

**THE JOURNAL**  
**of the**  
**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HISTORY SOCIETY**

(incorporating the Congregational Historical Society  
founded in 1899, the Presbyterian Historical Society of  
England, founded in 1913, and the Churches of Christ  
Historical Society, founded in 1979)

EDITOR: PROFESSOR CLYDE BINFIELD, M.A., F.S.A.

**Volume 8 No 6 May 2010**

**CONTENTS**

Editorial and Notes . . . . .	312
George Whitefield. A Commemorative Address by <i>Geoffrey F. Nuttall</i> . . . . .	313
The Mission of <i>The Presbyter</i> : An Aspect of the Reception of Karl Barth's Theology in Great Britain by <i>D. Densil Morgan</i> . . . . .	325
Tigers from the Fountain: The Tiger Kloof Institution and Moeding College – Some Personal Memories by <i>Kenneth Maltus Smith</i> . . . . .	341
Review Article: Nonconformist Texts by <i>Robert Pope</i> . . . . .	347
Reviews by <i>C. Keith Forecast, Stephen Orchard, David Peel, Robert Pope, Brian Talbot and Roger Tomes</i> . . . . .	355

## EDITORIAL

“‘Anniversaries are for Heritage not Historians’. Discuss.” Such questions are probably no longer set. On the whole the *Journal* has avoided anniversaries – up to a point. This issue is a case in point. The quincentenary of Calvin’s birth in 2009 is appropriately recognised in a review, and there will be more in future issues because anniversaries breed publications. The bicentenary of Whitefield’s death in 1970 is recognised forty years later by publishing Geoffrey Nuttall’s commemorative address, forwarded to the *Journal* by Roger Tomes, one of this issue’s reviewers. In 1970 Dr. Tomes was one of Whitefield Memorial Church’s two ministers. He recalls that the address was delivered in the course of a Sunday evening service. At over 6,000 words it was lecture rather than sermon length, but Dr. Tomes remembers it as measured and easy to listen to. He typed it afterwards and duplicated it on the Whitefield’s Gestetner; as far as is known it has not – until now – been otherwise published. The text and references are as duplicated in 1970.

Would there have been a United Reformed Church without Congregationalism’s New Genevans? That question is even less likely to be set for examinations or appear as an essay topic (if essays are still written) but Denis Morgan’s paper, originally given at the Society’s study weekend at St. Deiniol’s Library, Hawarden, in 2009, prompts such a thought.

Kenneth Maltus Smith’s paper was also first given at a study weekend, at Mill Hill School in 2007. Its immediacy is explained by Mr. Maltus Smith’s service as missionary and educationist in Rhodesia (as it still was) and Botswana between 1954 and 1986.

We welcome as contributors Professor Morgan, of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Wales, Bangor, and Brian Talbot, who is a Baptist minister.

**Note:** The Conference of the Association of Denominational Historical Societies & Cognate Libraries will take place at Luther King House, Brighton Grove, Rusholme, Manchester, M14 5JP, from Tuesday 7 to Thursday 9 September. Its theme is “Protestant Nonconformity and Christian Missions”. Booking forms may be obtained from the Secretary, Mrs Pauline Johns ([secretary@adhsc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@adhsc.org.uk)) or 33 Addison Road, Caterham, CR3 5LU. For further details, please consult the ADHSCL website (<http://www.adhsc.org.uk/>), or contact the officers.

## GEORGE WHITEFIELD

Ezekiel 34: 26    “I will cause the shower to come down in his season;  
there shall be showers of blessing.”

Mark 1: 17        “Come ye after me, and I will make you to become  
fishers of men.”

Your ministers have asked me to speak to you tonight about George Whitefield, and to do so as part of our worship. This church owes its existence to Whitefield, by whom the original building was opened on 7 November 1756. He was never its minister, in our Congregational sense of a called and settled pastor; but he had a special relationship to it and to the Moorfields Tabernacle, which were the two places where he preached most often and the two largest buildings open to evangelical preachers of all the different Protestant denominations. When one of these preachers, the Welshman Howel Davies, died – in 1770, just a few months before Whitefield’s own death on 30 September – the poet and hymnwriter, William Williams, wrote in an elegy for him:–

Totnam Court-Road shall hear his voice no more,  
Where crouds on crouds as waves came to adore.<sup>1</sup>

Here, as elsewhere, indoors or out, evangelical preachers then drew immense crowds; and none more so than Whitefield himself, after whom the building here became known as Whitefields Tabernacle. The name *Tabernacle* (like the name *Chapel*, which was adopted by the followers of John Wesley and lasted longer) was chosen deliberately, to indicate that the building was neither a parish church nor a Dissenting meeting-house, but auxiliary to both and ready to welcome Dissenters and Churchmen alike. To us today *Tabernacle* sounds peculiar; but it was a good scriptural word for a building erected for worship: it signified the place where God dwelt, and where his worshippers might meet him face to face. It thus expressed a conviction dear to these evangelical preachers, Whitefield among them, that worship meant, above all, coming into God’s presence and meeting him. The presence of God among his worshippers, making them holy, might make the building itself precious; but there was no need, indeed there could be no place, for superficial and outward adornment. The Tabernacle was a huge edifice of no architectural merit; it had plain red brick walls, small windows and doors like entrances to a barn; even the seating accommodation was rude and consisted mainly of benches rather than pews.<sup>2</sup> When Mr Salmon [minister at that time: ed.] planned this present building, he was anxious that – within limits – its noticeably simple character

1 *Gweithiau Williams Pant-y-celyn*, ed. N. Cynhafal Jones, (Treffynnon, 1887), i., 648.

2 Cf. John Stoughton, *History of Religion in England*, (1881 edn.), vi., 244-5.

should be preserved. It thus provides association of a visible kind with Whitefield, whose memory is preserved in the name you now use, the Whitefield Memorial Church.

Whitefield was a figure of considerable importance, and his place is secure, in the religious history of this country. The bicentenary of his death has been noticed in other churches, and in the religious press as well; but there is a special appropriateness in our remembering him here. As a result of his preaching, or of the preaching of men whom he converted, a number of congregations came into being, and were sometimes grouped in a *connexion* (as the word then was) such as the Rodborough Connexion in Gloucestershire<sup>3</sup>; but most of these congregations in time became Congregational churches, as this one has done; neither Whitefield nor his followers founded a separate denomination, as the followers of Wesley did. The Moorfields Tabernacle is now gone; in 1868 it was rebuilt and renamed the New Tabernacle, and in 1882 it amalgamated with the Hoxton Academy Chapel, and that is now gone too; but you remain – and, so far as I know, you and the Whitfield Tabernacle at Kingswood, Bristol, alone preserve his name. It is therefore good that we here should remember him and thank God for him and for all the blessing and life that have flowed from his preaching and his faithfulness during the two hundred years since his death.

And this is what I want to do; and why I began the address with a couple of texts. During their Yearly Meeting (which corresponds to our own May Meetings) the Quakers have this excellent custom: one of the Clerks to the Meeting reads aloud what they call a “Testimony to the Grace of God in the life” of one or more recently deceased Friends. This is my purpose tonight: to bear testimony to the Grace of God in the life of George Whitefield, and with you to thank God for him, that we may all offer our lives anew to be better servants of God ourselves. You keep a small bust of Whitefield on the windowsill there, close to the preacher. I do not think Whitefield would smile on me if I were simply to talk about him and praise him. If we are to commemorate him in the only way he might have approved, we must talk of Jesus, and praise God for his inexhaustible life-giving grace. “I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing”; “Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” Those are the two texts which after much consideration seem to me to be the right ones for commemorating George Whitefield: God’s promise, to those who are his, of “showers of blessing”; and Jesus’ call, “Come ye after me”. The word come is in both: and the showers of blessing coming to us from God, with our coming to Christ and then going after him, following him, give us the meeting with God which, I have said already, is deep in Whitefield’s experience and in his preaching. “Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men”: Whitefield hears these words of Jesus to the first disciples as if uttered in his

---

3 Cf. G.F. Nuttall, “Rowland Hill and the Rodborough Connexion”, in Congregational Historical Society, *Transactions* for 1971.

own ear, addressed directly to himself; and, wherever he went, he went fishing for men, catching and winning souls, bringing them not to himself but to Jesus. He did not organize any new denomination; but "Come!" he cried again and again: "Come! Come!"

I suppose many of you here will be familiar with the outlines of Whitefield's life. For the benefit of any who may not be, I will run over them. He was born on 16 December 1714 at Gloucester, where his father, and after his father's death in Whitefield's infancy his mother, and then his stepfather, were successively proprietor of the Bell Inn. He was the youngest in the family, with five elder brothers and one sister. After schooling in Gloucester he went up to Oxford in 1732, to Pembroke College, from which he graduated as B.A. four years later. While in Oxford he came under the influence of a group of serious young men led by the Wesleys (nicknamed the Holy Club); and by this means, with the help of a book written in the previous century which Charles Wesley put into his hands, he was brought to the knowledge of God, and after prolonged inward struggle found what he calls "an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith . . . My joys", he writes, "were like a spring tide, and overflowed the banks!"<sup>4</sup> From then onwards "showers of blessing" were his constant experience, and he never looked back. He did not have the difficulties experienced later by many of his own converts in finding a bishop willing to ordain him. The Bishop of Gloucester was sympathetic, and ordained him first deacon in 1736, and three years later to the full orders of a priest in the Church of England. By this time he had already become noted and popular for his remarkable power as a preacher. "I now preached generally nine times a week", he writes; and here in London, "on Sunday mornings, long before day, you see streets filled with people going to church, with their lanterns in their hands, and hear them conversing about the things of God."<sup>5</sup>

He had also already been to America for missionary work in Georgia, then a young colony, where his friends the Wesleys had preceded him. Those years either side of 1740 were a wonderful time of expansion and hope for these young Christians. The Wesleys, Whitefield, Cennick and other Moravian brethren, Howel Harris and other Welsh evangelists, were all active, and all active together, consciously and deliberately sharing in a single movement of revival in religion that, besides affecting Scotland, which Whitefield visited with great effect, was at work across the Atlantic as well. This was the setting of Whitefield's ordination and mission, whether at home or abroad, especially in these first years, during the 1740s. "From New-England," he writes in 1742 to the Baptist minister in Leominster, "fresh and surprising glad tidings are sent . . . In Scotland, the fruits of my poor labours are abiding and apparent. In Wales I hear the work of the Lord runs and is glorified, as also in many places

---

4 Cf. Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, (1970), ii., 77.

5 *Ibid.*, i., 114.

in England. In London, our Saviour is doing great things daily... We scarce know what it is to have a meeting without tears."<sup>6</sup> London was the centre, where the Moorfields Tabernacle was erected in April 1741; but the circumference was in America, and for Whitefield much more so than for Wesley; Whitefield as well as Wesley claimed the world as his parish<sup>7</sup> and, while Wesley crossed the Irish Sea forty-two times, he never went back to America, whereas Whitefield crossed the Atlantic no less than thirteen times. And, wherever he went, it was the same, whether in London, in Glasgow, or in Philadelphia. "I cant pass over in silence," a Philadelphia merchant wrote in 1740 to a friend in London, "the surprising change and alteration I see in the people of this place since that shining light the Reverend Mr. Whitefield has been amongst them... He appears to me to be a very sincere person, zealous for his Masters cause, and justly admired for his elegant though plain language and very easy to be understood, and for the serious vein of piety that runs through all his exhortations, crowded after by multitudes... He is endeavouring to reclaim a wicked, vicious, and sinful age, and that with great authority and courage, and I must own to you that I never heard of or saw his fellow"<sup>8</sup> In Philadelphia (as in London) Benjamin Franklin wrote, "it seem'd as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk thro the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street"<sup>9</sup>

That is, more or less, what everyone said of Whitefield and of the effect he had; and there is not much more that can be said; for, while extraordinarily broad in its outreach, Whitefield's life is extraordinarily narrow in its consistency, persistence and devotion; and it was not a long life. On 14 November 1741 he married a widow, a Welshwoman named Elizabeth James; she died two years before him (she was buried here in Tottenham Court Road); and their only child, a son named John, lived only four months. Whitefield's remarkable preaching had the unusual quality of appealing to, or at least intriguing, the nobility and court, as well as the illiterate, poor and downtrodden. Lord Bolingbroke and Lord Chesterfield were among those who came to hear him. There is a story of Chesterfield, when Whitefield was describing a blind beggar tottering at the edge of a precipice, bounding from his seat with the cry "Good God! he's gone!"; and in America Benjamin Franklin, though he had come in an unsympathetic frame of mind, was so moved by Whitefield's appeal for financial help for the orphanage established by him in Georgia, that in the end he emptied his pockets into the collection, gold and all.<sup>10</sup> In August 1748 Whitefield became a chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon; and for a time there were political currents flowing round the Prince of Wales as the centre of

6 George Whitefield, *Works*, ed. John Gillies, 1771-2, i., 381.

7 Cf. Arnold Dallimore, *op. cit.*, i., 400.

8 Cf. F.B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, (New York, 1960), 98-9.

9 Cf. Arnold Dallimore, *op. cit.*, i., 439.

10 Cf. *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. George Whitefield.

the Tory opposition party (to which Bolingbroke and Chesterfield both belonged), currents which some hoped might lift Whitefield to the bench of bishops.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to speculate how things might have developed if this had come to pass; but I do not think Whitefield himself gave much thought to it. The grand alliance of Evangelicals had broken up by this time – first the Wesleys and Whitefield had found it impossible to work together owing to differences of doctrine, and at the second conference of others than the Wesleys Whitefield was chosen Moderator; but then Cennick and the Moravians had broken away, and in 1750 the Welsh evangelists suffered grievous division between two rival leaders – but through it all Whitefield himself seems to have been little affected. This was partly because all through his life he refused to be diverted by the business of organizing (with the disagreements which so easily accompany this), diverted from his own particular call and charge, which he believed to be that of general itinerant preaching, awakening, evangelizing, converting of any and all who might listen. Whitefield's simplicity of temperament as well as of purpose also enabled him to keep on affectionate terms with fellow-workers who were themselves all too ready to quarrel. His entry in his diary after meeting Howel Harris – “My heart was knit closely to him. I wanted to catch some of his fire... A divine and strong sympathy seemed to be between us”<sup>12</sup> – suggests the affectionateness and generosity of spirit which attached many besides Harris to him, and kept them attached. He never fell out, as so many others did, with Lady Huntingdon, whose chapels he was opening, and also her college at Trevecca, during the last twelve months that he spent in England. Though he had been seriously ill, he was determined to return to America, to make final arrangements for his beloved orphanage (which he bequeathed to Lady Huntingdon); and at Newburyport, Massachusetts, he died, probably of angina, on 30 September 1770. He was only fifty-five. Even his death was characteristic and dramatic. He had been preaching, and was now exhausted and on the way to bed; but on the way up he stood on the stairs with the candle in his hand; and there he remained, still exhorting the people, till the candle burnt out; by next morning he was dead. Among the many funeral sermons, a notable one was preached here, in Tottenham Court Road, by his old friend, John Wesley, who spoke to the congregation of “our dear friend”, “your beloved Brother, Friend, and Pastor; yea, and Father too; for how many are here whom he hath begotten in the Lord?” Wesley referred to “the uninterrupted shower of blessings wherewith God was pleased to succeed” Whitefield’s “labours”, and to “the Integrity, which was inseparable from his whole character”; and for “of all others... the distinguishing part of his character” he pointed to “an heart susceptible of the most generous and the most tender Friendship”.<sup>13</sup>

---

11 Cf. G.F. Nuttall, *Howel Harris 1714-1773*, (Cardiff, 1965), 21.

12 *George Whitefield's Journals*, 1960 edn., 229-30.

