo-Puritan, crusading, even radical, Yankee purpose, is one of the undeveloped themes of Lincoln historiography. It is a great irony that a man whose earlier political career had been held back by religious unorthodoxy, and whose faith was at the very least unconventional, should have been elevated by Union evangelicals to the role of "Father Abraham", of prophet and agent of American mission.

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28. James H. Moorhead, *American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War 1860-69* (New Haven, 1978), 156-7.

In fact Lincoln's theological path through the war years continued to keep him at a remove from orthodox Protestant thinkers, as the extraordinary formulations of his Second Inaugural Address reveal. Here, just a few weeks before his death, we encounter a remarkable magnanimity towards the enemy, a surprising even-handedness in his moral judgments on the Union and Confederacy, and an agnosticism about God's purposes in the continuing struggle. In shunning their self-righteousness, their language of retribution and their confidence in knowing that God was on their side, Lincoln set himself apart from the evangelical mainstream and in a war marked by theological aridity can be seen as a source of fresh thinking about God.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, through his assassination Lincoln took the final step into the full body of the evangelical church, for John Wilkes Booth fired his fatal shot on Good Friday. By his action he ensured that Lincoln became someone he could not have been in life: the ultimate Christian, an American Christ.

## VI

Historians, commonly spotted by non-historians through their distinctive cry "not my period", make themselves known to their fellow historians by claiming the transcendent significance of what *is* their period for all subsequent events. Applied here, that approach would be to suggest, plausibly enough, that the evangelical elements in nineteenth-century political culture were the fountain head from which has flowed the born-again Christian moralist presence in recent American politics. The current evangelical right, as a historian of pentecostalism has reminded us, is defined by its "allegiance to a cluster of values derived from Victorian middle-class society". But, true as this is, it is not the whole truth. The early republic was host not to one faith, but to many, not to one evangelicalism, but to several. From a complex source complex outcomes followed. The fusing of pre-Civil War millennialist optimism with the War's triumphant Unionism created a Protestant nationalism which subsequently expressed itself in varieties of political activism, including Progressive reform and imperialism. Yet at the same time many evangelicals, especially but by no means exclusively in the defeated South, participated in what has been described as a "Great Reversal", the withdrawal of the churches from the political terrain.

No: the main long-term significance of the early republic's experience does not lie in its theological or philosophical legacies, important though these were. Rather it issues from its unique ecclesiastical and political arrangements. Freed from the cartel of an established church, Americans, as we have seen, bought and sold religion in a spiritual market place. Its guiding principle resembled the liberal individualism that shaped the growing market economy. Liberated in religion, Americans were free to develop mass churches at the same time that most men

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29. Mark A. Noll, "The Civil War in the History of Theology", conference paper presented at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminar, October 1994.

secured their political rights. But they got the right to vote well before they developed mass parties. It was the distinctive cultures of the young republic's highly competitive churches, and their formidable experience in mass mobilization, which provided the building materials and issues on which politics could construct competitive popular parties. This fusing of religion and politics at the outset of mass democracy has never been reversed, though certain elements within the religious economy – most notably the fundamentalist Protestants – have shifted to and fro in their attitude to political action. The subsequent history of the republic has suggested that for as long as Americans go to church in numbers unparalleled elsewhere in the economically developed world, for as long as there is no established church to dampen religious competition, and for as long as a version of Christianity that favours political engagement prevails, American politics will continue to be indecipherable without attending to the American soul. It means we will continue to be entertained by the electoral contortions of a George Bush, or deafened by the foghorn of fundamentalist conscience. But it means, too, a continuing forum for what we may consider more authentic moral voices, including those which speak in the accents of America's most unexpected theologian, Abraham Lincoln.

RICHARD CARWARDINE

### **EXODUS: LABOUR EMIGRATION FROM THE ENGLISH CHURCHES OF CHRIST TO CANADA DURING 1906 AND 1907**

“She made the confession of her faith before many witnesses, by the open sea, and was immersed in the sea before many spectators”.<sup>1</sup> In the early fall of 1907, Mary Alice Taylor, the teenage daughter of a Wigan coal miner, was baptised off Sydney Mines, Cape Breton, Canada by William Thomas Miller, a twenty-seven year old miner who hailed from the same small Churches of Christ chapel on Victoria Road, Platt Bridge, Wigan, Lancashire.

I and a few others from the Churches of Christ in the Wigan district, emigrated to Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia, Canada. We were about 16 in number and we met and worshipped every Sunday morning in the home of Mr. William Taylor. Besides having a Sunday School of approximately eighteen children, we held a number of open air meetings, our preacher being Robert Unsworth, who had had six months training under the late Lancelot Oliver of Birmingham. The people of the village became interested, and there was much speculation as to which religious body we belonged. Two new members were added to the Church, and I had the privilege of baptising the

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1. *Bible Advocate*, 4.10.1907. Her age is not known, but the Churches of Christ practised believers' baptism by total immersion.

daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor in the sea at North Sydney. Our hymn singing was quite good, because of our previous training in part singing.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, through the small notices of an obscure religious publication, the *Bible Advocate*, and the reminiscences of an old man half a century later, we glimpse a remarkable episode, which may do a little to reveal the hidden world of English working-class emigration. Before returning to the circumstances of Miller and the Cape Breton emigrants, let us set their experiences in the context of English working-class emigration. Then, since the general literature on late nineteenth and early twentieth-century migration stresses economic factors and neglects any religious dimension, we follow our account of the Cape Breton experience with a broader discussion of contemporary Churches of Christ emigration, centred on a larger settlement at Wychwood, Ontario. Finally, we draw some conclusions as to the significance of this working-class, Churches of Christ experience, for a general understanding of the last great burst of English emigration to the new world.<sup>3</sup>

The stereotype of European emigration is of "an undifferentiated mass movement" of poor peasants drawn to the USA like moths to a candle. Yet by the first decade of this century, Canada had overtaken the United States both in the intensity of its immigration and in the absolute numbers of English immigrants. Moreover, many of the latter were of a very different character from the rural peasant or artisan, and the pen picture offered here sheds light on their experience. According to Thistlethwaite, one of the reasons why social scientists, rather than historians, have set the pace in emigration studies is "the elusiveness of the usually anonymous individual migrant compared with other subjects of historical research, so that special reliance must be placed upon the use of statistics".<sup>4</sup> This is a particular problem for the English, probably the largely emigrant group of all, given the ease with which they melted into the host community, in contrast to the more cohesive Irish and Scottish who maintained identifiable religious and ethnic sub-cultures. Recent historical scholarship has sought to put human faces on the statistical aggregates, which stand like war memorials to the unknown dead. This

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2. W.T. Miller "50 years ago", *Church of Christ, Rodney Street, Wigan, Newsletter* March 1959.
  3. For the literature on English Emigration, see the concise overview, D. Baines, *Emigration from Europe, 1815-1930* (London 1991). See also C. Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, USA 1994) and the review by P. Panayi in *Labour History Review* 60(2) 1995, p.132. An earlier essay by F. Thistlethwaite, "Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" in H. Moller (ed), *Population Movements in Modern European History* (London 1964), 73-92, offers a searching survey of the emigration literature.
  4. Thistlethwaite, "Migration", p.75. Intensity of immigration, 1901-1910: USA 1,000 per 100,000 population; Canada 1,500 per 100,000 population, p.76. According to W.A. Carrothers, *Emigration from the British Isles* (London 1965, original publication 1929), pp.245-246, "the most notable feature of the period [1847-1914] was the enormous increase in the number going to Canada". From 1905 net emigration from the British Isles to Canada exceeded that to the USA, with the exception of 1909.

article is a contribution in the search for the "invisible" English emigrant. It is, moreover, a study not of scattered, atomised individuals, but of cohesive religious communities with strong links to particular English localities.<sup>5</sup>

In Thistlethwaite's view, the limitations of the broad-brush approach to European emigration apply equally to origins and destinations. "Seen through a magnifying glass, this undifferentiated mass surface breaks down into a honeycomb of innumerable particular cells, districts, villages, towns, each with an individual reaction or lack of it to the pull of immigration." For this reason, we should avoid statements about entire peoples; and speak not of "Lancashire but of Darwen or Blackburn" or, in our case, Wigan, Birmingham and Leicester. "Only when we examine such districts and townships, and trace the fortunes of their native sons, do we understand the true anatomy of migration."<sup>6</sup> Once this is done, we find not all-purpose labourers, but particular occupations, like coal mining, that are "intimately connected" with both the district of origin and the destination.<sup>7</sup> Such skills were characteristic of English labour emigrants, such as Cornish miners, as working-men "used to practising a specialised trade took advantage of demand and cheaper transport to pursue it all over the world". Yet once they left these shores "very little is known about British communities abroad".<sup>8</sup> The dangers of generalisation become most acute when we turn to the motives for migration. Thistlethwaite considers it "a truism that nineteenth-century emigration was predominantly economic in motivation", but suggests that "the actual economic determinants were very vaguely formulated", amounting to no more than a "laundry list of 'push' and 'pull' factors which were then left in the background."<sup>9</sup> An extreme version of this is found in economic theory, where rational interest models of economic man recognise no cultural boundaries, familial, religious or community attachments. Thus Cebula offers "a general framework for the analysis of the determinants of migration behaviour" (albeit within the USA), which "basically treats the migration decision as an investment decision".<sup>10</sup> This article sets personal and religious influences alongside economic motives, to provide a more three-dimensional portrait of one emigration spate.

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5. C. Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants. The Adaptation of English and Scottish Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century America* (London 1972).
  6. Thistlethwaite, "Migration", p.80.
  7. Thistlethwaite, "Migration", p.81. Earlier writers, like Carrothers, *Emigration*, p. 244 noted that for the period 1897-1914, British "Emigration was no longer the last resort of the hopeless, but became the means of achievement for the hopeful".
  8. Thistlethwaite, "Migration", p.83.
  9. Thistlethwaite, "Migration", p.84.
  10. R.J. Cebula, *The Determinants of Human Migration* (Lexington, USA 1979). For a sociological perspective, see J.A. Jackson, *Migration* (Harlow 1986).

## II

At the turn of the new century, W.T. Miller was a Wigan collier and member of the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation. On 6 November 1902, he married Annie Phelps at the Churches of Christ chapel in Rodney Street, central Wigan, though they attended the smaller, mining chapel at Platt Bridge. Annie Phelps was the daughter of another collier, and both sides of her family had migrated to Platt Bridge from Ruspidge near Cinderford, in the declining Forest of Dean coalfield. The year after his marriage, Miller became a colliery officer, an assistant fireman, and within the next four years he and Annie had three children. Yet in 1906 Miller emigrated to Canada without his family.<sup>11</sup> Why did he go? In the absence of direct personal testimony – for Miller's own account is silent on this matter – we can only try to reconstruct his motives from the economic logic of the situation and the second-hand memories of friends and families. As Johnson remarks, once we have listed the usual factors, the true personal grounds for emigration run deep and muddy:

Sometimes, it is a mere spirit of adventure, a love of change. Very often the reasons are personal; sometimes they are involved and complicated, and however strongly felt, are but vaguely understood even by those who are under their influence. Whatever weakens the ties of home – bereavement, altered surroundings, domestic infelicity, social or political disappointment, economic difficulties, in short any one of the many things which darken the current of life, urges men to a change of habitation.<sup>12</sup>

Miller's home circumstances may have influenced his decision. He was the eldest of ten children and commenced work at the age of twelve as a pony driver. His mother, Louisa, bore two other children but died when he was five, after which his father, Simon, married Martha Taylor who bore him seven more children. In about 1894, Miller joined his father at Wigan Junction Colliery, where Simon was a deputy. Shortly afterwards, and before the introduction of the 1897 compensation legislation, Simon received serious injuries from a runaway coal tub, which forced him to leave the mining industry for an irregular and poorly-paid livelihood as a costermonger or itinerant greengrocer. This placed the family in difficult financial straits and made Miller the principal breadwinner. Within a few years he had a wife and children of his own and the atmosphere for the dozen or more men, women and children, living in the small terraced house belonging to

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11. For Miller's personal details, see: the author's entry in J.M. Bellamy and J. Saville (eds) *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (Basingstoke 1993), Volume ix, 215-219, and his doctoral study, "Christian Brethren, Union Brother: A study of the relationship between religious nonconformity and trade union leadership, in the life of the coal mining deputies' official, W.T. Miller (1880-1963)" (Wolverhampton PhD 1993). On pp.124-127 there is a much briefer account of Miller's Canadian trip.
  12. S.C. Johnson, *Emigration from the United Kingdom to North America, 1763-1912* (London 1966, reprint of 1913), pp.66-67.

