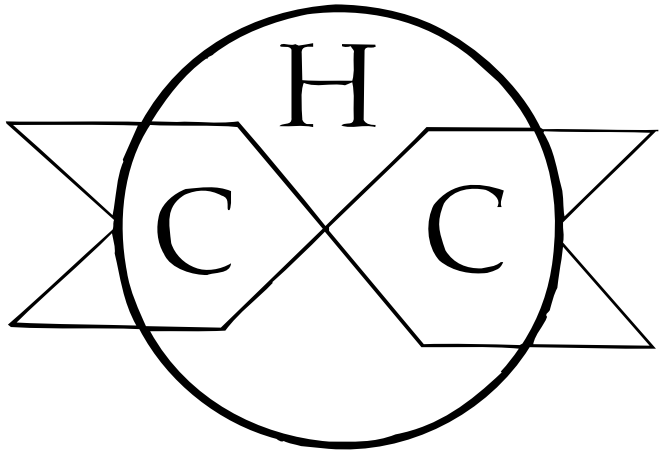

A table of contents for the *Congregational History Society Magazine* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_congregational-history-circle-01.php

ISSN 0965–6235

Congregational History Circle *Magazine*



Volume 5 Number 2
Spring 2006

ISSN 0965–6235

THE CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY CIRCLE MAGAZINE

Volume 5 No 2 Spring 2006

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

This issue has a reflective ring to it, with John Seldon Whale's headship of Mill Hill School recalled from a pupil's perspective, John Wilcox with further remembrances of his involvement in events leading to the formation of the Congregational Federation, and Richard Cleaves providing an account of his father's early life. We commemorate also the centenary of the Liberal landslide victory in 1906 and, in particular, the Nonconformists' contribution to and involvement in that triumph, and examine the treatment of Congregationalists in the newly published *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

We welcome Adrian Stanley and Jonathan Morgan as contributors to our magazine and note that the latter has agreed to become the reviews editor.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Sadly, during this last year, five of our long time members have died. Revd Trevor Watts, who died last year, has been a mainstay of the History Circle from its early days, was a regular contributor to our magazine and, more importantly, was its editor for several years, after which he served as the assistant editor. Trevor was an enthusiast for Welsh Congregational history but wrote much on Shrewsbury and on Job Orton (1717–1783). Colin Price writes, "I have an abiding memory, when on a 'chapel tour', of singing an Isaac Watts' hymn at Abney Park cemetery. There on Watts' mound, Trevor casually beat to death the surrounding brambles with his walking stick."

In addition, Revd Irene Blayney who toiled bravely and profitably at Kentish Town Congregational Church, with and without her friend and inspiration, Elsie Chamberlain, throughout its critical years of reconstruction, finally succumbed in December 2005. Pamela Hervey, the willing, accomplished and indefatigable secretary of St Helier Congregational Church, Morden, died in November 2005.

John Curtis, deacon of Guilden Morden Congregational Church, a keen lay preacher has also recently died. Colin Price recalls John, a member of his church, as "an enthusiast for Congregationalism, having previously been a lay reader in the Church of England. He was well known in the Chapels Society and in various local history and Workers' Education Associations. John wrote a creditable account, for a local history diploma with Madingley Hall, Cambridge, of Francis Holcroft (1633–1692) and his influential role in spreading Congregationalism in Cambridgeshire". Finally Revd Michael Durber, who was the very competent co-ordinator of the Congregational Federation's training

board for many years and suffered serious injuries, in a motor accident in July 2001, died in January 2006, aged 47. Each of them long displayed an admirable loyalty to Christ and to Congregationalism in different ways.

Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556)

2006 marks the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the martyrdom of Thomas Cranmer, the reforming, evangelical archbishop of Canterbury under Henry VIII and Edward VI, whose adherence to Protestantism was tested severely by Queen Mary and the restored Roman Catholic authorities. His courageous death, on 21 March, 1556, in Oxford followed his sermon in the university church where, departing from his written text, he explained "the great thing which so much troubleth my conscience", which was his having signed those papers "since my degradation". He was manhandled from the pulpit and hurried through the rain to the fire, in front of Balliol College, where he was burnt to death. There he achieved a saintly serenity and stated "forasmuch as my hand offended, writing contrary to my heart, my hand shall first be punished" and stretched his "unworthy right hand" into the flames. Quoting the final words of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, he cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit".[1] This cautious scholar was in many ways an unlikely martyr which fact renders the courageous manner of his eventual witness to his reformed Christian principles the more remarkable.

Publications—Forthcoming and Present

The United Reformed Church History Society had intended to publish a work this year offering brief lives of notable men and women from the Reformed Churches in the twentieth century. Members of the CHC will be happy to know that these notables, in *Who They Were in the Reformed Churches of England and Wales 1901–2000*, include Reg Cleaves, Elsie Chamberlain and Viscountess Stansgate from the Congregational Federation, as well as Alan Tovey and others from the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches. Contributors to the work have also been drawn from all the churches. However delays in gathering all the written material—at present some 12% is outstanding—have resulted in publication being put back until 2007.

South Gloucestershire Council have produced a substantial pamphlet to promote a Nonconformist Trail in their area. It lists some 64 chapels and meeting houses without overlooking such places of interest as Frenchay Village Museum, Kingswood Heritage Museum, Thornbury and District Museum and John Wesley's New Room, Broadmead, Bristol. The pamphlet contains a simple map and several photographs in colour. Copies are free—telephone

1. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

01454 865783. It is hoped that other local authorities will see the wisdom of offering a similar service.

Day Event

On Saturday March 4th, 2006, the Congregational Peace Fellowship and the Congregational History Circle held a joint meeting at Trinity Congregational Chapel, Brixton, in south London. The morning was given to a consideration of human rights, with a talk from Ian Davies, a solicitor who specialises in charity law, while the afternoon session comprised a lecture from Clyde Binfield entitled "If Archie were a strict Baptist would that make Pooh a Congregationalist?". Professor Binfield was helpfully exploring some aspects of early twentieth century Congregationalism, related to the authors, John Betjeman and A A Milne. After tea, Alan Argent conducted a brief tour of Brixton chapels while Yvonne A Evans gave an illustrated talk on the history of Trinity Chapel, Brixton. Perhaps some fifty people in all gathered for this event, the clear majority being men! It is hoped that something similar may be possible next year.

Correspondence

Letters received in response to last year's *CHC Magazine*.

Dear Dr Argent,

I found the article on my grandfather interesting and it filled in a few gaps in my knowledge, including locating H H Snell on the family tree.

I was also interested in the mention of Sir Henry Tate, who was I think one of the Brixton Independent Chapel congregation. Certainly the Tates were well known to the Snell family, and I remember my aunt Gwyneth, Bernard Snell's oldest child, who married a barrister (and later Bencher of Lincoln's Inn) Ernest Abbot, speaking of them. Either Sir Henry or Lady Tate gave my grandfather a rather elegant rolltop desk, now in the possession of one of his great-grandsons. On his retirement my grandfather lived, as you note, in Bowdon with Gwyneth and her family.

You are a bit hard, I think, on Bernard Snell's sabre-rattling in 1917: it was very much the majority opinion at the time. And bloody as the Second War was, the first was much worse, and had much more public impact coming as it did after so long a period of peace, interrupted only by comparative sideshows like the Boer and Crimea. He would have had much agreement with his statement about Satan being loosed for a season—as indeed he was, and one could argue that the season is not over yet.

Yours sincerely,

John Snell.

Dear Alan,

All my life, until my mother died, I was always hearing about Bernard Snell, whom she called her minister. Certainly she usually attended Brixton Independent unless she took some elderly person to 'their' church if the need arose.

I have never had any idea what B S taught but I gained a vivid impression of what he was like in leading worship, which was alive and meaningful. I think she felt that she never heard a better preacher! As a pastor he gave confidence and was dignified and neat, a fine man. She had believed him to be single and your article explains why! Thanks so much for writing it.

Every blessing,

Peter Larcombe.

CHAPEL TOUR

On 11th May 2005 about twenty CHC members and friends gathered at Highbury Congregational Church, Cheltenham. Our host and guide, Richard Cleaves, welcomed all to the Morton Brown room, named after his famous predecessor. Around the room he had laid out some items relating to the history of Highbury and its foundation by students from the former Highbury college, London, on whose site the present Arsenal football ground (soon to be demolished) stands.

After a cup of tea, we departed for Deerhurst, a small village north-west of Cheltenham. There at the edge of the Severn flood plain we briefly looked at the river before entering Odda's chapel, a simple two cell Saxon structure, the importance of which was only realised in the nineteenth century when part of it which had been incorporated into the adjacent house was uncovered. A copy of the ancient inscription was on display showing that it was built by Odda, a relative of King Edward the Confessor, for the soul of his late brother Aelfric who had died there as later did Odda. Moving around the corner to the parish church, St Mary's, which is also of Saxon origin, we noted the considerable amount of pre-Norman conquest work remaining, more of which continues to be discovered. In addition it is a fascinating survival from the Puritan period. What would normally be called the chancel of the church is approximately square with, instead of choir stalls, a long pew running around all three walls (north, east and south). At the centre sits the communion table. Richard explained how in the Puritan administration of the Lord's Supper the worshippers would gather around the table seated in this pew, with the long dimension of the table aligned east-west. A photograph in the church guide illustrates this.

Travelling north, upstream to Tewkesbury, we had lunch in the abbey's café before walking down a narrow alley to the old Baptist chapel, sadly not used for

regular worship, which has been restored. Originally created from two houses, it has a pulpit in the centre of the longer wall with the entrances from the alley on either side. At first floor level is a gallery on three sides facing the pulpit. In the centre of the ground floor is the baptistery, probably an eighteenth century addition. Prior to that time, baptisms would have taken place in the nearby river. Continuing to its end, the alley opens out into the chapel's burial ground from which, over the back wall, can be seen a branch of the Severn. Buried here are the Harts, descendants of Shakespeare's sister, to whom our late member Bill Ashley Smith was proud to be related.

We travelled east to Hailes church adjacent to the ruins of Hailes Abbey. Here are remnants of medieval wall paintings, depicting the doom of the last judgment. As we sat in the church, Richard described to us what a huge impact the reformation would have had on ordinary people. From a Latin service in a dimly lit church with the darkness of the huge figures and terrible scenes on the walls, suddenly, perhaps almost overnight, they had the brightness of whitewashed walls and the minister was talking in their own language. He also told us that, until the present incumbent, the communion table was aligned east-west. Again there had been a pew against the three walls surrounding it, although that against the east wall had long been removed. With Chris Damp playing the harmonium we sat here and sang hymns by Bunyan, Watts and others, reawakening Puritan piety and Nonconformist joy.

Returning in a south-westerly direction to Cheltenham, we were entertained to tea by Highbury members. We then held our annual general meeting in the church, an event tinged with the sadness of knowing that it was the day of the funeral of the CHC Magazine's former editor, Trevor Watts.

Peter Young

THE NONCONFORMIST HEYDAY—THE LIBERAL LANDSLIDE OF 1906

The January 1906 general election produced a shock result with the spectacular overthrow of the Conservatives and the triumphant return of the Liberals, led by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (1836–1908). Indeed the Liberals secured their biggest majority since 1832. A J Balfour had resigned as prime minister in early December 1905, without first seeking the dissolution of parliament, so Campbell-Bannerman had been asked by the king to form a government and then had called an election to secure a mandate. According to W B Selbie, the minister of Emmanuel Congregational Church, Cambridge 1902–9, and principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, 1909–32, the chief issues in the election were "Free Trade, education, licensing, and Mr Balfour's policy in South Africa".[1]

The National Free Church Council quickly became involved in Liberal party preparations to secure an election victory, following the suggestion of Charles Silvester Horne (1865–1914) that the Free Churches should provide some 100 candidates to ensure a satisfactory outcome of the education issue. Horne, an extraordinarily vigorous Congregational minister, had been minister of Kensington Chapel 1889–1903 and from 1903 was superintendent at Whitefield's Central Mission, also in London. The secretary of the National Free Church Council, Thomas Law, openly encouraged leading Free churchmen to stand for parliament, in constituencies which had then not selected candidates. Law also issued a manifesto, on behalf of the council, demanding a national education system, temperance reform, prompt action on the employment of Chinese indentured labour in South Africa, and an effective policy on the nation's social problems. The Free Church Council opened an election fund and Law wrote to every minister to advocate support for the fund. Law maintained that "the most godly work" that could be undertaken in January 1906 would be the return of "godly men to St Stephen's". In consequence several Free Church ministers, sent out in pairs, embarked on motor tours across the country.[2]

1. W B Selbie (ed) *The Life of Charles Silvester Horne MA, MP* (1920) 194. For Selbie see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*).

2. *Congregational Year Book* (1915) 154–6, E K H Jordan *Free Church Unity History of the Free Church Council Movement 1896–1941* (1956) 100–103, D W Bebbington *The Nonconformist Conscience* (1982) 77–8. Law committed suicide in 1910 in a fit of depression.

Law was directly responsible for organizing these election tours for leading ministers to visit different parts of the country "in early and unreliable motor cars" to campaign for a Liberal victory.[3] Among the Congregational ministers who enthusiastically campaigned for the Liberals were Horne and J D Jones who together embarked on a tour of the south-west midlands of England, taking them from London to Aylesbury and Birmingham, to Shropshire and Worcestershire and then back to London. J D explained that his reason for campaigning during the election was to achieve "some redress of the grievances inflicted upon Free Churchmen by the Education Act of 1902", with "its obnoxious provisions". In this J D was typical of many Nonconformists who "flamed with righteous indignation" against what they held to be Balfour's breach of faith, in promoting a measure which gave aid from the rates to denominational schools.

Balfour had assured the electors in 1900 that the sole issue before the country was the South African War. The 1902 act, therefore, had horrified the Nonconformists who held that money from the rates should only be given where schools were controlled by the state. In addition, over 9,000 headships were closed to Nonconformist teachers (because only members of the Church of England were appointed to such positions in Anglican schools) and, in about 4,000 school areas, Nonconformists had no choice but to send their children to Church of England schools where they were taught Anglican doctrine and dogma. The passive resistance which ensued, led by the Baptist John Clifford and by Horne, had not abated by 1906 and served to fuel the Nonconformists with vehemence and passion in their electioneering.[4]

Nonconformists at the Hustings

In January 1906 Robert Forman Horton, the other-worldly minister of Lyndhurst Road Congregational Church, Hampstead, travelled to the Isle of Thanet to speak for his friend, Joseph King, in contesting the constituency for the Liberals. King was unsuccessful. George Campbell Morgan (1863–1945), the minister of Westminster Chapel since 1904, and John Clifford toured the eastern counties of England also on behalf of the Liberals. They had to abandon two motor cars which broke down and sent for a third car from London. Campbell Morgan observed that in twenty-four years of evangelistic campaigning he had never experienced anything "more deep and remarkable" than this election campaign. The Liberals were victorious in all but two of the seats in their area. The car which was to convey the Baptist F B Meyer and the Congregationalist Thomas Yates to the West Country experienced three punctures even before

3. G I T Machin *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1869 to 1921* (Oxford 1987) 275.

4. Selbie *op cit* 194, 196–7, J D Jones *Three Score Years and Ten* (1940) 227–230, A Porritt *J D Jones of Bournemouth* (1942) 122–5.

delivering Yates to his first meeting! As a result he reached Reading three and a half hours late. Later that evening in Marlborough he gave what was considered "a fair statement of the Nonconformist case". The next day the car took its passengers to Bristol where Meyer joined his companion.