13 John Wesley, *Sermon on the Death of... George Whitefield*, 1770, 3, 13, 20, 18-19.

The church historian, John Stoughton, who is not given to fanciful or exaggerated language, says that “Whitefield bears away the palm from all rivals in pulpit oratory. Perhaps no man of any age in the world’s history was exactly like him... By his own voice, so far as human instrumentality was concerned [he] converted thousands on thousands from the error of their ways. No one man before him had ever come into immediate contact with so many minds; no one voice had ever rung in so many ears; no one ministry had touched so many hearts. The depth of the impression produced is as wonderful as its extent. People were not merely interested, persuaded, convinced, ... they were quickened with a new kind of life... Say that it was mere excitement; still the fact remains, that no such excitement by preaching had ever in this country been produced before”.<sup>14</sup>

I should like to add my own confirmation of this remarkable tribute by saying that I find, when working on the development of the Evangelical Revival in this country, that the evangelical leaders in the next generation often owed their conversion to Whitefield. Torial Joss, the sea-captain who assisted Whitefield and was left by him in charge of the work here, was naturally one of these; but so was Cornelius Winter, a man like Whitefield for his large heart, who is commemorated by the Winter Memorial Church at Painswick, where he combined his pastorate with an academy for training ministers. So was Rowland Hill, of the Surrey Chapel and of the Tabernacle at Wotton-under-Edge (who in turn, may I say in parenthesis, converted one of my own ministerial great-grandfathers). Another was Robert Robinson, the minister and virtual founder of the Baptist church in Cambridge, with whose hymn, “Mighty God, while angels bless thee” we opened our service tonight. So that it is true to say that, though no denomination bears his name, churches all over the country owe their existence, as this one does, to Whitefield’s preaching. And how many unknown people – as unknown then as now – owed it to him that they were brought into captivity to Christ! No one who listened to him could doubt that he was in earnest. Did you notice the sentence I quoted earlier from him, “We scarce know what it is to have a meeting without tears”? If you did, you probably thought it quaint; but he meant it literally. Of a meeting in Bristol in 1739 he says, “Floods of tears flowed plentifully, and my heart was so melted, that I prayed for them with strong cryings – and many tears.” Two years earlier, at a sacrament service at Christmas time here in London, he says, “The tears of the communicants mingled with the cup”.<sup>15</sup> In 1844 an old man of eighty-one named John Knight recorded how he had heard Whitefield preach in 1769 on his last visit to his native parts in Gloucestershire. “I was about 6 years of age,” he writes, “my father held me up in his arms, and though so young I well remember to have seen the tears run down the cheek of that Servant of God while preaching the love of his Master to dying sinners.”

---

14 John Stoughton, *op. cit.*, vi., 124-5.

15 George Whitefield’s *Journals*, 242, 292.

Whitefield was totally engaged. "I have heard," Knight writes, "that it was worth going 10 miles to hear him give out that Doxology, Praise God from whom all blessings flow."<sup>16</sup>

If Whitefield was pre-eminently a preacher, the natural question is: what was his preaching like, and what made it so remarkable? After allowing for the imponderables of time and circumstance and the inimitables of personality, I think one must say that its secret lay in an unalterable and indefatigable simplicity and singleness of purpose. Whitefield found Jesus everywhere: he found him everywhere in the Bible, in the Old Testament no less than the New, through an allegorical mode of interpretation which gave scope for the vivid use of imagination; he found him everywhere, no less, in his own everyday experience; and his one consuming desire was to bring others to Jesus. "If thine eye be single," Jesus once said, "thy whole body shall be full of light." Whitefield's singleness of purpose, the integrity which Wesley picked out as his distinguishing characteristic, expressed itself, when he preached, in a simplicity of language and illustration which first struck home to, and then united, all who listened to him; nor did he hesitate to speak from his own experience, in a way some might find embarrassing or egotistical, had it not been that his interest, so evidently was not in himself but in Jesus, to whom he called others to come, as he had come; and when Whitefield said "Come!", people came.

Most sermons, if printed for reading, are revised, and any original immediacy they may have is taken away. Fortunately we possess the last sermon Whitefield preached here at Tottenham Court Road, on Sunday 27 August 1769, together with one preached in the Moorfields Tabernacle the following Wednesday, before he left Ramsgate for America, both of them in a state not revised by him, for he never returned. They were published<sup>17</sup> in November 1770, after his death, by an anonymous admirer, who says, "The florid style was never affected by Mr. Whitefield – but their peculiar manner will sufficiently bespeak the Author, will stamp them his own, and leave no room to doubt their authenticity."

The sermon preached here was from the passage about Jacob's dream of "a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven" (Gen. 28: 12-15); the sermon at Moorfields was from the text "My sheep hear my voice... and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" (John 10: 27-28). Both were consciously farewell sermons, in which Whitefield looked back over his thirty years in the ministry.

His text at Moorfields had carried him all the way through. "I have got to part from you with good news in my mouth," he said. "I give them eternal life. Oh that these words may come with as much warmth to your hearts, as they did to mine near five-and-thirty years ago! I am sure I never prayed so much

16 Cf. Congregational Historical Society *Transactions*, x., 279, 277.

17 Cf. George Whitefield, *Two Farewell Sermons*, 1770, (copy preserved in the library of New College, London).

against my infirmities, as against going into holy orders so soon . . . I remember once at Gloucester (I know the room, and I cannot help looking up at the window, whenever I am there and go by. I know the bed-side, I know the floor on which I have prostrated for weeks together; and I remember once) I was crying, I cannot go! I am a novice! . . . At last these words came into my mind, My sheep hear my voice, &c. and none shall pluck them out of my hand. Then I said, Lord I will go, send me when thou wilt." "I call heaven to witness," he says later, "and earth to witness, and God to witness; and his holy angels to witness, that tho I had preferment enough offered me, tho I was offered two parishes before I was two-and-twenty, tho the late bishop of Gloucester was my friend, and used always to invite me to his table before the sacrament, God knows I cared for no other preferment than to suffer for the Lamb of God. In this spirit I came out, in this spirit I came up to this metropolis. I was thinking Jacob went over the brook with a staff, but I could not say I had so much as a staff. I had no friend, not a single person to introduce me . . . I might have settled in London, I was offered hundreds then, yet I gave it all up to turn pilgrim for God, to go over into a foreign clime, out of a love for immortal souls and I go, I hope, with that single intention now. When I came from America last, I thought I had no other river to cross but the river Jordan . . . I thought of nothing but retiring into some little corner, that I might pray though I could not preach. But God has been pleased to renew my strength, God has been pleased in some measure to bring back my spirits, and as I find my spirits return, I find my heart willing to be a pilgrim preacher for the blessed God . . . This is the thirteenth time of my crossing the water, and I find it a little difficult at this time of life. But I am willing to go. I am as clear as light in my call And my prayers for you shall be, Lord! let nothing pluck them out of thy hands . . . And if I am drowned, if I can, while I am drowning, I will say, Lord! take care of my dear London friends." Though "a pilgrim preacher," as he calls himself, and never the pastor here, Whitefield was far, you see, from being devoid of pastoral feeling.

The sermon is not all like this; this is the autobiographical part; earlier we find this: "Christ does not say, Are you an Independent, or Baptist, or Presbyterian? or are you a Church of England-man? nor did he ask, Are you a Methodist? All these things are of our own silly invention. But the whole world the Lord divides into two classes of people, sheep and goats. The Lord give us to see this morning to which class we belong! . . . You know sheep generally love to be together, they don't love to be alone, and you will seldom see a sheep by itself . . . And they are but little creatures, and Christ's people may well be compared to them in this: O, think some, if we had but great people on our side, King, lords and commons! what then? alas! alas! do you think the church of God would go on a bit better? . . . No! no! religion never prospers when it has too much sun-shine. Christ's people are a little people . . . sheep are likewise some of the most quiet, harmless creatures on earth . . . Come learn of me says Christ, for I am meek and lowly of heart . . . And I believe of all creatures," he goes on, "sheep are the most apt to wander; . . . Turn a horse out and he will go

back again, and a dog will find his way home; but when a poor sheep wanders, he knows not his way, baaing here, bleating there, as much as to say, dear stranger show me my home again. Thus Christ's sheep are apt to wander, without the great shepherd keeps them at home. They leap over this hedge, and that ditch, and often return home shorn: but at the same time sheep are the most useful creatures. They manure the land which feeds them – they clothe our bodies with their wool, and there is not a single part of the sheep but what is useful. Oh, my brethren! God grant you and I may in this respect answer the character of sheep.”

“Take care, take care,” he ends this sermon, “if you never was among Christ's sheep, may you be brought into the number now. Come, come, see what it is to have eternal life! Haste! haste! haste away to the great, the glorious shepherd! He calls you, he holds up his crook; and if you never heard his voice before, God grant this may be the happy time, that I may have the same comfort now I had the last time of my leaving you, to be the means of converting one soul to God! O may it prove a farewell sermon indeed to some, to make them bid a farewell to the world and the devil! Come! come! come! come! said the Lord Jesus. Nothing shall pluck you out of my hand. With this I leave you ye dear sheep! God keep you from wandering! I don't care where you go, so as you are kept under the care the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. May the Lord Jesus bless his preaching to you.”

In the other sermon, the one preached here, Whitefield takes the congenial story of Jacob's vision and develops it in much the same manner and to much the same end. Here too we have autobiography. “I have never gone yet,” he says, “but God has been pleased to bless my ministry. I intend to travel all along the Continent – I am going in no public capacity – I am going trusting on God to bear my charges. I call heaven and earth to witness, that I have never had the love of the world, nor ever felt it one quarter of an hour in my heart. . . . I will bring thee to this land again, said God to Jacob: – Whether that may be so or no with me, I know not; but I have a better land to go to: And if I am to die in the ship – I am as clear as the sun, that I am called by the will of God.”

Earlier, he draws out the story of Jacob in this way. “He went on foot; and it should seem (by those who know the geography of the place) that the first day of his journey, he walked no less than forty English miles. – No wonder, therefore, that by the time the sun was going to set, poor Jacob found himself weary. . . . He saw the sun going down, and he was a stranger in a strange land. – You who were born, and live in England, can have little idea of this; but those who travel in the American woods, often go hundreds of miles, covered with lofty trees, like the tall cedars of Lebanon. This was the case of Jacob; there was no inn; he got to a certain place. . . . and lay down in that place to sleep, ver. 11. Hard lodging indeed! – It was a hard pillow! – And yet, I don't hear him say, It is too hard for my head; – I don't hear him say, I wish I had not set out or I wish I had got home to my father and mother again. No: I believe the good man never slept sweeter in his life; and certainly, we never sleep sweeter than

when God is with us in our dreams. He was in a very dangerous situation, and might have been destroyed by the wild beasts. When we are travelling in the woods, we are obliged to light a fire, and that keeps off the beasts from us. – And I have often got up in the night, and said to them that were with me (and God forbid that I should ever travel with any one even a quarter of an hour without speaking something of Jesus) – This fire, said I, is like the fire of God’s love – for it keeps off the Devil and our own lusts from hurting our souls – . . . Perhaps some people may say – Pray what is there here so very extraordinary or particular? Jacob was very tired – fell to sleep – and, among other things, dreamt of a ladder! No: – no: – this dream was from God. And how kind was it of God, to meet him on the night of the first days journey – to encourage him in his lonesome way! . . . this ladder,” Whitefield continues, “is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ: . . . A ladder, you know, is that by which we climb to one thing or other. – Thus God, in condescension to our capacities, lets down this ladder, to show us that Jesus Christ is the way to heaven. – I am the way, the truth and the life . . . If we would climb to heaven it must be by Jesus Christ. No one ever chalked out our way to heaven but him; Jesus alone is the true and living way.”

And so, after explaining how the top of the ladder reached to heaven, though the bottom reached to earth, how it had steps, how God stood above it, not sat, but stood, and not only stood but spoke to Jacob, after explaining all this in the grand evangelical manner, Whitefield draws to his invariable conclusion in this fashion.

“Let me ask every one of you – Whether you have ever set your foot upon this blessed ladder, the Lord Jesus Christ? Did you ever believe on the Lord Jesus? Come to him as a lost sinner? . . . Perhaps, when I ask, some of you may say – Away with your ladder – I can go to heaven without it – I have been baptized – That ladder will break under you. – What! trust to a ladder of water? – I have done no harm. What’s a ladder made of negative goodness good for? That will surely fail you! I think, says one, to get to heaven by my praying and fasting. – My friend! all these things are good in their place, but dont think to climb to heaven by them. Christ is the way, the truth and the life . . .

“Young people! Put your foot on this ladder . . . Climb! Climb! Climb up the blessed ladder! – It delights me to see so many climbing to heaven. Come! Come young women! Set your foot on this ladder. – Come! you middle aged people! It is high time for you to begin to climb to heaven. And ye old! Ye grey-headed sinners! that have one foot in the grave, God give you strength – to climb up to heaven. Some of you have climbed – at least are climbing: – I give you joy; God be praised for letting down such a ladder! But for Jesus Christs sake! Climb – oh climb a little faster! Take care that the world does not take hold of your heels! You may think what you will, but the lukewarmness of Gods people is more provoking to him than all the sins of the nation. If there be any one coming down the ladder again, may the Lord Jesus stop you! Oh, say you, I am giddy – I shall fall – Here – I will give you a rope.

– Just as the sailors put down a rope to climb by – so God lets down his promises for our assistance. Climb, then, till you have got to the top of the ladder, there God stands to receive you . . . Remember my last words! COME! – COME to Christ, to Jacob’s God! And God give you faith to climb up Jacob’s ladder!”

That is how Whitefield preached – always with what he called “the true market-language”, vivid images and the appeal to come to Christ. In his sermons, as in his journals and in his letters, he is never afraid of the conversational style, the loose, the half-slang phrase that gives vivid immediacy: “broken the ice”, “taken to task”, “all was hush” are three that I have noticed out of many. “He has a great mastery of words,” a writer in the *New England Journal* for 1743 says, “but studies much plainness of speech.” “He has a most ready memory,” the same writer recorded, “and, I think, speaks entirely without notes. He has a clear and musical voice, and a wonderful command of it. He uses much gesture, but with great propriety. Every accent of his voice, and every motion of his body, speaks, and both are natural and unaffected.”<sup>18</sup> Another American, the wife of Jonathan Edwards, wrote to her brother in 1740: “It is wonderful to see what a spell he casts over an audience by proclaiming the simplest truths of the Bible. I have seen upwards of a thousand people hang on his words with breathless silence, broken only by an occasional half-suppressed sob . . . It is reported that while the miners of England listened to him, the tears made white furrows down their smutty cheeks”.<sup>19</sup> Finally, here is the testimony of an unlettered farmer, who was one of the great multitude whose lives Whitefield permanently changed. It is a passage entirely innocent of punctuation. “when i see mr whitefield come up . . . he looked almost angelical a young slim tender youth before thousands of people and with a bold undaunted countenance & my hearing how god was with him everywhere as he came along it solemnized my mind and put me in a trembling fear before he began to preach for he looked as if he was Clothed with authority from ye great god and a sweet solemnity sat upon his brow and my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound & by gods blessing my old foundation was broken up & i see my righteousness would not save me”.<sup>20</sup>

So we commemorate George Whitefield, who, because he forgot himself for Jesus’ sake, in his lifetime drew multitudes to Jesus and since his death has been largely forgotten; as I suppose he would have wished; yet it is not wrong to commemorate him, especially here; so long as we let him point us, as he pointed those who listened to him, beyond and away from himself to the God

---

18 Cf. Arnold Dallimore, *op. cit.*, i. 435.

19 *Ibid.*, i., 539.

20 *Ibid.*, i., 541.

whose showers of blessing came down wherever he went: so long as we let him say to us, as he said to those to whom he preached, Come to Christ the true and living way to heaven, to Christ the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls; so long as we hear, beyond Whitefields call, the call of Jesus himself, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men"; hear it, and answer; hear it and come.

GEOFFREY E. NUTTALL  
A Commemorative Address delivered at  
Whitefield Memorial Church, London,  
Sunday, 1 November 1970

**THE MISSION OF *THE PRESBYTER***  
**An Aspect of the Reception of Karl Barth's**  
**Theology in Great Britain:**

It is only since his centenary in 1986 that the consensus has developed that Karl Barth (1886-68) was not just a gifted and significant Protestant theologian, but that he possessed a sustained theological genius that put him into a category of his own. If partisan thinkers like Thomas F. Torrance could state as early as 1955 that “Karl Barth is incontestably the greatest figure in modern theology since Schleiermacher, occupying an honoured position among the great elite of the church – Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Luther and Calvin”,<sup>1</sup> since then a raft of informed commentators, on the basis of a mature interaction with the *Church Dogmatics* as a whole, have concurred. In the context of the United Reformed Church, the contribution of the late Colin E. Gunton, the most distinguished English systematic theologian of the latter twentieth century, reflects this view.<sup>2</sup> “In the midst of this ongoing engagement of his thought”, writes another recent analyst, “Barth has come to be considered by many not simply as the outstanding voice of the twentieth century, but also as one of the most significant theologians in the history of the Christian church”.<sup>3</sup> In studying the reception of Barth’s theology in the Anglophone (and Celtophone) world, it is noteworthy that, apart from in Scotland and among Nonconformists in Wales,<sup>4</sup> it was among the English Congregationalists that his thought resonated the most. This occurred initially in the context of the doctrinal renewal of the 1930s and 1940s connected with the “New Genevan” movement of Nathaniel Micklem and J. S. Whale,<sup>5</sup> it gathered strength with the work of F. W. Camfield, author of *Revelation and the Holy Spirit* (1933) and *The Collapse of Doubt* (1945), and was perpetuated after the war in the work of Daniel T. Jenkins, Herbert Hartwell, W. A. Whitehouse and others. In assessing the influence of Barth’s theology in

- 
- 1 T. F. Torrance, “Karl Barth”, *The Expository Times* 66, (1954-5), 205-9 [205].
  - 2 See Colin E. Gunton, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*, 2nd. ed., (London, 2001); *idem.*, *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Oxford, 2002); *idem.*, P. H. Brazier (ed.), *The Barth Lectures*, (London, 2007), *idem.*, P. H. Brazier (ed.), *Revelation and Reason: Prolegomena to Systematic Theology* (London, 2008).
  - 3 John R. Franke, *Barth for Armchair Theologians*, (Louisville, 2006), ix-x.
  - 4 For Barth reception in Britain see Richard H. Roberts “The reception of the theology of Karl Barth in the Anglo-Saxon world; history, typology and prospect”, in S. W. Sykes (ed.), *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, (Cambridge, 1989), 115-171; Anne-Kathrin Finke, *Karl Barth in Grossbritannien*, (Neukirchner, 1995); Alister E. McGrath, *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*, (Edinburgh, 1999), 113-46; D. Densil Morgan, “The early reception of Karl Barth’s theology in Britain: a supplementary view”, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 (2001), 504-27, reprinted in *Wales and the Word: Historical Perspectives on Welsh Identity and Religion*, (Cardiff, 2008), 121-41.
  - 5 R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662 – 1962*, (London, 1962), 450-51.