Platt Bridge Churches of Christ chapel, must have been constricting. Here was ample incentive for Miller to break from this confining, perhaps suffocating, scene either to build a life for his family in the new world, or to earn enough to set themselves up independently in Wigan.

Miller's motives are the more obscure because he left his wife and children behind and then returned home eighteen months later. Family memory<sup>13</sup> suggests that he hoped his dependents would follow once he had obtained a secure position, but that Annie would not go for fear of the long transatlantic crossing, and so the family remained in Wigan. According to daughter Betty, "father would have stayed if me mother would have gone out to him, but she absolutely refused. I think it was a great disappointment for him really to have to come back home." Ruth holds a similar view: "Well you see me mother wouldn't go, else he might not have come back... she was scared to death of going". Was this the full story, or was Miller disappointed with what he found in Canada, or had he always intended to return? As Thistlethwaite notes, little is known about such "temporary and transitory" migrants or "the experience of remigrants who returned permanently to their country of birth".<sup>14</sup> Whether Miller intended to settle or merely hoped to is something beyond our reach. Other family lives record the full range of options, and while the frequent excursions abroad may indicate some family immigration syndrome, they may equally testify to how commonplace the temptation was. In 1961 Brian Ackers, Miller's grandson and the author's father, joined the Canadian Airforce in Quebec, moved with his family, explored the prospects for permanent settlement, but eventually returned home. In 1957, Miller's youngest son, Frank, left Wigan for Australia where he settled as a policeman. In 1923, Miller's half-brothers, John, James, and George [all coalminers] and half-sister, Rachel, left Wigan for Canada, and Platt Bridge chapel held a "farewell tea" with "musical items and a presentation" for James.<sup>15</sup> He and George soon returned to work in the Wigan coal industry, but John and Rachel crossed the US border and settled in Detroit. Harry Ackers recalls that religion was again an influence. "There was a preacher came from Canada to Platt Bridge, somebody named Rockcliff... and through him quite a lot of people went to Canada and America". At roughly the same time as Miller, Brian Ackers's grandfather, George Ackers, reputedly sold his farm outside Wigan with a move to Canada in mind, but in the face of opposition from his wife, took a small joinery

13. The family version of events is culled from taped interviews with Miller's children, in particular: Betty (born 1906) 8.9.1989; Ruth (born 1916) 15.4.89; and his son-in-law, Harry Ackers (born 1903) 15.4.1989. The daughters' "memories" may rest heavily on their mother's understanding of events. Family memory tends to confuse the 1906 with the 1923 excursion, which this generation recalled at first hand. The account of his youngest son, Frank, (born 1928), in letters to the author, 14.3.1989 and 26.1.1990, was probably told to him by his father thirty or forty years after the event.
14. Thistlethwaite, "Migration", pp.76-77.
15. Platt Bridge Church of Christ minutes 11.3.1923. Unfortunately, the author has not located the minutes for the 1906-1907 period.

business in the town. If we are denied access to Miller's inner motives for leaving in 1906, we do know, beyond conjecture, how he adjusted on returning in 1908. His life assumed its former pattern, as he resumed his old position as a deputy at Cross Tetleys Ltd., and continued as a colliery officer at this and other Wigan pits until he became the full-time trade union secretary of the fledgling Lancashire Deputies in August 1922, and ultimately the national secretary of the Deputies' Federation. In this light, perhaps, migration was one unsuccessful option in a search for social mobility which ultimately found expression in a trade union career. As daughter Ruth observes, "If he'd had a chance, I think me Dad would have got places really". Geographical mobility may have been an expression of this urge for self-improvement.

Miller's youngest son, Frank, offers the most rounded and dramatic account of the reasons for his departure. In his version, 1905 was a bad year for the coal industry, and "the mine owners closed down the pits when a stockpile was on hand", mainly during the summer months. As a deputy, Miller was most concerned about the safety aspects of this practice, as "closed mines were dangerous due to water seepage and gas pockets". In response, he travelled at his own expense around Lancashire.

Conversed with all the known Deputies, [and] wrote to all the mine owners in the area. Ultimately, he hired the Pavilion Theatre, Library Street, Wigan, for a meeting: 'a/ To affect safety measures when mines were closed during lock-outs'; and 'b/ for permission to form a Colliery Deputies Association'.

Only three mine owners turned up, "including the owner of the mine where Dad worked. He was fired". Were this account accurate and complete, it would explain Miller's sudden departure and place him as a very early pioneer of deputies' organization, which was established in Lancashire a few years later. Unfortunately, there is no other evidence to support the specific points about union activity and victimisation, while it seems doubtful whether the particular economic circumstances of 1905 would explain his departure. There is no record of a severe recession and, in any case, Miller was already a colliery officer and would have been cushioned from the insecurities of the ordinary miner. Moreover, while Frank's account is consistent with his father's concern for safety and his subsequent union career, it does not square with the fact that in Canada he rejoined his old Wigan employer. More likely, Miller's dissatisfaction was a more general one with an ageing Lancashire coal industry that "had developed ominous symptoms, signs of sickness that blighted its further growth".<sup>16</sup>

If, as seems most likely, an inchoate mixture of motives pushed Miller towards

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16. R. Challinor, *The Lancashire and Cheshire Miners* (Newcastle 1972), p.257. This account does not mention an acute recession in 1905. While general working-class wages were stagnant during the first decade of the new century in mining "average earnings rose by about 7 per cent. between 1906 and 1907". See H.A. Clegg, A. Fox and A.F. Thompson, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889, Volume I: 1889-1910* (Oxford 1964), pp.479-480.

emigration, among them a general desire for self-improvement and a wish to improve his domestic situation, as well as dissatisfaction with his employment prospects and the development of union organization, the pull factors are easier to identify. Miller was not an Irish or Italian peasant driven abroad by desperation, with few skills relevant to the world he was entering. Rather, he was a skilled man, part of "an unprecedented emigration of British technicians who, in country after country", followed British industrial leadership, capital, commerce and trade routes" and "provided the essential *cadre* of skills for industrialization."<sup>17</sup> Miller obtained work as a collier for the Nova Scotia Coal and Steel Company at the Queens Pit, Sydney Mines, where he became active in the Union as a "liaison representative" for five mines, and remained for twenty months.<sup>18</sup> Sydney Mines, Canada was a natural choice for a number of reasons. In 1906 Canada was the favourite destination for British emigrants, and its coal industry called out for skilled workers. According to Thistlethwaite,<sup>19</sup> the first phase of economic development required "creative innovators" who established new industries and technologies, "then, on their heels the scores and hundreds of skilled operatives", including miners, "some only seasonal migrants, some settling into communities of British folk ways and craft loyalties and organizing labour unions". Finally, once industry was established and mechanized, it called for "cheaper, unskilled and more docile workers recruited from more recent immigrant stocks from Ireland, French Canada and eastern Europe". At this point, already reached in early twentieth-century USA, the demand for the characteristically English or Scottish technician came to an end. In this respect, Miller was a representative figure, riding the last great wave of skilled labour emigration to the Empire and North America.

Once the opportunities existed, the encouragements were several. In the first place, Miller was treading in the footsteps of others, and his employment at Sydney Mines was probably secured before he left Wigan. As Betty puts it, "There must have been miners' openings there, and there were a lot of people went, and I believe the crossing was terrible". In her version, he travelled with his sister Eliza, about five years his junior, and her husband, Tom Griffiths, among others, many of whom also returned in due course. Contact was nevertheless long maintained between those who stayed and those who returned. Miller's own account too suggests a larger party, for the family of Mary Alice Taylor, also from Platt Bridge

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17. Thistlethwaite: "Migration", p.82.

18. Frank Miller letters.

19. Thistlethwaite, "Migration", p.83. D. Morton with T. Copp, *Working People: An Illustrated history of Canadian Labour* (Ottawa, Canada 1980), p.50, point to the skill requirement of coal mining. "Miners also were different from other hinterland workers. Theirs were not farm-boy skills. They were part of a complex, dangerous, and often inherited craft. The miners of Great Britain and later of central Europe provided the men who developed the underground resources of both the United States and Canada. There were close links in method, organization, and even ideological outlook among miners on both continents".

chapel, were reported in 1907 as having left England "about four years ago", indicating that some chapel brethren had been in Sydney Mines since 1903, and had sent messages back to others, like Miller, about the prospects there, creating an emigration "chain".<sup>20</sup> Other barriers were less than might be expected. There were cheap ships aplenty leaving from Liverpool for Halifax, Nova Scotia, or St. John, New Brunswick. Johnson, writing in 1913, shows that rates, at between £5.10s and £6.15s for steerage or £8 for second class, including food and accommodation, had remained almost static for a century, and were within easy reach for a colliery officer like Miller. According to the *Canadian Labour Gazette*, "In September 1904, the immigration movement from Great Britain was stimulated by the low steerage rates offered by the Atlantic transportation companies".<sup>21</sup> Nor, despite the reported anxieties of Annie Miller and the difficulties of the actual voyage, was the sea passage the ordeal that it had been a generation before; a fact which Miller's precursors would no doubt have communicated to him. The 1894 Merchant Shipping Act (amended in 1906) had introduced a comprehensive code of statutes to protect the health and safety of emigrants, and Johnson reported, "Today, the journey from the Mother Country to North America is comfortable, healthy and free from the impositions which characterised it three-quarters of a century ago."<sup>22</sup>

Of the work experience of Miller and his brethren at Sydney Mines, we only have background information. If Miller was hoping to escape the conflict and uncertainty of the Lancashire coalfield, he seems to have jumped from the frying pan into the fire. Nova Scotia had been a mining area for over two hundred years, and the Cape Breton workings were a later addition to the established Pictou and Cumberland coalfields. The industry had followed the butty system of sub-contracting and hence was dangerous. Moreover, there was little work at Cape Breton in the winter, when workers were forced back onto the paternalism of the Dominion Coal and Steel company, which, by the time of Miller's arrival, controlled most of Nova Scotia's steel mills, mining, shipping, as well as the houses and stores in the company town of Sydney Mines. The Provincial Workmen's Association (PWA) dated from 1879, when, at first, it had faced bitter, often violent, company hostility. By the start of the century, the union had cultivated a moderate, perhaps subservient, industrial stance, and struck a close

20. *Bible Advocate*, 4.10.1907. They certainly sent such invitations in 1907 (see below) and Miller's later union scrap-book contains an intriguing *Christian Advocate* (the new name) cutting from 4.7.1925, "To brethren desiring to go out to New Zealand, a warm welcome awaits and plenty of hard work". Baines, *Emigration From Europe*, discusses emigration "chains".

21. Quoted in Johnson, *Emigration*, p.66. The fare estimate is on p.127, and in the footnote, Johnson records an 1820s fare, including provisions, for the twelve week trip to Nova Scotia at £4 14s 6d. Clegg, Fox, and Thompson, *A History of British Trade Unions*, estimate average earnings of adult miners at about 33s in 1906, and faceworkers at 40s. Lancashire was not a high wage coalfield, but Miller probably earned the higher rate or a little more, so we can guess that the trip must have cost around two weeks' wages in addition to loss of earnings.