A J Grieve (1874–1952), then minister of Romsey Congregational Church, his first pastoral charge, enthusiastically campaigned for the Liberal candidate who was returned in the New Forest division. Grieve in his maturity considered the Liberal triumph in the 1906 general election to have been "the most thrilling experience of his career". Although not a minister, Nathaniel Micklem (1888–1976), then a school boy at Rugby, canvassed for his father and namesake who was returned as Liberal MP for West Hertfordshire. He saw his father as "an ideal candidate, courteous, fair, not given to imputing ill motives to his opponents and with an extraordinary gift for explaining difficult matters to very simple people." He also believed that during the election he had learned a great deal from his father about public speaking.[5]

Jones recalled his week of campaigning with Horne as "adventurous and exciting". In it they experienced traffic accidents, "intoxicated … hooligans", an antagonistic "roaring mob" indulging in "free fights", a "booing crowd" surrounding their car, a drive through "winding Shropshire roads on a very dark night", without headlights, but with a local farmer standing on the running board and shouting instructions to the chauffeur, and for Horne alone, when the car's engine had given out and the brakes had failed on a steep hill, a crash into a hedge and a gully. Among the candidates whom they supported was Horne's brother, Fred, who stood for a Shropshire constituency but who, like all those unfortunates whom they spoke for, failed to be returned. Jones' sympathetic biographer, Arthur Porritt, concluded that "Electioneering was not his metier", although education remained "a primary concern". The 1906 campaign was J D's only major foray into the political arena, yet he remained to the end of his life wholly committed to the Liberal party. The historian, David Bebbington, has described the ministers' campaign tours as "the peak of the mountain of Free Church electioneering" and commented that the 1906 general election marked "the climax of the political involvement of the Free Church councils".

Throughout the campaign, Silvester Horne characteristically "threw himself into the fray with immense ardour" and, subsequently, he "rejoiced exceedingly over the result". From his church, Whitefield's Mission, in Tottenham Court Road, he shared in the mounting excitement as the results gradually became known.

---

5. S Koss *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics* (1975) 71–2, R F Horton *An Autobiography* (1917) 259, N Micklem *The Box and the Puppets* (1957) 28–9, C E Surman *Alexander James Grieve MA, DD, A Biographical Sketch* (Manchester 1953) 17, Bebbington *op cit* 78, *The Christian World* 11 January 1906.

"In came the telegrams. Everywhere the Tories swept out of existence. London was the culmination. By this time we were like a rag that has been through the mangle. Thousands were frantic in the Tottenham Court Road. The wild hurrahs of the multitude were incessant … nobody will ever forget it. It was one of the greatest nights in England's political history." He rejoiced that more Dissenters than Conservatives had been returned (although he allowed that a few Dissenters were Conservative).[6]

R F Horton was, according to his friends, "Like all prophets … an indifferent politician". He had an "entire lack of worldly wisdom" and in the hands of astute politicians he displayed "a child's innocence". Yet his loyalty to Liberalism was unwavering. He spoke frequently during the 1906 election and "greatly rejoiced in its result". He held that "the new day is bringing in new and better men" for the "old corrupt gang of self-seekers is vanishing like the mist". After the election Horton presided over a dinner for 100 Free Church MPs at the Hotel Cecil, with James Bryce and David Lloyd George as the chief guests.[7] Given Lloyd George's later reputation for unbridled and ruthless ambition Horton's view, though not unique to him at this time, seems wildly naïve.

Election Results

The election returned 377 Liberals, 132 Conservatives, 83 Nationalists, 53 Labour members and 25 Liberal Unionists to the new House of Commons. All 34 Welsh constituencies returned Liberals, apart from one where Keir Hardie stood for Labour, and 25 of the Welsh MPs were Nonconformists. Similarly impressive results were found elsewhere with even the Conservative leader, A J Balfour, losing his Manchester seat. This represented a dramatic transformation in British political life.

The Christian World greeted the election results with enthusiasm. On the front page it stated, "In his wildest imaginations the most optimistic of Liberals never dreamt of such victory". Its editorial, headed "The Awakening", reinforced the mood of unrestrained optimism, by stating that "It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is the greatest week the existing English population has ever lived through" and "a fresh epoch has opened". We "have a new country and a new era", it boldly announced.[8]

According to *The Christian World*, the new parliament contained 181 Nonconformists, more than at any time since the age of Oliver Cromwell. 63 Liberal MPs were Congregationalists and 27 were Wesleyans. The cabinet of

6. Selbie *op cit*, Jones *op cit*, Porritt *op cit*, Machin *op cit* 278.

7. A Peel and J A R Marriott *Robert Forman Horton* (1937) 244–6. James Bryce, Viscount Bryce (1838–1922), was Irish chief secretary 1905–7 when he went to USA as ambassador. *ODNB.*

8. Bebbington *op cit* 78, *The Christian World* Jan 18, 1906.

nineteen also contained more members of Nonconformist background than any of its predecessors. Campbell-Bannerman was himself a Scots United Free Churchman and the "rising leaders of the party were of Nonconformist origin"—Asquith, Simon, Runciman, Lloyd George and others. The Congregationalist, Lord Cozens-Hardy (1838–1920), whose daughter had married Silvester Horne, became Master of the Rolls in 1907. Horton admired what he termed the new government's "magnificent Cabinet" and remarked with particular satisfaction on the appointment of the independent Labour MP, John Burns (1858–1943), "a working man", to administer the poor law as president of the local government board. As late as 1960 Erik Routley judged that if ever "Dissent was an English Institution, it was so in that talented and progressive government" of 1906–10.[9] The temper of the times gave every indication that Nonconformists had at last come into their rightful inheritance and that the future would see their influence increase even more.

Yet it is possible to exaggerate the significance of these figures, as perhaps some contemporary Nonconformists were deceived into doing. Sir William Robertson Nicoll, the editor of the widely circulated *British Weekly*, who was well placed to know, stated in 1907 that only 83 of the MPs who claimed to be Dissenters were serious Free Churchmen. Similarly a report in *The Baptist Times* in 1910 admitted that the number of Nonconformists in the 1906 parliament was "vastly over-rated".[10] Certainly politicians were prepared to use their Free Church relations to win favour. Were Nonconformists too easily deceived by the claims of candidates who wanted their votes?

Nevertheless with such a commanding majority, the supporters of the Liberals among the Nonconformists had good reason to believe that their grievances would be redressed. The reform of the Education Act of 1902, the licensing issue and the disestablishment of the Church of Wales (if not of the Church of England) would surely be given priority. Augustine Birrell, the son of a Baptist minister, became the minister responsible for education but his bill of April 1906, to redress the balance in the schools, putting the Nonconformists on a more even footing, met entrenched opposition in the Commons and was severely amended in the Lords.[11] All attempts to reach a compromise and a settlement of the education issue under Birrell, and also under his successors in

9. E A Payne *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England* (1944) 121–4, Peel and Marriott *op cit* 244, E Routley *English Religious Dissent* (Cambridge 1960) 167–8, Machin *op cit* 278, *The Christian World* February 15, 1906. H H Asquith had been brought up a Congregationalist. John Allsebrook Simon, first Viscount Simon (1873–1954), was the son of a Congregational minister. Walter Runciman, first Viscount Runciman of Doxford (1870–1949), was a Wesleyan Methodist. *ODNB.*

10. S Koss *op cit* 78, 88, Machin *op cit* 279.

11. R T Jones *Congregationalism in England 1662–1962* (1962) 341–2, Machin *op cit* 278.

the ministry, McKenna and then Runciman, failed and the proposed reforms were dropped. Wild excitement had given way to political reality and the Free Churches thus received notice that their concerns would not dominate the parliamentary agenda.

Similarly temperance, so important a social issue to the churches in the late nineteenth century, failed to attract sufficient political support to secure the desired amendment of the licensing laws and, in the new century, disestablishment of the Church of England was no longer viable. However, the existing pressure for the disestablishment of the Church of Wales had been reinforced by the Welsh revival of 1904, which had led directly to greatly increased numbers of Nonconformists in the principality. An act to disestablish the Church of Wales was passed in 1914 but, in practice, disestablishment did not occur until 1920 when a separate province was created. As has been stated, the coming of the First World War and the social changes which it brought, altered dramatically the priorities of the government so that those issues, which had long seemed important to pre-war Free Churchmen, lost significance during and after the struggle.

Commitment to the Liberal Cause

Like many other Nonconformists, J D Jones remained undeviating all his life in his allegiance to political Liberalism. His biographer stated that the "spirit of Liberalism was bred" in his bones and that, in truth, he was "an old Gladstonian Liberal of the Peace Retrenchment and Reform school, a Free Trader, devoted to the cause of religious liberty and equality". He saw the Conservatives as "dominated" by British industrial magnates and the Labour party as "controlled" by the trades unions. As far as he was concerned, both were "equally ominous alternatives" to the Liberals. His elder brother, Haydn (Sir Henry Haydn Jones), was the Liberal MP for Merionethshire 1910–45 and J D would regularly speak for him in his constituency before an election. Yet he resisted offering partisan political support in his sermons and, in both churches to which he ministered, Newland, Lincoln, and Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, he had Conservatives among his church members and office-holders. J D consistently voted Liberal at Bournemouth but genuinely admired the Conservative Stanley Baldwin and voted for the Labour politician Ramsay MacDonald when he stood as a candidate for the Scottish universities parliamentary seat (Jones had graduated BD from St Andrews in 1889 and, therefore, was a constituent).[12]

Although Horton was a Liberal all his life, he seriously examined the claims of the alternatives. He sympathised with the under dog but had no belief in socialism or communism, both of which he considered "impracticable". Indeed

12. Porritt *op cit* 122–3. For J D see *ODNB.*

he held that the Christian Church could achieve, without force, the ends which socialism desired but which it could only obtain by "revolution and violence". However in 1924, with no Liberal candidate to support, Horton voted Labour and yet found that the Conservative victory that year, which "normally he would have deplored", brought from him the earnest prayer that it might "smash the diabolical movement of Communism and its Gospel of hatred". In 1929 he spoke again on behalf of the Liberal candidate.[13]

Leyton Richards, the Christian pacifist, held to "the principles of Liberalism through all his politically conscious life" yet was never merely a party man. He differed with the Liberal government before the First World War over the accumulation of arms and the balance of power which he believed sooner or later must lead to a European war.[14] Nathaniel Micklem became an active member of the Liberal party as an undergraduate in Oxford and briefly considered a career in politics, before pursuing a call to the ministry. Throughout his life he devoted much thought to matters of Christian responsibility and consistently upheld the freedom of the individual against any form of over-mighty state power. After his retirement in 1953 from his post as principal of Mansfield College, he gave time to the Liberal party nationally. In *The Idea of Liberal Democracy* (1957) he emphasised the duty of Christian thinkers for the defence of that democracy. He was elected president of the Liberal party for 1957–58 and in his chairman's address he reminded members of the ethical foundation of their movement.[15]

Despite the fragmentation of the Liberal party, after the First World War, and further evidences of its near demise, J D Jones always maintained his belief that it would at some time experience a "renaissance". Horton too "deeply lamented the virtual disappearance of the party to which from boyhood he had been attached" but he took comfort from those qualities in Baldwin which reminded him of his adolescent idol, Gladstone. He had also supported Ramsay MacDonald in his contest at Leicester.[16] "The Liberal tradition" exerted a profound influence on A J Grieve's life and he "venerated its principles". He kept a photograph of Gladstone at his desk on his study wall for over fifty years and he regarded H H Asquith as "his highly esteemed and model political leader".[17] As the Liberal party declined, and the political influence of the Free

13. Peel and Marriott *op cit* 245–6, 277.

14. E R Richards *Private View of a Public Man* (1950) 35.

15. *The Times* 29 December 1976, *ODNB.*

16. Peel and Marriott *op cit* 357, Porritt *op cit* 122. (James) Ramsay MacDonald 1866–1937 was returned in 1906 as Labour MP for Leicester, with Liberal support, but in 1920 Lloyd George's coalition won a crushing majority and MacDonald lost his seat to a coalitionist. In 1922 he was returned for Aberafan, south Wales. *ODNB.*

17. Surman *op cit* 17–18.

Churches fell away, Nonconformist ministers lost confidence with the erosion of their former high status. With this loss of confidence, came a sense of fond nostalgia for the Nonconformist heyday which followed the 1906 victory at the polls.

Twenty Years After

In 1926 Albert Peel bemoaned the fact that the previous twenty-five years had seen two prominent features in Nonconformity—the decay of its political power and "the mitigation of the dissidence of dissent". Although Gladstone had been a devoted member of the Church of England, Peel noted that he had kept the Liberals in close touch with Nonconformist opinion on public affairs through contacts with men like R W Dale and Henry Allon. After his death, the Liberal party had continued to express "the political ideals of Free Churchmen", especially throughout the struggle over the Education act of 1902, when the Free Church Council had co-operated fully with the Liberals and the parliaments of 1906 and 1910 had contained large numbers of Nonconformist Liberal MPs. However, Peel stated, "the altered complexion of British politics" by 1926 had "deprived Nonconformity of its usual instrument for expressing its opinions".