England, the Congregational input is well to the fore. The intention of this paper is to call attention to the most vigorous forum that Barth reception received in England, especially, before the establishment of *The Scottish Journal of Theology* in 1948, namely the monthly journal *The Presbyter*, and how this cohered with the unexpectedly positive response that younger Congregational ministers and theologians afforded Barth's theology at the time.

### **The founding and the feel of *The Presbyter***

Originally a cyclostyled news-sheet produced between 1939 and 1942 by a group of younger Presbyterian ministers, *The Presbyter: a Journal of Confessional and Catholic Churchmanship* was re-launched in January 1943 by its joint-editors, Daniel T. Jenkins, and an expatriate New Zealander called Alexander Miller. Jenkins (1914-2002), employed at the time as an SCM secretary attached to Birmingham University, had already made a name for himself as both an interpreter of Barth and the most ecclesialogically engaged of all the younger Congregational ministers. He was, in fact, a Welsh Independent, the son of a brick-mason from Dowlais, Glamorgan, in the industrial heartland. He had entered the Yorkshire United Independent College at Bradford in 1932 where, following a long-standing arrangement, arts students were enrolled at Edinburgh University to read for a preparatory degree before returning to Bradford to study for the post-graduate B.D. Consequently, between 1932 and 1936 Jenkins was in Edinburgh being exposed to Reformed churchmanship and taking in something of the Barthian renewal that was being felt north of the border at the time. At Bradford his principal E. J. Price and doctrine tutor H. F. Lovell Cocks were in full sympathy with the Genevan renaissance which was being so effectively championed by Bernard Lord Manning, Nathaniel Micklem and John Whale; they would be signatories to the churchly manifesto "To the Ministers of Christ's Holy Gospel in the Churches of the Congregational Order" issued from Emmanuel Church, Cambridge, in 1939.<sup>6</sup>

Cocks, whose own theology approximated that of P. T. Forsyth, his mentor,<sup>7</sup> confirmed Jenkins in his churchmanship and emboldened his appropriation of Barth's thought. 1937 found Jenkins in Mansfield College, Oxford, which was (despite the presence of C. J. Cadoux as professor of Church History) the intellectual centre of the Genevan movement.<sup>8</sup> There he made the acquaintance of

6 For the text of the manifesto see Erik Routley, *The Story of Congregationalism*, (London, 1961), 164-71; the contribution of E. J. Price is noted by Elaine Kaye, *For the Work of Ministry: A History of Northern College and its Predecessors*, (Edinburgh, 1999), 194, 197-8.

7 See Alan P. F. Sell, "Theology for all: the contribution of H.F. Lovell Cocks", in *Commemorations: Studies in Christian Thought and History*, (Cardiff, 1993), 303-40.

8 See Elaine Kaye, *Mansfield College, Oxford: Its Origin, History and Significance*, (Oxford, 1996), 189-210.

W. A. (Alec) Whitehouse and John Huxtable, ministerial candidates and future leaders of the churchly and orthodox renewal among Congregationalists during the 1940s and 1950s. Jenkins's ordination, aged twenty-six, at the Vineyard Congregational Church, Richmond, Surrey, in 1940, signalled the beginning of an extraordinarily fruitful period of literary and ecumenical activity which would include the publication of a series of books including *The Nature of Catholicity* (1942), *Prayer and the Service of God* (1944) and *The Gift of Ministry* (1947), membership of J. H. Oldham's high powered discussion group "The Moot",<sup>9</sup> the secretaryship of the Christian Frontier Council, the editorship of *The Christian News-Letter* (1945-7) and, in 1948, a Commonwealth Fund Fellowship to study at Union Seminary, New York. Not the least of his activities during these frenetic years was to found and co-edit the journal *The Presbyter* (1943-8), which would prove the principal forum for Barth's reception in Britain at the time.

If Jenkins shared the editorship with Alexander ("Lex") Miller, his editorial board included H. F. Lovell Cocks, W. A. Whitehouse, Hubert Cunliffe-Jones and T. Ralph Morton, the Presbyterian minister of St Columba's, Cambridge, while among its editorial supporters were Nathaniel Micklem, principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, and John Marsh, Mansfield's chaplain and philosophy tutor, Thomas F. Torrance, a former student of Barth's at Basel, and Church of Scotland parish minister in Alyth, Perthshire, Alec Vidler, the Anglo-Catholic editor of *Theology* who was, at that time, heavily influenced by the theology of crisis, the Welsh Barthian theologian J. E. Daniel, and another Congregationalist, J. S. Whale, president of Cheshunt College, Cambridge. Although it attempted to avoid sectionalism by inviting such mainstream theologians as John and Donald Baillie, professors of Divinity at Edinburgh and St Andrews respectively, as well as H. H. Farmer of Westminster College, Cambridge, and George MacLeod, leader of the Iona Community, as its sponsors, there was no doubt where its commitments lay. J. S. Whale's stately proclamation in his popular *Christian Doctrine* (1941) encapsulated the feel of *The Presbyter* perfectly: "I happen to be a minister of the Churches of the Congregational Order, one who stands gratefully and proudly in the Reformed tradition of Genevan High Churchmanship".<sup>10</sup> Genevan churchmanship and Barthian theology were set to complement each other once more.

*The Presbyter's* manifesto, "The transformation of theology in the twentieth century", was laid out by Daniel Jenkins clearly in its opening issue. "The modern Reformed revival is best understood...as an attempted revival

9 See Keith W. Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J. H. Oldham*, (Edinburgh, 1999), 363-88; William Taylor and Marjorie Reeves, "Intellectuals in debate: the Moot" in Marjorie Reeves (ed.), *Christian Thinking and Social Order: Conviction Politics from the 1930s to the Present Day*, (London, 1999), 24-48.

10 John S. Whale, *Christian Doctrine: Eight Lectures Delivered in the University of Cambridge*, (Cambridge, 1941), 131.

of the theology of the apostles and Reformers", he claimed. The task of the church was "to listen attentively, humbly and as self-critically as possible to the testimony of the apostles as witnesses to Jesus Christ".<sup>11</sup> It was no longer valid to attempt to go behind the apostolic testimony to a supposed Jesus of history who was little other than the sum of the liberal theologians' most cherished ideals:

It is this which has lit up for us with a new vividness, of course through the pressure of God's Spirit upon us in the events of the world in which we live, the biblical understanding of the doctrines of God, sin, faith, the church and the divinity of Jesus Christ about which we differ most clearly from many in the generation which has gone before us.<sup>12</sup>

Whereas the older generation had interpreted the Reformers as harbingers of modernity and champions of the individual conscience, they had been blind to their churchly convictions and dogmatic concerns: "Luther and Calvin have come alive for us again and we are able to read them with ready understanding and the warmest gratitude".<sup>13</sup> But not even the Reformers were perfect. They had sometimes failed to maintain the inner consistency of their views, most markedly in the fields of natural theology and ecclesiology. The challenge to the present generation of younger Barthian theologians and "New Genevans" was to apply the Reformers' insights to the vastly different intellectual world of the twentieth-century Protestant church.

The verve and energy of *The Presbyter* would be maintained throughout the war years and beyond. It provided a platform for such promising talents as T. F. Torrance, E. Gordon Rupp, C. K. Barrett as well as those on its editorial team. Torrance's essays "Kierkegaard on the knowledge of God" (March 1943) and "In hoc signo vinces" (November 1945) would be the first fruits of an extraordinarily productive career which would be crucial for the reception of Barth's work in the English speaking world. Rupp's "...And the English Reformers" (November 1943) and the Presbyterian Basil Hall's "The contemporary relevance of the [Westminster] confession" (December 1943) displayed the youthful talents of two church historians who would make a signal contribution to English Luther studies and Calvin scholarship respectively. Although overwhelmingly Nonconformist in tone, the journal also engaged the interest of the occasional Reformed Anglican. T. H. L. Parker, who would become the Church of England's premier Calvin scholar,<sup>14</sup> wrote

---

11 Daniel T. Jenkins, "The transformation of theology in the twentieth century", *The Presbyter: A Journal of Confessional and Catholic Churchmanship* 1/1, (January 1943), 4-7 [7].

12 Jenkins, 'The transformation of theology in the twentieth century', 4-5.

13 Jenkins, *Ibid.*, 5.

14 For the earliest example of his work see T. H. L. Parker, "The approach to Calvin", *The Evangelical Quarterly* 16, (1944), 165-72.

acquaintance of *The Presbyterian*. Perhaps one of its most useful functions... is from Cambridge in August 1943: "I must say how glad I was to make the to provide a meeting place for those who are romantically surprised that there are seven thousand others!" The regular essays and reviews by Lovell Cocks, Marsh, Cunliffe-Jones, Whitehouse, and Jenkins were suffused with Barthian themes and informed by his writings.

Perhaps the most unusual among this group was Alexander ("Lex") Miller (1908-60). As a student in his native New Zealand, he had been heavily involved in both the S.C.M. and radical social causes, and following the depression of the early 1930s he had been drawn towards Marxism. As a ministerial student he had also partaken of the theological renewal emanating from Europe. "The impact of Karl Barth's teaching, and the continental theology generally", he wrote in 1944, "transformed the thinking of the live elements in the colleges and of the younger men in the ministry, and remodelled the theological outlook of a significant minority".<sup>15</sup> Whereas Marx had provided a key to understand the dynamics of economic and social upheaval, Barth had inspired him with a vision of radical churchmanship and a virile gospel: "What Barth did for us was to confirm the conviction, forced upon us by Marxism and the facts of the case, that our analysis of the social problem must be driven deep enough to take account of the dynamics of power and class, and that there is both biblical warrant and biblical guidance for so doing".<sup>16</sup> Having left New Zealand for Britain in 1939, he took a Presbyterian charge in Stepney, London, where he applied his heady blend of social radicalism and Barthian Biblicism: "The horrors of the blitz", reminisced one contemporary, "strengthened his pacifism and as a stranger not quite at home in England, made him extreme in his Calvinism and in his revolutionary politics".<sup>17</sup> By September 1942 he had been appointed deputy leader of the Iona Community, the ecumenical experiment established by George MacLeod, the powerful and privileged minister of Glasgow's Old Govan parish, which attempted to bridge the divide between established Scottish Christianity and the disaffiliated urban populace of Glasgow and other inner-city areas. Miller soon became a disturbing presence there. The autocratic MacLeod, whose misty Celtic Christianity was closer to Catholicism than Calvinism, had found his foil; his complaints about "Karl Marx through the week and Karl Barth on Sundays"<sup>18</sup> illustrated the tensions between two strong personalities with

---

15 Alexander Miller, "Theology and lay responsibility", *The Christian News-Letter*, supplement 206, 19 April 1944, 5-12 [6].

16 Miller, *Ibid.*, 6-7.

17 T. Ralph Morton, *The Iona Community: Personal Impressions of the Early Years*, (Edinburgh, 1977), 41.

18 Ronald Ferguson, *George MacLeod: Founder of the Iona Community*, (Glasgow, 1990), 210.

differing visions about how radical Christianity should be practised. In fact, MacLeod was relieved when Miller resigned in 1945 and returned to New Zealand. He would later move to Canada, and eventually took up a professorship at Stanford University in California before dying at the early age of fifty-two.

With *Lex Miller The Presbyter* gained not only a social conscience but developed a liberation theology with its own preferential option for the poor. His volumes *Biblical Politics: Studies in Christian Social Doctrine* (1943) and *The Christian Significance of Karl Marx* (1946) reflected the social commitment which the journal espoused. "It is unquestionably true", he wrote in August 1943, "that a good deal of theologizing which claims the name 'catholic' or 'confessional' or 'Reformed' tends towards a pretty barren ecclesiasticism, divorced from any radical concern with Christian obedience in terms of contemporary political or economic facts".<sup>19</sup> The challenge was to combine biblical orthodoxy with costly social commitment which was earthed in the complex realities of a fallen world: "There is a suspicion on the part of some who are concerned with the social problem", opined an editorial in September 1943, "that sections of the church are reacting to the contemporary crisis by retiring into a shell of ecclesiastical order and of theological 'rightness' which has little relation to the vexing questions that effect the life of men".<sup>20</sup> Yet none of this involved a toning down of Miller's uncompromising doctrinal stance. This would become patent in his polemical treatment of the liberalism of Charles Raven and Nathaniel Micklem's nemesis at Mansfield College, C. J. Cadoux.

### **The liberal backlash**

Raven and Cadoux were perhaps the most vociferous opponents of the new theology and viewed the mission of *The Presbyter* with irritation if not outright disdain. Although Charles E. Raven (1885-1964), since 1932 Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge and Master of Christ's College, had been trained as a classicist, he was a naturalist at heart who had already distinguished himself in the field of biology. A magnetic presence and popular speaker in S.C.M. circles, he had personified the theology of synthesis which had characterized much Anglicanism into the 1920s. His volume *Apollinarianism* (1923) had sought to delineate the dangers of a less than fully human Christology. During the 1920s he was at the forefront of all that was popular, progressive and enlightened in the Christian faith. Christianity, for him, was a matter of God's evolutionary presence within creation drawing out human goodness towards the pinnacle of the cosmic Christ. Although he had experienced the horrors of combat during the Great War and knew something about the tragic sense of

---

19 Alexander Miller, "Questions about Reformed theology: has it a social message?", *The Presbyter* 1/8, (August 1943), 9-11 [9].

20 Alexander Miller, "Editorial", *The Presbyter* 1/9, (September 1943), 3.

life, he was wholly unprepared for the change of theological atmosphere which occurred with Barth's *Romans* commentary of 1919 and the ensuing eclipse of liberalism: "By the late 1930s Raven for all his brilliance and pursuit of relevance, found himself regarded as irrelevant",<sup>21</sup> and the experience stung. His feeling of aggrievement was compounded by the fact that he felt himself being frozen out by both the ecumenical establishment and the Anglican Church: "I had been dropped out of almost all ecumenical work in spite of my share in COPEC and the Jerusalem conference",<sup>22</sup> he would inform J. H. Oldham in 1948: "I had also no position at all in my own church except a nominal connection with Ely... I think you will realise how hard it was then to find myself entirely alone and unwanted by the movements in the church in which I was particularly interested... It left a deep mark and has made me feel scarred ever since".<sup>23</sup> Whereas a man of his ability and influence would ordinarily have been chosen for a senior episcopal position within the established church, his disapproval of Anglo-Catholicism and even more pronounced liberalism put him at odds with the trend of the time. In all he found himself "half-bitterly, half-defiantly"<sup>24</sup> on the outside.

Knowing of his theological stance, Daniel Jenkins invited Raven to respond to *The Presbyter's* spirited manifesto of January 1943. The older man did so with alacrity and aplomb: "This theology as expounded in Mr Jenkins' article... seems to me to be in fact reactionary, ill-founded and if not itself transformed, disastrous."<sup>25</sup> He was appalled, as he had been by the work of his Cambridge colleague Edwyn C. Hoskyns, by the replacement of the Jesus of history by the kerygmatic Christ, with the downgrading of mundane history as the sphere of divine activity and saw in this "theology of a 'divine intruder', a 'God incognito'... the reducing of the incarnation to the level of a stage-play".<sup>26</sup> The younger theologians had made a fetish both of the Reformers and the concept of the Word and had nothing consequential to say about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit: "It is a reformation not in terms of Chalcedon, Luther and Dr Barth [that we need] but in those of the twentieth century, of Christ as the consummation of the creative process, of the scientific method and outlook".<sup>27</sup> Whereas Raven's generation had put forward a new hope for humankind and the church based on synthesis and evolution, "it is to the

---

21 Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-2000*, (London, 2001), 294.

22 COPEC, the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship held under the chairmanship of William Temple in Birmingham in 1924; the Jerusalem conference of the International Missionary Council, 1928.

23 F. W. Dillistone, *Charles Raven: Naturalist, Historian, Theologian*, (London, 1975), 275.

24 Dillistone, *Ibid.*, 277.

25 Charles E. Raven, "Questions about the Reformed faith: is the new expression of it valid?", *The Presbyter* 1/3, (March 1943), 8-9 [8].