22. Johnson, *Emigration*, p.126.

relationship with the company and the Liberal Nova Scotia government. The employer provided check-off facilities, and membership rose from 5,000 in 1901 to 7,000 in 1907. In 1904, the union was greatly weakened by an unsuccessful steel strike at Sydney Mines and became even more dependent on company sponsorship. However, around the time of Miller's employment, the huge United Mineworkers of America (UMA) launched a long campaign to supplant the PWA, which finally succeeded in 1918. Shortly after Miller's departure in 1909, there took place "one of the longest and most bitter strikes in Canadian history", a veritable civil war comparable to the 1926 strike in Britain, in which the PWA and the company fought "the obvious preference of its employees" for the UMA.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Miller joined the Cape Breton coal industry during a remarkably turbulent period of transition, albeit before the major storm. His subsequent preference, as a union leader, for moderation and co-operation was no doubt formed by the collaborationist stance of the PWA and the conflict that was already shaping up. Again, the dark clouds on the horizon may well have prompted his return home in 1907.

How Miller coped with this working situation, we can only guess, but we know a little more of the religious dimension to his stay. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this migrant tale, is that Miller did not travel to Canada as an isolated individual, but as a member of a Churches of Christ religious community. In July 1907, Robert Unsworth reported of "ten disciples, five of each sex, [who] are meeting together for the 'breaking of bread'". Two of these lived some way away, and the average attendance was just five; but they hoped to establish "a prosperous church". Another pointedly upbeat November bulletin asked brethren back home to "pray that the Lord will send labourers into His Harvest?", and said that they "expect to erect a 'place of worship' next spring".<sup>24</sup> After that, the little community faded from view, though we have Miller's own memory that,

Unfortunately the Church ceased to exist because some members moved away to other coalfields, and others returned home, but I am sure that the work done there has been of lasting value. Some of their offspring may now be members of the Disciples Churches in Canada. Who knows?<sup>25</sup>

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23. Morton with Copp, *Working People*, p.98. The author draws widely on their account found on pp. 50–52 and 96–98. On p.52, they note scathingly that "the PWA appeared satisfied to collect its dues, represent miners to the provincial government, and prove to the Dominion Coal Company that it was a humble but useful partner". For Canada and Nova Scotia, see too: P. Buckner, "Peopling of Canada", *History Today* 43(11) November 1993, 48–54; D. O'ram, *Canadian History: A Readers Guide, Volume 2: Confederation to the Present* (Toronto, Canada 1994); and W.L. Marr and D.G. Paterson, *Canada: An Economic History* (Toronto, Canada 1980).

24. *Bible Advocate*, 5.7.1907, 29.11.1907.

25. W.T. Miller "50 years ago". One of their leaders, Robert Unsworth, a former member at Platt Bridge chapel and Sunday School, superintendent at Albert Street, later settled in Alberta – another important coalfield along with Vancouver Island. He was "responsible for the working of coal mines", suggesting a managerial role, and died there in 1927, *Christian Advocate*, 9.9.1927. It seems likely that individuals like this would form links in the chain between the 1906 and 1923 emigration rounds.

## III

Though it is widely accepted that economic motives lay at the forefront of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century emigration. North America had a particular religious resonance for dissenting Protestant Englishmen, one that originated in the definitive journey of the Pilgrim Fathers. A huge Victorian popular literature testified to a land of milk and honey, freedom and opportunity.<sup>26</sup> By the twentieth century, the call of the USA blended in the protestant imagination with the British imperial religious mission to the colonial dominions. Miller himself possessed *The Life of a Century: 1800 to 1900*, an illustrated popular history saturated with imperial sentiment, with sections on Canada, Atlantic Steamships, and Foreign Missions.<sup>27</sup> He was by no means alone in this, and in 1924 a young Arthur Mears received as a Methodist Sunday School prize, *The Young Emigrants*, with its account of the "Voyage to Quebec".<sup>28</sup> Miller's generation were steeped in similar boyhood stories. We can be certain he had read the popular account of President Garfield's life, *From Log Cabin to White House*. Another version spelt out the moral of this tale to any young Englishman looking across the Atlantic.

It is one of the most notable features of American political and public life, that the highest offices of state are open to 'self-made men'.<sup>29</sup>

The book carried a special meaning to any member of the little-known English Churches of Christ, for Garfield belonged to their much larger American sister organization, the Disciples of Christ. Moreover, even a young miner in provincial Wigan would know that the Churches had been born in transatlantic migration. The movement's leading thinker, Alexander Campbell, was born in the Scotch Presbyterian north of Ireland in 1788, and accompanied his family to the USA in 1809. He revisited Britain and went to Wigan in 1847, as did other American evangelists throughout that century. In turn, the founder of the Wigan Churches and one of the leading lights in the English movement, Timothy Coop, travelled to

26. See W.S. Shepperson, *British Emigration to North America: Projects and Opinions in the Early Victorian Period* (Oxford 1957), Chapter One.
27. E. Hodder, *Life of a Century: 1800 to 1900* (London 1901). The book was published before Miller's departure, though it may have appeared in instalments. His address therein is a later one (in the author's possession).
28. C.L. Johnstone, *The Young Emigrants: A Story for Boys* (London undated) presented by the Wesleyan Sunday School, Swadlincote (in the author's possession). As H. McLeod points out "In the later nineteenth-century, as missionary enthusiasm reached its highest point, missionary exploits became staple fare in Sunday Schools". See *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (Basingstoke 1996) pp. 147-150.
29. F.T. Gammon, *The Canal Boy who became President* (London undated), Preface, p.i, formerly of Belton Baptist Sunday School Library (in the author's possession). The better known version is W.M. Thayer, *From Log Cabin to White House* (London 1902; the first edition was 1881). The author's version was presented to one Ernest Shaw by Allen Street Sunday School Band of Hope, 12.4.1903.

America in 1869 and met General Garfield.<sup>30</sup> In short, the transatlantic path was well worn, and as an Anglo-American restoration movement the Churches reprised images of religious revival and journey that were burning cold in mainstream religious nonconformity.

In 1906, these influences had merged with a fascination for empire and the interest in Canada shown in the Church's publications reflects the missionary mood of the times, while cloaking the economic necessity or opportunity underlying many of these adventures. It seems likely, too, that the Churches of Christ produced men of a spiritual and occupational mettle suited to emigration.

It has been suggested ... that the self-help and self-restraint for which the Englishmen were noted in the nineteenth century was the outgrowth of a personal discipline bred of evangelical Puritanism. If that were true, the Protestant Ethic which helped to mould freedom of action and mould an individuality of character was obviously a significant factor behind the self-sustained and self-directed English emigration.<sup>31</sup>

The Churches were a late and intense flowering of that Protestant Ethic, while, on the other hand, they also displayed many characteristics of a "labour sect", and attracted especially the labour aristocracy of working men with a trade, like skilled mining work in Wigan or shoemaking in Leicester. The 1912 Conference paper on membership loss referred to "the problems created by migration in search of employment, including emigration overseas". Whereas by 1930 the loss from emigration was "almost negligible" at less than ten members a year, the decade before 1914 "saw emigration running at a record level of 129 a year" (national membership was only 15,228 in 1914). By the 1960s, "the personal ties between the British Churches and those overseas through emigration [had] weakened with

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30. See D.M. Thompson, *Lets Sects and Parties Fall: A short history of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland* (Birmingham 1980) for the definitive general history. W.T. Moore, *The Life of Timothy Coop, or the story of a Consecrated Business Career* (London 1889) contains a detailed description of Coop's trip by a leading US evangelist working in England. Of course, as early as the 1840s theological differences between the closed attitude to communion in the British churches and the more open one in the US Disciples poisoned their international relations. By the start of the present century, the Churches on both sides of the Atlantic were divided along these lines, as the response of the emigrants to the indigenous liberal Disciples Churches makes clear.
31. Shepperson, *British Emigration*, p.18, My work on the Churches has followed this theme. See: P. Ackers, "Christian Brethren, Union Brother"; "Churches of Christ in the Wigan area", *Chapel Society Newsletter*, 4 June 1991; "Who Speaks for the Christians? The Great War and the Conscientious Objection movement in the Churches of Christ: A view from the Wigan coalfield" in *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History*, 5(3) 1993, pp.153-167; "The 'Protestant Ethic' and the English labour movement; The case of the Churches of Christ", *Labour History Review* 58(3), 1993, pp.67-72; and "Back Street Bethel and West End Chapel: Labour and Capital in the Wigan Churches of Christ c.1840-1940", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 47(2), April 1996, pp.298-329.

the passage of time”, indicating that the emigration spurt in the first decade of the century had neither been sustained nor repeated.<sup>32</sup> This suggests that Churches emigration in 1906 was characteristic of and attuned to the last great wave of skilled English labour to the USA and the dominions.

The overseas fascination was reflected in the coverage given to the expatriate Canadian brethren in the pages of the *Bible Advocate* during 1906 and 1907. By July 1906, a group of ten practising Christian Brethren, some whom had left Britain in October 1904, had gathered in Calgary, Alberta.<sup>33</sup> A November edition heard again from Calgary of more arrivals, swelling the total to twenty-one.<sup>34</sup> During this time, references to Canada were listed alongside more exotic missionary locations like Bulawayo, Siam, South Africa and China. The community from Wigan at Sydney Mines, Cape Breton, never reached the stage of development of the much more mixed collection of brethren from Birmingham, Leicester and elsewhere who settled at Wychwood, on the outskirts of Toronto. In January 1907 a report entitled “Missionary Work in Canada”, described how the nineteen Wychwood brethren were building a small meeting house, with financial support from James Marsden of Rodney Street chapel, Wigan, who had helped to fund the building of Platt Bridge chapel several decades earlier.<sup>35</sup> In March that year the evangelist, George Collin, announced his impending visit to the scattered English brethren in Canada.<sup>36</sup> His regularly reported trip sheds an interesting light on Miller’s journey a year before and his wife’s unwillingness to accompany him. Collin (whose health was generally poor) left Liverpool aboard the Leyland Line steamer “Bohemian” on 27 April, anticipating his departure, “with deep interest and not a little anxiety to making such a journey ... I can only trust in God to stand by me in my daring enterprise”.<sup>37</sup> While this was not the perilous voyage of the Pilgrim Fathers – whose mood is caught in many of these epistles – neither was it today’s smooth sail. On 24 May, the Wychwood brethren reported meeting Collin from Buffalo “needing a rest after the Atlantic voyage”.<sup>38</sup> Collin described a twelve day land-and-sea trip wearisome of “flesh and spirit”.<sup>39</sup> The preview of his visit explained that “a very large number of brethren” had emigrated to Canada, “especially during the last few years”, and described his main purpose as presence at the June “Annual Meeting” in Toronto “of those pleading for New Testament Christianity in that great colony.”<sup>40</sup> This article listed those Churches “similar

32. Figures and quotes from Thompson, *Sects and Parties*, pp. 114, 128, 192.

33. *Bible Advocate*, 20.7.1906. A month later, there was a report of a Gospel service at Albert Street, Newtown, Wigan for another family who were emigrating, this time to New Zealand; *Bible Advocate*, 24.8.1906.

34. *Bible Advocate*, 14.11.1906.

35. *Bible Advocate*, 18.1.1907.

36. *Bible Advocate*, 29.3.1907.

37. *Bible Advocate*, 27.4.1907.

38. *Bible Advocate*, 24.5.1907.

39. *Bible Advocate*, 31.5.1907.

40. *Bible Advocate*, 12.4.1907.

either to the non-‘progressive’ churches in the States, or to the Churches in Great Britain and Ireland”, and appended fifteen individual addresses, including a contact for the Cape Breton community, “Scott J, 3 Florence PO”.