In Peel's view the rise of the Labour party was to blame because it had "divided the forces of progress in every part of the nation's life". In truth the Liberal and Labour parliamentary parties 1906–14 had effectively operated a tacit coalition which did not survive the war. However by 1926 Free Churchmen no longer turned "instinctively" to the Liberals to secure their political aims and political leaders of all shades no longer took their views seriously. This process was a direct result of the First World War, and the peace that followed, which "shattered" the Liberal party and drastically reduced the numbers of Nonconformists in parliament. Indeed even as the political objectives of the Nonconformists were secured in the nineteenth century, Peel argued, their churches had begun to lose power and influence.[18]

Significantly he did not blame Lloyd George for the Liberal party's decline, unlike many contemporaries, such as the former Liberal, who became a Labour parliamentarian in 1927, William Wedgwood Benn (1877–1960). Benn, created first Viscount Stansgate in 1942, retained a lifelong affection for H H Asquith.[19] Lloyd George displaced Asquith as prime minister in December 1916 but was dependent upon Conservative backing. In truth the Liberals were left "confused and discredited" by the feuds which their leaders maintained from then

18. C S Horne *A Popular History of the Free Churches, with additional chapter 1903–26 by A Peel* (1926) 427–430.

19. For Benn see *ODNB.*

onwards.[20] Nor did Peel draw the conclusion that the misplaced faith which so many Nonconformists continued to have in the Welsh wizard accounted in part for the loss of their political influence. By the 1920s clearly many of those concerns which had formerly dominated the Nonconformists were regarded as "outmoded" by the majority of the population. "The political disintegration of the Liberal Party and the inability of the nonconformist churches to redefine a political role for themselves went hand in hand".[21]

In Retrospect

In 1944 the Baptist scholar, Ernest Payne, wrote that religious Nonconformists at the beginning of the twentieth century "looked forward eagerly, for they had more liberty, prosperity and influence than ever before". He continued, "Nonconformity was excited, confident, eager, as it entered" the new century. "Its social position had greatly improved. Its preachers were still eagerly listened to … Oxford and Cambridge Universities were now open to its sons, and in municipal and national politics there were opportunities for the able and ambitious of a kind unknown before. Money was more plentiful in Nonconformist pockets", although with hindsight such prosperity might have been taken as a warning.[22]

By the 1920s, as A J P Taylor observed in 1965, "religious faith was losing its strength" and the "Free Churches were hardest hit". They had "rested on belief and preaching" but their "influence faded as belief declined" and none of their ministers could repeat "the fashionable success" of Silvester Horne. In some areas before the First World War the churches and chapels had been centres of communal life, although in towns especially they faced the rival attractions of football teams, public houses, and music halls. During the war political quarrels over the Education Act of 1902, the drink question, and the disestablishment of the Church of England became less important. The "nonconformist conscience ceased to count in politics", as Lloyd George belatedly discovered when he tried to mobilize it in the 1930s. In Taylor's view the Liberals "lost bite" as their "main interest group", the Nonconformists, became no longer a political force.[23]

Conclusion

After their pre-1914 successes, the Liberals, and with them the political influence exercised by the Nonconformists, went into relative decline in the 1920s. The bloodshed occasioned by the First World War contributed to the greater

20. A J P Taylor *op cit* 337.
21. J Stevenson *British Society 1914–45* (1984) 358–9.
22. Payne *op cit* 121–3.
23. A J P Taylor *English History 1914–1945* (1973) 222–3, 336.

questioning of Christian belief. Church-going, competing with rival and superficially, at least, more attractive activities, was becoming less popular and the numbers of those attending all kinds of religious activities decreased. In addition, with the extension of the franchise throughout the nineteenth century, the political aspirations of working men in the early twentieth century could no longer be ignored. This meant that many, with little formal attachment to the churches, yet forming a large part of the electorate, looked increasingly to the Labour party, and not to the Liberals, to represent and articulate their interests. As we have seen, the euphoria, accompanying the 1906 election landslide, was to prove ill founded, leaving behind a sense of liberating joy but leading to little significant change. In truth the Liberal government, despite the size of its majority, lacked the power to impose a settlement of the education dispute and, in consequence, some became disillusioned with politics. The decline of Nonconformity, in worldly terms, was by no means obvious to contemporaries but the splendid triumph of 1906, for the Free Churches, proved to be but "the prelude to disenchantment".[24]

Alan Argent

24.D W Bebbington *The Nonconformist Conscience* (1982) 79.

THE LIFE OF R.W.CLEAVES

BY HIS SON

"Let me say at once the burden of a biographer was one from which I shrank. The sin of Ham lies as an open pit in the way of any son who writes his father's life; and the determination not to say too much may easily lead him to say too little."[1] As I reflect on my father's life, I recall the words of A.W.W Dale in his preface to *The Life of R W Dale of Birmingham by his son A W W Dale*. I share his reluctance. Twenty-six years after my father's death, I at last put pen to paper. I regard this as a preliminary sketch which draws mostly upon my own recollections and only in some small measure upon the carefully ordered archive of papers, stored by my mother until her untimely death in 1994.[2] My sons never knew their Taid and didn't have the opportunity to enjoy his company and learn from his wisdom. I hope my writing may help redress that lack. As the minister of Highbury Congregational Church, Cheltenham, my story curiously begins with a family business in Cheltenham which started at the end of the nineteenth century and is still prominent in the town.

A Child of the War and of the Depression

"He had been sharing some Bovril with his comrades and then took his post as sentry. A bullet came perilously near and he turned round and remarked to me—'that was a near shave.' He turned back and was immediately struck with another bullet and fell at my feet … he was carried through the adjacent woods in which he is now buried and sent off by motor ambulance to a dressing station two miles away but died as he was being carried in."

Reginald William Cole had joined 'The Famous', the Gentlemen's Outfitters founded by his father, Abraham, and still a family business at 350–351, High Street, Cheltenham. He had enlisted in the 1/5th (Territorial Battallion Gloucestershire Regiment in April 1913 and was drafted to France with his battalion in March 1915. He was serving with C Company near Ploegsteert, Belgium, when he was killed.[3]

1. A W W Dale *The life of R W Dale of Birmingham* (1905) v.

2. Thanks for help with this article go to my father's archivist, Jean Young, who ordered his papers so that he was able to write *Congregationalism 1960–1976 The Story of the Federation* (Swansea 1977), to my wife, Felicity, and to our sons, Dave and Phil, and also to the editor.

3. J Devereux and G Sacker *Leaving all that was dear—Cheltenham and the Great War* (Promenade Publications 1997). Private Yeates, a comrade, recorded the tragic event in the words quoted.

The date has a bearing on my story. It was 12th May, 1915.

The Coles had moved to Cheltenham from Monmouthshire. Abraham's wife, Minnie Rosetta, was related to the Watkins family of Abersychan. That very day a cousin, May, who had married Herbert Cleaves, gave birth to a son in their small terraced house at 106 High Street, Abersychan. As the news broke of the death of Reginald Cole in Belgium, Herbert and May decided to call their son, Reginald, and to give him also the family name Watkins.

Abersychan was a close-knit community, a few miles from Pontypool, in Monmouthshire. Grandpa Watkins, a painter and decorator, lived only a few doors away. George Cleaves' grocers' shop was a short distance further up the road. Cleaves Terrace, named in memory of another Cleaves who died tragically stands near 'the big arch', under which the dram road from the colliery brought coal to the railway line. Coal had brought the Cleaves family to south Wales seventy-five years earlier. The family originated in High Littleton in Somerset, where they had for generations been coal miners. Here William Smith began the work for mine owners which led to the first geological map of Britain in 1815.[4] In the 1840s one brother joined the gold rush to Australia[5] and two others moved to south Wales, one finding his way to Abersychan in the second half of the nineteenth century.

By 1915 Herbert Cleaves had become an overman in the Blaenserchan colliery, three or four miles up a secluded valley from Abersychan, literally in the middle of nowhere. It was one of the last collieries to close in south Wales in the 1980s.[6] An overman was responsible for the safety of miners in his district. He carried a Davy lamp and watched out for dangerous gas.[7] I grew up with stories of the mining tragedies of that period, not least the Senghenydd disaster. One family member had been due to go down the pit that day, but something had kept him off work. He never ventured under ground again.

One of three children, my father grew up in a close and large, extended family. His mother, May, had a sister Emily who, with her husband Percy Heather, could not have children. The family resolved their loss by arranging

4. S Winchester *The Map that Changed the World* (2001).

5. My father would have loved to have read the family history compiled by Alan Cole from the Australian branch of the family. He traced the family to the seventeenth century, identifying some migrants to America. He suggests that wherever you come across people with the name 'Cleaves', they are likely to be related in some way to this Somerset family.

6. When Felicity and I, with my father's two sisters, visited the colliery about 1985, we saw maps of the workings my grandfather would have been in charge of, and we took some pieces of coal that still adorn our mantelpiece. Little did we know then that bustling colliery would soon be forced to close!

7. The story of the south Wales coal mines is told at the Big Pit in Blaenavon, in the next valley from the Blaenserchan colliery.

for the younger of my father's two older sisters, Clarice, to join Emily and Percy in London where they lived in a fine house in Dulwich. Percy worked for the Bodley Head and became president of the Book Publishers' Representatives Association in 1924.[8] Their austere parlour was adorned with a set of 12 first edition prints from the Jungle Book stories, published as Kipling's book came out. Actually, only eleven pictures adorned the walls. One was kept in wraps in the 'ottoman' that later I used to explore in my Aunty Clarice's house. It was a picture of Mowgli with no clothes on—not something to hang on the wall of a respectable household!

Percy Heather collected books, many of which he appears not to have read. Signed first editions by Kenneth Grahame and Ernest H. Shepard, on hand made paper, had folded pages that were not to be cut! I have kept his collection of first editions and other interesting books from 1900–1930s in their original bookcase. The first editions of Aubrey Beardsley's etchings and of *The Yellow Book* still have their brown paper covers and are out of sight of prying eyes! His father worked in Fleet Street either as an editor for Lord Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* or it might have been on *The Daily Express*.

Growing up in Dulwich, Aunty Clarice belonged to Trinity Congregational Church, Brixton, and in later life delighted to attend reunions there. On visits to Alan Argent's home church it has been wonderful to meet people who knew my aunt well. My father would tell of a happy childhood full of fun, visiting family members on Talywaun, and enjoying lots of parties at the Oaks with Arthur Drew's family. He was particularly fond of Iris Powell and was always close to Mary and her family too. Indeed it was Maud Hodge's father who followed my grandfather as overman at the Blaenserchan colliery, and from whom we obtained the Davy lamp that my grandfather in all likelihood had used. It stands proudly on a windowsill in our lounge.

As a boy he was often reminded of his tragic links with the war, as Uncle Ab from Cheltenham never forgot a birthday. For my father's seventh birthday, Uncle Ab gave him a copy of *Just William* by Richmal Crompton. The inscription on the fly leaf is poignant, 'Seven years and it seems but a day, to one Reggie, remembering another.'

My father's descriptions of some of the fun and games he and his friends used to get up to are sometimes hard to distinguish from the exploits of William and the outlaws. 106 High Street was typical of the terraced houses that characterise the ribbon development of the south Wales valleys. The front door opens on to the pavement and the adjacent parlour window has a window ledge, ideal for games with playing cards. Marbles was an innocent pastime that sometimes didn't meet with the neighbours' approval. As for the custom of linking knockers on

8. A Thrush *Representative Majority Twenty-one years of the BPRA 1924–1945* (BPRA 1945).

opposite sides of the street with string, knocking on the door and waiting at a distance to see what would happen … the less said the better.

In spite of the depression, the family were comfortable, though all too aware of the deprivation around them. My father was 11 during the General Strike in 1926. He agonised over his father's decision to carry on working. Grandpa reasoned that, if he as an overman and others like him did not go down the pit to keep the ventilation systems going, there would be no work for the miners once the strike was over. The miners argued that if the overmen came out the strike would end more quickly as the mine owners would have no option but to capitulate.

My father recalled his father needing an escort of policemen from the pithead to the safety of his home. There he washed in a tin bath in front of the fire as it was well before the days of pithead baths. My father sided with the miners and had that ambivalent attitude to mining so prevalent in south Wales: it was an awful occupation that should not be necessary: and yet one that demanded respect. My father's keen sense of social justice was honed in these years: he never forgot the day of his father's retirement. After a lifetime down the pit, Grandpa walked across the pithead yard, doffed his cap to the mine owner, or the manager, who said, 'afternoon, Herbert', and from that day the family's allowance of coal was cut off.

Family life centred on the church. As a leading member of the Congregational church in Abersychan, Herbert enjoyed the respect of contemporaries. In *Who's Who in Congregationalism* (1933) James Herbert Cleaves is listed as deacon, trustee, Sunday school treasurer and Sunday school teacher.[9] He and May wanted the best for their children and determined not to allow their son to go down the mine. Clarice was in London. Susan went to the convent school locally as she did not pass to get into the grammar school. She later became a nursery nurse and worked near Bristol docks. After coal, iron and steel, south Wales next great export in this period was of teachers and ministers.

Church was fun, and not just for the social activities that went on outside worship! The organist sat behind the central pulpit watching proceedings through a mirror. My father put down his skill at signing the alphabet on his fingers to the art of communicating from one side of the church to the other via the organist's mirror during the sermon.

Not that the sermons in Abersychan were dull. When my father was in his teens the minister of the church was Ben Davies (1887–1963) who, in 1938, moved to Newent and Ledbury Congregational churches, Herefordshire, where he stayed for eighteen years before retiring to Abersychan. Davies had trained for the ministry at the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, and after a ministry at Maesteg, had moved to Abersychan in 1925. Davies' eventual retirement to

9. *Who's Who in Congregationalism* (1933) 121.

Abersychan reveals how much he felt at home there. He eventually died while visiting Pontypool hospital in October 1963.[10] Davies made a great impression on the young people of his church at Abersychan, firing them with deep Christian commitment. One, Ginger, had a dramatic conversion experience and became a missionary. Two cousins went into the Congregational ministry. One was my father. The other was George Cleaves who trained at the Yorkshire United Independent College, Bradford, and at Edinburgh University, before going as a Rhodes scholar to southern Africa. After a short spell as a pastor, he continued his ministry as a teacher. In the early years of the Congregational Federation, he was the tutor for the lay preachers' course.[11] A third friend, Cyril Lloyd, whose first sermon at the age of 16 was on the text "Be of good cheer", began his ministry two years after my father, being ordained on 9th July, 1942 in Bicester.[12]

Aged 16, my father began to think seriously of becoming a minister. His education at the West Mon school put him in a position to go to university and then to theological college. Ben Davies was a great encourager and at this point began to coach him in New Testament Greek. Uncle Ab could see the potential in his much loved Reg. In 1931 he presented him with a more serious book, *A Labrador Doctor; the autobiography of Wilfred Thomason Grenfell, MD (Oxon), CMG*, the notable medical missionary and social reformer.[13] The flyleaf bears the perceptive comment, "Who knows! Perhaps he will be a Doctor someday, if not for bodies, for the souls of men. From Abraham."

Ben Davies encouraged the involvement of young people in church life and in leading worship. When my father became a church member in his early teens, he received communion for the first time. Davies used the words of institution, based on the authorised version of I Corinthians 11:23f. When later my father came to preside at communion he would, almost invariably, use those same words, a tradition I continue.

He had equal encouragement from his father, Herbert, a lay preacher. Before preaching his first sermon, my father sought advice from his father who

10. *Congregational Year Book* (hereafter *CYB*) (1964–65) 439.

11. George Thomas Cleaves (1914–86), after pastorates at Sarisbury Green and at Bexley and serving as a chaplain to the forces, lectured at Grahamstown University, in South Africa, and later taught in Acton. He joined the United Reformed Church. *United Reformed Church Year Book* (hereafter *URCYB*) (1987–88) 194. Does history repeat itself? When I went into the ministry, another Abersychan Cleaves, a distant cousin, became a Baptist minister and as I write, Michael Cleaves is a Baptist minister in Cardiff.

12. Cyril Aubrey Thomas Lloyd (1917–85) trained at Carmarthen and Mansfield colleges. He was minister at Bicester and at Whetstone and then taught at Stowmarket and elsewhere. *URCYB* (1986–87) 198, T Watts *English Congregational Church, Abersychan: Souvenir Handbook and History of the Church on the occasion of the Centenary Celebrations* (Abersychan 1964) 10.

13. W T Grenfell *A Labrador Doctor* (1919). For Sir Wilfred Grenfell (1865–1940) see also *ODNB.*

suggested the theme, the love of God. The text he chose was John 3:16, "God so loved the world …" Before going into the pulpit that first time, my grandfather advised him to preach each sermon as if it is the last! That advice, he recalled, when he came to his last sermon in April 1980.

Theological College and University

With the support of his family and to the delight of his pastor, two years later my father was accepted as a candidate for the Congregational ministry. He followed a course of training typical for the time. That training largely accounted for the strengths of his ministry over the next forty years. He was accepted for training by the local Memorial College, Brecon. An imposing building on Camden Road, it had opened in 1869 and had an impressive reputation. It enjoyed close links with the collegiate University of Wales and linked its students to the nearest constituent college of that university in Cardiff.