26 Raven, *Ibid.*, 8.

27 Raven, *Ibid.*, 9.

reaction, the obscurantism and escapism of the 'new theology' that the destruction of that hope is due".<sup>28</sup> Raven's pique was intensified by the strident confidence with which the new theologians held their views: "Is all this insistence upon their own novelty and revolutionism by what is after all a small and not (as yet) very distinguished group of students really justified?", he asked. "We cannot feel that wisdom is the necessary perquisite of the neophyte".<sup>29</sup>

Jenkins's reply was measured but uncompromising nevertheless. "May it not be that we sound arrogant in the ears of liberals because we have a different conception of the nature of theological truth than theirs?", he asked. "They are more at home in approaching truth through probabilities and relativities, which approach they may think is the more humble and reverent one. We do not, and give reasons for our position".<sup>30</sup> He distanced himself from all those who would drive a wedge between historical criticism and the New Testament Christ: "Possibly Dr Raven has been moved to make this criticism by certain phrases of Bultmann, by which no responsible Reformed theologian would wish his position to be judged".<sup>31</sup> The New Testament, however, could only really be understood by an evangelical appropriation of its message and not by merely dispassionate academic research. He wholly rejected the fact that the new theology had abjured the doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Barth had written extensively on it in both his *Dogmatics* and in *The Holy Ghost and the Christian Life*: "Dr Raven may not like the modern Reformed doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but we are a loss to understand why he says it does not exist".<sup>32</sup> The fact was that Raven's understanding of the Spirit and the new theology's account of it did not amount to the same thing. The Holy Spirit in classic Christian theology was not another name for the innate power energizing the universe but the Third Person of the eternal God: "Dr Raven's diffused world-spirit manifesting itself everywhere with large-hearted comprehensiveness is like a signpost pointing in all directions", he claimed. "Because it is not closely enough linked to God's word to man, Jesus Christ, speaking to us in judgment and promise, it can frequently do no more than echo without discrimination the voice of the spirit of the age".<sup>33</sup>

If Jenkins's riposte was courteous, Lex Miller's review of Raven's *Science, Religion and the Future* (1943) and even more pointedly his *Good News of God* (1943) amounted to a blistering attack. If the former volume, a course of eight lectures delivered at Cambridge, purported to be for the academic market, "*Good News of God* is a far more slap-dash book, part written at a

28 Raven, *Ibid.*, 9.

29 Raven, *Ibid.*, 8.

30 Daniel T. Jenkins, "Questions about the Reformed faith: do liberals understand it?", *The Presbyter* 1/4, (April 1943), 9-10, 13 [9].

31 *Ibid.*, 9.

32 Jenkins, *Ibid.*, 10.

33 Jenkins, *Ibid.*, 10, 13.

furious pace, part dictated during a critical illness".<sup>34</sup> Both, however, were contemptuous of the new theology and its practitioners. "Barth's school... in Britain and America was neither impressive in quality nor (at first) strong in numbers",<sup>35</sup> Raven claimed, and while "the abler minds of Christendom" were working towards the synthesis of science and religion, "these 'revolutionaries' reverted to the legends and superstitions of the old order or to an irrationalism which contentedly writes meaningless rhetoric and justifies it as the proper language to apply to the ineffable".<sup>36</sup> Evidence of this was that "an exaggerated enthusiasm exalts the strange and diseased genius of Kierkegaard into the place of the most profound Christian theologians".<sup>37</sup> There was no doubt in Raven's mind that "since the outbreak of war such theology... has been plainly pathological".<sup>38</sup> In his second book, his condescension became positively toxic:

The message of the lions of *Theology* and the *Student Movement* [the magazine of the S.C.M.]... is affected, priggish, arrogant, contemptuous of what it does not understand, and apparently incapable of seeing much beyond its own glibly enunciated formulae; its claims when tested amount to little but ill-digested borrowings from Kierkegaard and Barth, and its assets boil down to a few clichés, 'vertical and horizontal', 'irruptions into history', 'not victory in this world but vindication at the last day' which sound nice but mean nothing, and an extensive vocabulary of abuse applied to all who have laboured for critical scholarship, for historical research, for philosophical theology and for a reasonable faith.<sup>39</sup>

If Raven and the dedicatee of his volume, the theologian Henry St John Hart, revelled in the tradition of the "reasonable religion" of Cambridge Platonism, they patently reviled "our theological reactionaries, these loud-voiced champions of a new and biblical theology".<sup>40</sup> Again there was no doubt that "the characteristic theology [of *The Student Movement* and *The Presbyter*] is plainly pathological".<sup>41</sup> Given this level of invective, it was hardly surprising that Miller responded in kind. "Dr Raven's counter-revolutionary fretfulness makes him... hysterical", stated the review. "To give this as a summary of what serious Reformation theology says about science

---

34 Alexander Miller, "Theological counter-revolution", *The Presbyter* 2/1, (January 1944), 12-14.

35 Charles E. Raven, *Science, Religion and the Future*, (Cambridge, 1943), 76.

36 Raven, *Ibid.*, 77.

37 Raven, *Ibid.*, 79.

38 Raven, *Ibid.*, 78.

39 *Ibid.*, 31.

40 Raven, *Ibid.*, 31.

41 Raven, *Ibid.*, 6.

and rational investigation is to convict oneself of illiteracy in this field".<sup>42</sup> Having countered the professor's accusations, "Dr Raven's phobias" as he called them, "one would search for a long time in the literature of 'neo-orthodoxy' for such an instance of such regulated and undocumented abuse".<sup>43</sup> The younger man was at a loss to understand why a Regius professor was reacting in such a bizarrely volatile way. It was clear that something elemental was at stake and that the liberals' combativeness was masking a potentially deep crisis of faith: "Manifestly Dr Raven would not dig his own grave as a serious theological controversialist unless he were sorely provoked".<sup>44</sup> The response seemed to be out of proportion to the provocation itself. It served to confirm the supposition that liberalism was not only outmoded but perhaps delusional as well.

### **Franz Hildebrandt and *This is the Message***

Lex Miller's article, not unexpectedly, "stirred Charles to indignation and anger", wrote his biographer. "This was perhaps the severest treatment that Charles ever received and he resented it deeply".<sup>45</sup> It was not, alas, the end of his woes. An even more trenchant though cooler response came in the Lutheran and former Confessing Church pastor Franz Hildebrandt's *This is the Message: A Continental Reply to Charles Raven* (1944). Hildebrandt (1909-85) had been one of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's closest friends who had been forced to flee Germany due to his Jewish ancestry. He had acted as Martin Niemöller's curate at Dahlem and after arriving in Britain in 1937, had been active in the work of the Confessing Church abroad. By the outbreak of war he was pastor of the Cambridge Lutheran congregation and had enrolled for a Ph.D in Christ's College which was subsequently published as *Melanchthon: Alien or Ally?* (1946). He would become a Methodist minister in England and in Edinburgh, and latterly professor at Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.<sup>46</sup> Although he was not a contributor *The Presbyter* he shared in its doctrinal orientation and its values, and despite the fact that he and Raven were personally close, their theologies were poles apart. Such was the onslaught in *Good News of God* that the German felt that he had no choice but to reply.

*This is the Message* was penned as a series of letters, loosely based upon 1 John, addressed politely: "My dear Charles". Although friendly, and often witty, no punches were pulled. In Germany, he said, those who had been keenest to forge a synthesis between Christianity, science and the modern mind were the first to welcome Hitler as having been sent by God: "What

---

42 Miller, "Theological counter-revolution", 12.

43 Miller, *Ibid.*, 13.

44 Miller, *Ibid.*, 13.

45 Dillistone, *op.cit.*, 288-9.

46 See Holger Roggelin, *Franz Hildebrandt: Ein lutherischer Dissenter im Kirchenkampf und Exil*, (Göttingen, 1999); Amos Cresswell and Max Tow, *Dr Franz Hildebrandt: Mr Valiant-for Truth*, (Leominster, 2000).

movement".<sup>47</sup> For the Lutheran, revelation was not a general phenomenon of nature but a matter of "[Christ's] own Word coming down to us from heaven, corresponded to the Modern Churchman's Union turned out to be, ninety-nine times out of a hundred cases, the champions of the 'German [Nazi] Christian' carried by his messengers, the prophets and apostles, and embodied in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments".<sup>48</sup> The categories which Raven used: religion, unity, experience, were open to severe misunderstanding: "Even the word 'religion' is no longer safe to express the divine promise of the gospel", he wrote. "To us it has come to denote man's offer to God rather than God's offer to man".<sup>49</sup> He criticized Raven for positing an immediacy between God and humankind which dispensed with the appointed means of grace. Whereas nature, for the professor, was a straightforward emanation of God's glory, for Hildebrandt it had been blighted by sin: "I believe that our position is fundamentally different from Adam in the garden; living after the fall, we have lost the immediacy between creation and creator and the direct understanding of the language of plant and animal".<sup>50</sup> The gospel was not a commonplace dependent on individuals' "capacity" for God; it was, rather, a message of redemption for otherwise lost sinners and a gift of free grace: "Christ is the only source of our proclamation, the only Word of promise. Nothing short of the Barman safeguard can end the confusion of voices in our pulpits and prevent the doctrinal chaos which is the common plague of your church and mine".<sup>51</sup>

The scripturalism of Hildebrandt, the "New Genevans" and the devotees of the Barthian renaissance was foreign to Charles Raven and for him, much too narrowly based. "What worries us 'continentals' beyond measure", wrote the younger man, "whenever we enter the theological discussion with our English friends is the almost complete absence of biblical arguments from the debate".<sup>52</sup> It was on the basis of scripture that the younger theologians had been drawn to the unique nature of Christ and to a renewed sensitivity to the church as the community of the Word. If Raven was disillusioned with the ecclesiastical establishment and found solace in the idealism of a wider humanity, Hildebrandt had no choice but to remain a man of the church: "There is an unmistakable demarcation line between the church and the world which we have neither right nor power to change nor ignore".<sup>53</sup> Although the good God was undoubtedly at work in his world, there was no biblical warrant for equating the fruit of Holy Spirit with the natural virtues of humankind:

---

47 Franz Hildebrandt, *This is the Message: A Continental Reply to Charles Raven*, (London, 1944), 11.

48 Hildebrandt, *Ibid.*, 12.

49 Hildebrandt, *Ibid.*, 21.

50 Hildebrandt, *Ibid.*, 110.

51 Hildebrandt, *Ibid.*, 26.

52 Hildebrandt, *Ibid.*, 13.

53 Hildebrandt, *Ibid.*, 41.

wonder whether this is not to mistake enthusiasm for the spiritual life?"<sup>54</sup> Similarly, when Raven was appalled by a primitive literalism which took evil, "I the devil and the apocalyptic language of the New Testament seriously, the Lutheran could only point to the iniquity of Hitler's regime: "You have your scientists, I have my Nazis to consider".<sup>55</sup> Niemöller was still in Gestapo hands and Bonhoeffer in custody, eventually to be hanged at Flossenberg prison in Berlin. Suddenly Raven's concerns seemed inconsequential and trite. Theology was a serious matter which demanded a gospel which was commensurate with the needs of the time: "The 'deity' which to my horror I find mentioned on p. 53 of your book may be within the reach of scientific 'evidence' for its 'existence and nature'; the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ is accessible only by faith".<sup>56</sup> There was no neutral ground on which these matters could be decided: "We can only proclaim the good news".<sup>57</sup>

The tone of *This is the Message* was temperate and its content was balanced and clear. Raven, however, was mortified and their association came to a bitter end: "Charles felt that he had been wounded by a friend".<sup>58</sup> Although the missionary statesman Max Warren, former vicar of Holy Trinity, Cambridge, tried to engineer a reconciliation between the two men, nothing came of it: "The use of my Christian name on the dust cover", Raven claimed, being "a failure to appreciate the nuances of English manners",<sup>59</sup> was what he had resented most. It was a sad end to what had been a sincere friendship. Hildebrandt's wistful final letter to Raven, on 27 December 1948, expressed the distance and exclusivity between both men's views:

When I felt the pain that I had caused you, I knew that I had made my first mistake, and that 'confessions' of this kind, however laudable in the German situation, were not really wanted here . . . That one could ever act as a bridge-builder, that another point of view but that of the Cambridge tradition could ever find a hearing in the university, was a hope, which I have once had, but have buried long since.<sup>60</sup>

As in the case of other advocates of the new theology and their opponents, there would never be a meeting of minds.

Just as Raven had used the pages of *The Presbyter* to express his disapproval

54 Hildebrandt, *Ibid.*, 83.

55 Hildebrandt, *Ibid.*, 96.

56 Hildebrandt, *Ibid.*, 112.

57 Hildebrandt, *Ibid.*, 113.

58 Dillistone, *Charles Raven*, 311; the controversy is described and analysed by Alan Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform? War, Peace and the English Churches 1900-45*, (London, 1986), 224-7 and Roggelin, *op. cit.*, 234-8.

59 Dillistone, *op. cit.*, 437.

60 Quoted in Roggelin, *op. cit.*, 237.

of Barthianism, C. J. Cadoux did the same. Responding, though good-naturedly, to Lex Miller's pugnacious review "Militant Liberalism" (July 1943) of his *Pilgrim's Further Progress* (1943), Cadoux made a significant confession: "Miller makes much of the fact that I have not read much of Barth or Brunner. But surely one can know (and say) how one stands towards Barthianism without having personally waded through Barth's enormous tomes".<sup>61</sup> Whether this referred to the *Kirchliche Dogmatik* I and 2 which were now available in German or to the English works, G. T. Thompson's *Doctrine of the Word of God* (1936) and the Aberdeen Gifford Lectures, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God* (1938), was not clear. It was evidence, though, that Barth was better known by reputation, whether good or ill, than by a careful perusal of his written texts. "During the last fifteen years or so, I have listened to and read countless discussions and quotations of his views: and one cannot do that without gleaming an approximately correct view of what he stands for. It is the same story every time: and life is too short to enable me to do more".<sup>62</sup>

### Herbert Hirschwald, Barth reception and *The Presbyter*

Despite the work of his early English translators, Karl Barth was only known sketchily even by his devotees. Modest scholarly work based on a knowledge of the original texts, had been undertaken, principally at Edinburgh where some Ph.D dissertations had appeared at the beginning of the decade,<sup>63</sup> while F. W. Camfield had provided the readers of *Theology* with a short précis of Barth's idea of election in 1943.<sup>64</sup> It was not until 1945, however, that a level of sophistication was achieved which lifted Barth's thought from beyond the level of cliché. Barth himself had been working assiduously in Basle throughout the war and had completed *Kirchliche Dogmatik* II/1, on God's being-in-becoming and the divine perfections, in 1940, *Kirchliche Dogmatik* II/2 on the ambiguities of "religion" and the doctrine of election in 1942, while *Kirchliche Dogmatik* III/1, his first part-volume on creation, was issued in 1945. Very few people in Britain were in a position to keep up with this welter of publication, but one of them was the Confessing Church refugee, Herbert Hirschwald (1894-1989). As the naturalized Herbert Hartwell, he would publish a sturdy and useful volume *The Theology of Karl Barth: An Introduction*, in 1964. Hirschwald had served in the German army during the Great War where he had been awarded the Iron Cross for bravery. Following legal training at Erlangen he had been appointed to the Prussian Supreme Court at

61 C. J. Cadoux, "What is theology?", *The Presbyter* 2/10, (October 1944), 15.

62 Cadoux, *Ibid.*, 15.

63 John Henderson, "The controversy between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner concerning natural theology", unpublished Ph.D, New College, Edinburgh, 1940; Ivor Francis Morris, "The relation of the Word of God to the doctrine of the imago Dei in the theology of Professor Karl Barth", unpublished Ph.D, New College, Edinburgh, 1941.