Another article bemoaned the lack of “innovating spirit” among the indigenous “progressive” brethren, and was followed by a progress report on the new meeting house at Wychwood, and further contact addresses for English brethren “proposing to make Canada the land of their adoption”. In May, “A Chapter in an Emigrant life” from Wychwood, sheds further light on the motives behind emigration and the brethren’s isolationist religious stance once there.<sup>41</sup> Brother Osborne of Birmingham told how he had set out “with fear and trembling” to Toronto, making for an address “I had seen in the *Bible Advocate*”. To begin with, he had joined local Baptists and Methodists in worship, but having ultimately determined that “The Church of Christ is the only home to the Christian”, he joined the group at Wychwood, “a church of workmen, all having to work for their daily bread.” Osborne’s original reason for emigration had been “to improve my position financially”, with religion as something of subsequent justification: “it has not only done that, but improved me spiritually as well”. In contrast to Miller’s party, the Wychwood brethren appear to have come from a diverse selection of English regions and trades. Collin described the place as “nothing but a scattered number of... Shaks[*sic*]... knocked together out of planks, and covered outside with a sort of tarred paper”.<sup>42</sup> He also noted, approvingly, their simplicity of worship, with “no ornamentation, no show in their house, no organ”. Later he was present at the opening of the wood-framed meeting house. Altogether, these reports from the emigrant frontier show how the expatriate brethren, with their more fundamentalist religious views, would not worship with the “progressive” or Disciples churches that were already established in parts of Canada, like Halifax, Nova Scotia, where the first church dated from 1832.<sup>43</sup> Instead they continued in their own self-contained *émigré* groups.

41. *Bible Advocate*, 24.5.1907.

42. *Bible Advocate*, 31.5.1907. A couple of years later, Wychwood was annexed by the Toronto metropolis. See J.M.S. Careless, *Toronto to 1918: An Illustrated History* (Toronto, Canada 1984) p.157–161. “Most of the British migrants, who arrived from about 1897 on, came from a highly urbanized and industrialized homeland. They moved with little noticeable disruption into factories, stores, services and dwellings across the city, although many did tend to settle in newer-developing neighbourhoods”. Between 1901 and 1911 the British-born proportion of city inhabitants rose to a remarkable 28 per cent or 91,000.

43. Apparently an early church at St John, founded 18.6.1815, had Scotch Baptist origins. See J.D. Murch, *Christians Only* (Standard, Ohio, USA 1962) pp.324–325; R. Butchart, *The Disciples of Christ in Canada since 1830* (Canada 1949) pp. 336–378; and J.T. Brown, *Churches of Christ* (Louisville, USA 1904) pp. 138–150.

## IV

The sectarian spirit of the Christian Brethren abroad, and the unstable composition of their communities, explain why little or no permanent residue remained. Yet this same spirit, when coupled with working-class social cohesion, also afforded the English Churches of Christ emigrants a short-lived visibility uncharacteristic of most other English emigrants to North America.<sup>44</sup> For a brief moment, at least, they did not fade into the background. The experience of Miller and his co-religionists challenges some of the stereotypical images of European emigration to North America. In Miller's case, here was a skilled man taking his expertise to an expanding Canadian industry in what was perhaps the last great opportunity of its kind. He was not a peasant driven off the European land and drawn by the lure of farming or unskilled work in the USA. Moreover, he and no doubt many others who left at that time proved to be temporary migrants, whatever their original intentions, not unlike the British technicians who ply their trade today in Germany or Saudi Arabia. Finally, the tangled motives and collective experience of the Churches of Christ emigrants challenge purely economic and individualistic explanations for emigration. These travellers went together as religious brethren and formed communities within their host countries in a style that defies the secularised, materialist image of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century population movement. Just as their faith claimed to "restore" the lost simplicity and fervour of New Testament Christianity and early Protestantism, so they restored a forgotten image of transatlantic emigration as religious pilgrimage and exodus to a new world, invented by the Pilgrim Fathers, revived by early Victorian Methodists, and apparently exhausted by mid-nineteenth century English Mormons.<sup>45</sup>

PETER ACKERS

***QUOD EST VERITAS ? THE MISAPPROPRIATION OF  
RELIGIOUS AND ATHLETICS HISTORY IN  
CHARIOTS OF FIRE***

The history of the cinema and that of foreign missions have often appeared incompatible, although that is fortuitous and not intrinsic. Throughout the twentieth century, screenwriters and directors have consciously or unconsciously caricatured missionaries and their efforts to propagate Christianity across cultural and ethnic lines. In the annals of Hollywood and its overseas counterparts, we find

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44. Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants*.

45. Shepperson, *British Emigration*, Chaper Four, pp. 129–141, considers Religious and Mormon emigration in the mid-Victorian period. One local study is D. Morris, *The Dalesmen of the Mississippi River* (York 1989) about Swaledale leadminers who emigrated to a US mining region in the early nineteenth century, taking their Primitive Methodist faith with them.

abundant examples of missionaries portrayed as narrow-gauged religious fanatics insensitive to the cultures of the peoples whom they are evangelising (e.g. *Hawaii, At Play in the Fields of the Lord*), rapists (e.g. *Rain*), closet alcoholics (e.g. *Zulu*), and embodiments of repressed sexuality (e.g. *Black Robe*). One might conclude that the temptation to create dramatic tension by contrasts between the ideals that missionaries supposedly represent and their actual lives has been too great to resist. In fairness to the film industry, it must be conceded that it has produced works in which missionaries have appeared as positive and even exemplary figures, such as *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* and *The Mission*.

*Chariots of Fire*, which received an Academy Award as the best film of 1981, might be allocated to the latter camp. One of its two central characters, the Scottish missionary candidate Eric Liddell, who subsequently spent most of his brief life teaching and ministering to Chinese Christians before succumbing to a brain tumour in an internment camp in occupied China in 1945, is sensitively depicted as a handsome, modest, and idealistic university student who won the 400-metre sprint at the 1924 Olympic Games in world record time after refusing to enter the 100-metre event, which he had been favoured to win, because the preliminary heats for it were scheduled for a Sunday, when his Sabbatarian beliefs prevented him from competing. To a considerable degree, this corresponds to the image that many of Liddell's friends and acquaintances recorded before this film was conceived.

Indeed, the appealing portrayal of Liddell was so inspiring and harmonised so well with the spirituality of Christians on both sides of the Atlantic that many church leaders encouraged their members to see the film, used it as a theme in discussion groups, and employed Liddell's uncompromising idealism as a sermon illustration, responses that the producers and distributors both encouraged and exploited through an arrangement with Inspirational Films which employed such strategies as publishing study materials and offering discounted tickets to groups of cinema-goers from churches. Critical reception of *Chariots of Fire*, moreover, was generally positive in the Christian press, not least in American evangelical circles, where reviewers recommended it enthusiastically.

Writing in the *Christian Herald*, for instance, P.M. Gilbert reported with unveiled glee and no mean understatement that "a generation that cut its eyeteeth on the Viet Nam War, came of age during the cynicism of the 70's, and lives in a no absolutes society in the 80's, has embraced Eric Liddell and called him 'hero' ". She sought to explain the "overwhelmingly positive" response of churches and other Christian organisations to this film by pointing to the personal example of Liddell as one who "quietly challenges us to be good, pure, set apart, and committed".<sup>1</sup> In the flagship journal *Christianity Today*, Lloyd Billingley and Kent Hughes praised *Chariots of Fire* no less fervently and, curiously enough, asserted that "the film does not moralize". These two critics found the greatest

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1. Peggy Moon Gilbert, "The story behind 'Chariots of Fire' ", *Christian Herald*, CV, no. 7 (July/August 1982), pp. 42-44.

strength of the depiction of Liddell and his Jewish rival Harold Abrahams to lie in the fact that one sees "two real people and not idealized figures in a calculated, contrived sports or religious story".<sup>2</sup>

There has been a consensus amongst critics that *Chariots of Fire* had a high degree of verisimilitude. Indeed, in addition to the Academy Award for being the best picture of 1981, it won Oscars for best original screenplay, best original soundtrack, and best costumes.<sup>3</sup> Beyond the visual effects, the film self-consciously emphasises its truthfulness as an historiographical mirror of people and events. Across the screen are displayed the words A TRUE STORY. The same phrase adorns the cover of the novelisation of the script.

When one assays *Chariots of Fire* with the touchstones of historical method, however, and compares what is represented on the screen with what can be known from conventional historical sources, one discovers the degree to which history has been sacrificed on the altar of dramatic effect. Notwithstanding affirmations to the contrary, the screenwriter, Colin Welland,<sup>4</sup> clearly took liberties with regard to the Liddell family, Harold Abrahams, and the 1924 Olympic Games. Critics almost uniformly overlooked these distortions and direct contradictions of documentable facts.

Precisely why Welland's engaging script is historically so unreliable is difficult but not impossible to ascertain. Part of the answer, of course, may simply lie in inadequate research. Producer David Puttnam and Welland undoubtedly strove for historical accuracy and verisimilitude and, it should be emphasised, to an appreciable extent they attained that goal. At an early stage, they visited the archives of the British Amateur Athletic Association in London, and in advertisements they requested people with memories of the 1924 Olympics to contact them with anecdotal information.<sup>5</sup> Had they supplemented these sources with relevant issues of the British press and a careful reading of D.P. Thompson's sympathetic but generally reliable biography of Liddell, they might have avoided some of the pitfalls into which they fell.

On the other hand, there appear to have been deliberate distortions of certain facts and unvarnished fabrication of others to serve purely cinematic purposes.

2. Lloyd Billingsley and Kent Hughes, "Chariots of Fire: 'Muscular Christianity' in Conflict", *Christianity Today*, XXVI, no. 2 (22 January 1982), pp. 40-41.
3. " 'Chariots of Fire', Katharine Hepburn and Henry Fonda Win Top Oscars", *The New York Times*, 30 March 1982, p. C 13. No Oscar, it will be noted, is awarded for best theology.
4. Born in Liverpool in 1934, Colin Williams (who writes under the pseudonym Colin Welland) has been a relatively prominent screenwriter, playwright and actor in England since the 1970s. Before *Chariots of Fire*, which has been his most acclaimed work thus far, Williams wrote the screenplay for *Yanks*. Besides his professional interests, he has long been active in the Labour Party (notwithstanding the conservative values propounded in *Chariots of Fire*) and the administration of rugby.
5. Pat Butcher, "Chariots of Fire", *Runners World*, XVII, no. 1 (January 1982), p. 60.

Whether on the silver screen or the stage, after all, drama flourishes on inner conflicts and tensions, and conceptually, structurally, visually, and even musically *Chariots of Fire* is built on them. At the heart of these historical and fictive dichotomies lies the pivotal theme of Harold Abraham's Jewish identity crisis in Anglo-Saxon and nominally Christian England set against Liddell's crisis of fidelity to his conservative Christian principles when he discovers that the preliminary heats in the 100 metre dash are scheduled for a Sunday. A host of other tensions complement this duality. Within each of these two primary characters, multiple motivations are at work in determining their behaviour. The frivolity of Abraham's friends and team mates at Cambridge contrasts with the piety of the Liddells. The tepid Anglican broth of the memorial service for Harold Abraham which brackets the narrative is counterpoised with the hearty fare of Scottish evangelical preaching and Sunday observance. Twentieth-century ambition challenges traditional Oxbridge values. Liddell's natural training methods in the hills of Scotland are contrasted with the techniques of Sam Mussabini, who coaches Abraham. Iconographically, the tweeds of Scottish attire have little in common with the sartorial finery of Cambridge undergraduates. By analogy, the skirl of the bagpipes identifies Liddell's ethnic fealty, while Abraham and his friends perform as members of the Cambridge Gilbert and Sullivan Society or attend professional performances in the tradition of Richard D'Oyly Carte. The list seems virtually endless as the camera shuttles between Scotland and England before crossing the Channel to focus on the Olympics at the Stade de Colombes in Paris.