The University of Wales had grown out of those colleges formed to bring higher education to people in the Welsh regions—in Cardiff, Swansea, Aberystwyth, Bangor and Lampeter. Memorial College taught for the University of Wales bachelor of divinity and students for the ministry went first to the nearest university college to do an initial, usually arts, degree. My father, with the college's support, did his first degree in Cardiff, a BA in Hebrew and philosophy. The Hebrew department in Cardiff was then renowned for its biblical scholarship, with Theodore H Robinson and W O E Oesterley on the staff. Their fine book, *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development* (1930)[14] was published only three years before my father went to Cardiff. Another distinguished lecturer, the Baptist H.H.Rowley (1890–1969), published on the Old Testament for many years.[15] My father's grounding in Hebrew informed his preaching and enabled him to be critical as new translations of the Bible appeared throughout his ministry. One other area of study was no less important for his later ministry. In the 1930s the philosophy course at Cardiff stressed the study of logic. Mastering the mathematical basis of logic sharpened his critical faculties. As a minister he was formidable in argument and impeccable in his use of logic.

It was just before the period when British philosophy became bound up with language and the definition of words. Kant, Locke and Berkeley were on the curriculum and the Big Questions of life were explored. This enabled my father, in his preaching and pastoral ministry, to make a case for the Christian faith.

14. W O E Oesterley and T H Robinson *Hebrew Religion Its Origin and Development* (1930).

15. For Rowley see *ODNB.* After serving as minister of a joint Baptist-Congregational church in Wells, and some years as a missionary in China, he became assistant lecturer at Cardiff in 1930.

University life from 1933 to 1937 was a time of grappling with these questions. My father was drawn to a visionary teacher of economics at Cardiff who passionately advocated the need for job creation schemes to help the unemployed. It was also a time for fun—piling into someone's car and going to London, and joining the Welsh speaking student community. Not that my father spoke Welsh, but some attractive women were among those students, not least Dilys Sarah Jones.

She had grown up in Porth before moving, with her large family, up the Rhondda valley to Treherbert. There her father had been head of the local school, leader of the local boys club and a renowned choir master. It was her grandfather who had determined his children should not follow in his footsteps. He had been a quarryman in the slate quarries of Dinorwic where as a young man he had led a strike. He died 'of the dust', leaving a widow who lived in the small cottage Tan yr Aswi.[16] Dilys spent many happy summers in Dinorwic and was proud of her Welsh roots. Although a Welsh speaker, the educational policies of the day prevented her using Welsh at school. She was taught it only as a 'foreign' language at secondary school. It was her first language, however, and she had gone to Cardiff to study Welsh and then to go into teaching. My father struck up a friendship with my mother but not until after they both had left college in Cardiff did he propose to her, during a walk up the Sugar Loaf mountain, near Abergavenny.

Theological College

My father graduated BA (Hons) in 1937 and then moved to the Memorial College (Coleg Coffa), in Brecon. The principal, an eminent Old Testament scholar, was the brother of the hymn writer and bard, Howell Elvet Lewis or 'Elfed' (1860–1953). Thomas Lewis (1868–1953) had studied at University College, Bangor, at Lancashire Congregational College, and at Owens College, Manchester, graduating with a university of London BA in 1888, and MA in 1890 with honours in classics. Later studies took him to St Andrew's, and to the University of Marburg in Germany. At Memorial College he was highly regarded for his biblical scholarship and he was noted also for conducting singing festivals and eisteddfodau in the Brecon area. In addition the athletic Lewis excelled at sport and football. He became principal of the Memorial College in 1907 and remained there until his retirement in 1943, gaining the deserved reputation, in Pennar Davies' view, of being a "gentleman". Thomas

16. Beyond the filled in pit, it was immediately before the first cottage on the right—sadly it is no longer there. My great grandfather had watched the first experimental train ascend Snowdon and crash from the Saddleback down the steep mountain. As a result, a rack and pinion system was installed on the mountain railway. In the next significant derailment, a century later, calamity was prevented by the safe working of the rack and pinion system.

Lewis was chairman of the Union of Welsh Independents 1936–37, the year my father began his studies at Brecon.[17]

John Evans (1858–1963) taught church history. He had trained at New College, London, when Samuel Newth was principal there, graduating BA in 1884 and ATS in 1886. He joined the college staff at Brecon in 1905 as tutor and as financial secretary in which capacity he served until 1943 when he retired. "Through his quiet faith and gentle personality he came to be regarded as the college's unambitious and unjealous man of God", as Pennar Davies observed. Reaching his 100th birthday on 16th May 1958, *The Manchester Guardian* published a tribute—a lover of books and people, he nurtured the craft of preaching among his students: "he reads theology and philosophy and biography strenuously still, and composes his sermons with scrupulous care, whether they are for a little country chapel or a town congregation". He continued to lead worship regularly until he was 104.[18] Teachers at Congregational theological colleges in the 1930s were held in high standing by scholars at large. Love of learning, not for its own sake, but to nourish a ministry, which had at its heart preaching and 'the cure of souls', infused the college in Brecon.

Among my father's contemporaries was Edgar Jones (1912–91), with whom he once shared a room. In 1956 Jones joined the staff of Yorkshire United Independent College, moving two years later to teach Hebrew and Old Testament at Northern Congregational College, Manchester. In 1968 he became principal of Northern College, where he had a significant impact on younger ministers until his retirement in 1977.[19] Another contemporary of renown was William David Davies (1911–2001), from 1950 professor of Biblical theology at Duke University, and 1959–66 teaching at the Union Theological Seminary, New York, where he was Reinhold Niebuhr's daily walking companion. He was described in *The Times* as bringing "Welsh insights" to the milieu of the New Testament. Davies' *Invitation to the New Testament* (1967) remains a good introduction to the subject.[20] Certainly his *Paul and Rabbinic Studies* (1948) transformed the study of Paul and contributed massively to a re-think of the Jewish foundations of the Christian faith in the wake of the holocaust.[21]

Rootedness in the local church was assured in Brecon's training, not by placements, but by regular visits in order to lead worship. These often involved a weekend away from college, attending churches within a fifty mile radius of Brecon. Visiting the Congregational church at Dowlais during 1993–94, when

17. *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography 1941–1970* (2001).

18. *Ibid. The Manchester Guardian*, 16th May 1958, *CYB* (1963–64) 431.

19. *URCYB* (1991–92) 229.

20. W D Davies *Invitation to the New Testament: A Guide to its main witnesses* (1967), *The Times* 6 July 2001.

21. W D Davies *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1948, 3rd edition 1970).

president of the Congregational Federation, I was delighted to be shown a visitors' book with my father's signature in it. He had preached there as a student from Brecon. Students received a guinea on occasion, but more often two, and sometimes even five! Before the days of state grants, preaching fees effectively paid for students' board at the college. Life there, according to my father, was full of fun. He recalled the eccentric professor who walked to college, turned away from the wind to light his pipe, and then carried on walking in the direction from which he had come. Sorties on other colleges, 'shouts' in the street during inter-college Eisteddfod weeks, and initiation ceremonies which still operated in Bala-Bangor when I was a student there, but would now be frowned upon, were all part of communal life.

The Approaching War

War loomed large in the late 1930s when my father and his contemporaries hammered out their views on the contemporary world. Although in the market town of Brecon, my father regularly shared in chapel life in the industrial heartlands of the valleys. His close friend, Dilys, after finishing at Cardiff, had become a teacher in London where among her teacher friends were some who had served with the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. At this time my father resolved to be true to the teachings of the Jesus Christ which had seized his imagination and had led him into ministry. He became a pacifist and joined the Christian peace movement, the Fellowship of Reconciliation.[22] One small gesture of defiance was his refusal to carry a gas mask. Among his papers is a 1940 silver jubilee edition of *The Christian Pacifist,* the journal of the FoR. With articles by among others Laurence Housman, George Lansbury, George Macgregor, Charles Raven, Sybil Thorndyke, Eric Gill and Alex Wood, it is a powerful statement of an active, non-violent alternative to war that even in 1940 drew many to active peace-making.

He often told me of his preaching, knowing that the declaration of war was imminent. Someone had been charged with staying at home to listen to the anticipated announcement on the wireless. That person joined the church just as the service began and sat in the back row. Noting the solemn nod, my father broke the news to the congregation that the country was at war.

22. The FoR dates from the beginning of the 1914–18 war when two Christian friends met on a station platform and vowed never to be at war with each other. As I write, a one time vice-president of the FoR is held hostage in Iraq, having gone there as a Christian peace maker to work for reconciliation. J Wallis *Valiant for Peace: A History of the Fellowship of Reconciliation 1914 to 1989* (1991).

Ordination to the Christian Ministry

In the summer of 1940 my father completed his training for the ministry and was awarded the University of Wales BD degree. In April that year he visited the Congregational churches of Theale and Bucklebury, both near Reading, in Berkshire, and in May received a unanimous call to their pastorate. "Under God's guidance, and in His strength, I trust we shall spend many happy years together in His Service," he replied. His ordination occurred at Theale on Wednesday, 24th July 1940, with a preaching service at 4 pm, a tea and address of welcome at 5.30, and the ordination service proper at 7 pm.

The three hymns my father chose for this service say a lot about his views of the church and its ministry, and about his own background. The first celebrates the church, its struggle for peace in the world, and its essential unity with one Lord and one Faith—'The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord'! The second reflects a commitment to ministry in a spirit of humility, love and gentleness, stressing God's love in Christ—'Lord, speak to me that I may speak in living echoes of thy tone'. The third reveals my father's Welsh roots but also looks forward to a life of pilgrimage in God's strength—'Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah'.

A touching letter from Abraham Cole's widow is a sad reminder that Uncle Ab did not live to see Reg into the ministry but, in her words, he would have been delighted at the news.

First Pastorates at Theale and Bucklebury

My father quickly settled into ministry in both churches, fulfilling a caring pastoral ministry in war time. He began with a bicycle but soon had recourse to a motorbike. He justified its use to the authorities, citing the wide area he covered in his pastoral work, clocking up 200 miles per month. He was permitted to acquire a 250 cc motorbike with a fuel capacity of 60 miles to the gallon!

Theale was a busy, bustling church and the village population grew as Londoners were evacuated at the start of the war. The Cumber family who farmed in and around Theale, and still do, were the pillars of the church. 'Old man Cumber' sat as a director on the board of The London Missionary Society and involved my father in the LMS: it wasn't long before he too sat on its committees. Another Cumber was in Calcutta as a missionary and a third joined the Friends' Ambulance Unit. My first visit to London was for the valedictory service for Mary Cumber, before she set off for Bechuanaland (now Botswana).[23] She returned to work in the office and died only a few years ago.

23.N Goodall *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895–1945* (Oxford 1954) 601. There it states that Mary Cumber went to India with the LMS in 1939. For the constitution of the LMS at this time see Goodall *op cit* 578–9.

Typical of my parents' sense of fun was my father's visit to a joke shop to buy some magic tricks: Davenports is now on the concourse of Charing Cross Station and is still going strong. In the evening I was introduced to my first London show, *Pickwick*. But that is to anticipate!

Among the evacuees was David Goodall, whose father Norman (1896–1985), a leading Congregational minister and on the LMS staff 1936–44, delivered the ordination prayer at my father's ordination service. David was himself to be ordained in 1951. Another was (Thomas) Caryl Micklem (1925–2003) who became a gracious and sensitive minister and whose hymns, prayers and worship books have been widely used.[24] His father was Edward Romilly Micklem and his uncle was Nathaniel Micklem of Mansfield College, Oxford. Sunday night young people's fellowship meetings in the hall of memory were a forum for exploring the burning issues of the day and for fun together.

My father was committed to young people's work, encouraging them to explore and develop their faith through discussion and fellowship. Work with the LMS and with the Congregational Union regularly took him to London. He described to me his time as a fire watcher, at the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street, and the dreaded silence when the engines of the doodlebug flying bombs cut out, followed by the slow count to the inevitable explosion. However, visits to London were not entirely to do with business.

Marriage

Dilys had chosen to stay in London, teaching in St Helier, one of the largest of the London County Council's overspill estates. Not all children had been evacuated from the area and my mother stayed with those who remained. She taught many subjects, including music and country dancing. Their friendship blossomed and, on 6th January 1942, they were married by Eric Williams, minister of Horeb in Treherbert. Horeb was a Welsh Presbyterian church and Eric, who retired to Menai Bridge on Anglesey, used the recently published *Book of Common Order* of the Church of Scotland. That was a book my father also favoured, particularly for weddings and funerals.

My parents set up home in the Theale manse and were joined by my Aunty Clarice and her adoptive mother, Aunty Emmie. They brought with them those prints of the Jungle Book stories, though few went onto the wall! My aunt was then working for the Great Western Railway Company and moved to Theale when its offices were evacuated there from Paddington. My father was also a manager of the school at nearby Tilehurst and was involved in ecumenical matters, with the Free Church ministers' fraternal in Reading, and with the Free Church Federal Council.

24. For Goodall see *ODNB*, for Micklem see *URCYB* (2004) 327.

The Importance of the Local Church

For all his involvement in the wider work of the church, the local church was foremost among his priorities. On 24th July 1941 he marked the first anniversary of his ordination by receiving into church membership many in Bucklebury who hitherto had only been associates of the church. Clearly people hesitated about church membership, but he considered it important. He wrote,

> "That the days in which we live are critical days, with revolutionary daily changes, needs no enlargement here; and that the Church, still small and in a minority, stands in the midst of a pagan world needs no enlargement. But, if the Christian Church is still to stand, in spite of the changes in the world, and in spite of the paganism of the world, then I think you will agree with me that those who now form the Christian Church will have to hold fast."

It concerned him deeply that only 13 of the 50 regular worshippers at Bucklebury were church members. "I want to tell the world the accurate number, and, if ever called upon, to tell who they are … just as Jesus was able to name His disciples." He made the practical suggestion of making 20th July a special membership Sunday "when all, including those who now make up the 13 and others who desire, may receive the Right Hand of Fellowship, and enter into a renewed or a new membership of our Church." To help those who wanted to know about Church membership he enclosed with his letter a page outlining what it meant to him. It's worth quoting in full as, in the forty years of his ministry, he never wavered from this understanding of the importance of Church membership.

The Church and Church Membership (July, 1941)

1. The Church is the World Family of Christians, and our fellowship with each other is united and deepened in that we are each a member of that family. The Church is the Body of Christ on earth.
2. By receiving the Right Hand of Fellowship and becoming a Church member I thereby openly confess my faith in Jesus Christ; I consecrate myself to His service, and by daily prayerfulness promise to do what He would have me do. I take my share of the responsibility for the welfare of the particular branch of the Church I join; for that responsibility does not rest on the Minister and Officers alone [in the Bucklebury version, in pastor and committee members alone], but on every member. I declare my loyalty by constant and regular attendance at the services of worship unless that be rendered in any way impossible.
3. The Communion of the Lord's Supper. Jesus gathered his disciples together and bade them partake of a Sacramental meal, and that as often as they did they should do it in remembrance of Him. We, as members of a Congregational Church, and inviting with us all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and desire to be His true disciples, gather at His table one Sunday each month (at Bucklebury the third Sunday of each month, at Theale the first Sunday after the evening service) and partake together of the Holy Communion,
   i in remembrance of Christ
   ii in thankfulness that while we were yet sinners He died for us

iii in renewal of our consecration to His Service
iv in our willingness to share in all that Christ was and is, His Sonship to God the Father, His obedience to God's will, His Cross-bearing and self-offering
v in our desire for unity with God, unity with each other, unity with all members of the Church universal
vi in our quest for forgiveness, and for new spiritual strength[25]

As he came to the end of his letter, he invited people to join with him 'in presenting to the world a united Christian front at Bucklebury'. He concluded with two quotations:

"Jesus said, 'Follow me'." Matthew 4:19, "And they forsook all, and followed Him." Luke 5:11

My father was convinced that it is not possible to be a Christian in private—you must be a Christian in the open. You need to nail your colours to the mast. On 28th November he conducted a service with a difference at Theale. Members of the youth fellowship posed questions, in the form of a questionnaire, which he answered. There he defined what 'faith' meant for him.