64 F. W. Camfield, "Barth's doctrine of God", *Theology* 46, (1943), 3-8.

the age of 32 to become the youngest high court judge in his land. A committed Lutheran layman, he had joined the Confessing Church in 1934 and become immediately involved in the legal defence of Jews. Deprived of his professional status under the Nuremberg laws, he had come into contact with George Bell, bishop of Chichester, and the office for non-Aryan Christians, and later with Nathaniel Micklem and John Marsh. Having escaped from Germany in 1939, he was invited to Mansfield College where he began training for the Congregational ministry. Like Franz Hildebrandt in Cambridge, he enrolled for the Oxford D. Phil., which was awarded in 1945. "Karl Barth's Conception of Grace and its Place in his Theology" was the most detailed and insightful study of Barth's work yet to appear in English, which pre-dated the Dutch scholar, G. C. Berkouwer, by a decade in positing "the triumph of grace" to be the keystone of Barth's whole system:<sup>65</sup> "Grace is the central pivot or core of Barth's theology and the key to the true understanding of it",<sup>66</sup> the dissertation claimed. "This message proclaims the absolute sovereignty of the grace of God and its sufficiency for every man, which latter has an almost totalitarian character, and the present war and total destruction has every reason to listen to that message very attentively".<sup>67</sup>

What was novel in the British context was Hirschwald's exposition of *Kirchliche Dogmatik* II/1, God's loving in freedom, God's existence as the event of reaching out to humankind and creating communion in Christ. Also, there was his elucidation, which was present in the Aberdeen Gifford Lectures, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God* (1938), but hardly noticed at the time, of the radical shape of election from *Kirchliche Dogmatik* II/2. The tendency among his British disciples was to see Barth, if no longer as a prophet, then as a system builder whose dogmatics, when mastered, were there to be applied. Even in Daniel Jenkins, the impression gleaned was that Barth was a somewhat conventional, if brilliant, Reformed theologian. Hirschwald was sure that this was not the case and that Barth belonged to a category of his own. Grace, though wholly gratuitous, is irresistible because God is God. It is never coercive and there is no synergy between God and the human will: "We are not invited to understand his idea of ruling grace in terms of sheer power and tyranny forcing its acts and decisions upon man by the mere weight of God's omnipotence".<sup>68</sup> Man's total freedom was a postulate, through the *analogia fidei*, of the absolute freedom of God. It was the sheer graciousness of God's elective action, which arose from his inner Trinitarian being, which was most striking in Barth's scheme, a theme which only came to the fore as the *Kirchliche Dogmatik* unfolded: "In Barth's theology a place of the first

---

65 G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, (Grand Rapids, 1956).

66 Herbert Hirschwald, "Karl Barth's Conception of Grace and its Place in his Theology", unpublished D. Phil., St Catherine's Society, Oxford, 1945, ii.

67 Hirschwald, *Ibid.*, 10.

68 Hirschwald, *Ibid.*, 123.

magnitude has been assigned to the idea of grace as never before in the history of the doctrine of grace".<sup>69</sup> This made all previous writing on his work redundant.

Hirschwald's dissertation, though erudite and astute, remained unpublished while, following ordination as a Congregational minister, his pastoral work among German refugees prevented him from accomplishing the sustained contribution to theological studies which he surely could have made. By 1946 other scholars were mediating Barth's work to an English language readership: J. H. Oldham provided a précis of *Kirchliche Dogmatik* III/1, Barth's treatment of creation and covenant, his Christological interpretation of the Genesis saga and God's "Yes" to his creation, in *The Christian News-Letter*<sup>70</sup> with Alec Whitehouse fulfilling the same task on the pages of *The Presbyter*.<sup>71</sup> F. W. Camfield, who had left the Congregational ministry in 1942 to seek orders in the Anglican Church, provided a more extensive description of *Kirchliche Dogmatik* II/1 on God's being-in-becoming and the divine perfections, and *Kirchliche Dogmatik* II/2 centring on the doctrine of election, in the opening chapters of his edited volume *Reformation Old and New* (1947). The volume was presented to Barth as a tribute on his sixtieth birthday and its editor had no qualms about the significance of the Swiss theologian's accomplishment: "For the first time in the history of the Christian church, a theology of vast range and of striking coherence and clarity, has been built wholly on the foundation of the Word of God as attested in the biblical witness to revelation".<sup>72</sup> It was *The Presbyter*, however, which saw the first detailed analysis of Barth's evolving doctrine of the *imago Dei*. The author was Herbert Hirschwald who contrasted Barth's earlier view in *Romans* (1922), *The Holy Ghost and the Christian Life* (1929) and *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (1936), of which he disapproved, with the communal understanding put forward in *Kirchliche Dogmatik* III/1, a work which had not appeared when he had been working on his doctoral dissertation: "Man (male and female) who has been created not only by God... but for God... as God's partner in His covenant with man, is called to reflect in his own form of life the dynamic relationship that exists within the Godhead".<sup>73</sup> For Hirschwald this was a much more fruitful avenue of thought but one which was not devoid of difficulties. What was more, it "not only differs from the Reformers but in a most striking way

---

69 Hirschwald, *Ibid.*, 5.

70 J. H. Oldham, "Karl Barth on the doctrine of creation", *The Christian News-Letter*, supplement 271, 16 October 1946, 6-16.

71 A. W. Whitehouse, "Karl Barth and the doctrine of creation", *The Presbyter* 4/4, (Winter 1946), 1-7; reprinted in *idem*, *The Authority of Grace: Essays in Response to Karl Barth*, (Edinburgh, 1981), 9-16.

72 F. W. Camfield, "Development and present stage of the theology of Karl Barth", in *idem.*, (ed.), *Reformation Old and New: A Tribute to Karl Barth*, (London, 1947), 12-100 [27].

73 Herbert Hirschwald, "The teaching of Karl Barth on the doctrine of the *imago Dei*", *The Presbyter* 5/4, (Winter 1947), 1-17 [11].

appears to be at variance with Barth's own teaching on the same subject in the first volume, part one, of his *Church Dogmatics*.<sup>74</sup>

### Conclusion

The final edition of *The Presbyter* appeared in October 1948. Post-war European reconstruction was underway and the formation of the World Council of Churches in August signified the triumph of the biblical ideal concerning the unity of the church, based on an explicitly Trinitarian creed according to the norms of the apostolic faith. Barth himself, though something of a sceptic as to ecumenism in its official sense, was heavily involved in the arrangements for the first Assembly of the Council in Amsterdam. The same year saw the establishment of *The Scottish Journal of Theology* which would become the means for the dissemination of Barth's theology during the second part of the twentieth century.<sup>75</sup> *The Presbyter* saw the new publication as a continuation of its own mission: "The concerns of its sponsors are so very closely allied to our own", wrote its editor, John Huxtable, "that we can regard this new quarterly as a welcome and powerful reinforcement to the cause of Reformed theology".<sup>76</sup>

The story of the reception of Karl Barth's theology in Britain has yet to be told in detail. When that story appears it will become apparent how significant ministers and theologians of the Congregational order were in appropriating that theology and assimilating it to English norms. In this context, the mission of *The Presbyter* was vital.

D. DENNIL MORGAN

---

74 Hirschwald, *Ibid.*, 2.

75 See McGrath, *op. cit.*, 128-9.

76 John Huxtable, "Editorial", *The Presbyter* 6/3, (October 1948), 1.

## **TIGERS FROM THE FOUNTAIN: The Tiger Kloof Institution and Moeding College – Some Personal Memories.**

This paper is a brief comment on two schools which were run by the London Missionary Society in Southern Africa: the Tiger Kloof Institution located near Vryburg in the Northern Cape Province, closed in 1955 under the apartheid legislation, and its replacement, Moeding College, located in the southern part of Botswana.

At midnight on 30 September 1966, the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland became the independent Republic of Botswana within the Commonwealth. Botswana was, at that time, the only independent democracy as we understand that word, in sub-Saharan Africa. The other countries were military dictatorships, one party states, colonial territories or under an Apartheid regime. Seretse Khama was elected as the first President. Seretse's grandfather, Chief Khama of the Bamangwato, the largest tribe in the country, had led a delegation to Britain in 1895 of the three most powerful Bechuana chiefs, to appeal for British protection against the expansionist policies of Cecil Rhodes. The interpreter who accompanied them was the then L.M.S. missionary to the Bamangwato, W.C. Willoughby. The chiefs went on a speaking campaign round Britain, organised by the L.M.S. They met Government ministers and Queen Victoria, and returned home victorious.

Seretse's father, who succeeded to the chieftainship of the Bamangwato, died while Seretse was a minor. Both Seretse and the tribe were placed under the guardianship of Seretse's uncle, Tshekedi, a capable and energetic man. He sent his nephew Seretse to school at Tiger Kloof, then to Fort Hare University in South Africa where he graduated B.A., and then to Balliol College, Oxford. While in England, Seretse met and married Ruth Williams – a marriage which, contrary to all predictions, proved to be a success and a blessing to Botswana. Although Seretse was the hereditary chief of the Bamangwato, he recognised that if Bechuanaland was to achieve independence, it must have a democratic form of government. To this end, with the support of others, he instituted and led the Democratic Party. At the first elections, the Democratic Party achieved a substantial majority, and Seretse formed his first cabinet, of which all the members, with the exception of one man, were former students of Tiger Kloof.

Tiger Kloof was the educational Institution run by the L.M.S. in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, designed to serve the L.M.S. constituency of the Northern Cape Province, Bechuanaland and Matabeleland. W.C. Willoughby, who had accompanied the chiefs to Britain in 1895, was appointed Principal and given the job of constructing the buildings which would comprise the Institution. To this end, he enrolled a group of young men as building apprentices:

On 8th March 1904 the Principal, his wife, and the Instructor of Carpentry took possession of 3,000 acres of unfenced wilderness that the Society had purchased in war-time. The Instructor of Masonry arrived a day or two later. The only signs of previous occupation were the ruined walls of a small farmhouse. We borrowed a wagon, bought a bell tent and an antiquated marquee and settled down. There was a railway siding there, but no platform. It took great care to unload heavy items like the oil-engine and saw bench, building materials and machinery. We selected eighteen lads from the forty who wanted to learn the building trade and started by building a stable which we used as a workshop... Now all this was but preparation for the work that we want to be at. The Boys' Boarding School started with five scholars and it will grow every year. We have Bible teaching and prayers every morning, and three services every Sunday.<sup>1</sup>

Willoughby was followed by the Revd A.J. Haile who served as Principal from 1914 to 1945, and was followed in his turn by the Revd Aubrey Lewis whose Principalship was terminated in 1955 by the South African Government's apartheid legislation. When girls were admitted, Janet Bryson was appointed in 1922 with the title of Lady Principal, remaining until 1955.

What were the aims of the L.M.S. and were these aims achieved? In 1933, the L.M.S. set up a Board of Enquiry into Education in relation to Evangelism.<sup>2</sup> It endorsed the Society's educational policy, listing three features for a school run by the Society:

1. It was to be regarded as an evangelising agency, directed towards the non Christian community.
2. It was to provide for the instruction of the existing Christian Community and to nurture Christian leadership.
3. It was to be maintained as a Christian obligation to the community as a whole, providing "Education for Life".

By what means were these aims to be achieved? The first was by admitting the children of both Christian and non-Christian parents to what was a wholly boarding establishment, at which pupils were required to attend prayers at 7 am each day, and on Sundays to attend morning and evening services in the chapel, and afternoon Sunday School. In addition, a number of voluntary religious meetings were organised and conducted by the pupils themselves, assisted by the theological students.<sup>3</sup> Besides the formal teaching, there was

---

1 This is an amalgamation of two accounts by Willoughby. See W.C. Willoughby, *Tiger Kloof, the London Missionary Society's Native Institution in South Africa*, (London: 1912), 99; Norman Goodall, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945*, (London: OUP, 1954), 257.

2 Norman Goodall, *op.cit.*, 458.

3 W.C. Willoughby, *op.cit.*, 96.

the example of Christian staff and students, and the ethos and discipline of a school based on Christian principles.

This carried over to the second aim, the strengthening of the existing Christian community and the nurture of Christian leadership. The importance of this had been recognised long before Tiger Kloof was established. An attempt had been made in the 1870s, using funds raised in thanksgiving for the work of Robert Moffat, to start ministerial training among the Bamangwato. This was moved to Kuruman, but local disturbances, the Boer War, and the construction of a railway line that by-passed Kuruman, made it necessary to remove to a more easily accessible location. Hence Tiger Kloof on the line of rail, where one of the most important departments included in the Institution was the Bible School for the training of ordained ministers and of evangelists. It was men trained at the Tiger Kloof Bible School who evangelised much of Bechuanaland and Matabeleland and laid the foundations of that part of what today has become the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa. But Christian leadership involves lay men and women as well as ordained. The organisation of life at Tiger Kloof owed something to the British public school system, and something to the British army. Responsible senior students were appointed as prefects, and wore sergeant's or corporal's stripes on their arms as badges of office, and drill was part of the regular school routine. Many students from Tiger Kloof gave important lay leadership in the church, as well as in national and village life. The example of the first cabinet selected to rule the newly independent Botswana has already been mentioned, and I would go so far as to suggest that the decision to adopt a democratic form of government in this newly independent country, and an economic policy designed to improve the standard of living of all sections of society, were in no small degree the fruits of the Christian education provided at Tiger Kloof.

One further reason for investing in an educated church membership was to meet the requirement of the Fundamental Principal of the London Missionary Society; which stated "that its design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church Order and Government, . . . but the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, to the heathen; and that it shall be left . . . to the minds of the persons whom God may call into the fellowship of His Son from among them to assume for themselves such form of Church Government as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God." To make a decision of this nature requires Christian maturity; hence the importance of nurturing local Christian leadership.

The third aim of the Directors of the LMS was to provide an education for life. The way Tiger Kloof did this was to include vocational training in its curriculum. The Industrial Department provided training in building and carpentry – it was the building and carpentry apprentices who over the years constructed the magnificent buildings that made up the institution. Other sections in the Industrial Department included tailoring (where school uniforms were made), leatherwork, and domestic science for the girls. Then there was a teacher training department with its practising school attached and,

last but not least, an increasingly important academic secondary school preparing students for the Matric. examination and an opportunity to go on to a university. The Tiger Kloof Institution comprised nine departments in all; and its nature meant a considerable age range in the student population. I believe it was Janet Bryson who declared that when she first arrived at Tiger Kloof and went into a class to teach, she found she was the youngest person in the room. The alumni of Tiger Kloof returned to the villages and towns in Bechuanaland, the Cape Province, and Southern Rhodesia from which they had come, to create for themselves, and in many cases their neighbours, a better life than they had left. In addition, the Tiger Kloof Book Room acted as publisher for books produced for use by churches and mission primary schools.

The staff included three missionary appointments – the Principal, the Lady Principal, and the Bible School Tutor. Other staff were local white appointments and, increasingly, local Africans.

The Nationalist Party victory at the 1948 elections in South Africa provided the opportunity to further its programme of apartheid legislation. Two laws which directly affected Tiger Kloof were the Group Areas Act and the Bantu Education Act. The former established different residential areas for the various ethnic groups, and since Tiger Kloof was located in an area designated for whites, the government intimated in 1955 that the Institution would have to move elsewhere. This was followed by a communication from the Department of Native Affairs announcing that, in terms of the Bantu Education Act, the department would assume control of Tiger Kloof on 1 January 1956. The L.M.S. therefore decided to close the institution,<sup>4</sup> and build a replacement school in the neighbouring Bechuanaland Protectorate.<sup>5</sup>

The conditions required of a site for the replacement school to be built in the Bechuanaland Protectorate were that it be on the line of rail, that it be not in the tribal area of a dominating chief who would be likely to interfere in the running of the school, and that water be plentifully available. A site was selected at the village of Otse in the southern Protectorate that met these conditions. With alternative provision for industrial, ministerial and teacher training already provided elsewhere, it was decided that the provision of a good secondary education was what was needed. Compensation from the South African government together with grants from the Bechuanaland administration and the L.M.S., funded the new buildings which were built by a missionary builder, Harry Brown, and his team of local bricklayers.

What name might be given to the new school which would retain the link with Tiger Kloof? At Tiger Kloof there was a spring of running water or, to use

---

4 At this point, it should be mentioned that following the abolition of the apartheid legislation, a group of enthusiasts purchased the Tiger Kloof property, renovated it, and opened it as a secondary school. Aubrey Lewis was delighted to be invited to be present at the opening ceremony.

5 Bernard Thorogood, *Gales of Change*, (W.C.C.: Geneva, 1994), 32.

the local terminology, a fountain. In the days before the whites had arrived in that area, the local Batswana people had named that place "Moeding", meaning "the place where water flows". This was the name, rather than Tiger Kloof, by which the students referred to their school when speaking Setswana amongst themselves. This was the name selected for the new school at Otse - Moeding College. Under the Principalship of Graham Phipps Jones, the College admitted its first pupils in February 1962. When Graham Phipps Jones resigned in 1968, I was transferred as Principal from Inyati School, Zimbabwe. A five year course was provided at Moeding, leading to a local public examination, the Junior Certificate, at the end of the third year, and the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate at the end of the fifth year. The curriculum included English, Mathematics, Science, History and Geography, Setswana and Latin (though Latin was dropped after a few years), Religious Education, Agricultural Science, and Carpentry for the boys with Home Economics for the girls. The College, like Tiger Kloof, was wholly boarding, admitting both boys and girls.

The provision of education was naturally high on the priority list of the newly independent Botswana and, as a grant-aided school, Moeding received generous grants from government. Parents paid school fees to cover the cost of uniform and books and a contribution towards the cost of food. The college was subject to fairly rigid Government regulations, but had its own Board of Governors which included an official from the Ministry of Education.