Yet *Chariots of Fire* does not seem artificial, and it is not ponderous. Notwithstanding all the effort expended on establishing the tensions, most of Welland's meaty screenplay is briskly paced narrative. Bracketed by the memorial service at St. Mary's in the Strand, but otherwise beginning *in medias res* with Aubrey Montague writing from Broadstairs in Kent as he and his team mates train for Paris (this provides the first segment of an occasional first-person narration), it returns to Abraham's arrival at Cambridge in 1919 to read law at Caius College. From the outset this nascent star of the cinder track has a chip on his shoulder as he smoulders with resentment at the antisemitism which he believes has marginalised him and his family in their own country. "I catch that look again", Abraham explains to Montague. "I catch it on the edge of a remark; I feel a cold reluctance in a handshake". He adds that his father was a Lithuanian Jew, "an alien" who nevertheless "worships his country", and that his elder brother is a highly regarded medical doctor, "a leader in his field". Abraham subsequently informs Montague while the two tour King's College Chapel that his father, a successful banker, has forgotten that "this England of his is Christian and Anglo-Saxon, and so are her corridors of power, and those who stalk them and guard them with jealousy and venom". The younger Abraham will have nothing of Montague's suggestion that he grin and bear it. "I'm going to take them on, all of them, one by one, and run them off their feet", he vows defiantly.

And that he proceeds to do. Scenes show Abraham training diligently, winning

aces, airborne in the long jump, and examining laudatory accounts of his accomplishments in newspaper cuttings. No less significant than his athletic feats in this context, however, is the musical accompaniment. As Abrahams proceeds from strength to strength in both individual events and a sprint relay, we hear "He Is an Englishman" from *H.M.S. Pinafore*, which eventually Abrahams and his fellow members of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society stage.

Meanwhile, young Eric Liddell, his siblings, and their parents have returned to Scotland from the mission field in China. The handsome Eric, played by Edinburgh native Ian Charleson, gains renown both as a wing on the national rugby team and as an increasingly successful sprinter at the university level. It is implied that he lacks experience as a runner but his latent talent is somehow discovered by Sandy McGrath, a friend of the Liddells. Eric's spiritual vitality matches his athletic prowess. Prefiguring the dilemma on which his rôle partly turns in *Chariots of Fire*, while leaving a Sunday morning service with his family he warns a boy not to play football on the Sabbath. After Liddell's parents and, apparently, his elder brother, return to China, he and his sister remain in the Scottish capital to study and serve as part-time evangelists. McGrath encourages him to excel at athletics and trains him to compete in the 1924 Olympics. Liddell wins every race depicted in the film and, sometimes in connection with athletics meetings, proclaims the muscular Christianity of which his brother believes he can be an effective example.

Abrahams learns of Liddell's success north of the border and attends a dual meet between Scotland and France at which Liddell is shoved into the infield early in a 400 metre sprint but, *mirabile dictu*, rises and goes on to win the race. Eventually the two compete against each other in London in 1923. Abrahams loses to Liddell in a tightly contested 100 yard race and is crushed by what we infer to be the first loss of his career. He consequently vows to hone his skill and hires a professional coach, Sam Mussabini, to train him.

Both athletes are named to the 1924 British Olympic team, as are two of Abrahams's Cambridge friends. Predictions of great success in the sprints seem imperilled, however, when Liddell hears, while boarding a ferry to cross the English Channel, that he is to compete on the following Sunday. *En route* to France he decides to forego the competition if the date cannot be changed. His crisis is solved only when Lord Andrew Lindsay, after winning a silver medal in an Olympic hurdles race, volunteers to relinquish to Liddell his place in the 400 metre dash. Seemingly with minimal experience in running that distance, the devout missionary's son manages to take the gold in a thrilling race. Immediately before he approaches the starting line, an American sprinter, Jackson Scholz, whose acquaintance he has made at a social function for Olympians in Paris, but who does not compete in the 400 metre event, hands him a note reading, "It says in the old book, 'He that honors me, I will honor'", a paraphrase of I *Samuel* 2:30. Without having to face Liddell at 100 metres, Abrahams matches his performance in that event, defeating the highly touted Americans Charles Paddock and Scholz, whose team is portrayed as preparing for the Olympics by a rigorous training

reminiscent of their country's "boot camp" military discipline. As the Union Jack is raised the the band plays "God Save the King", Abrahams receives his coveted token of victory, which he is later shown packing for the journey back to England. Aubrey Montague receives a bronze medal in the steeplechase. All the featured British runners thus emerge from the Olympics with precious metals around their necks. Liddell's fidelity to Sabbatarianism and Abrahams's determination to overcome antisemitism through athletic success have been rewarded.

As told by Welland, this narrative is an amalgam of fact and fabrication which does not justify the claim that *Chariots of Fire* is "a true story". To be sure, even in a so-called "docudrama", one can allow some measure of the authorial licence which characterises most fiction. It is our contention, however, that *Chariots of Fire* does not fulfil its creators' proclamations of historical veracity. It remains to explore not only how but also why this is so.

Liddell was a product of the mission field, although he lived only briefly in China as a child. His father, James Dunlop Liddell, from Drymen in central Scotland near Loch Lomond, had been ordained in Dundas Street Congregational Church in Glasgow and gone to China in 1898 to serve the London Missionary Society in Mongolia.<sup>6</sup> His fiancée, a nurse named Mary Reddin from Paxton in Berwickshire, joined him in the following year. They were married in Shanghai Cathedral on 23 October 1899, and their first child, Robert Victor, was born in that city a year later. Eric, their second, was born in Tientsin on 16 January 1902. A daughter, Jennifer, followed. When the Liddell family returned to Britain for their first furlough in 1907,<sup>7</sup> Eric and Robert were left at the School for the Sons of Missionaries at Blackheath in London, which the London and Baptist Missionary Societies had administered since the 1840s. So successful was this institution that it had to move in 1912 to buildings vacated by the Royal Naval School at Mottingham and received the new name, Eltham College. Broadening their acquaintance with Britain, the Liddell boys spent their holidays with relatives in Drymen and in Berwickshire. Eric and his brothers became communicant members of the Congregational Church during the First World War. After receiving private tutoring in French to meet entrance requirements, Eric matriculated at the University of Edinburgh in 1920 to pursue a four-year course in General Science. Lines which he recites as a young adult in *Chariots of Fire* about being "Oriental born and bred" and consequently sceptical when his father would tell him about the natural beauty of Scotland are simply untenable and give a distorted impression of the place of children in the history of the London Missionary Society. In Edinburgh, Eric and Robert Liddell, the latter of whom was studying medicine to prepare for his career in the mission field, lodged at the hostel of the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society. During his years at the University of Edinburgh and as a surgeon at Cowgate Dispensary, Robert

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6. James Sibree, *A Register of Missionaries, Deputations, etc. From 1796 to 1923*. Fourth edition (London: London Missionary Society, 1923), p. 139.

7. *Ibid.*

belonged to Morningside Congregational Church and, in keeping with his family's spiritual orientation, reportedly devoted much of his vacation time to evangelistic work.<sup>8</sup> Their sister returned to China with their parents in 1922. Robert followed in the autumn of 1924 after completing his studies.<sup>9</sup>

Particularly important to Eric Liddell's spirituality during his student years in Scotland was his participation in evangelistic campaigns. D.P. Thompson, who was similarly involved, is unquestionably the most reliable source about this dimension of his activity. The two young men met in the spring of 1923 when Thompson was studying theology at Trinity College in Glasgow. At his behest, Liddell began to participate in the work of the interdenominational Glasgow Students' Evangelistic Union. Convinced of the potential popularity and effectiveness of this most promising athlete and rugby player, Thompson travelled to Edinburgh to recruit him as a speaker. Liddell agreed and took part in a meeting at Armadale on 6 April 1923.<sup>10</sup>

Since she returned to China before Eric began his endeavours as an evangelist, it is not known whether Jenny Liddell participated in the work of the Glasgow Students' Evangelistic Union, even though in *Chariots of Fire* she is active alongside her brother. Nor, for that matter, is there any evidence that Jenny opposed Eric's participation in sports of any kind. In the film, her stubborn hostility is counterposed with the general support which Abrahams's sweetheart, Sybil Gordon, lends him when she is not singing in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. Furthermore, in *Chariots of Fire* Eric Liddell's brother and sister witness his Olympic victory, but in fact both were then in China.<sup>11</sup>

Liddell's athletics career began considerably earlier than is commonly represented. Both he and Robert excelled at Eltham College. In 1918 he won that school's intramural competitions in the long jump, 100 yards, and quarter mile. His time for the 100 yards was, for a sixteen-year-old, a highly respectable 10.2 seconds. To be sure, Eric apparently did not intend to compete during his student years in Edinburgh. After a few months there, however, he began to train for the spring 1921 season. Almost from the outset, his results were impressive within Scotland, although more than two years passed before he became known as a formidable competitor in England or elsewhere. (In *Chariots of Fire*, Liddell decides to become a runner only during his parents' furlough, which took place in 1921 and 1922). At the 1922 "Annual Sports" meeting, he won all three sprint events – 100, 220 and 440 yards, and the following year at the Inter-Universities Sports at Craiglockhart, he broke three records for that meeting by running those events in 10.1, 21.6 and 48.8 seconds. These performances necessitated strenuous training, in which Liddell persevered while simultaneously maintaining a commendable academic record.<sup>12</sup>

8. "Autumn Reinforcements", *The Chronicle of the London Missionary Society*, October 1924, p. 222.

9. D.P. Thompson, *Eric H. Liddell: Athlete and Missionary*, Crieff, 1971, pp. 1–19, 26.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–37.

11. Sally Magnusson, *The Flying Scotsman* (New York: Quartet Books, 1981), p. 186.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–22.

Abrahams and Liddell competed against each other when the latter returned to England for the annual championships of the Amateur Athletic Association at Stamford Bridge in July 1923. In the 220 yard sprint, both men won their first heats, but in the second round Liddell narrowly defeated Abrahams, who dead-heated with W.P. Nichol for second place and, rather than undergo a run-off to determine which of those two would advance to the final round, Abrahams tactfully withdrew from the event, which Liddell eventually won.<sup>13</sup> The young Scotsman also won the 100 yard dash against a highly touted international field in a wind-aided, and thus unofficial, record time of 9.7 seconds. A correspondent to *The Times* called Liddell's performance in the 100 yard dash "magnificent" and predicted that "he is quite likely to improve on it in the near future". Abrahams does not appear to have competed at the distance in the 1923 championships, when he won the long jump by a fairly wide margin.<sup>14</sup>

A week later both men were to represent Scotland and England, respectively, in a meeting which included Ireland at Stoke-on-Trent. Abrahams, however, apparently withdrew from that competition; in any case, his name is not listed among the winners, and the long jump, in which he had chosen to compete for England, was won by H. Conway of the National University in Ireland, whose best leap was more than three feet shorter than Abrahams had jumped a week earlier at Stamford Bridge. Liddell nevertheless faced stiff competition but succeeded in winning the 100, 220 and 440 yard events. A report for *The Times* found his victory in the quarter mile "a brilliant one, for, after being forced out of his place at the start, he made a wonderful recovery". Liddell won by six yards. The talented J.J. Gillis of the Surrey Athletic Club was disqualified for "boring" Liddell in this race.<sup>15</sup> In *Chariots of Fire*, this heroic effort is assigned to a fictitious dual meeting between Scotland and France earlier in Liddell's career.