"'Believing what you know ain't true'. Most of us know it is not that, but yet we go very little further when we suggest it is something we cannot prove. There is a hymn in our hymn book (no 156 in *Congregational Hymnary*) by Tennyson, the first lines of which read:

Strong Son of God, immortal love
Whom we, that have not seen Thy face
By faith and faith alone embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove.

"Many of us feel that faith is just that—and it is, partly. Immanuel Kant suggested that 'reason' must take us so far on the road of life—reason about the things we can prove and touch and measure, but there comes a time in life when reason won't take us any farther, and we must take the wings of faith and soar into the heights, where reason cannot prove, but where faith alone serves. Faith is believing, but it is also a complete relying upon the all-sufficiency of God. Do you ever feel utterly insufficient for your job? Do you feel that life is so big that you cannot meet it? Faith involves acknowledging our complete insufficiency and believing in the all-sufficiency of God. That is the two-fold faith upon which good Christian citizenship is built."

In the same service he defended 'the church' as more than an institution, as the very body of Christ on earth.

"The Christian Church is not merely a Society competing with other societies—it is not on the same plane—it is on an entirely different plane, merely because it is a *Church;* it is a Divine institution—the body of Christ on earth. And

25. The text of the Bucklebury version of this statement is slightly shorter. It suggests that the statement was made for the Bucklebury folk and then honed in a fuller version for Theale.

> you are not members of the Church because you *want* to be—you are a member because God in you makes you be."

It is interesting to reflect on what underpins this kind of theology. A lot can be gleaned about someone's thinking from their library. On 18th March 1941 'The Boys', George, Cyril and Reg, who had gone into ministry from the Abersychan Church under the influence of the ministry of Ben Davies presented their one time minister with a book token. With it he bought a copy of *The Epistle to the Romans* by Karl Barth.[26] When Davies died some of his books came to my father's library, among them this one by Barth. Had Barth's theology of the Word been part of Ben Davies' inspiration? Did that have an impact on those three young men as they entered into ministry? Barth's approach to theology is something we shall return to later in my father's ministry.

Pastoral care, church life, community commitment and preaching were at the heart of my father's ministry in the neighbouring churches of Theale and Bucklebury.

He kept the script of the sermons he preached and cross referenced them to a little notebook. His archive includes nearly 3000 sermons, all written out in full. They are accompanied by three tiny notebooks. On the inside of the front cover of the first are words that underpinned the whole of his preaching ministry.

> Absolute honesty.
>
> Absolute purity.
>
> Absolute unselfishness,
>
> Absolute love.

Though not sympathetic to the moral rearmament movement, he was much taken with their four moral absolutes which became the watchword of his preaching. In this period he tried to develop his academic studies too. He was on the way to completing a master's dissertation but the busyness of the pastoral ministry, not least in wartime stood in the way of completion. The typescript of his dissertation runs to 49 foolscap pages. His subject is very telling for war time: 'The Meaning and Significance of HOPE in the New Testament'. At the end is a short, pencilled essay on Hope and Ethics. It perhaps goes some way to explaining why he should have put those four absolutes on the inside cover of the first of his sermon record books.

> "Whilst, then, the view of 'an interim-ethic' must be over-ruled, it must nevertheless contribute to the relation between 'hope and ethics' in the sense that Jesus' belief in a future realisation of God's Kingdom did bring an urgency to his teaching. Men must 'watch' for no one will know at what hour or day that

26.K Barth *The Epistle to the Romans* translated from sixth edition by E C Hoskyns (Oxford 1933).

> Kingdom will dawn and men must live now as though that moment had in fact arrived. Obedience to God's will was not determined by time, present or future. God's will was absolute and required obedience now and always. Jesus sought not only to teach this but to enthuse men towards it, and it was his proclamation of hope in the coming of God's Kingdom that gave him his vantage ground. God would by his own power bring in that Day, but God's strength was afforded now to His obedient servants. He would triumph: that was certain, and amid all their failures and frustrations in this world they could count on His ultimate victory."[27]

Maidenhead

As the war drew to a close my father received a call to move from Theale and Bucklebury to nearby West Street Congregational church, Maidenhead. He started this ministry on 1st April 1945 and the induction was held the following Thursday. The charge was given by Aubrey Vine, secretary of the county union and minister of Broad Street, Reading.[28]

> "I am glad I have been asked to give the charge to the Minister and the Church," he is stated, "because minister and church are combined in the work of ministering to the community. It is not so much minister ministering to the church as minister and the church together ministering to the community. You must pull your weight."[29]

For the next ten years my parents were part of a church recovering from the war.

By the time my father wrote his first piece for the church magazine, in May 1945, the war in Europe was over and the peace celebrations had taken the town by storm. Parliament had been dissolved and a general election campaign was under way. To cap it all he had attended the May meetings of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in London, a 'religion and life' week in Maidenhead, and the L.M.S. was celebrating its 150th anniversary.[30]

---

27. The last paragraph of R W Cleaves *The Meaning and Significance of Hope in the N.T.* (unpublished Masters dissertation).

28. A R Vine had recently published a concise history of Nestorian Christianity in Asia from the Persian schism to the modern Assyrians, in other words a history of Christianity in Iraq. He was working on *An Approach to Christology—an interpretation and development of some elements in the metaphysic and Christology of Nestorius as a way of approach to an orthodox Christology compatible with modern thought* (1948). These books show how my father's contemporaries in the Congregational Union were grappling with the great themes of classical theology to reinterpret them for their age. My father was part of this process. His dissertation on Hope drew on another contemporary who profoundly influenced him, C H Dodd, and his *The Parables of the Kingdom*. The Nestorian churches were largely overlooked in Britain until the publication of *Christianity in Iraq* by Suha Rassam (Gracewing 2005). It is a fascinating story that speaks to the contemporary world 60 years after the publication of Vine's books.

29. Newspaper cutting in R W Cleaves, *Jottings*

30. For this period of my father's ministry see N Hardyman *West Street Story—a history of Maidenhead United Reformed Church* (Maidenhead 1985)

Reading Norman Hardyman's history of West Street Congregational Church in this period one notes new developments started after the war. It must have been a euphoric time as life began again in earnest. It shows my father as innovative, seeking constantly to re-interpret the never-changing heart of the faith that was precious to him in appropriate ways. A stall was set up in the church porch to sell religious books. The Sunday School was re-organised and someone who was to become a good family friend took over the work as Sunday School Superintendent.[31] Another venture of some significance reflected the new mood of Christian unity that followed the war. My father joined others in setting up 'a Maidenhead Christian Council': it included all the clergy and two representatives from each church.

He continued his commitment to Christian unity whilst at Maidenhead. A high priority was the ministers' fraternal, bringing people together from all the churches. As we have seen, he held to 'a high view of the church' and a strong theology of the church universal, made real in the local place. Throughout his ministry he was drawn to those with an equally 'high view' of the church, even though their theology might differ from his. In the Reading district, in Maidenhead and later in Leicester he numbered among his close colleagues Anglo-Catholic friends.

One such friend was a Greek scholar whom my father delighted to visit at his home in Holyport. He also enjoyed using his Greek and Hebrew and read the Hebrew and Greek texts for his own preparation and for the fraternal. John Arbuthnot Nairn (1874–1957) had been headmaster of Merchant Taylors' School 1901–26 and fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge 1896–1902. Among other writings, he published with his sister, G A Nairn, sometime scholar of Girton College, Cambridge and lecturer in Latin, in Bedford College, University of London, an introduction to classical Greek called *Greek through Reading* (1952). It was a ground-breaking book in the teaching of classics. My father delighted in his presentation copy, which bore the inscription from J A Nairn in Greek, 'To a fellow worker in the Lord, as a sign of friendship'.[32] This friendship is another reminder of the rootedness of my father's preaching ministry in the biblical languages. I seem to remember him speaking of one 'Father Brown', though I fear I may be confusing him with G.K.Chesterton's detective, much loved by my father!

31. Cyril Palmer was one of the few people from Maidenhead to visit us as I was growing up in Leicester. A hairdresser, he used to tour the country with fashion shows, perhaps linked to L'Oreal. My older son, David, a sound engineer, has helped to provide the sound for L'Oreal tours in the last couple of years!

32. For J A Nairn see *Who Was Who, 1951–1960.*

A Personal Tragedy

During the early years at Maidenhead personal tragedy struck my father and mother. My mother's love of children as a teacher was matched by my father's sense of fun in his work with young people. When they knew a child was on the way they were delighted. My mother's pregnancy went the full term, but sadly her son, whom they would have named Jonathan, was still born. My mother was desperately ill during the pregnancy. My father had been given the choice at the time between saving the child and saving his wife. He had no second thoughts. It was in the days before the National Health Service, though after the discovery of penicillin. Without penicillin my mother would not have survived. Had the National Health Service existed Jonathan might have lived. Following the still birth my mother was distraught and in poor health. At the time there was no acknowledgement of the awfulness of her bereavement. They didn't ever know what happened to the infant's body.

It was 'Father Brown' who ministered to them most helpfully. My father was convinced that one of the town's undertakers, who had become a good friend, arranged for Jonathan's disposal in a burial he was doing at the time. Many months later when my father was conducting a funeral, my mother described a wonderful sense of release when suddenly she felt all was well once more. The story they had to tell was one they rarely shared, except when they met people who had had a similar experience. Before the recognition of the seriousness of miscarriage and still-birth, my parents and especially my mother always took such loss very seriously and offered pastoral support to those involved. It was a subject that always touched her deeply.

When she was fully fit again, in thanksgiving, my parents presented the church with two cut glass vases for the communion table. I wonder whether that reflected my mother's love of flowers in church, or whether it contributed to the love she had of flowers! Perhaps a little of both!

Bridge-building in the Aftermath of War

The aftermath of war was not only a time to build bridges between churches here but also to build bridges across Europe. My father contacted a church in Germany and set up a kind of 'twinning relationship'. That was the start of a friendship with an eminent German theologian, Hans-Werner Bartsch. Although my father never left these shores, he valued the friendship greatly, and delighted in visits from Hans whenever he was attending conferences in this country.[33] They corresponded on some of the big theological issues of the day. In 1953 Hans edited a book that brought together a number of significant essays sharing

33. My first visit to Oxford was to see Hans who was attending a conference at Brasenose College.

the thinking of Bultmann and others. He also contributed one of the essays to the seminal 'Kerygma and Myth'. Indeed my father's copy bears a publisher's plate saying that it had been sent at the request of Hans Werner Bartsch.[34]

In an essay in 1954 Hans quoted a 'pronouncement of the Bishops of the United Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Germany', part of which gives a feel for the theological context in which my father was developing his ministry.

"Here is the heart of our faith, and the centre of the Church's message. It is founded on fact, the fact that Jesus lives. The Church's mission is to bear constant witness to this message, preaching it to all nations and to every age in its own language, and in its own patterns of thought."[35] That's the task my father addressed as his ministry grew and developed in Maidenhead.

A convinced pacifist and member of the FoR, he ministered to a church whose members did not all return from the war. With some apprehension he approached the first armistice day service after the end of the war. On 10th November the church unveiled a plaque to John Francis Baldwin, George Stanley Isaac and Frank Roland Wilson. My father preached a sermon on 'The Ministry of Silence' and Hardyman recalls how 'at the end of the morning we felt that our Armistice Day of 1946 could not have been spent in a more fitting way than in a place of worship."[36] It is a tribute to his sensitivity that, through the years, he took seriously Remembrance Sunday, always preaching in a way that was true to his own convictions and yet aware of the differing views of many in his congregation. Perhaps it had something to do with those poignant birthday books he had received from his beloved Uncle Ab, remembering another Reggie.

He presided over an increase in the number of deacons to 12 and called for the first election of deacons in the church for a number of years. I feel sure that, influenced by my mother, he would have resisted fiercely those calls for the diaconate to be limited only to men. As Hardyman stated, finally there was no discrimination.[37]

Church and Community

In those post-war days of austerity, the manse on Marlow Road, known as Greenfield, was difficult to keep warm, especially in the dreadful winter of 1947. If the icy conditions were not bad enough, major floods devastated large parts of

34. H W Bartsch *Kerygma and Myth—a Theological Debate* with contributions from Rudolf Bultmann, Ernst Lohmeyer, Julius Schniewind, Friedrich Schumann, Helmut Thielicke, and Austin Farrer. Edited by H W Bartsch and translated by R H Fuller (1953). Our visit to Oxford coincided with the publication of Volume 2 with contributions by H-W Bartsch, K Barth, G Brondsted, R Bultmann, K Jaspers, H Ott, and R Schnackenburg (1962).

35. Bartsch *op cit* (1962) 1

36. Hardyman *op cit* (1985) 122

37. *Ibid.*

Maidenhead. Much relief work was organised by the church. My father made the most of contacts he had with the Art College over the road, where he exercised a kind of informal chaplaincy. He acquired a four shaft table loom and proceeded to weave 12 foot lengths of carpet for the long corridors in the manse and rugs for the various bedrooms—we still have some of them in the loft—and, until we moved to Cheltenham, I enjoyed weaving on the loom. His great accomplishment was to weave a piece of fine tweed cloth that my mother tailored into a 'bolero' for herself.

My father's ministry again involved him becoming a school governor, and for years he served the Gordon Road School in this role.[38] He set up a Family Service Unit that met the needs of many in the community. This work he shared particularly with George Foster, a probation officer, whose sense of social justice accorded with my parents' views. George remained a good friend and hosted one of our rare visits back to Maidenhead.[39]

A feature of church life at Maidenhead during my father's ministry was a resurgence of interest in the church meeting. This was characteristic of every stage of his ministry. Hardyman commented on the significance of this.

> "At the beginning of 1948 the editor of the magazine, Mr Gower Thomas, wrote cheerfully of the renewal of interest in the church meeting. [A footnote informs us that the attendance at the meeting on 28 October 1947 was 37. For comparison it was 12 ten years before, on 10 November 1937. The attendance on 30 October 1957 was 23.] "It is a heartening sign to see the growing enthusiasm of members in this pivotal part of our corporate religious witness here in West Street. Throughout the Congregational Churches of our land there seems to be now a universal feeling that the primary condition of new life within them is the restoration of a vital church meeting … with all members of the fellowship helping to decide what future plans we undertake, and what policies we choose to formulate. Here in the church meeting we see Christian democracy in action."."[40]

Interestingly the annual meeting in 1950 was attended by 75 people after my father appealed for a good attendance. That was with a church membership of 126.[41]

I am unsure whether my father would have described a church meeting as a 'democracy'. For him it was, probably, a theocracy in which the people who make up the body of Christ seek out the mind of Christ together. To that end

38. W Rose *A History of Gordon Road School (1907–1974)* (Maidenhead 1998). I am indebted to Walter Rose for supplying me with a copy of his history of the school.