What was the distinctive contribution that Moeding, with its Christian foundation, made to Botswana and its people? Our aim at Moeding was to prepare boys and girls for citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven and in the Republic of Botswana. As with Tiger Kloof, there was the ethos of a Christian boarding school with daily prayers and Sunday services. Some of the students met informally for Bible study and discussion. One group that was a good influence in the college was made up of Seventh Day Adventists. However, there were two particularly important contributions that the college made as a Christian foundation.

The first was to constitute for the members of the college a local church within the Botswana Synod of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa. The village of Otse was in an area settled by the small Bamalete tribe, who had been evangelised by the Lutherans. In terms of the comity of missions, the L.M.S. undertook not to interfere with the work of the Lutherans in the village, but to confine its religious activity within the school boundary. Membership of the Moeding Church was open to staff and students on an equal footing. The minister of the church was the college chaplain, the church secretary was elected from among the adult members, and the assistant secretary from amongst the students, similarly with the treasurer and assistant treasurer. Half the number of deacons were elected from among the student members, and half from among the adults. Elections for officers and deacons were held annually. After the Sunday morning assembly, which was compulsory for the whole school, a service was held in the school chapel, at

which attendance was voluntary, and was led by a visiting minister or the chaplain.

The second significant contribution was, in conjunction with a nearby Roman Catholic secondary school, to prepare a scheme of Christian Religious Education which was adopted by all secondary schools in the country. When Botswana obtained independence in 1966, there were four senior secondary schools in the country – Moeding, St. Joseph’s College (Roman Catholic), Moeng College which was a tribal school for the Bamangwato, and a newly established government secondary school in the capital, Gaborone. Over the next twenty years, Government opened secondary schools in all towns and many villages throughout the country, but Religious Education was not included in their timetables. In 1978 we at Moeding were invited to St Joseph’s College to meet with two visiting teachers from Roman Catholic schools in East Africa and hear about a successful ecumenical initiative in which they had been involved, to introduce an acceptable Religious Education syllabus to secondary schools there. The scheme abandoned the old system of requiring the study of selected books from the Bible on which students were then examined, and replaced with a syllabus entitled “Christian Living Today – a study of life themes”. Themes studied included: Man in a changing society, Order and freedom in society, Life, Man and Woman, Man’s response to God through faith and love. Each theme was studied from a number of points of view: first, students looked at it from their own current point of view; secondly, what was the traditional African teaching on the subject?; thirdly, what is Church and Biblical teaching on the subject?; and finally students were invited to evaluate their own lives in the light of what they had learnt, and to live their own lives accordingly. This scheme was introduced at both Moeding and St Joseph’s, explained at a meeting of secondary school heads, and accepted by them, and the Minister of Education (who had been a student at Tiger Kloof) sat in on one of the classes that our chaplain, Derek Lindfield, was taking with the new syllabus. The minister was satisfied by what he heard and saw, and it was agreed that R.E., using this syllabus, could be used in government schools.

And where are the students now who have been through their schooling at Moeding? They can be found in almost every walk of life: architects, doctors, nurses, teachers, policemen, soldiers, engine drivers, farmers, bank managers, university lecturers, civil servants, politicians, and cabinet ministers as well as ordained ministers of religion. A good number, including those who served as deacons of the Moeding Church in their school days, are providing significant lay leadership in the churches in Botswana today. It is in these committed Christian lay men and women in the churches and in all walks of life that Moeding has fulfilled its aim, to prepare its students for the dual citizenships of Botswana and of Heaven.

KENNETH MALTUS SMITH

## REVIEW ARTICLE: NONCONFORMIST TEXTS

*Protestant Nonconformist Texts: Volume 1, 1550-1700.* Edited by R. Tudur Jones with Arthur Long and Rosemary Moore. Aldershot and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2007. Pp. xiv + 421. £75.00. ISBN 978-0-7546-3864-3.

*Protestant Nonconformist Texts: Volume 2, The Eighteenth Century.* Edited by Alan P. F. Sell with David J. Hall and Ian Sellers. Aldershot and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2006. Pp. xviii + 459. £75.00. ISBN 978-0-7546-3853-7.

*Protestant Nonconformist Texts: Volume 3, The Nineteenth Century.* Edited by David Bebbington with Kenneth Dix and Alan Ruston. Aldershot and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2006. Pp. xx + 400. £75.00. ISBN 978-0-7546-3850-2.

*Protestant Nonconformist Texts: Volume 4, The Twentieth Century.* Edited by David M. Thompson with J. H. Y. Briggs and John Munsey Turner. Aldershot and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2007. Pp. xvi + 416. £75.00. ISBN 978-0-7546-4013-4.

Whatever else they filled their time with and whatever else they accomplished over the four centuries or so of their existence, there can be little doubt that the Nonconformists of the past have left behind them a huge number of documents which can now be studied, analysed and evaluated by historians and other interested parties. Not only were they incredibly productive in theology and philosophy, but they were also kept busy producing apologetic – and sometimes polemical – tracts, engaging (even interfering) in political, social and economic matters, composing confessional and liturgical materials and sermons and, very often, writing their personal journals. Considering there have been so many Nonconformists, that the period in which Nonconformity has officially existed is so long and that publishers inevitably limit the amount of space available, it is surely an unenviable task to have had to sift through this material and make a selection for publication. Such recognition of the immensity and complexity of the whole undertaking points us to our indebtedness to the select band of scholars who have produced this series of four-volumes of Nonconformist texts. Even a cursory glance at the contents will confirm how comprehensively and sensitively they have fulfilled their brief. With a simplicity and lightness of touch, and by drawing on aspects of Nonconformist confession, piety, apologetics, dogmatics, discipleship and worship as they were pursued both in public and in private, they have selected and edited material which encapsulates the very essence of Protestant Nonconformity in its various forms. The appearance of these books marks the culmination of a remarkable project which is sure to have abiding value.

Given the immensity of the task, not to mention the instability of the market

and the shifting anxieties of potential publishers, it is hardly surprising that much time passed between the inauguration of the scheme and the appearance in print of these four volumes. The Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries set the whole enterprise in motion as its primary task in October 1993, yet volumes 2 and 3 did not appear until 2006, while volumes 1 and 4 were published in 2007. The editors had, for the most part, completed their work well before this (volume 1, for example, was completed shortly before R. Tudur Jones's sudden death in July 1998; the editor of volume three has added a note to the effect that the text was completed in December 1998, the delay in publication requiring that references be updated), but the project awaited a publisher. That these volumes finally saw the light of day owes much to the vision and commitment of Alan Sell, the series editor. His foresight and dedication, along with that of the eleven other editors responsible for the individual volumes, has ensured that a vast array of documents that have been vital in the history of Nonconformist witness, as well as more peripheral but interesting and illustrative articles, have been given a permanent home in the public sphere. Thus a heritage that currently rests on a precarious foundation (as the number of Nonconformists as well as the number of scholars engaged in research into Nonconformity continue to decline), has not been lost and future historians will have a resource through which it will be easier to familiarise themselves with sources and be directed to further information about their subject. Surely the series editor's hope will be realised: these volumes will "prove helpful to students and interested readers" as "a checklist of sources which, though necessarily limited by considerations of space, is intended as an appetiser and a stimulus to further quarrying" (from Series Editor's Preface).

Each volume follows the same basic pattern. There is a general introduction to the period under review which in some ways justifies the selection of documents. The first volume's introduction is twice as long as any of the others and in many ways readers would have benefitted greatly from a similar, detailed treatment of the more recent Nonconformist history (though it has to be confessed that this might have drawn attention away from the documents themselves). Each volume is then separated into thematic sub-sections, with the contents usually (but not always) arranged chronologically. Each sub-section has a short introduction, and each document is usually introduced with a brief reference note. Needless to say, the scholarly acumen displayed in the introductory sections is of the highest quality. While observing a similar format, the editors appear to have had complete freedom over the content of each volume. All involved were painfully aware of the restriction of space. They admit that in the hands of others a wholly different selection could have been made. But they have all done their work well for there are no texts that do not have a context, and the reader's understanding is enhanced because the editors demonstrate how each piece of writing fits in to the story as a whole. All in all, the editors have succeeded in producing as balanced, illustrative and inclusive a set of volumes as is possible. There is a select bibliography and an

index of persons in each volume. A subject index would have been immensely helpful, though the task of assembling one, admittedly, would have been rather difficult.

In volume 1, R. Tudur Jones expertly guides us through the emergence of Nonconformity and its association with Protestant reform, Separatism and the rise of religious Dissent. Covering the years 1550 to 1700, we are presented with the legal documents which made dissenters of a vocal and passionate minority, the petitions to parliament which suggested that most had little interest in sedition, the occasionally radical nature of opposition to the State church as contained in the Marprelate tracts, the debates between Presbyterians and Independents over polity, the Civil Wars, the restoration, "Black Bartholomew" and the subsequent oppression of the Clarendon Code, and finally the inauguration of Tolerance following the Glorious Revolution. While apparently concerned with ecclesiology – many of the debates in which "Nonconformists" engaged centred on the requirement that vestments be worn, the nature of church polity, the interference of parliament in church affairs or the power of the church courts – Tudur Jones suggests that there was something far more essential bubbling up in English life in this period. On the surface, he contends: "They asked themselves whether it [the Book of Common Prayer] conformed with the prescriptions of the New Testament and decided that it did not. The central concern of Christianity is the relationship between people and God". But behind this lay the forces which looked to *conserve social order* in the form of a religious and political establishment which perceived the threat emanating from those who refused to conform whose ultimate goal must therefore have been *social transformation*. There were, of course, a wide variety of "Nonconformists" at this time: those who wished to remain within the Church of England but whose practice deviated from the norms established in law, the separatists who had turned their back on the national church, and those who sought to follow their consciences by emigrating initially to Europe and then to the New World. Among them was represented a host of theological ideas: some were Presbyterian, others Independent, some were Baptist, many were fifth monarchists and most had adopted some form of millennialism. There were those whose movements endured and those whose movements were short lived. But, concludes Tudur Jones, all remained second class citizens at the end of this period due to the fact that the Test and Corporation Acts remained in force. All this is clearly expressed in the documents included in this first volume.

In volume 2, Alan Sell suggests that the "long eighteenth century" might not, *prima facie*, appear as interesting as the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries despite the overwhelming influence of the evangelical revival and its leaders, John Wesley and George Whitefield in England, Howel Harris, Daniel Rowland and William Williams of Pantycelyn in Wales. The revival was not beyond nonconformist experience, but it is to be remembered that its main protagonists remained firmly within the confines of the Anglican church. Nevertheless, they are represented in this volume by Wesley and Whitefield,

and the debates which ensued between them and the Dissenters on the nature of grace, predestination and the final perseverance of the saints. Alongside revival, this was a century of philosophical and theological controversy, with the boundaries between the two modes of investigation being inevitably blurred, and there is a section of extracts from philosophical writings of some of the prominent rational Dissenters of the period, including Isaac Watts, Joseph Priestley and Richard Price. Furthermore it was a century when denominational (and thus ecclesiological) boundaries were not clearly defined and there was much movement between Presbyterianism and Independency. Professor Sell tells us that his aim is "to present as comprehensive a view as possible of the philosophical, doctrinal, ecclesiological, socio-political, evangelistic and missionary concerns of the eighteenth century Nonconformists, and to afford a glimpse into their devotional life – private and public, their churchly activities, and their heaven-orientated motivations and aspirations". That is quite ambitious, though it seems largely to have been fulfilled in the volume as a whole.

David Bebbington was the co-ordinating editor for volume 3. In some ways the nineteenth century offers the reader more excitement than the preceding hundred years. Being the century of rapid industrialization with its attendant concerns – squalid working and living conditions and basic social and economic injustice – along with an unprecedented and massive growth in population, there is perhaps more to ponder here, especially in socio-political and economic history and the way in which religion played its part. What is remarkable is, as Professor Bebbington points out, Nonconformity during this century "fared remarkably well". He notes, for example, that there was a tenfold increase in worshipping congregations between 1772 and 1851, while the Religious Census of 1851 demonstrated that just under half of all churchgoers in England were Nonconformists. This was the period when "a despised religious minority, formally relegated to the margins of national life, had turned into a vast social movement that looked set to overtake the established church in the affections of the people". There are a number of new developments highlighted by Professor Bebbington. While volume 1 includes the fascinating section on "A Woman's Ministry: Margaret Fell and the Kendal Fund" (recalling one who played a vital role in early Quakerism) and an extract on "Women Preachers" (representing the way in which the Quakers sought to justify such activity), and volume 2 includes "Elizabeth Singer Rowe on God's Inexpressible Love", "Ann Moore's Desire", "The Experience of Ann West" and "Mercy Doddridge's Letter to her Children", it was in the nineteenth century that the role of women was more fully recognised. Professor Bebbington informs us that, perhaps surprisingly, women were in fact more numerous in Baptist and Congregational chapels, though not always in attendance at services (for obvious reasons). As a result of this, the volume contains a whole sub-section dedicated to "Women", very little of which is taken up with the idea that women play no more than a supporting role. Alongside this, the nineteenth century saw many Nonconformists rally themselves

behind the name of evangelical with the resulting emphases on the atoning death of Christ and on the need for individual conversion. Perhaps this gave stimulus to the growth of the Missionary movement which receives its own sub-section, full of fascinating documents which relate to home as well as to overseas mission. In socio-economic history, the century is characterised too by the rise of the Nonconformist businessman and the growth in philanthropy, as well as by the emergence of a number of new “dissenting” sects such as the Mormons, the Theosophists and the Christadelphians. From mid-century, Victorian moralism and its elevation of the genteel and propitious meant that even Nonconformists wondered whether it was acceptable to be concerned about the “state of the soul”. As the century drew to a close, concludes Professor Bebbington, a popular evangelicalism may still have remained in the pew, but increasing leisure time, a growing interest in sport and the tendency to domesticate the gospel message under the influence of home-grown moralism as well as continental philosophy, tended to result in decline and “membership began to fall relative to the population”. Nonconformists began to lose their grip on their social role as the state gradually took responsibility for welfare and for education. Texts that both illustrate and illuminate all these developments can be found within the covers of this volume.

The final volume in the series, which brings the story of Nonconformity up to date, was co-ordinated by David Thompson. Perhaps what most strikes the reader about this collection is the rapid rate of change and the startling range of developments which occurred during the twentieth century. There was little short of revolution in some aspects of society: the inauguration of the National Health Service, the state welfare and education systems, the number of women who went out of the home to work and continued with careers even when they had started a family. All these things would have been virtually unthinkable in the previous century. A section on social issues reflects how the churches have developed in this area of witness with articles on temperance, marriage, divorce and remarriage giving way over time to articles on abortion, sex and sexuality, gambling and racism. The section on “Peace and War” reminds readers that the twentieth century was one of the bloodiest yet, while technological “advance” had ensured that humanity now faced the prospect of aerial bombardment – used to devastating effect in the Vietnam war, the Balkans conflict as well as in Iraq – and even total annihilation through nuclear weapons. If this section verges on depressing the reader, due to the futility and intensity of man’s hatred and violence towards his fellows (and it is usually *men* who declare war and fight it), it at least reassures that the churches became aware of the problem and eventually began to make their protest. There were also wide-ranging changes in church life. Women’s ministry has emerged and flourished, and there are appropriate texts marking this including an article which reported the ordination of Constance Coltman, the first woman to be ordained in a Congregational church in 1917, and a note on Ella Gordon, the first woman minister in the Presbyterian Church of England. The arrival of immigrants in the United Kingdom from the late 1940s has led to the

development of vibrant and growing “black churches”, while other debates which arose in this century included subjects such as the place of the child in church and interfaith relations. Perhaps more than any, this was the ecumenical century with the quest for unity looming large over much of it, even if it could be argued that there is very little to show for the vision and energy of a whole generation of Nonconformist leaders who were committed to the cause of organic union. Nevertheless, the United Reformed Church figures prominently, and the volume is all the richer as a result, with texts relating to particular U.R.C. witness such as the Church Related Community Worker, the Second Order of Worship from the 1989 Service Book and the Statement of Faith in “inclusive language”. But perhaps most noticeable in the book is the fact that this was the century of cruel and relentless decline in the mainstream Nonconformist denominations. The Nonconformists had begun the century with the belief that “this would be ‘their’ century”, but the hopes and dreams were dashed, and Professor Thompson notes that “the improvements in life expectancy after 1945 probably disguised the extent to which Nonconformity was losing its hold on the population, because its age structure was increasingly skewed towards the elderly”. Despite this, he points us to the fact that while many have asked the question why such decline has occurred, an equally important question concerns the reasons why those who continue to worship in Nonconformist chapels have stayed. He does not offer an answer, though possible reasons can be gleaned from the rich variety of texts he has selected for inclusion here.