Turning to the characterisation of Harold Abrahams, one discovers what is arguably the film's fundamental and pivotal fabrication. This young Jew's resentment of British antisemitism and his resultant striving for acceptance is crucial to *Chariots of Fire*. Abrahams's identity crisis gives birth to all manner of dramatic tensions. In fact, however, there does not appear to have been any such crisis. Abrahams could not by any reasonable standard have been called an outsider. To begin with, his nominal Jewishness and surname withstanding, he was a very Germanic looking man, considerably more so than the Irish Catholic Ben Cross who plays him. The son of a City banker, Isaac Abrahams (1850-1921), a native of Russian-occupied Poland who had emigrated to England as a young man and there dropped his original surname, Klonimus, Harold was born on 15 December 1899 and educated at Repton. His military service, as correctly indicated in *Chariots of Fire*, was of very short duration. Abrahams matriculated at Cambridge in 1919, nearly twenty years old, and enjoyed almost immediate

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13. "Athletics. The Championships", *The Times*, 7 July 1923, p. 5.

14. "Athletics. The Championships", *The Times*, 9 July 1923, p. 5.

15. "Victory of Scotland. Fine Running by E.H. Liddell", *The Times*, 16 July 1923, p. 5.

success there as both athlete and student. In 1920 he represented Britain in the Olympic Games held in Antwerp, competing in the 100 and 200 metres sprints, the 4x 100 metre relay, and the long jump, but did not win a medal. In competitions against Oxford between 1920 and 1923, however, Abrahams succeeded in winning no fewer than eight gold medals in both the 100 and 440 yard sprint events and the long jump. In recognition of his athletic prowess and his leadership skills, he was elected president of the Cambridge University Athletic Club in 1922. In *Chariots of Fire*, Abrahams sees slides which his trainer, Sam Mussabini, shows him of Paddock and Scholz, who had won medals at the 1920 Olympics and reacts as if he knew of them merely as distant personages, but in fact Abrahams had observed these internationally known competitors in Antwerp. The academic side of Abrahams's life matched the sporting side. He completed the Cambridge Honours Tripos in Law in 1923 and was called to the Bar by the Inner Temple the following year.<sup>16</sup> Far from being a rebel who sought to humiliate the establishment, he was part of it. Abrahams sprinted through its corridors from start to finish. From 1925 until 1967 he was the athletics correspondent of *The Sunday Times*, and from 1950 to 1963 he served as secretary of the National Parks Commission. He was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1957.<sup>17</sup>

Preoccupied with his studies and athletics, Abrahams is not known to have evinced more than the slightest interest in his ethno-religious heritage. Sir Norris McWhirter, the founding editor of the *Guinness Book of Records*, with whom he co-operated for decades as a sports administrator, is convinced that as an adult Abrahams never attended a synagogue and cannot recall that he "ever expressed enthusiasm for the Jewish faith". Furthermore, "In all the many long journeys I made with him by car he never once expressed enthusiasm for the Jewish faith except perhaps the odd reference to their admirable sense of family". Abrahams's wife, Sybil Marjorie Eves, whom he married in 1936, was an Anglican, as are their adopted son and daughter.<sup>18</sup> The fact that the memorial service for Harold Abrahams was held in an Anglican Church, which confounded some film critics, thus becomes altogether plausible.

The memorial service for this notable Englishman, which was held on 19 February 1978, more than a month after his death, was not at St. Mary's in the Strand, but at St. Bride's, Fleet Street. The eulogy was not delivered by the fictitious Lord Andrew Lindsay, but by McWhirter. Among the many noteworthy mourners present were Sir Roger Bannister, who made athletics history in 1954 as the first person to run a mile in less than four minutes, and Colin Welland, who would write the screenplay for *Chariots of Fire*.

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16. "Abrahams, Harold Maurice", *Dictionary of National Biography 1971-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 2-3.

17. "Mr Harold Abrahams. Lasting service to athletics" (obituary), *The Times*, 16 January 1978), p. 14.

18. Frederick Hale Private Archives, *Chariots of Fire* files, Norris McWhirter to Frederick Hale, 31 March 1995.

Much of the depiction of the 1924 Olympics Games in *Chariots of Fire* is accurate, although again Welland's imaginative powers distort the record. It is true that the preliminary heats for the 100 metre dash were held on Sunday, 6 July, but it is quite untrue that Liddell was unaware of this until minutes before crossing the English Channel and that his eleventh-hour refusal to compromise his principles caused a furore in the British press. The schedule was announced months in advance, and Liddell trained accordingly for the 400 metres for which, as we have seen, he was eminently suited as a champion quarter-miler. Neither the non-existent Lindsay nor anyone else had to relinquish his participation in that event in order to accommodate Liddell's beliefs. His record-shattering Olympic performance in the 400 metre race was an historic achievement, but in the context of his career as an athlete it was a natural continuity, not a dramatic discontinuity.

In the 100 metre event, Abrahams won his heats in both the first and second rounds, as did his American rivals, Paddock and Scholz. In the second heat, Abrahams's time of 10.6 seconds equalled the Olympic record. In each of his semi-final heats, he matched this time in defeating first Paddock and then Scholz.<sup>19</sup> Three days later, both Abrahams and Liddell ran in the semi-final heats of the 200 metre dash. *Chariots of Fire* gives the impression that Liddell went to Paris intending to compete only in the 100 metre sprint and that, upon learning that the preliminary heats for it were to be on a Sunday, had no prospect of competing at all, but in fact his participation in the 200 metre race, like that in the 400 metre event, had been planned. Abrahams, "evidently stale and labouring", in the words of a *Times* reporter, was placed third behind Scholz, while Liddell finished second to Paddock. In the final event, Abrahams ran last all the way in a field of six competitors, while Liddell won the bronze medal behind the two Americans.<sup>20</sup>

In the meantime, Liddell had won his first heat in the 400 metre race in a mediocre time of 50.2 seconds.<sup>21</sup> On 11 July, he won his semi-final heat in that event with a significantly more impressive time of 48.1 seconds. In the final event, run only three hours later that day, Liddell set the world record of 47.6 seconds. The outcome of this race, as described by a correspondent from *The Times*, was never in doubt, and the Scotsman, running in the disadvantageous outside lane, won by approximately three metres. His most feared rival, Josef Imbach of Switzerland, who had set a world record only a day earlier, fell near the midpoint and did not complete the race. "The Stadium went insane" when Liddell's time was announced, reported the same journalist. "So, in one wild minute, what had been the dullest of days was turned into about the most memorable that the Olympic Games have ever seen... After that all else is bathos... But after Liddell's race everything is trivial".<sup>22</sup>

19. "Olympic Games. Abrahams in Fine Form", *The Times*, 7 July, 1924, p. 7.

20. "Olympic Games. An American Day", *The Times*, 10 July 1924, p. 7.

21. "Olympic Games. Nurmi's Great Running", *The Times*, 11 July 1924, p. 7.

22. "Olympic Games. E.H. Liddell Beats a World's 'Record'", *The Times*, 12 July 1924, p. 14.

Liddell's biographer apparently clarified the rumours which had circulated around a minor episode immediately before the swift Scotsman ran the 400 metres on that day of athletic glory. It will be recalled that in *Chariots of Fire* Jackson Scholz hands him a note with a quotation from I *Samuel*. "Of the many versions of that incident which have been given in print across the years, none is quite accurate", Thompson declared approximately a decade before the film's release. He insisted that the man who had given Liddell the written message was a masseur for the British athletes; he had contacted Thompson after Liddell's death, claiming that he had in fact handed Liddell the message at the Hotel Modern, where the British team was staying. Liddell had promised to read it at the Stade de Colombes.<sup>23</sup> Whether Liddell did so is not known.

In any case, the adulation showered upon Liddell in *Chariots of Fire* is arguably understated. Much of it followed and can probably be attributed in large measure to his success in the Olympic Games, although this prospective educational missionary's spirituality was also well-known before his departure for China. Athletic prowess and public expression of faith continued to go hand-in-hand. On Saturday, 27 June 1925, Liddell won the 100, 220 and 440 yard sprints at the annual championship meeting of the Scottish Amateur Athletic Association in Glasgow, breaking two Scottish records in the process. The following morning Morningside Church in Edinburgh was crowded for his service of dedication to missionary work on Dr Lavington Hart's staff at the Anglo-Chinese College in Tientsin. That evening Augustine Church was packed half an hour before Liddell's valedictory service began, and across the road Martyrs' Church was full for the overflow service. Liddell spoke at both. According to one contemporary report, he "made a powerful appeal for the surrender of students to the work of the Kingdom of God and struck a deep evangelical note". The next day crowds of enthusiastic supporters appeared at Waverley Station in Edinburgh to see Liddell depart by rail for London on the first leg of his journey to China.<sup>24</sup> In history, no less than on the silver screen, the ideal of "muscular Christianity" had apparently been fulfilled.

*Chariots of Fire* offers a high degree of verisimilitude and gives viewers many detailed insights into both athletics and, to a lesser extent, religious life in Britain during the 1920s. But ultimately this film is historical fiction, and Welland took liberties with the history which he used in creating the plot. What is the artistic gain which arguably compensates for this empirical loss?

It is virtually a truism that drama arises from conflicts and other tensions, and *Chariots of Fire* is replete with them. At the bifocal core of Welland's script, one finds Abrahams's Jewish identity crisis and the dilemma which Liddell's fidelity to his Sabbatarian principles places on him. Accentuating the fundamental commitments of these two athletes are Sybil Gordon's ego-stroking comments and Jenny Liddell's reminders that her brother's first priority should be his evangelistic

23. Thompson, *Eric H. Liddell: Athlete and Missionary*, pp. 55–56.

24. "The Athlete as Missionary", *The Chronicle of the London Missionary Society*, August 1925, p. 195.

activity. On a national scale, Scotland is pitted against England, a conflict signified by the textures of the clothing which the players wear and the music of Gilbert and Sullivan juxtaposed with that of hymns and bagpipes. British Commitment to tradition vies with the crass behaviour and speech of the American Olympic delegation. Within the British Olympic committee, personalities cross verbal swords as Liddell's faith challenges his patriotism. Instances could be multiplied almost endlessly. Some of them are historically accurate and did not require a drop of artistic licence. At other times, however, Welland apparently sought to heighten the dramatic effect in ways which may not have been necessary. He surrendered no mean amount of subtlety in the process. In the world of the cinema, this served him brilliantly and helped him to win an Oscar. Yet it is at least arguable that Welland would have done better to heed Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: "Less is more".

FREDERICK HALE

### **THE PRESBYTERIANS IN LIVERPOOL: PART 6 A SURVEY 1945-1972**

After the war the churches spent some time in getting back to normal. Much effort was spent in trying to get money from the War Damage Commission for repairs. In many cases, the amount offered was not enough to do the work, and long negotiations still did not bring a realistic sum. The trustees of the Mount Pleasant site had to go to the Court of Chancery to get their claim settled. Many churches had to organise a series of money raising activities and then there was the challenge of coping with architects, contractors and workmen. This took a great deal of energy that should have been used in the evangelistic work of the church.

When the buildings were ready for use there was a flurry of activity, but a decline was soon in evidence which became particularly obvious in 1953, when many people bought television sets to watch the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Now they did not need to go to week night activities at church. Those who were not so deeply committed to Christianity felt that they could watch a service on television; they could worship God without moving from their armchairs.

Most churches made some attempt to stem the decline. There were special efforts called "visitation evangelism", while plans were made to deepen spiritual life; 1948 was designated the "Year of Advance"; 1950 was "The Threshold Year".

But nearly every church reported a decline in membership, coupled in most cases with a difficult financial situation. In the down-town areas and those which were increasingly industrialised, this could be expected. But it affected large churches in middle-class areas, such as Egremont, and when the Presbytery visited Trinity, Claughton, there was cause for concern in some areas of the church's life – and they were giving the largest supplement to the minister's stipend of any congregation in the Presbyterian Church of England.