39. I have fond memories of playing with his sons, Jonathan and Andrew, and of being lost on a visit to Virginia Water. I knew exactly where I was hiding from my parents, and kept them in view all the time: it was just that they didn't know where I was. I remember the ticking off I had from George Foster and the relief that it hadn't been the police who actually found me.

40. Hardyman *op cit* (1985) 125.

41. *Ibid* 126.

his church meetings were never simply business meetings. There would invariably be a substantial time of worship and a focus on a spiritual theme.

The philosophy behind his running of the church meeting and the rest of church life was set out in a little book of which he made extensive use, *A Manual for Ministers* (1936).[42] As well as providing orders of service which my father used by adapting them to make them his own, it also included a section of 'General Information and Suggestions for Ministers'. His clear style of chairing meetings essentially followed the guidelines laid out there.

One of the first things my father did on arriving in Maidenhead was to start a young Congregationalists' club. Very much a continuation of that Sunday evening young people's fellowship he had treasured in Theale, it became an important part of church life. A young wives club followed in 1951, an idea my parents later carried to Clarendon Park, Leicester.

In 1951 the denomination produced a new hymn book. It was heralded by my father and by many in the church as a 'wonderful collection of hymns and chants, grand and simple'.[43] Though some resisted its introduction on the grounds that the *Congregational Hymnary* had only been published in 1916, my father was convinced, in the words of the preface to *Congregational Praise*, quoting the preface to the *Congregational Hymnary* that 'each generation requires—or, at least, demands—its own hymn book'.[44]

In 1953 came the coronation. This was a special time for my parents, and not only for them!

> "In 1953 the Queen's Coronation was celebrated with four services of prayer on the evenings of Tuesday—Friday 26–29 May. Mr Cleaves led the first two on the themes 'The Anointing' and 'The Investment'. On the Thursday Rev J C Redman spoke on 'the Enthronement' and Mr Cyril Pedler concluded the series on the theme of 'The communion'. The reason for Mr Cleaves' absence on the last two evenings was the birth of his son on 27 May."

It is good to know that paternity leave is nothing new! His pastoral ministry was much appreciated involving as it did some hospital chaplaincy. One highlight of his time at Maidenhead was a massive production of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* that brought people together from different churches and stuck in my parents' mind for ever afterwards.

In January 1955 my father announced to the deacons that he had accepted the call to move to Clarendon Park Congregational Church in Leicester. "He acknowledged that he had always had difficulty in speaking on personal matters and this moment was perhaps the most difficult of all. Some Congregational ministers, he said, but not many, felt the call to serve in a single church for

42. *A Manual For Ministers* (1936) 239–240.
43. Hardyman *op cit* (1985) 129.
44. *Congregational Praise* (1951) iii.

many years. He was not one of them. The fact was that after ten happy years in Maidenhead he had accepted the pastorate of Clarendon Park, Leicester."[45] In those ten years he had received 80 new members into West Street.

> "At a final social … the treasurer, Mr Mountford, said he wondered whether the church had assessed its tremendous loss. Mr Cleaves' value could not be overestimated. He was held in the highest esteem in the town as well as the church. Mr Cleaves replied that his ministry had not been a spectacular one but he doubted whether any ministry ought to be. He felt his own ministry "would always be a plodding one" but "it was in the name of the Master and all glory was to Him."

He seems, says Hardyman, to have been a singularly modest man. Those who remember him there describe him as an outstanding preacher. The deacons had recognised this in 1951 when several had congratulated him on 'his splendid and helpful sermons'. Mr Cleaves was presented with a wallet containing a cheque, Mrs Cleaves with a handbag, and their two-year old son Richard with a silver spoon."[46]

My father's text for his final sermon at Maidenhead was not insignificant. It echoed that first sermon he had preached on John 3:16 on love, a subject his father had advised him was the greatest thing in the world. "For his last service Mr Cleaves preached on I Corinthians 13:13, And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."[47]

The Theology Behind the Ministry

In those formative years in Abersychan my father had been inspired by the ministry of Ben Davies. The kind of theology he absorbed from Davies is perhaps reflected in the book Davies bought with the token his 'three boys' gave him as they began their ministry, that is Barth's *Commentary on Romans*. From Abersychan he went on to the University of Wales where he absorbed the biblical teaching of Robinson, Oesterley and Rowley, a love of Hebrew and clear thinking. He brought that together with a high view of the church at Brecon under an inspirational principal, Thomas Lewis, and with the wisdom of the long-lived John Evans.

During the war years at Theale and Bucklebury he put that theology into practice with a commitment to society, summed up in the teachings of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and to peace-making. Among the writers represented on his shelves was Toyohiko Kagawa (1888–1960), the peace loving Christian social reformer from Japan.[48] The thinkers he drew on in the post war years included language scholars like the Nairns, and those determined to

45. Hardyman *op cit* (1985) 131.

46. *Ibid*.

47. *Ibid*. Interestingly, my father was already paraphrasing his much loved Authorised Version. In reading from I Corinthians 13 he always substituted 'love' for the AV's own 'charity'.

48. For Kagawa see *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford 1997).

express theology in an appropriate way for today's world, like Hans-Werner Bartsch. He also drew on contemporary Christian thinkers like Niebuhr, the Baillie brothers, Barth, Thielicke and Bultmann, and treasured his copy of *Kerygma and Myth*.

Clearly he tried to make sense of his ministry and his preaching against the backdrop of the world in which he lived. Nowhere did he do this more effectively than in the occasional series of lectures that he was called upon to give. In one of these, on 'Christian Words and Christian Meanings', he explored the relationship between 'Revelation and the Word' and gave a fascinating insight into the theology, which underpinned his preaching. It may account for the impact that his preaching had both in Maidenhead and Leicester.

> "Revelation means an unveiling, a disclosure of something formerly hidden—not a discovery, which implies man's initiative but a disclosure to man, implying God's initiative. "But what is it that is disclosed? Truths about God? Attributes of God? Such revelation would leave us still unsatisfied even if it were complete: it is so in ordinary human relations. To reveal to you something about my friend is to tell you of attributes in him with which you are already familiar by your association with others, and you would build up in your mind only a partial picture of what might be, or a series of adjectives describing what to you would remain an abstraction. That way you would never have communication with my friend.
>
> "Revelation, however, is from Person to person: it is a revelation of Self to persons: a revelation not merely of truths about God, but of God Himself. This is part of what is Involved in revelation through the Bible. It is the revelation of a mystery, yes, but the mystery is God, God in His Mighty Acts.
>
> "What is important for us to realise, however, is that the Bible is not simply a record of mighty acts done long ago. If that were so, the records would be merely historical documents of only historical interest.
>
> "May we not say that God reveals Himself through the events which scripture records and which preaching proclaims? Yes, but not in the sense that these are in a time-sequence, that the event was first and long ago, the records were compiled, also long ago, and that now the preacher recalls the memory of them. For example, if the 'event' is Moses' delivery of the Commandments on tablets of stone, and later the event was recorded as a once-upon-a-time mighty act of God, and today the preacher recounts it as an ancient account (with all its errors of transcription) of an old event, then the process is a tedious telling of 'an old old story' which has lost all its news value, all its force and significance, and the boredom of the repetition acquires a mathematical progression.
>
> "Instead, think of it this way. In the event Moses was conscious of God's word direct to him and relating to him and the people in his charge. The historian who recorded it in scripture not only recorded the event, but interpreted it as something happening between Moses and God that was then happening to him, the historian, and that always happens. The preacher, preaching it, is conscious of

that something happening in him and in his own congregation there and then. There is an intercourse between God and Man at each stage, event, record, and preaching. Each is a Mighty Act of God. Each is a revelation of God to Man. So that revelation is not separately past, present and future. It is all three at the same time, and it is God's revelation of Himself. There is always 'something happening' between God and Man, and of course the means at man's disposal for discerning it are his reason, his sensitiveness to the divine, his feeling, his religious consciousness, in fact all he is. For the intercourse is of the whole Person of God with the whole person of Man.

"The Bible is not the object of the revelation of God. It is the means towards it. It is in my reading the Bible that I receive a revelation, not of the truths and thoughts expressed in it, but a revelation of God Himself. As John Baillie has put it, "God does not give us information by communication; He gives us Himself in communion", or again, we say with Emil Brunner, "Revelation is neither book nor doctrine, but God Himself in His historical attestation. Revelation is event…."

"THE Event is Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him…'."[49]

From Maidenhead to Leicester

My father was 40 when he moved to Leicester. He had twenty-five years remaining in his ministry which were entirely spent in Leicester but, within five years, it had taken an unexpected turn which would lead him into controversies not of his making, into a renewed commitment to his very high view of the Church universal, and to a re-working of his understanding both of the local church and of the nature of Christian unity. It is a story to which I shall return in a future issue of *The Congregational History Circle Magazine.*[50]

A R W Cleaves

49.R W Cleaves *Christian Words, and Christian Meanings, Lecture 1: Revelation and the Word* (Unpublished series of lectures) 4,5.

50.My father's perspective on that part of his story is given in a book he was determined to publish before his death. R.W.Cleaves, *Congregationalism 1960–1976 The Story of the Federation* (Swansea 1977).

YOU TOO CAN CLIMB A MOUNTAIN

SCHOOLBOY RECOLLECTIONS OF A NON-CONFORMIST NONCONFORMIST HEADMASTER REVEREND JOHN SELDON WHALE, MA (OXON); DD (GLASGOW)

"You were at Mill Hill when Dr Whale was headmaster? Tell me about it", said Alan Argent. "Better still, write about your memories and tell it as a personal recollection."[1] We both knew that Roddy Braithwaite's commemorative book on the history of Mill Hill School, a public school founded for 'children of Protestant Dissenters and other Evangelical Christians', was shortly to be published, to mark the school's bicentenary.[2] Roddy was also a contemporary pupil of Dr Whale's time, but Alan wanted something more personal, a schoolboy's perception, focussed on Dr Whale, and this paper is the result.

Dr Whale's headship was 1944–51. I shared my first day at Mill Hill with the new headmaster and I left in 1948. As a septuagenarian, putting together earliest recollections of Dr Whale, my first recall was some 2 or 3 years previously when, at age about 11, I had accompanied my parents on one of several pilgrimages to the Nonconformist cathedral of the City of London, the old City Temple, drawn there by the hypnotic voice and language of Dr Leslie Weatherhead.[3] On this occasion, however, the pulpit was occupied by a visiting preacher, an academic, perhaps less compelling, but arresting even to an eleven year old.[4] This was my first memory of the man whom my parents encountered some three years later as headmaster, at interview for prospective new parents on his home territory, The Athenaeum Club. Mill Hill School at this time was evacuated to St Bees in what was then Cumberland, occupying what used to be a large hotel by a wind-swept beach, with a number of out houses between sea and village, about a mile inland and some shared facilities with another public school named after and located in the village. In recent years, Wainwright's

1. J S Whale (1896–1997) was president of Cheshunt College, Cambridge 1933–44. A distinguished theologian, he surprised many in 1944 by accepting the headship of Mill Hill School where he remained for seven years.

2. R Braithwaite *The History of the Mill Hill School Foundation 1807–2007* is to be published later this year. It may be ordered from The Bursar, Mill Hill School Foundation Ltd, Walker House, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill Village, London, NW7 1AQ.

3. For Weatherhead see J Travell *Doctor Of Souls Leslie D Weatherhead 1893–1976* (1999) and *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*).

4. Whale preached there at both morning and evening services on 26 May 1940. Travell *op cit* 125.

coast to coast walkers may have noted the restored hotel, now almost overhanging the beach and will have experienced a more exhilarating excitement at the start of a more acceptable journey![5] Mill Hill School, named after the village north west of London, was then in use as a hospital. It seemed that Dr Whale was making good use of his London club! It might also have been discerned as early vibes of the late professor (Mansfield, Oxford) and late president (Cheshunt, Cambridge) coming to terms with yet another role change. I'm sure my parents were impressed. I wonder whether it was mutual!

My introduction to Mill Hill in September 1944 was clouded not only by the steam of a London, Midland and Scottish train arriving at the outpost of St Bees! There was to me something more that was chill and choking. Everyone else in my carriage seemed to know each other, the rituals and the order of things. I later came to realise that I had been sharing my coach with a group of new boys from Belmont, Mill Hill's 'Prep School', at that time evacuated from the precincts of Mill Hill to Cockermouth. Their extrovert excitement contrasted stonily with my homesickness and the months ahead provided little relief within this earliest phase of survival. I did have the advantage of a previous boarding school, where food had been worse (boys at Mill Hill were amazed at my enthusiasm for the food), but the disadvantage of life having been easier there, less competitive, where I felt I had been 'somebody'.

Life in those days at Mill Hill was hugely influenced by which house you were in, the centrality of team games (with particular emphasis on rugby football), the delegation and rituals of punishment amongst the boys and traditions that related to status. I still remember the talk for new boys, given on our first day, by our housemaster, his reassuring smile but not so reassuring words "here you are nobody, you are the scum of the earth". Every one of us was indeed a prefect's fag throughout his first year (one or two exceptions for those starting in sixth forms) and by first half term the house prefects conducted 'colour tests' on all new boys; penalties, of course, included beatings. These tests were not just about precise descriptions of the many ties, scarves, blazers, shirts, vests, caps, cups and shields nor just the numerous privileges, but the names and correct initials of every boy in every school team, as posted on notice boards from week to week. The team game culture was such that the captains and honorary secretaries of the three major sports (rugby, cricket and hockey) were referred to as the Games Committee and were at one time seen as the nub of peer influence. To this day Old Millhillians still refer to the school as the 'GC' and I understand that it is still the shout from the touchline. With so much at stake and with so much anxiety about 'survival' it is not surprising that memories of masters, other than one's housemaster, let alone a headmaster, at

5. A Wainwright *A Coast to Coast Walk* (Kendal 1973).

this early stage could become distorted. There is also good reason to spell all this out because it was my perception of the scene Dr Whale had then chosen to enter.

Those who are privileged to have viewed the fine display of historical portraits in The Octagon of the main school building at Mill Hill may have seen the remarkable and compelling painting by P K C Jackson of Dr Whale, dated 1983 when he would have been 86, seated in academic robes. My memory, of Dr Whale in his 40s, is of a man of medium height, slightly stooped with prematurely smooth grey hair, ruddy faced and taken to low key use of a gold rimmed pince-nez. A prominent nose and side of mouth smile were distinctive features. Double his age and there seems to have been little change!

As a new boy I sensed a kinship with this new head. It quickly became apparent that the status quo might be challenged, that all was not smiles among the hierarchy. He at once conveyed by his body language that he was in charge. At morning assembly on day one, I remember his entry in gown and mortarboard, his purposeful stride to the lectern and his clear unfaltering style of address. Yet within the hierarchy there seemed to me to be much that was immovable. Those (particularly the more senior boys) who themselves had been subject to the system could see no reason why others should be let off the hook, particularly with that inevitable streak of sadism which takes the form "look at me, it's done me no harm". I was soon to learn, however, that I had been fortunate in house allocation and that there did appear to be an unhealthy opting out by some other housemasters. An extreme example was a house named Burton Bank which came to be known as Belsen Bank. This was no doubt unfair naming in the light of German concentration camp revelations at that time, but it is not irrelevant to mention an encounter some 20 years later.