It is inevitable that the editors’ interests are displayed in each volume. It is not surprising to see John Penry, William Wroth, Walter Cradock and Morgan Llwyd alongside Robert Browne, John Robinson, John Milton, George Fox, Richard Baxter and John Owen in the first volume. Volume 2 gives much of its space to philosophical and doctrinal matters, including the nature of the church, ministry and sacraments and the all-important question of the relationship between church and state. The third volume, uniquely, gives space to the sermon and traces the advent of the missionary societies and the inauguration of denominations. But it presents this within the theoretical framework of the development of evangelicalism in nineteenth-century Nonconformity. The final volume highlights the engagement of Nonconformists in politics, demonstrating that, in the twentieth century, politics was more open to them than at any other time in their history. Much space is also given to ecumenical relations and the quest for unity. Yet personal as the selection inevitably is, there is no sense in which Nonconformist history has been in any way distorted in order to accommodate the editors’ interests alone. Instead, a fairly comprehensive picture emerges of a movement which in each era maintained an essential connection with its antecedents, but which undoubtedly changed emphases and interests as it grew and as it had to respond on the one hand to social, political and economic developments and, on the other, to philosophical and theological changes. The result is that, in the twentieth century, Nonconformist witness and practice was very different from that of

the seventeenth century Puritans. Yet throughout the four and a half centuries under review, those who claimed, or were tarred by, the name of Nonconformist belonged to a vibrant movement that refused to stagnate but rose to meet each new challenge.

Of course, these are reference volumes to be dipped in to rather than to be read from cover to cover and readers will be drawn more to some texts than others according to personal interest and taste. In perusing the content, I found myself captivated at times by what could be described as the core writings of the past four centuries and at others by what are peripheral, even tangential, documents which nevertheless offer a flavour of Nonconformity in its various manifestations.

For example, I liked the inclusion in volume 1 of an extract from Philip Henry's diary – ejected from the curacy of Worthenbury, Bangor on Dee, on 24 October 1661 – primarily because it shows that, for all the changes that have occurred, the life of the twenty-first century pastor has remained remarkably similar to her or his seventeenth-century equivalent. On 24 August 1661, Henry recorded: "Sister Mary went to Chester to a Shirurgion, having a sore foot bitten with a leech"; on 3 September he was involved in the funeral of the Clerk's daughter, though Henry had objected to the superstition of taking her body into the church before the burial. He mentions preaching, studying, preparing for the sacrament and frequent illness, of one of which he feared "may bee tis death" (21 October).

Among the gems in volume 2 can be found a variety of Isaac Watts's writings including extracts from his *Guide to Prayer* as well as other texts where he responds to, and even adopts, the findings of John Locke. "The Church, Ministry and Sacraments" section is particularly interesting with ordination, confessions of faith, attitudes towards baptism and the Lord's Supper all given due prominence. This was a century where Nonconformity was blessed with leaders of weighty minds, and they treated their subjects with appropriate seriousness and thoroughness. That in itself teaches us an important lesson.

Much could be mentioned from the third volume and the nineteenth century. The inclusion of a section of excerpts from sermons is particularly noteworthy. The short entry by the Methodist W. B. Pope on the nature of theology as science was most welcome, though it is probably not as insightful as P. T. Forsyth on "God the Holy Father", described succinctly by the editor as "a manifesto for his mature theology in which holiness tempers love to generate the grace of atonement". In our day, when liturgical laxity in Nonconformist worship is much bewailed, many would do well to look at James Martineau's "Call to Worship", an all the more startling fact (perhaps) given his Unitarian sympathies. But most welcome, for me, was the inclusion of the report to the Wesleyan Chapel Committee of the plans to erect a chapel at Penmaenmawr in North Wales (where I now am minister).

There are many fascinating documents in Volume 4, including the URC Basis of Union and the Welsh Covenant of 1975, as well as extracts from the

memoirs of Harold Wilson, James Callaghan, and Margaret Thatcher which reveal their debt to various Nonconformist bodies. But one of the most intriguing sub-sections is that on "Worship" and particularly the section on "Later Twentieth Century Hymnody" where examples of the work of Ivor H. Jones, Alan Gaunt, Brian Wren, F. Pratt Green, Fred Kaan, and Caryl Micklem show that there were thoughtful and theologically astute alternatives to the "chorus culture" that appears to grip some parts of the contemporary church. It also reveals that whatever other troubles they faced, at least some Nonconformists continued to make profoundly theological and contemporary contributions to liturgy and worship to the benefit of all. (Let it be noted, though, that four of the six belonged to the URC.)

It would, of course, be easy to complain that certain texts have been omitted, particular events have been ignored and notable individuals have been overlooked. Readers might be left wondering what it means to be a "Nonconformist" in the twenty-first century given the variety of expression in the previous four hundred years and the differences in social climate that we now both enjoy and endure. (And, of course, having no established church since 1920, the term has completely changed its meaning in Wales). But it cannot be denied that this is a fascinating and illustrative collection or that its primary merit is as a resource, and an invaluable one at that, for future study of Nonconformity. It remains to be seen whether this will take the form of a dispassionate appraisal of a social and religious phenomenon that emerged and then quietly receded, or if it will provide a stimulus to re-evaluate the principles and witness of previous generations in order to encourage theological literacy, cultural dynamism, passionate evangelicalism (in the sense of zeal for the good news) but social and political toleration among current and future inheritors of the Nonconformist tradition. Perhaps this is too much to expect of a series of books, even if the story contained here can offer much by way of inspiration. Alan Sell alludes to this in the Series Editor's Preface and his words are worth quoting in full:

Above all, it is hoped that worthy tribute is here paid to those who, often at great personal cost, and in face of socio-political obstacles of various kinds, declared their faith and bore their witness. Indeed (to advert to realities, not to utter a lament), in a time of general apologetic caution, widespread doctrinal ignorance and apathy, fitful ecumenism, queried national institutions and overall numerical decline among the Protestant nonconformists of England and Wales, it may even be that forebears have something to teach those who inherit their mantle – and any others who may care to listen.

If the Nonconformists of previous generations have anything to say to us, then much of it is said in these volumes. Let those with ears, hear.

ROBERT POPE

## REVIEWS

***Calvin: A Brief Guide to His Life and Thought.* By Willem van't Spijker, tr. Lyle D. Bierma. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2009. Pp. x + 197. £16.99. ISBN 978-0-664-23225-2.**

The five-hundredth anniversary of Calvin's birth, which fell on 10 July 2009, presented the opportunity for Calvin scholars to publish new evaluations of his theological contribution to the life of the church as well as his historical impact on society in general (in Europe, the USA and, it could also be said, South Africa and Korea among many other places). This book claims to be an introduction rather than a new analysis, but it is clearly based on sound and extensive scholarship, an acute but faithful reading of the Calvin corpus as well as a profound grasp of the socio-political context of sixteenth-century Europe. As might be expected from the title, the book contains a mixture of historical detail and theological insight both employed to elucidate the life and work of a man whose reputation has suffered from the criticism of subsequent generations who have very little grasp of what he actually said about predestination, or (worse), who condemn him for failing to prevent the execution of Michael Servetus. Reading this book will probably not convince those who, though doubtless ignorant of the facts, have nurtured such animosity towards the Genevan Reformer. But for those who come to it more openly, then their appreciation of Calvin, his greatness as a thinker and his genius as an organiser, will certainly be enhanced.

The book opens with a succinct summary of the political situation in France into which Calvin was born. For some time the king, Francis I, had protected "humanists" and "evangelicals", but in the 1530s he seemed arbitrarily to change his mind, adopting policies that were intolerant towards the reformation and its protagonists. This is the background to Calvin's birth and upbringing. His mother was deeply pious and inculcated the Catholic values (or even superstitions) into her young son (he remembered having kissed a relic associated with St Anne). She died while he was still a boy. His father intended that he should have a career in the church and sent him for the appropriate education, until Gérard Cauvin fell out with the chapter at Noyon cathedral and sent his son to be trained in jurisprudence instead. In the early 1530s, Calvin underwent a "conversion", about which he was always reticent, but which convinced him that his life was not his own but belonged to God. While this impressed upon him the importance of election in the Christian scheme, it more importantly led him to commit the rest of his days to promote and expedite the reformation. But his conversion coincided with Francis's violent suppression of the "Lutherans", and Calvin fled to Basel where he met, among others, Guillaume Farel, Pierre Viret, Heinrich Bullinger and Martin Bucer. It was relationships with these men that would prove decisive for Calvin and for much of what would become Protestant Europe. Nevertheless, as the book suggests, Calvin's aim at this time was to become a humanist scholar, using his

learning primarily to encourage reform in his native France. To that end he published the first edition of his *Institutes* in 1536 while he lived in exile in Basel. As he passed through Geneva in July 1536 he was persuaded by Farel to stay and help with the work of reform in that city. He spoke of this in providential terms: it was "as if God had from heaven laid his mighty hand on me".

After relating this early part of Calvin's story, the book offers some background material explaining how Geneva had opted for the reformation and then relates how Calvin and Farel came into increasingly bitter conflict with the secular powers in the city which led finally to their expulsion in April 1538. Farel eventually settled in Neuchâtel while Calvin settled in Strasbourg with Bucer. Some background detail is offered regarding the reformation in that city, before we are informed that it was Bucer who convinced him that he could not spend his life in pursuit of learning but had also a duty of care to a congregation. Calvin took pastoral charge of the French refugees in the city. He continued to develop his own expository method which he described as "brevity with clarity", in sharp contrast to Bucer's comprehensiveness; even verbosity. In 1540 he married the widow Idelette de Bure and in the following year he was persuaded, contrary to his own wishes, that it was God's will that he return to Geneva. "I would rather die a hundred deaths than on that cross, on which I would daily perish a thousand times over," he remarked.

The book then reaches Calvin's extended period in Geneva which would last until his death and during which he made his greatest contribution. That does not mean that things were easy, as the chapter headings imply. "Geneva 1541-1546, Organisation" outlines how Calvin formulated both ecclesiastical and political structures in the city, finally ensuring that the city conformed to the pattern he and Farel had suggested in 1537, a plan which at that time led to their expulsion. "Geneva, 1546-1555, Crisis" outlines the opposition he endured from prominent citizens, from those such as Bolsec and Trolliet who opposed his views on predestination, and the affair associated with the name of Servetus. This is a sympathetic account of Calvin, but the author carefully demonstrates that it was not Calvin but the magistracy which condemned Servetus and that the decision to execute him as a heretic was supported by Bern, Zurich, Basel and Strasbourg, while Catholic Vienne had condemned him to death and, when Servetus escaped, that city burned him in effigy. "Geneva, 1555-1564, Consolidation" shows that Calvin had ridden the storm as his pattern of discipline and structures were developed, as the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* was published, and the Academy established (initially to train students in theology but, after Calvin's death, adding a faculty of law and of medicine, the foundation of what would become the University of Geneva).

The book draws to a close with an analysis of the "Contours of Calvin's Theology" which describes his dislike of scholasticism, his development of the thought of Luther and Bucer, his commitment to scripture and belief that word and spirit must be held together. Perhaps more could have been said in this section about his views on union with Christ, and more to explain that his

views on predestination were, for him, recognition of God's sovereignty, part of the pastoral nature of the good news and simply a logical, but theological, conclusion, but space probably prevented this. The final chapter offers an insight into his wider influence, naming especially developments in the Netherlands, Scotland (where Calvin was interpreted and elaborated upon by Knox), England (where Calvinism was stronger among the Puritans than with those who laid the foundations of the established church), the Palatinate, and Heidelberg. The conclusion is that Calvinism is characterised by unity in diversity.

Each chapter of this book is packed full of detail and the author manages to condense much into each sentence. As a result, readers might find it difficult to keep up, even though the prose is fairly light. Nevertheless, those who persevere will gain real knowledge and insight into the life and work of this reformer. As a result, Calvin and his work might be salvaged for further reflection by those who have inherited the Reformed tradition. This would be no bad thing. For while he could be bad-tempered, stubborn, cantankerous, even petulant, he was also an astute theologian who was convinced that the pursuit of theology was a pastoral rather than a philosophical task. As such he was a theologian of the church, with the Body of Christ and its essential unity as his fundamental concern. The mere adoption of his system is, of course, unthinkable, but reflection on his insights might well assist the development of a constructive approach among contemporary Reformed Christians. This book goes a long way towards familiarising its readers with the man and inspiring them to reflect upon his theology. It is well worth reading.

ROBERT POPE

***Hinterland Theology: A Stimulus to Theological Construction.* By Alan P. F. Sell. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008. Studies in Christian History and Thought. Pp. xvi + 715. £39.99. ISBN 978-1-84227-331-9.**

For many years now Alan Sell has been engaged on a mission: to rescue from oblivion figures in the Dissenting tradition who, without making any major contribution to theology, have nevertheless tried to think out for themselves and pass on to others an understanding of the Christian faith that is both true to the Bible and engaged with the intellectual and religious movements of their times. In an appendix to this book he lists 122 such people, mainly Dissenters, for whom in various places he has "arranged mini-resurrections". In *Hinterland Theology* he has chosen ten examples from the past three centuries, who have written "in the wake of" Toleration, Enlightenment and Revival, Modern Biblical Criticism and Theological Liberalism.

The ten are: Thomas Ridgley (1667-1734), Independent minister and tutor,

who explained and defended “the most important doctrines” contained in the *Westminster Larger Catechism*; Abraham Taylor (fl. 1721-1740), also an Independent minister and tutor, who deplored what he saw as the declension from the doctrines of the Reformation by some of his fellow Dissenters; Samuel Chandler (1693-1766), Presbyterian minister, a “moderate Calvinist”, who did not believe in subscription to any creed; George Payne (1781-1848), President first of Blackburn Academy and then of the Western Academy, whose Calvinism was modified by the Enlightenment in a moral direction and by the Evangelical Revival in a religious direction; Richard Alliot (1804-1863), Payne’s successor at Western College, later President of Cheshunt and tutor at Spring Hill, who strove to hold together objective truth and subjective experience; David Worthington Simon (1830-1909), tutor at Spring Hill, then Principal of the Scottish Congregational Theological Hall and of Yorkshire United Theological College, who entered the nineteenth century debate on the meaning and necessity of the atonement; Vincent Tymms (1842-1921), Baptist minister, who presented the gospel in terms of the most liberal thought of the day; W. F. Adeney (1849-1920), tutor at both Hackney and New Colleges, and then Principal of Lancashire Independent College, who mediated the results of biblical criticism and contributed to church history; R. S. Franks (1871-1964), Principal of Western College, who believed that the theologian must assimilate religious experience and Christian history with the aid of reason; and Charles Duthie (1911-1981), Principal of the Scottish Congregational College and of New College, who sought to interpret and learn from the major theologians of the day.

Sell does not deal only with the formal theological writings of his subjects. He begins each section with biographical information, not only about the person himself, but also about his forebears, his children, his tutors, his colleagues, his students and his opponents, and he tells us where to find more, often in earlier publications of his own. He then surveys as much as he could find of what they wrote, what they read and what others said about them. I am glad to have been introduced to those I did not know, and to learn new things about those I knew already. I knew about Chandler’s part in the controversy about the character of King David; this has now been placed in a wider context. I knew of Adeney as a biblical scholar, but did not know his book *The Greek and Eastern Churches* or his concern for Sunday School work; I had not realised how much light Franks’s book reviews and Duthie’s *British Weekly* articles threw on their own thinking.

In a brief introduction and a seventy-page conclusion Sell justifies his choice of subjects and suggests the respects in which they may stimulate our own theological thinking. At one point he claims that they are all representative of Dissenting thought in their times, but does not generally tell us which contemporaries shared their ideas or methods. He sees continuities between them: although only Ridgley and Chandler are quoted by any of the others (Payne and Taylor respectively), and the rise of biblical criticism gave rise to a major discontinuity, they are all Trinitarians, concerned with the person and

work of Christ, and with the nature of the Church. They also share awareness of the need for systematic theology and apologetics.

How might these theologians help to stimulate our own thinking? They encourage us to think about our starting-points: do we begin with the human situation or with the nature of God? with objective revelation or subjective experience? Sell further suggests that they may remind us of issues that we may have neglected or forgotten, but the examples he gives – was Jesus the Son of God prior to the incarnation? how far did he “empty himself” of divine attributes during his life on earth? – hardly impress themselves as matters that either need or are capable of resolution. On the other hand, I suspect that claims made for the cosmic significance of Christ do need examination in the light of our increased awareness of other faiths and concern for creation. What place do they have in either the belief of Christians or the apologetic task?

The book has obviously been both hard work and a labour of love for Sell. Reading it has been hard work too, though rewarding. It is a long book (advertised at approx. 350 pages, it grew to 715), and readers might be advised to begin with the more recent subjects, that is, from Tymms onwards. Regrettably, some adverse comments must be made on the editing and production of the book. It is a paperback with binding that makes it difficult to hold the book open and is liable to split (my copy fell apart at p.294 on first reading). Occasionally Sell refers to a matter he has dealt with earlier: he will give the reference to his source, but not a cross-reference to the place in his own book. And I have noted eighty-two misprints: far too many.