If this was the general picture, it is not surprising that the churches which had been down-town before the War, but had not moved out or closed, now saw little possibility of continuing. The first to close was Grange Road, Birkenhead, in 1948, (although they had been worshipping in Trinity, Claughton, for some six years); St. Andrew's, Birkenhead followed in 1951. The third church to close in this period was at Huyton, after a life of just over sixteen years, for the Presbytery had built it in the wrong place. If it had been built in an area of private housing it might have succeeded, but it was built on a corporation housing estate just outside the Liverpool city boundary.

But other churches, in areas which had been good before the War, were also finding that their congregations were decreasing as their areas were deteriorating. For instance, Rock Ferry was increasingly industrial and its church was in a serious financial position, so the mission house and premises were sold, then the church hall, in order to pay for repairs to the church. This kept them going for a few more years. Everton Valley too, was having building troubles, and the Presbytery wanted to close the church, but the congregation managed to complete some of the war damage repairs, and were allowed to remain open. Then, in 1956, the congregation was served with a dangerous building notice, and the Presbytery gave them permission to demolish it. This only delayed the end, and the congregation was dissolved in 1960. Queen's Road, which was in a similar area, was also facing a serious financial situation and a declining congregation. The Presbytery suggested that there should be some co-operation with another Presbyterian church in the area – perhaps Everton Valley. But matters had gone too far; and in 1960 the Presbytery recommended that the congregation be dissolved, though the youth work might be continued. St. Paul's, Birkenhead, also sold their mission to help to liquidate the debt on the church building, for they too were facing a scattered congregation and a decreasing membership. Trinity, Prince's Road, was reduced in status to a preaching station in 1953, for it had become a down-town congregation, but in the following year it was raised to the status of a sanctioned charge when Sefton Park's Hyslop Street Mission joined with it.

The Presbytery met with the session of Fairfield just after the War and urged them to make plans for becoming a down-town church. They, however, have managed to survive until the present time. As Fairfield had been a comparatively wealthy congregation with a separate, excellent hall, they were able to sell this hall, when the church needed extensive repairs, and use the substantial proceeds to put the church in order. Nevertheless, they too were faced with a great drop in membership. Even Egremont was finding that their membership had almost halved in the eight years between the call of one minister in 1947, when it was 1,063, and the call of his successor in 1955, when it was 598. It was only such churches as West Kirby, Heswall, Bebington, and Eastham on the Wirral, and Blundellsands, Allerton, Hunt's Cross, and Maghull on the Liverpool side of the Mersey, that managed to keep up or increase their numbers. Most of these were new causes, and the others were in outer areas with newly developed private housing estates.

Another factor with a far-reaching influence on the churches was the death of wealthy, long-serving elders. For example, Trinity, Claughton lost three notable elders, West Kirby lost four, Seacombe lost four, Waterloo lost three, and Sefton Park lost two. The point was that there were no replacements for such men.

The Church Extension Committee started a new experiment – the first in the Presbyterian Church of England – with one of the churches in the Presbytery – Rankin Memorial – in 1945. The church became a “Church Extension Charge” and was put under the care of the Home Mission Board. The congregation was told that the benefits of this would be guidance and help in filling the vacancy and selecting an experienced minister; financial help in paying more than the minimum stipend; and the work of the congregation would be continued in the best way possible. For this experiment a minister and church sister were appointed to use methods which, it was hoped, would mean a new chapter, not only for the congregation, but for the Presbyterian Church of England. However, when the session heard that it meant removing some of the pews, building a stage at the back of the church, and putting a screen round the apse so that the church could be used as a hall for week night activities, they were decidedly lukewarm. In the end, the Home Mission Board gave them an ultimatum – accept this two-way church (and the church would have to pay most of the cost, of course), or forgo a minister. The church was left with no option – but this did not improve relationships within the congregation. The Home Mission Board also took over St. Andrew’s, Birkenhead, for a few years.

Another church which had a dispute with the Presbytery at this time was Egremont. Unlike Rankin Memorial they were an influential congregation. The point of contention was that Egremont had been ordaining elders at their two missions, Oakdale and Union Street, for twelve years, but the Presbytery ruled that this was contrary to the law of the Presbyterian Church of England. There was nearly a year of discussion before an agreement was reached: the Presbytery recognised the elders already ordained and Egremont undertook not to ordain any more without the approval of the Presbytery.

Trinity, Claughton, was another church which made its ideas felt in the Presbytery, for its managers, given the stipend supplement to their minister, felt that they were the most important court of the church – more so than the session and the minister – and should be represented on the wider courts of the Church. They therefore sent an Overture through the Presbytery to the General Assembly, asking that a manager from each church contributing more to the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund than it received towards its minister’s stipend should be a member of the General Assembly as well as an elder. They also petitioned the Presbytery to change the method of assessing churches for Maintenance of the Ministry payments, and did not send their full amount. However, after the visit of a special committee from the Maintenance Support Committee of the Presbytery, they agreed to pay in full.

Union church also had a dispute with the Presbytery. In 1950 the Presbytery recommended that Union should be dissolved, but the congregation held a meeting

and decided that they were not going to close. They appeared, by commissioners, at the appointed Presbytery meeting and asked the Presbytery to delay the closure. The relevant Presbytery committee did not want the church to stay open, but as the closure was not passed at the meeting, by the time of the next meeting it was too late for it to be effected by the defined date. However, the Presbytery agreed that the congregation should be dissolved as soon as the necessary procedure had been effected. The congregation refused to carry out this decision. This was a serious matter. Here was a small, down-town church defying the Presbytery. The latter met in private and decided to refer the matter to the General Assembly. The executive of the General Assembly appointed a special committee to visit Union, and, as a result, decided that Union should continue for a year, when the situation would be reviewed. There was great consternation in the Presbytery over this for the General Assembly had not supported their decision. The congregation, pleased at the way things had gone, made such progress that it was allowed to continue for another year. It was now doing so well that the Presbytery changed its mind but some years later, in 1960, the Presbytery again wanted to close the church. This time the congregation sent a solicitor's letter to the Presbytery and when the Presbytery took a vote on the closure, the resolution was defeated. In 1964 the Presbytery tried a third time to close the church; the congregation survived this threat, but it joined with Westminster Road Church after the United Reformed Church came into being in 1972.

We have seen that many churches were having building work done at this time, but usually this was either repairs after war damage or following war-time neglect. Meols was the only established congregation which was building a new church. The new congregations of Maghull and Bebington built a church and a church hall respectively, while the Presbytery built churches for the new congregations at Huyton and Eastham.

It was not a promising situation for the Presbyterian Church of England after the War. Most of the churches were declining. The few that were holding their own or growing were mainly new congregations in developing areas.

The picture did not change much in the last twelve years of the Presbyterian Church of England's existence. It was still the churches in the new areas of middle-class development that were growing. The others were fighting for existence. Many were hampered by large, old buildings which needed a great deal of upkeep, and were suffering from years of neglect. Dry rot, damp, and vandalism were taking their toll. Although all church buildings were inspected every five years when the Presbytery made their "Quinquennial Visit", so little had been done during the years of the War, that the cost of the repairs was beyond what most churches could afford.

One church that suffered in this way was Queen's Road, which was closed in 1961, for it had become a down-town church with a small membership, unable to pay for the necessary repairs to its building. However, from this congregation grew the only new church to be built at this time – the Rock Church Centre. When the Queen's Road Church closed, its successful open youth club was allowed to

continue. Premises were bought by the Presbytery of Liverpool – a delicensed, derelict, public house; a committee was appointed; then a minister was called to get the project of a new church centre off the ground. In July 1972, a few weeks before the United Reformed Church came into being, the new buildings of the Rock Church Centre, consisting of a worship area with youth club, sports barn, and manse, were opened. This was the only new venture in this period.

But if only one church was opened as a new venture on a new site, only one church was closed. On Good Friday 1972, Trinity, Princes Road, closed and most of the congregation joined Sefton Park.

But even as most of the Presbyterian Church of England churches were declining, so too, were the Congregational churches. Already, some neighbouring churches of the two denominations had joined when one of the sets of buildings – usually the Congregational – had been too costly to repair.

Now there were talks at General Assembly level between the two denominations, and local congregations were asked to hold joint services on special occasions. The United Service which the Presbytery had organised for many years in the Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool for the churches in the Presbytery, and which had always been well attended, was now widened to become a joint Presbyterian-Congregational service, with all the Congregational ministers as well as the Presbyterian ministers sitting, gowned, at the front.

The Presbyterian Church of England ceased to exist in October 1972 when, the respective Assemblies having passed the resolution to unite, a meeting was held in Sefton Park Church, and the Presbyterian Churches in Merseyside became member churches of the Mersey Province of the United Reformed Church.

ALBERTA JEAN DOODSON

Note: for a bibliography see *JURCHS*, vol. 5, No. 6, May 1995. pp. 368–9.

## REVIEWS

Sam Hamstra, Jr., and Arie J. Griffioen, eds., *Reformed Confessionalism in Nineteenth-Century America. Essays on the Thought of John Williamson Nevin*, Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1995. xxii + 257 pp. \$42.50

Since Reformed confessionalism came in a variety of forms in nineteenth-century America, it is well that the sub-title of this collection of papers clearly indicates the authors' concern with the contribution of the erstwhile Presbyterian J.W. Nevin (1803–86) to the German Reformed Church of his adoption. Not indeed that the interest of the essayists is antiquarian only. On the contrary, the Mercersburg theology (so named after the seminary of its origin) of Nevin, Schaff and others lives on (especially, but not exclusively, within the United Church of Christ) through the Mercersburg Society, its conventions, regional gatherings and

journal; and through the Chair of Mercersburg Theology at Lancaster Theological Seminary. It is a Christocentric, incarnational-catholic theology with strong liturgical implications. It takes its stand not upon subjective experience, but upon Scripture, the confessions and tradition.

In their introduction, the editors introduce Nevin, paying particular attention to the formative influence upon him of J.A.W. Neander's romantic and dialectical historiography; and to Nevin's theological position, epitomised by *The Mystical Presence* (1846), which emphasises union with the risen and glorified Christ through the Lord's Supper. Nevin was as opposed to revivalist Arminianism and New England "Puritanism" (many Congregationalists having by now become Unitarian or gone revivalist) as he was to the decretal predestinarianism of Dort and the scholastic realism of the Princetonian, Charles Hodge.

James D. Bratt writes on "Nevin and the antebellum culture wars", showing that *The Anxious Bench* symbolises Nevin's opposition to both revivalistic "new measures" and to the cultural invasion of Pennsylvania by New England. In "Nevin and American nationalism" Richard E. Wentz discusses Nevin's opposition to four prevalent responses to the religious fragmentation of early nineteenth-century America: restorationism, dispensationalism, transcendentalism and "the Bible and private judgment." To Nevin these were vitiated by unhistorical and untheological biases which caused them in their several ways to elevate individualism at the expense of true catholicity. Undergirding Nevin's theology is his adoption – in the wake of his Mercersburg colleague, the philosopher F.A. Rauch (1806–41) – of such neo-Hegelian motifs as organic unity, development and the like – concepts which William DiPuccio discusses in "Nevin's idealistic philosophy." However, we are reminded that the influence of "the deep Platonizing thoughts" of John Howe, and of the Cambridge Platonists, as well as of Coleridge, should not be overlooked.

The early history of the Mercersburg theology is further elaborated by Stephen Graham; while theological and ecclesiological themes are discussed by Walter Conser, Jr., (the Church), Arie J. Griffioen (the Lord's Supper), John B. Payne (baptism), Glen Hewitt (regeneration) and Sam Hamstra, Jr. (the pastoral office). The paper on baptism by the current Mercersburg professor is of particular interest for its discussion of the divergent positions of Horace Bushnell, Charles Hodge and Nevin.