My wife and I had become friendly with a professional colleague and his wife. After we had known each other more than a year, education of our children was being discussed between wives. His wife had been considering a well known boarding school but said her husband had suffered from his own experience and would not contemplate it for either of their boys. The penny dropped. I remembered him from Mill Hill days as a boy in Burton Bank. I was stunned by his totally blanked out memory of names and his assertion that it wasn't him being bullied, but the pain of seeing others. This was a man whose first career was as a professional soldier with The Parachute Regiment, then as a probation officer appointed to Reading Prison (at that time renowned for institutional bullying). He later became a Chief in The Probation Service. Here was a'toughy' with enormous capacity to empathise. His example may help to convey the profound influence on some young people's lives of educational regimes and perhaps something of the challenge in 1944 to a new headmaster.

My next memory is of Sunday morning chapel. The building itself, a shared part of St Bees School buildings, ornate and dark, to me oppressive, but perhaps resonant with Dr Whale's evident love of prayer book liturgy! He retained an inherited tradition of bible reading by senior boys who were half hidden by an ornate brass bird of prey and always commenced, "Hear the word of God as it is contained in the … th chapter of the … beginning to read at the … verse" and ending "Here endeth the lesson". The opening and closing rituals seemed to convey as much as the content of the reading and the eye of the eagle even more! The first 'encounter' that comes to mind was his unhesitant rebuff of his unenthusiastic congregation. Dr Whale had a fine tenor voice and his frequent use of sung responses sent shockwaves through the establishment. Two correctives he enjoined, one was to bring about a remarkable improvement in our singing by sheer insistence and repetition, the other was to issue an edict that every boy was to learn by heart the Te Deum Laudamus. One could speculate that he had got his priorities sorted! The secular parallel was his rehearsing the whole school at morning assembly to rise or sit silently by judicial foot positioning prior to actual movement of the rest of the body. The effect was undoubtedly remarkable and perhaps significant in sowing seeds of 'togetherness' as a school.

Peer dialogue had already established that this headmaster be referred to as "The Whale", though later, a more endearing tendency crept in when he began to be referred to as "Johnny", at least by those who seemed more in sympathy. One thing was sure. You could scarcely feel indifferent towards him!

Another old boy reminded me recently of the introduction in that first year of church membership classes. I was not party to them, but I do recall the invitation to 14 year olds which required parental permission to participate and I believe they ran concurrent to the 'normal' bishop's confirmation classes. With only about 5 boys in this class, the resurrection of the Nonconformist flag reached its climax with hand on head blessings from a trinity of theologian professors. Apart from Dr Whale, he had invited Dr Gray and Dr Micklem[6] for the occasion. My friend still senses the exulted touch of the three distinguished hands!

Within twelve months the school was to return home to its very beautiful roots on the high grounds by the village of Mill Hill, with its splendid views to Harrow School and beyond. Much was to be done in restoring and reorganizing, yet in the midst of all this we were soon to discover that Dr Whale had undertaken to carry through what in those days was seen as a radical educational experiment. The governors were committed to opening doors for the first time to Middlesex County scholarships from secondary schools. At the same time there was an increase in overall numbers of dayboys as well as

6. For Nathaniel Micklem (1888–1976) see *ODNB.*

boarders. In 1944, I believe there were less than 200 pupils. In 1945 the total was nearer 300. Another way of looking at it, in the last year at St Bees there were 57 new boys (47, 5 & 5 in respective terms). In the first term back at Mill Hill there were 99. This was the intake that first included a less privileged and more merited intake, perhaps in keeping with political change nationally. Not far away. Richard Attenborough was starring in a popular new play and filling a West End theatre, later to become an Elstree Studios, Roy Boulting's film success, 'The Guinea Pig', all about a scholarship boy winning a place at a public school. If there was resistance, it may have come from parents or staff, but within school day to day life I was unaware of any adverse attitudes

I remember on arrival at the school, the curriculum was narrow and restricted. Even at Oxford & Cambridge School Certificate level (GCSE equivalent), because I opted for sciences, I was excluded from art, history and geography, two of which were favourite subjects. However, within a year of being back at Mill Hill, there had been an 'opening up' and with a huge sixth form embracing nearly a half of the school (twelve forms), as a member of the lower and then upper medical sixths I was soon to experience Dr Whale in the classroom for the first time, a once a week session on essay writing. At that time this was an enlightened attempt to broaden the curriculum of 'the scientists'. Most impressive was the evident respect for each boy's creative attempts and his detailed and lengthy observations in tiny but legible notes, often nearly as long as the essay. This evident respect for his pupils was also apparent in end of term reports and in school magazine write-ups he undertook subsequent to school plays.

Another contribution introduced by Dr Whale, also unusual in those days, was his joint plenary sessions for all sixth formers on the larger stage (plenary sessions in those days were in a hall with stage, referred to as The Large). Dr Whale conducted these himself once a week on such subjects as current affairs, world religions and English architecture. His contacts brought in a number of distinguished or 'up and coming' speakers, including parliamentarians and even a leading member of the Communist Party. For me, however, it was always Dr Whale himself who left the greatest impression, with his always prompt (respect and example?) and confident entries to centre stage, the removal of his mortar board and his opening words "Good morning, gentlemen …" and another favourite "I will not insult your intelligence by telling you that …" followed by some obscure reference best understood in Latin or Greek! There seemed to be a mutual understanding and a shared sense of humour that in turn assumed a mutual respect! His inputs on current affairs did not disguise his forebodings at a very early stage of the forthcoming 'cold war'.

An incident that stands out in my memory was a head on collision between Dr Whale and a popular PE master. I recall it being an occasion when parents were around, probably foundation day, when the weather was unpleasantly wet.

Time was drawing near for an event in the school chapel. The PE master discovered that his prize mats from the gymnasium had been commandeered by order of the headmaster to be lined up outside the chapel, thus to reduce mud intake! It seems there had been no consultation. Open warfare ensued and one of them had to go and it wasn't Dr Whale! A trivial event in the life of a headmaster? Or was this something more, an escape valve, perhaps, in that ongoing saga between chapel and sport? I was tempted to think the latter!

When we returned to Mill Hill the headmaster's family were more in evidence. Hitherto they had been accommodated in a hotel some half mile away. Now his domestic base was a sixteenth century cottage across the roadway fronting the main school buildings. From time to time we encountered Mary, his wife, a seemingly serene and gracious person. We would also occasionally see the two daughters cycling to school (North London Collegiate, Edgware where one of them was to become head-girl). Then there were the two younger boys who always seemed to me to be extraordinarily lively and energetic and made good use (as did the children of other members of stall) of the beautifully located open air swimming pool, when not in use by the school. What I also recall was a commonly accepted myth that from time to time this uncommonly intelligent family were prevailed upon to speak only Greek at some of their family meals! If this is untrue, it still says something of an impression conveyed or, more likely, something we wanted to believe!

Which leads me on to the mythology relating to 'Whale intellect'. In Dr Whale's first few terms many of us were impressed by his apparent knowledge of our individual backgrounds and still more his ability to put names to faces. This probably helped convey a sense of valuing that countered those housemastec comments on our first day. It mattered to him to take time out in relating. In apparent contradiction I later encountered someone whose judgment I have learnt to respect, who as a visiting preacher and guest at Mill Hill had afterwards judged him "an intellectual snob". Was this a threatened sibling theologian speaking or a Christian viewpoint? I am inclined to believe it was the former. What did become apparent was Dr Whale's ability to imbibe an astonishing range of data, a phenomenon that emerged in the classroom when my sixth form master had been discussing memory and the brain. He had been talking about people with photographic memories and, as an example, told us of Dr Whale's periodic visits to the masters' common room at the beginning of the day. Masters had found it disconcerting to comment on articles in *The Times*. It seemed that Dr Whale was usually able to quote the whole article! When asked how he had time to absorb so much he is reputed to have replied that he read his *Times* while shaving!

All encounters with Dr Whale demanded an opinion. One could not feel indifferent; and most opinions were extreme, usually with qualifications! During

my 4 years it was difficult to counter the view that there was a coldness to his dealings with other people, but there was also much to respect. What some took to be snobbery could well have been to do with the high mountain he trod. His sense of vocation as a good headmaster was always evident in the time and attention for individuals and not just for the 'high flyer'. I have sometimes wondered what was the Whale mythology among pupils at Mill Hill after 1951. He appeared to treat each one of us with a respect we hadn't hitherto encountered and weren't sure we deserved, but could be flattering. He brought the tread of the University Dean into the precincts of a public school and academic achievements increased dramatically. He wore his scholastic gowns with a humble rather than blatant pride.

I believe that, as a headmaster, he always anticipated an expectation that you might join him on the mountain! Academic results bore this out.

Adrian Stanley

SOME REFLECTIONS ON EVENTS LEADING TO THE FORMATION AND EARLY GROWTH OF THE CONGREGATIONAL FEDERATION

PART 2 CONGREGATIONALISM AND THE PROPOSED BASIS FOR UNION (1966–1970)

The May 1966 Assembly

On the morning of May 17th 1966, the assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales agreed overwhelmingly to change the basis of the national fellowship of Congregational churches from that of a voluntary association of churches to one of a more formal nature. In this new relationship local Congregational churches 'covenanted' with each other to form the national church body, which then became known as the Congregational Church in England and Wales.[1] This decision created problems for those Congregational churches which did not covenant. A small number of these had already withdrawn from the national fellowship and sought Christian fellowship elsewhere. Most non-covenanting churches, however, expressed a desire to remain in fellowship with their Congregational brothers and sisters, whilst still retaining their voluntary status. They continued to work in local Congregational Unions and many also entered into fellowship with either the Congregational Association or an Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches (EFCC). The legal position of these churches was complex, but fortunately neither the new covenanted body nor the Congregational Association nor an EFCC wanted to become involved in legal wrangles, and so the Congregational fellowship as a whole remained largely intact for the next five years. However, there existed within the larger fellowship these two relatively small groups.

On the day after the formation of the Congregational Church in England and Wales, the *Joint Committee for Conversations, Presbyterian/ Congregational* presented its report to the May assembly. This report included a summary of the comments, received by the joint committee, on its "Statement of Convictions". These comments came from both Congregational and Presbyterian churches, ministers and lay folk (30% from Presbyterian and 70% from Congregational sources) and most came under one of the following headings:

1. *Congregational Year Book* (hereafter *CYB*) (1966–1967) 88.

i The confession of Faith
ii Membership and Its Relation to the Sacrament of Baptism
iii the Role of the Laity
iv the Meaning and Place of Ordination
v the Relationships between the different councils of the Church.

After a lively discussion, the assembly approved the following resolution. "The Assembly instructs the Joint Committee to continue its work by *preparing a possible constitution for a united Church* and, in so doing, to pay particular attention to a more thoroughgoing discussion of the five topics enumerated in the report."[2] This resolution set the stage for the beginning of the great debate on the possible union of the Congregational and Presbyterian denominations in England (and partly in Wales), a debate which many Congregational leaders earnestly believed would lead ultimately to an even larger united church.

As the assembly drew to a close, a leading member of an EFCC came to share with some of the leaders of the Congregational Association, the future outlook of an EFCC, consequent upon the dramatic events of the last few days. Until then it had been my earnest hope that the two fellowships could work closely together and thus present a united continuing Congregational witness. Alas, the news from an EFCC was both unexpected and unequivocal, because we learned from our messenger that this fellowship had already decided not to associate with us in the Congregational cause. One of the more sympathetic members of an EFCC suggested that this decision simply meant that an EFCC and the Congregational Association would in future work in parallel with each other. In practice, however, an EFCC set up its own organisational structure, with membership based on a credal statement, and this has led many of their churches to loosen their ties with Congregationalism.

The Manifesto

Despite the setbacks experienced during the 1966 May assembly and the enormity of the task now confronting the small Congregational Association, this somewhat informal group was in good spirits. Its members were undeterred that they were scattered throughout the country, with virtually no financial resources. Rather they set about their tasks with enthusiasm and determination. A meeting of an ad-hoc committee was arranged in London for Thursday, 20th October 1966. The purpose of this meeting was set out in the letter of invitation, the two main paragraphs of which are as follows:

> "The main purpose of this meeting is to have a thorough discussion on our future, considering in particular what we hope to achieve by our continuing association. Now that the Congregational Church in England and Wales has been formed, churches will be asking us many questions and the time has now come when we should be prepared to give clear and explicit answers. It may be

2. *Ibid* 92.

that in the past our work has suffered because of our apparent vagueness, we may have been too eager not to offend and as a result seemed willing to compromise with the principles we wish to uphold. Some of us therefore feel that we should now set down briefly and clearly these principles, which we are convinced constitute the essential basis for a truly united church.

"You will see from this brief note that the meeting on 20th October is a crucial one, if you think there is someone in the denomination who may not be invited but who you feel could make a valuable contribution, perhaps you could let me know his or her name".

One of the important outcomes from this October meeting was the decision to produce and widely circulate a manifesto. Great care and effort went into this publication, so that it was February 1967 before it was finally printed. The manifesto read as follows:

1 The Congregational Association is a free and voluntary association of churches and individual members concerned to maintain Congregational principles, and desiring, under God, to perpetuate and extend their influence.

2 It **affirms**:—
   a) the right of every Congregational Church to order the life of its own Christian Fellowship in accordance with the spiritual aims and ideals of its members, and the traditions of the denomination.
   b) the right of every Congregational Minister or Preacher to proclaim the Christian Gospel as it is revealed to him through his understanding and personal experience.
   c) the right of every Congregational Church member to express his Christian faith according to his interpretation of the Gospels, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
   d) the responsibility of every church member to make his personal life an expression of the Christian spirit.

3 **It declares** that no organisation has the right to impose on a believer in Christ, or on any gathered company of believers in Christ, doctrinal confessions as a condition of church membership, and that to do so is to violate the sacred relationship between the believer and his Lord.

4 **It claims** that every local church, gathered together in the name of Christ, is a visible and localised expression of the Church in the World, maintaining the principle of "the Universal Priesthood of all Believers," as distinct from a Sacerdotal conception of the Ministry.

5 The Association seeks to promote Christian unity, not on the foundation of a uniform pattern of organisation but in accordance with the Spirit of Christ whom all believers serve.

6 It therefore deprecates the endless discussions on church organisation and administration, which have diverted the attention of Christians from facing the immediate moral, social and international problems, which left unsolved can easily bring the world to disaster. It urges Christians, by whatever distinctive names their churches are called, to co-operate in immediate action in meeting the real needs of living men.

7 The Congregational Association welcomes affiliation from:—
   a) all congregations who will share this free and voluntary co-operation for the

development and extension of the work of Christ in this generation, and
b) individuals, whose fellow members of their local church may not at present share these convictions.[3]

This manifesto was sponsored by the following members of the Congregational Association:

Mr Graham Adams BA	The Rev Dr W E Sargent MA BD[4]
Mr Frank Brisk	Viscountess Stansgate
Rev R W Cleaves BA BD	Mrs Betty Swarbrick
Rev Ransom Dow MA BSc[5]	Dr Elfed Thomas BSc
Rev H D Oliver MA[6]	Mr David Watson
Mr Norman Prichard MSc JP	Mr John Wilcox BSc (Eng) AMI Mech E

Although this manifesto was considered a success, only 5% of the Congregational churches in England and Wales received copies, because the manifesto had only been sent to those churches and individuals on our mailing list and in response to specific requests. This limited circulation was due to the lack of human and financial resources available in 1967 to the Congregational Association, which remained a tiny organisation, whose leaders were already heavily committed to Christian work in their local churches and county unions. New ideas to increase the number of churches on our list were now the top priority, and a special meeting of the association's ad-hoc committee was arranged for April 4th 1967, when advocacy was the main item for consideration. The committee decided to organise two more national meetings, the first of which was to be a "fringe meeting" at the forthcoming May assembly, the second a national conference in Leicester in the early autumn.