ROGER TOMES

***Apostles of The Spirit and Fire: American Revivalists and Victorian Britain.***  
By Nigel Scotland. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009. *Studies in Evangelical History and Thought*. Pp. xiii + 241. £24.99. ISBN978-1-84227-366-1.

This helpful study analyses the impact of a select group of male and female American Revivalists on British church life in the nineteenth century. The opening chapter “Revivalist Religion” begins with an overview of the history of revivalism in America. Scotland notes that the term “revivalist” was first used after the Second Great Awakening in the USA. It was a term used to describe those individuals and churches that sought by various human activities to prepare the ground for evangelistic initiatives. These new measures were seen as a contrast with the predominant earlier understanding that revivals were a sovereign act of God brought about in response to the earnest prayers of believers. The author draws out the features of revivalism which he identified as marks of the work of the American revivalists in Britain. These included:

literalism (with respect to the Bible); supernaturalism (an expectation of physical manifestations); emotionalism (lots of weeping and loud expressions of praise to God); conversionism (immediate professions in response to invitations); laicism (most of the revivalists were lay-people); radicalism (informal approaches to leading worship in contrast to the cold formalism of some churches); the raised status of women, together with support for labour movements and against slavery and intemperance. The last feature was adventism, particularly prominent in Sankey's hymns.

There are eleven men and women chosen to illustrate the different kinds of revival campaigns under discussion. There are first of all two couples (Walter and Phoebe Palmer, and Robert and Hannah Pearsall Smith); two women revivalists (Zilpha Elaw and Amanda Berry Smith); and five men (Lorenzo Dow, Charles Finney, James Caughey, Dwight L. Moody and Edward Payson Hammond). It is likely that most of these names are familiar to readers of the *Journal*, though Zilpha Elaw and Amanda Berry Smith are probably the least known. The chapter on Charles Finney effectively covers familiar material in highlighting the beginnings of professional revivalism as does the one on Dwight Moody's contribution to urban mission. "Lorenzo Dow and Camp meeting Revivalism" covers Dow's major contribution to the formation of the Primitive Methodist denomination and explains the significance of his work in the Potteries and North-West England amongst the working classes who had felt alienated from the more formal worship of Wesleyan Methodism. James Caughey, the holiness and temperance revivalist, was also, like Dow, an unusual and extraordinary communicator of the Christian gospel to the working classes. He saw his main successes in the industrial towns and cities of the north of England. Unlike Dow, he worked mainly within the circuits of Wesleyan Methodism. Huge crowds attended his meetings from "all classes in Pottery society; but great numbers of outsiders 'the common people'". He was welcome in pulpits across the various branches of Methodism. Zilpha Elaw and Amanda Berry Smith were bold and courageous African-American pioneers who overcame many difficulties that hindered their attempts to serve as revivalists. Edward Payson Hammond, the pioneer of revivalism amongst children and young people, excelled at communicating the Christian message, particularly, though not exclusively, to younger people. The chapters on the Palmers and the Pearsall Smiths cover "Holiness Revivalism" and "Higher Life Revivalism" respectively.

There are a few minor criticisms. Sections of the Particular Baptist community were healthier than here portrayed (see Roger Hayden, *Continuity and Change*, for more details). Also Bishop Wilberforce's confrontation with Thomas Huxley was not "ill-judged". (John Lennox's book *God's Undertaker*, provides convincing evidence of a contrary perspective). This study is commended as a well written and excellent introduction to the work of American revivalists.

***The Things That are Behind: The Memoirs of an Italian Protestant Pastor.***  
By Achille Deodato. Telford: British Bus Publishing Ltd., 2003. Pp. 224.  
£18.95. ISBN 978-1-904875-955. Illustrated.

This is an impressive book. It is, in fact, the second edition, published in 2003 – no date is given for the first edition. It gives an astonishingly detailed account of the life of one who comes across as a leading pastor of the Waldensian Church in Italy who lived from 1907 until near the end of the twentieth century – I could not find the date of his death. It therefore covers both world wars, the inter-war years and the half-century since the end of the Second World War. It presents, as the preface suggests, “an opportunity to draw closer to the everyday fabric of a generation that is by now rapidly disappearing, and describes, in a significant way, the recent history of our churches”. The “Deodato children” [*sic*] have provided an excellent, idiomatic translation – sometimes, indeed, engagingly colloquial in terminology: words like “bloke”, “slog”, “pell-mell” jump out of the page from time to time. There are interesting insights into the deprivations faced until recently by Protestants in overwhelmingly-Catholic Italy. It is particularly engaging to read of life there during the war from one who lived and ministered through that time. It is also good to read from the “inside” of the life of one of Europe’s oldest Protestant Churches, with whom the United Reformed Church has had a lot to do through the Waldensian Fellowship, so ably motivated for many years by Ruth and Bill Cowhig of Sale near Manchester (given honourable mention in the text). Deodato’s C.V. includes appointments as Moderator, Vice-Moderator (twice), director of a Deaconess’ Home, of the Pinerolo Hostel, and of the Foresteria at Torre Pellice, as well as pastor of several local churches. He was also engaged in extended speaking visits to England, Ireland, Scotland, Switzerland, Denmark, Holland, the USA (six times), and Canada (twice). Here is an influential ministry indeed, wide in scope and deep in significance.

Yet the book disappointed me. I found it heavy-going. The presentation is condensed: too many words on each page, closely printed, giving an impression of solidity. More significantly, there is a daunting amount of detail. There are at least two ways of writing memoirs. One is to rely largely on the memory. The other is to consult a daily diary. My guess is that this author has kept a diary on which he has drawn copiously. As a result he runs the risk of offering a heavy and even, at times, boring account. Had he relied less on his diary and more on his memory he would probably have forgotten to record a number of incidents but he would inevitably have been more selective and given the reader a racier and more interesting read. In the process, perhaps, he would have engaged a readership wider than those who already had an interest in his subject. Nevertheless I am pleased to have read it, and I commend it to others.

C. KEITH FORECAST

***A Memoir of Troubled Times.* By Hans and Gertrude Wedell, augmented and edited by Renate Rocholl and Eberhard George Wedell, translated from the German by Katherine Wedell and Maggie Hoeffgen. London: New European Publications Ltd., 2008. Pp 200. £14.99. ISBN978-1-872410-69-2. Illustrated. Available from New European Publications, 14-16 Carroun Road, London, SW8 1JT.**

Hans and Gertrude Wedell were heroes of the German resistance in the Second World War. To my shame and certain deprivation I had not heard of them until now. Now that I have read this fascinating book, they take their place in my respect along with more famous colleagues mentioned in its pages – Hans Lilje, Martin Niemöller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer among them. If they are less well-known it is because until now their story has not been told in print and in English. Gertrude Wedell first wrote her own memoir, and wrote it, as the editors of the present volume indicate, “in so personal a style and so defenceless a manner that we hesitated many years before making it available for publication.” In the 1990s, however, they were persuaded to make her writings accessible to a wider readership and they were published by the Archives of the Protestant Church in the Rhineland, within whose fellowship the Wedells would have been well-known and honoured. Thirteen years later, however, their family have been prevailed upon to prepare an English text. In doing so, the original work of Mrs Wedell appears (translated) as chapters three, four and five and around it the editors have written new chapters, setting her work in context. The result is a moving composite account, some of it objective, some of it deeply personal, of the life of an extraordinary twentieth-century international family.

Hans Wedell was of Jewish extraction, born in 1881 and spending the first part of his adult life as a lawyer of note in Dusseldorf. Becoming a Christian, and marrying a deeply Christian wife (a cousin of Dietrich Bonhoeffer) in 1919, he felt increasingly a call to study theology and enter the Protestant ministry. During the 1930s, as the Nazi storm clouds began to gather over Europe, with the help of his friend Karl Barth he began to study Theology at Basel and then in 1938 took up a post-graduate fellowship at Princeton. At home in Germany, however, both he and Gertrude had identified with the Confessing Church, and, also on account of their Jewish connections, soon found themselves subject to restriction and persecution. Hans’s journey to America in 1938 and the outbreak of war in 1939 ensured that they were forced to remain apart until 1945. The story of how the family (there were four children) survived under incredible opposition, hounded from place to place until they were enabled to come to Britain, the way they were received here (not by any means always charitably), and the way they won through is the subject of the personal chapters written by Gertrude. At the same time, the effect of their long separation on Hans’s health in the States is likewise described. To say that one cannot but admire Gertrude’s tenacity and deep faith is an understatement. The account is immensely humbling.

After the war the whole family found their way back to the Rhineland and established themselves as an open house for fellow-Christians looking for either intense discussion of the relationship between the Christian Faith and the “new” secular world, or of mental and physical renewal, or both. They offered a widely ecumenical approach, Hans in particular developing a healthy scepticism of the sometimes restrictive aspects of institutional Christianity. Hundreds of people, it seems, beat a path to their door. Hans died in 1964, honoured by his Church and his nation. Gertrude lived on until 1979 and remained a source of strength to many to the end of her days.

This is a remarkable story. One could have wished for a more arresting title, but the one given is the measure of the understated nature of this account. There is a bibliography of seventeen books written by Hans Wedell. They will doubtless still reward careful study.

C. KEITH FORECAST

***A History of Trinity Church, Sutton, 1907-2007.* By Colin Howard. Published by the church, 2009. Pp. 136. £10.00 (+ £1.50 p. & p.). No ISBN. Illustrated. Copies are available from Sheila Greenslade, 12 Village Row, Mulgrave Road, Sutton, Surrey, SM2 6JZ.**

A review of the history of a local church of which one has been the minister cannot be unbiased. As Colin Howard says, memories of events are not always to be relied upon and he is to be commended for returning to written sources to produce this history of Trinity Church, Sutton, which celebrated the centenary of its building in 2007. It is refreshing to be reminded of what actually took place when the former Sutton Congregational Church, newly United Reformed, merged its life with Trinity Methodist Church, Sutton, Surrey, in 1973. Colin Howard came from the Congregational strain of that union, but reveals his own parents as Methodists before they became Congregationalists, so perhaps he was peculiarly fitted to undertake this local history, which has an interest beyond its immediate neighbourhood.

When the Wesleyan Methodists put up their new building in Sutton in 1907 its architect was chosen by competition, the rules of which specified that it must be in the Gothic style. The competition was won by Messrs Gordon and Gunton. Although Henry Thomas Gordon was the senior partner most of the responsibility for the work was carried by Josiah Gunton. The resultant building, clad in stone, with one of the few crown spires in the country, is still a handsome contribution to the Sutton townscape. It took the Wesleyans twenty-five years to pay off the debt resulting from the building, a debt increased by the insistence on a fine organ. The Wesleyans renamed their building Trinity at the time of Methodist Union. The book sets Trinity and its members within the

civic life of Sutton, and quotes a hymn by Frederick Pratt Green, who had a particularly happy ministry there, which sums up the paradox of Trinity's grand worship area set in the commercial heart of a busy suburb. A further, and better-known hymn by Pratt Green always resonates in churches like Trinity, which stand by a busy main road. "When the church of Jesus, shuts its outer door," exactly describes the situation of worshippers in Trinity, caught between the eternal and the temporal.

The bringing together of the two congregations in 1973 is set out, with a summary history of Sutton Congregational Church. There is a nice balance between describing the ecclesiological problems that had to be resolved and the similarity of interests in the two congregations. This union is set in the wider context of the ecumenical project in central Sutton. Given that this was one of the first unions of two relatively large Methodist and United Reformed churches, and the claimed success of the venture, this local history takes on a greater significance. Add to this the ecumenical dimension and one begins to hope that a study of the whole ecumenical project in Sutton might be undertaken at some stage. The present minister, Martin Camroux, believes that the story of Trinity Church, Sutton, shows there is life in the liberal tradition yet.

The book has a good number of illustrations, some in colour. They include exterior and interior views of the former Congregational building and a banner devised by Mary Rodhouse, whose husband, Alfred, came from a Northamptonshire Congregational family in the shoe trade. Colin Howard pays tribute to the encouragement he received from his late wife, Ruth, to carry through this work. She was an historian, Danish by birth, part of the cosmopolitan mix which already characterised the congregation in 1973 and which is even more pronounced now. This history also shows how a London suburban congregation contains members with significant roles in wider society and in the Church. It is good to be reminded of that tradition and to celebrate a local church which is still vibrant and looking to the future.

STEPHEN ORCHARD

***Always Being Reformed: Faith for a Fragmented World.* Second Edition. By Shirley C. Guthrie Jr (including essays by Daniel L. Migliore, Amy Plantinga Pauw and George W. Stroup and a Tribute by Charles B. Cousar). Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press/Alban Books, 2008. £13.99. ISBN 978-0-664-23159-0.**

For several generations of Reformed theological students Shirley C. Guthrie Jr. was a guide and mentor during their introduction to the disciple of systematic theology. Through a widely acclaimed and hugely successful text-book (*Christian Doctrine*, 1968) Guthrie's influence extended more widely than Columbia Theological Seminary where he taught (1957-2001). He

communicated with conviction, wrote with clarity and displayed an eirenic disposition when confronted with theological positions different from his Barthian orientation. Nowhere is this more clearly evident than in his 1995 Warfield Lectures delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary, later published as *Always Being Reformed: Faith for a Fragmented World* (1996), in which Guthrie sought to address “the most critical theological problem of our time”, viz “whether and how we can maintain Christian identity and faithfulness in a pluralistic church without becoming exclusive, intolerant, and irrelevant; and whether and how we can be an open, inclusive, relevant community of Christians without losing our Christian identity and authenticity.”

Guthrie’s argument in the six lectures flows from his dissatisfaction with the usual options on offer in the now standard typology: “exclusivism”, “inclusivism” and “pluralism”. He maintains that each displays a common weakness which causes them “to lose sight of the Person who stands at the center of Christian faith and life.” Therefore he advances a fourth alternative which, surprisingly at first glance, begins with “the confession that *Jesus Christ* is the way, the truth, and the life.” Driven on by Barth his mentor and significantly influenced by Clark Pinnock and Lesslie Newbigin, Guthrie grounds his alternative in a Trinitarian understanding, which first, attempts to overcome “the traditional Western hierarchical and patriarchal understanding” of the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity by use of the Eastern notion of *perichoresis* and, secondly, advances the conviction that “the *works* of the Trinity are indivisible”.

The central Trinitarian idea of God-in-community teaches us that God’s freedom is not to dominate and control but “to be with us and for us... empowering us to be God’s faithful covenant partners... in God’s work in and for the world.” This, in turn, Guthrie believes, provides us with a model upon which to base our understanding of human society and the web of relationships within it. Meanwhile, the doctrine of *indivisibility* establishes three things: (i) that our understanding of God’s work and the task of the church will be less triumphalistic since “sovereign power” ought never be separated from “suffering love” in either God’s activity or the church’s mission; (ii) that what God does *outside* the church is formally (if not materially) identical to what God does *within* it; and (iii) that the Spirit’s work is not confined to *Christian* spirituality, personal development and the church’s life but extends to the entire *oikoumene*.

Guthrie’s position has much to commend it. He reminds us that what is important in inter-religious dialogue is not defined by “what *we* Christians are, what *we* have to offer to others”, but according to how Jesus can be known outside what Christians are, know and have to offer. Guthrie is also clear that in dialogue Christians may be just as much learners as teachers given that the Spirit is “not trapped in or possessed by Christians and their church.” The God revealed in the life and witness of Jesus is present and at work with and for all – “including people of other religious faiths, people of no religious faith, and, who knows, maybe fellow Christians for whom we have contempt because they

are too liberal, too conservative, or too pietistic in what they believe and too tradition-bound or tradition-shattering in the way they live". In short, an *exclusive* focus on Jesus can lead people to rise to levels of acceptance, affirmation and inclusion that correct the confrontational tendencies of "exclusivism" every bit as much as they underscore the admirable intentions of "inclusivist" and "pluralist" alike to honour what is admirable about faiths other than our own.

Some of us will be concerned that Guthrie's thesis still asks too much of faithful members of non-Christian faiths who in turn may want to advance *their* God or faith-story as a possible inclusive frame of reference for establishing a rapprochement between rival faiths. The patronisation of other faiths often pointed out by the critics of "inclusivism" still looms large however much we might believe that Jesus, the way, truth and life is, in an important sense, "beyond" *all* religion. What Guthrie has produced, though, is a nuanced approach which already has an important place in the extensive literature that exists on this subject. It is good therefore to have a second edition of *Always Being Reformed* which also includes as a bonus three interesting essays that carry forward some of the issues Guthrie's thesis raises: Daniel L Migliore reflects on the adequacy of the Trinity as an image for the church; Amy Planting Pauw outlines some of the practices the church must advance in order to live in and work out of a worldly spirituality; and George W. Stroup discusses divine freedom and the way it is both *from* and *for* the world. A memoir of Guthrie by Charles B. Cousar, a colleague at Columbia, rounds off a welcome publication which, if has not been already, ought to be on the reading list of all in the United Reformed Church who wish to engage theologically on a most important contemporary issue.

DAVID R. PEEL