In "Nevin's holistic supernaturalism" David Wayne Layman regrets that recent emphasis upon Nevin's ecumenism, sacramentalism and liturgical practice has obscured what all of these are premised upon: a doctrine of revelation which proclaims that theology "points toward and is grounded in the radically present *experience* of God's presence and activity." For Nevin the incarnation is not primarily a doctrine, but an "historical enduring fact." Insofar as the Bible is revelatory it "*is* Christ as incarnate revelation, now inscripturated." Finally, Charles Yrigoyen Jr. writes on "Nevin and Methodism". Without much difficulty he clears John Wesley of Nevin's charges against the "sect system" and "new measures" revivalism.

The book's usefulness is enhanced by a Nevin chronology, a bibliography, and an index. There are, however, a few slips: William DiPuccio refers, oddly, to "the Common Sense philosophers (i.e. the Baconians);" John Payne refers (ambiguously to the uninitiated) to "the English Baptist W. Noel" rather than to "the English Baptist, Baptist W. Noel;" and Sam Hamstra Jr. invents the new sin of "hypocrisy."

Charles Yrigoyen's piece apart, this is not the volume in which to seek correctives to Nevin – though John D. Bratt does regret that Nevin said so little concerning the Church's mission and, as a result of his elevation of the sacred above the secular, left Calvinism's cultural activism to the New Schoolers. But the papers are nonetheless informative and welcome. They deserve to reach a wide audience within the Reformed family (whose member churches can be remarkably ignorant of their sisters and cousins) and beyond.

ALAN P.F. SELL

*Saddlebags, City Streets, And Cyberspace: A History of Preaching in the Churches of Christ.* By Michael Casey. Pp. 210. Abilene University Press 1995. Paperback \$14.95

Communicating the Word is so central to Protestant religion that Michael Casey's book offers considerably more for newcomers to American Campbellite religion than the title suggests. Through the lens of changing approaches to preaching, illustrated by leading practitioners, we gain insight into the theological and sociological evolution of a distinctive brand of radical Protestant religion. The book combines chronological and thematic approaches, as we follow the central tension between "rational" and "emotional" preaching styles, from the founders, Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell, down to present-day TV Evangelists.

First came the "'Rough' and very emotional" Stone movement on the American frontier, with its obvious affinities to Primitive Methodism in early nineteenth-century England. This was drawn into an unlikely marriage with Campbell's dry, rationalistic brand of biblical literalism, rooted in Scottish Presbyterianism, through a shared emphasis on the "restoration" of New Testament Christianity. The former provided the evangelical impetus behind the rapid growth of the new movement, while the latter ultimately shaped a preaching style that appealed to intellectual conversion through a literal understanding of the relevant biblical texts. In a most interesting chapter, Dr Casey locates this Campbellite temper in the Scottish Common Sense Realism, as advocated by Thomas Reid of Glasgow University, which formed the basis for so much American literalist thinking about the bible.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, as the church migrated, with its members, from a frontier to an urban culture, so appeared the familiar trade marks of institutionalism and professionalism, notably full-time ministers trained in theological colleges. Poorer, rural backwaters, including much of the South,

resisted this process, culminating in the threefold division into liberal Disciples, intermediate Christian churches, and conservative Churches, of which this book focuses on the last. There the next phase was the “farmer preacher” with his confrontational “debating” style, centred on biblical bullet points. However, even the conservative tradition was in motion, and after the Second World War, growing prosperity drew it into the mainstream of the new, modern South. Better educated members sought more sophisticated preaching and so preachers like T.B. Larimore developed a more “irenic, peaceable style” notwithstanding a firm conservative biblical content. By now, most congregations had removed from small, frame buildings to impressive brick structures.

The strong other-worldly primitivism of the early Churches rendered them “mostly apolitical and pacifist until World War I”. Thereafter, preachers like G.C. Brewer sought to convert conservative theology into patriotic “red scare” Conservative politics. In the post-war period, the influence of “speech training” fostered a more personal and spiritual style than the old rendering of biblical truths, as preachers accommodated the message to the needs and fears of their congregations. At the same time, biblical scholarship eroded the certainties of the old biblical proofs, while black preachers, like G.P. Bowser, both challenged the racist assumptions of this Southern church and elaborated their blend of reason and emotion. Finally, with the advent of first Radio and then TV evangelism, we witness an increasing assimilation of the Churches into an emotional, Evangelical, sound-bite world, at the expense of the old text-based literalism.

This is a fascinating survey of Campbellite religion and the creative tension between rhetoric and culture in the propagation of the Christian message. The focus on preaching sidelines other key features of the Churches’ plea, such as Believers’ Baptism, closed communion, and hostility to instrumental music in worship. Still, some light is shed on these matters, so we are able, at once, to observe remarkably similar sect-to-denomination developments in the US and British Churches, allowing for differences of geography and time-scale, while noting the higher salience of the open versus closed communion debate in Britain or instrumental music in the United States. Dr Casey’s scholarly attention to the relationship between religious rhetoric and changes in society, reflecting the strong US discipline of (oral) Communications, gives the book a much wider relevance than the Churches of Christ and their sister organisations. Lastly, the book is attractively written and presented, with personal anecdotes opening each chapter, and brief pen portraits of the many men (yes, they are all men) whose varied and interesting lives fill these pages.

PETER ACKERS

*Obituaries and Marriages of Dissenting Ministers in the Gentleman's Magazine in the 18th Century*. Extracted and annotated by Alan Ruston. 1996, pp. [iv], 37. ISBN 0 9513527 2 5. Obtainable from Alan Ruston, 41 Hampermill Lane, Oxhey, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD1 4NS. No price given.

This brief "extraction of entries of the deaths and marriages of Dissenting ministers" in the *Gentleman's Magazine* should certainly achieve its purpose of helping "researchers into religious, social, local and family history in the 18th century to gain ready access to an unlikely source". It is a pity that it is published privately. Presbyterian, Unitarian, Independent and Baptist names, with a few others, are listed alphabetically, with supplementary information mainly from *DNB* and C.E. Surman's biographical cards at Dr. Williams's Library, and for Baptists E.C. Starr's (but not W.T. Whitley's) *Baptist Bibliography*. Standard works such as Browne for Norfolk and Suffolk, Coleman for Northamptonshire, Davids for Essex, Miall for Yorkshire, will often provide more. Alan Ruston modestly describes his work as only "a finding tool": he modestly urges checking, and makes no claim to be systematic. Fourneau is in *DNB* as Furneaux.

GEOFFREY F. NUTTALL

### **In Brief**

Two privately published biographies which will be of interest to members appeared last year.

*Benjamin Ingham*, (pp 152: £6.95) by H.M. Pickles is available from the author at 117 Dane Road, Coventry CV2 4JT. Mr Pickles is a descendant of the first Inghamites and brings his family history to bear in this sympathetic and illustrated account of Ingham and the subsequent history of his chapels.

*Joseph Lancaster*, (pp 123: £5) by Joyce Taylor is available from 56 Ravenswood Avenue, West Wickham, Kent BR4 0PW. The mercurial genius of Lancaster is described, with an assessment of his importance in the development of non-denominational education.

STEPHEN ORCHARD

## SOME CONTEMPORARIES (1995)

*Archaeologia Cantiana* (CXII and CV, 1993 and 1995)

G. Draper, "The first hundred years of Quakerism in Kent."

*The Baptist Quarterly* (XXXVI, nos. 1–4)

No. 1: C. Binfield, "The Coats family and Paisley Baptists" (cont. in no. 2); K.G.C. Newport, "Benjamin Keach, William of Orange and the Book of Revelation: a study in English prophetic exegesis". No. 2: W.C.R. Hancock, "No compromise: Nonconformity and politics 1893–1914"; A. Betteridge, "Barton-in-the-Beans, Leicestershire: a source of church plants"; G.F. Nuttall, "Abingdon revisited 1656–1675". No. 3: B. Green, "J.H. Rushbrooke and religious liberty"; H. Davies, "The American Revolution and the Baptist Atlantic". No. 4: G.M. Ella, "John Gill and the charge of hyper-Calvinism", A.H.J. Baines, "The pre-history of Regent's Park College"; S. Reed, "Further information on the Ryland family".

*Carmarthenshire Antiquary* (XXX, 1994)

G. Williams, "Nonconformity in Welsh history"; A.J. Parkinson, "Why study chapels?"; J. Orbach, "Some examples of Dyfed chapel architecture".

*Congregational History Circle Magazine* (III no. 3, Spring 1995)

J.W.A. Smith, "Ealing Green and Little Church".

*Cylchgrawn Hanes* (XIX)

R. Watcyn James, "John Davies, Tahiti and Pendugwom".

*Enlightenment and Dissent*

XIII, 1994: D.A. Rees, "The Enlightenment and its background; some features"; T. Rail and B. Thomas, "Joseph Priestley's Journal while at Daventry Academy, 1754". XIV, 1995: M.L. Brooks, "Mary Hays: finding a 'voice' in Dissent"; J. Graham, "A hitherto unpublished letter of Joseph Priestley".

*The Expository Times* (CVI)

No. 4, January: W.R. Ward, "Established Churches, Free Churches, religious communities: their contemporary social setting". No. 6, March: R.T. Halliday, "Will the real John Knox please stand?"

*Historical Journal* (XXXVIII no. I, 1995)

G.S. de Krey, "Rethinking the Restoration: dissenting cases for conscience".

*The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* (LVII, no. 2)

G.F. Nuttall, "Reflections on William Penn's Preface to George Fox's Journal"; C.D. Gilbert, "The Puritan and the Quakeress: Thomas Hall and Jane Higgs"; R. Moore, "Reactions to persecution in primitive Quakerism"; R. Cummings, "Some

unpublished Quaker tracts (Margaret Everard, fl. 1699–1704); K.L. Carroll, “John Archdale’s Quakerism”; M.H. Bacon, “The establishment of London Women’s Yearly Meeting: a transatlantic concern”; T.C. Kennedy, “An angry God or a reasonable faith: the British Society of Friends, 1873–1888”; D. Murray-Rust, “The Manchester Conference and a memoir of Silvanus P. Thompson”.

*Northern History* (XXXI)

D. Hey, “The Riches of Bullhouse – a family of Yorkshire Dissenters”.

*Past and Present* (149, November 1995)

M. Cragoe, “Conscience or coercion? Clerical influence at the general election of 1868 in Wales.”

*The Pacific Journal of Theology* (Series II no. 14, 1995)

An issue devoted to the work and legacy of the London Missionary Society.

*Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* (L, pts. 1-3\_

Pt. 1: I. M. Randall “Southport and Swanwick: contrasting movements of Methodist spirituality in inter-war England”, H.D. Rack, “Simon’s Life of Wesley”; Pt. 2: C.C. Short, “The Bible Christians in Birmingham”; C.H. Goodwin, “The greatest itinerant: Francis Asbury 1745–1816”; J.M. Turner, “The Maldwyn Edwards trilogy”. Pt. 3: T. Macquiban, “Practical pie or lettered learning”; G.E. Milburn, “H.B. Kendall’s *Origin and History of the P.M. Church*”.

*The Strict Baptist Historical Society Bulletin* (XXII)

P. Arthur, “Thomas Tillam’s legacy: the story of a Northumbrian church.”

*Studies in Christian Ethics* (VIII no. 2)

A.P.F. Sell, “A renewed plea for ‘impractical’ divinity”.

*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (6th series, III, 1993)

C. Rose, “Providence, Protestant union and godly reformation in the 1690s”.

*Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire* (XCIV)

S.B. Jennings, “The 1669 ecclesiastical returns for Nottinghamshire: a reassessment of the strength of Protestant Nonconformity”.

*Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society* (XXI, no. 1)

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

ALAN P.F. SELL