Proposed Basis for Union

At the May 1967 assembly, John Marsh, on behalf of the joint committee for conversations between the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England, presented the document entitled "A proposed basis for Union". He moved that the CCEW should commend the document to its churches and to the county unions for study and comment.

3. Also included in full in R W Cleaves *Congregationalism 1960–76 The Story of the Federation* (Swansea 1977) 29–31.

4. William Ewart Sargent (1898–1974) was born in Maesteg to a miner's family. He trained at Yorkshire United Independent College, gaining MA, BD and PhD from Edinburgh University. After ministry in Leeds, he worked in psychology, writing *Teach Yourself Psychology* and *Sex—its Meaning and Purpose*, among other works. He joined the United Reformed Church. *United Reformed Church Year Book* (1976) 307.

5. For Ransom Dow (1892–1989) see *CYB* (1990–1991) 29.

6. Hubert David Oliver (1908–67) was a pacifist and a notable modernist in theology. *CYB* (1967–68) 447–8.

During the ensuing discussions, two amendments were put forward (one privately by two members of the association, David Watson and Norman Prichard) but both were heavily defeated. The following motion was then carried by an overwhelming majority:

> "That the Congregational Church in England and Wales receives the document entitled 'A Proposed Basis for Union' and commends it to its member churches and to the County Unions in which they are associated, for study and initial comment by 31st December 1967, so that any proposed revisions may be submitted by the joint committee to the Assembly of 1968."[7]

Because of the late decision to hold a fringe meeting at the 1967 assembly, the Congregational Association had to rely on the kindness of the Union of Modern Free Churchmen, which body graciously allowed the association to share the room it had booked for its annual general meeting. At this joint meeting, Reg Cleaves and David Watson spoke briefly about the work and aims of the Congregational Association, followed by a general discussion. Although the attendance at this fringe meeting was disappointing and did not result in a large increase in our churches' mailing list, it did introduce several new members into our fellowship including Lady Stansgate and the Rev Kenneth Cairns.[8]

The problem of getting our literature into the churches, did, however, remain and this was tackled at an open conference in Leicester on September 16th 1967. The publicity material for the conference included a tear-off slip, as follows:

Name of church:	.....
Secretary of church:	.....
Secretary's address:	.....
Is your church willing to associate with us to maintain Congregational principles?	.....
Are you interested in the Leicester conference on September 16th?	.....

Of the 120 replies received, 57 churches expressed interest or stated that they would be represented at the conference, 25 churches expressed interest in the Congregational Association, 15 churches expressed no interest, 15 individuals sent apologies and miscellaneous replies were received from 8 churches.

The morning session of the conference was devoted to organisation and advocacy, whilst the afternoon session was given over to questions raised by delegates. These included legal matters, relating to trust deeds, and how ministerial training and settlements could be organised for continuing

7. *CYB* (1967–1968) 95–6.

8. Kenneth Cairns (1910–2002) trained at Lancashire Congregational College and was minister at Walkden, near Manchester for 42 years from 1934. *Congregational Federation Year Book* (2003) 39–40.

Congregationalists, should denominational union occur. Although only 52 delegates attended the conference, much enthusiasm was generated and some new volunteers came forward. Three of these enabled the Congregational Association to be sub-divided into four areas as shown below:

Southern Area	Secretary:	W H Meyer
Welsh Area	Secretary:	Rev W H Williams
Midlands Area	Secretary:	John Wilcox
Northern Area	Secretary:	John Wibberley

Another volunteer, G W Allen of Peterborough, gave particular help with the printing of publicity material which resulted in the association being able to print more leaflets than otherwise would have been possible.

In the autumn of 1967 and the spring of 1968, Congregational churches began to study the document entitled "A proposed basis for union", which had been produced by the joint committee of Congregationalists and Presbyterians. The Congregational Association felt it vital for all Congregational churches to receive information, setting out what it saw as the fundamental issues, which the proposed basis for union raised, and to meet this need it produced a small leaflet entitled *Do you know that?*. With the help of the newly formed areas, this leaflet was circulated more widely than previous literature had been and it prompted many requests for further information. At last it seemed that the association was making an impact which encouraged other initiatives including producing and distributing more literature, making available notes for speakers at church meetings and planning public meetings throughout England and Wales. Whilst the leaders in the association were all against the proposed basis for union, our efforts with publicity were primarily to ensure that the members of as many local Congregational churches as possible were made aware of the fundamental changes being proposed, and could thus make informed decisions. Our literature summarized these fundamental changes, emphasising that these all centred on the loss of autonomy of the local church. Whilst the extent of this loss was subject to debate in some areas, the association concentrated on the following points where in its view the loss could not be denied:

1) In the united church, the local churches would no longer have the right to withdraw; hitherto a local church might withdraw at any time from the Congregational Church in England and Wales.
2) In the united church, the national assembly would have the final authority on doctrinal formulations, and these would apply to every local church; hitherto each local church had been responsible for formulating its own creeds.
3) In the united church, the national assembly would have the authority to determine a uniform pattern for the eldership, which would then apply to every local church; hitherto the local churches were free to elect elders or deacons or others as the members decided.

4) In the united church, the local church would be restricted as to whom it invites to preside at the Lord's Table; hitherto there were no such restrictions.
5) In the united church, the local church would need the approval of the district council before it could invite anyone to be its pastor; hitherto no such approval was required.
6) In the united church, the local church would no longer be in full control of its own property, hitherto the only restriction on the local church's control of its property had been that the church acted within the terms of its trust deed.

The first national discussion of the document, *Proposed Basis for Union*, took place at the May 1968 assembly. John Marsh, as joint chairman of the joint conversations committee, introduced this discussion and, noting that the *Proposed Basis for Union*, in a revised form, had been circulated to all church secretaries and assembly delegates, he proposed the resolutions set out in an interim report on this document. John Huxtable, who seconded these resolutions, regretted that it had not been possible to bring the definitive revised Basis for Union to this assembly for approval and transmission to the local churches. A decision could be made by the assembly twelve months from then in 1970 which might be ratified in 1971. A full debate ensued on the interim report, after which the following amended resolution was overwhelmingly approved!

> "The Assembly welcomes the revision of 'A Proposed Basis for Union' so far completed and instructs the joint committee to continue its work, but requests it not to lay down as part of the basis for union a single pattern of eldership or diaconate in the local church."

A second resolution, also passed, requested that further comments on the interim report should be submitted as soon as possible and not later than November 6th, 1968.[9]

Christian Unity

In September 1968 the committee of the Congregational Association met to consider its programme for the next nine months, a period which was held to be crucial. Three initiatives were agreed, each one concerned with advocacy.

The first initiative to be implemented was the production of a leaflet entitled *To all Congregationalists*. This was printed in January 1968 and extracts are set out below. It introduced for the first time into the debate the concept of 'Federal Christian Unity'.

To All Congregationalists

> "For the reassurance of any who fear the total disintegration of Congregationalism, for the information of any who have been led to believe that there should be no alternative to a Presbyterian and eventually an Episcopal Church, and for the encouragement of those who believe that Independency

9. *CYB* (1968–1969) 90.

(not isolationism) has a part to play in true Christian Unity. The Congregational Association publishes the following Declaration of Intent":

Declaration of Intent

"That this Association confirms its determination to continue to pray for and work for the continuance and extension of the Christian Church according to the principles which Congregationalists have upheld and which this Association believes still to be valid. That so long as there remain local churches, each gathered in the name of Jesus Christ, and submitting to no external restrictions, a free and unfettered fellowship between those churches will be fostered and maintained. In this way there will continue to be a union of Congregational churches …. That such a union of Congregational churches will co-operate fully with Christians of other orders…. That this Association seeks that form of Christian Unity which can exist and thrive unhindered in the richest diversity. That this vision of a truly comprehensive commonwealth of Churches, … each with its own heritage and way of life … will continue to inspire Christians towards the true goal of FEDERAL CHRISTIAN UNITY."[10]

The second initiative was the publication of a leaflet devoted entirely to Christian unity. It was composed by Viscountess Stansgate and had both an immediate impact and a lasting influence on the development of continuing Congregationalism after 1972. The following quotation from this leaflet appears in Reg Cleaves' helpful book on *Congregationalism 1960–1976.*[11]

"to set out on the quest for a form of unity that can exist and thrive unhindered in the richest diversity. The true goal is Federal Christian Unity. This would force no issue (inter-communion included), offend no conscience, distress no feelings. It would mean taking each other, as we are now at every level, with all our imperfections for better for worse, and with a saving realism that recognised the Church Universal for what in fact it is—a mosaic and not a monolith".

"This vision of a truly comprehensive commonwealth of churches, living together and acting together in freedom and mutual regard, each with its own heritage, and way of life, yet learning all the time from the others, comes straight from the heart of the Congregational ethos. It could be our unique contribution to the future".

The third initiative was the organisation of a number of meetings in different locations up and down the country. These included reasonably well attended meetings at Bradford, Birmingham, Chelmsford, Leicester and Stockport. The best attended meeting, however, took place at Caxton Hall in London during the 1969 May meetings. The main speaker was the Welsh scholar, Dr R Tudur Jones, who delivered a stirring lecture on the history and principles of Congregationalism to an audience of about 200 people. At all these meetings the positive outlook of the Congregational Association on Christian unity was

10. Quoted in full in R W Cleaves *op cit* 37–8.
11. *Ibid* 38–9.

emphasised by the speakers, who included Viscountess Stansgate, Ransom Dow, Reg Cleaves and David Watson.

Delays Due to Parliamentary Bill

At the 1969 May assembly, the joint committee for conversations between the Congregational Church of England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England reported its inability to complete its programme for the past year, and that the report to the assembly was, therefore, only in a temporary format which did, however, include all the important material relating to the proposed union but not in a form suitable for whatever legislative action would be required from the churches and from parliament. After a full debate, the following resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority (approximately only twelve votes cast against it):

> "The Assembly authorises the joint committee for conversations between the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England to publish its proposals regarding the scheme and basis for union with all necessary accompanying papers, and so long as they are published by 31st August 1969 or, if necessary, such later date as will still allow adequate consideration throughout the churches, requests County Unions and churches to consider them as the proposals upon which the Assemblies of the two churches will be asked to make decisions in 1970, such decisions, if positive, to be sent down for ratification in the ensuing year".[12]

Between May and September 1969, rumours of further delays began to circulate. These rumours were confirmed in a letter to the churches from John Huxtable late in September. He explained that there had been a longer delay than expected in preparing the legal framework, within which the scheme of union would be set. This was caused not by new difficulties but by the legal work involved in the proposed transfer of property from the Congregational and Presbyterian bodies to the united church. Such transfers involve changes to the trusts of these properties and can only be effected by an act of parliament. This parliamentary work could not be completed within the original timetable before May 1970.

At the May 1970 CCEW assembly, John Huxtable reported again that the frustrating delay in producing the full scheme and basis for union was due solely to the fact that the parliamentary draftsmen (lawyers responsible for producing the texts of parliamentary bills) were "extremely busy" with other legislation. However the first draft of the proposed bill was then complete and it was hoped that printed copies of the final documents would be available by September 1970. If this revised timetable could be met, then the assemblies of the two churches were to be asked to make their decisions in May 1971 and, if these

12. *CYB* (1969–1970) 88–9.

were positive, the county unions and local churches were to be asked to make their decisions before December 31st, 1971. This report and timetable were approved by the assembly.[13]

When the delays in publishing the final documents became known, the Congregational Association published a single page statement, which was widely circulated. The text of this statement read as follows:

The Congregational Association

In view of the delay in publishing the final documents relating to the scheme for union between the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England, and in view of the postponement of the decision to May 1971 or later, many are enquiring about the work of the Congregational Association. For the purpose of providing information the following Policy Statement is issued.

1 That all Congregational churches shall remain in fellowship with the National Body, either as 'covenanted' or as 'non-covenanted' members, so long as the present constitution of that Body remains appreciably unaltered.
2 That at the time Congregational churches are called upon finally to vote for or against the scheme for union, all such churches shall be encouraged to register their votes.
To this end they will be encouraged to use the intervening time for a thoroughgoing examination of the proposed scheme, with a view to reaching an informed and prayerful decision.
3 That in the event of a sufficient number of churches voting for the scheme and the United Reformed Church being inaugurated, those churches voting against the scheme, and unwilling to become members of the United Reformed Church, will be encouraged to remain Congregational, to reconstitute the Congregational Union of England and Wales and to maintain the Congregational Union of England and Wales (Incorporated).
4 That until such time as the final decision be taken, the Congregational Association will continue to offer to the churches any advice and information about the urgent need for preserving the Congregational witness.
5 That the Congregational Association will make available to the churches examining the proposed scheme its published literature, and, if invited, speakers to Church Meetings and County Unions.
6 That the Congregational Association reaffirms its policy of encouraging Congregationalists to reach their decisions on this important matter in the light of ALL the facts, and after consideration of ALL the points of view.

All enquiries were to be made to the secretary, John B Wilcox, at his address in Loughborough, Leicestershire.[14]

The final documents relating to the scheme and basis for union were completed by August 1970 and printed copies of these documents were sent to all churches and county unions before the end of September 1970. What was required of the

13. *CYB* (1970–1971) 89.
14. Cleaves *op cit* 40–1.

churches at this stage was for them to determine the advice they would give to their delegates to the 1971 May assembly, as regards voting on these documents.

In Part 3 of my reflections on events leading to the formation and early growth of the Congregational Federation, I shall consider some of the concerns which were widely discussed in the churches during 1971, the year of decision for Congregationalism in England and Wales; and how a small body of committed Congregationalists were able to defy the prophets of doom and confound all the gloomy predictions that if union took place they would simply "wither away".

ADDENDUM TO PART 1

Revd Professor Alan Sell sent the following comment on my description of the amendment he and Reg Cleaves moved at the 1962 May assembly (page 12 vol 5 No 1 *Congregational History Circle Magazine*). In acknowledging his communication I did assure him that I was amazed how much they had achieved and certainly did not think that they had capitulated.

> "You write that Reginald Cleaves and I withdrew our amendment after discussion with Cunliffe-Jones. This might suggest that we simply capitulated. What happened was that following our speeches to the amendment that we 'consider implementing the main findings of Commission 1, Cunliffe-Jones and John Huxtable called us together in the pulpit and asked if we could accept the wording, 'work out the implications of …'. I felt that this was ambiguous; did it mean that we knew what the implications were, and simply had to work them out in practice, or did it mean 'let us determine what the implications are and then decide how to proceed'? In the event Reg Cleaves addressed the assembly again and declared that 'work out the implications of' meant the same as 'consider' as in our amendment—to which the assembly responded, 'Yes'! I felt that Cunliffe-Jones's wording, though ambiguous, was at least preferable to the original, since it bought time for further reflection."

Sell's account of these proceedings and of the events leading up to, and following them, is found in his *Testimony and Tradition. Studies in Reformed and Dissenting Thought* (Aldershot; Ashgate, 2005) ch.12.

John B Wilcox

THE NEW OXFORD DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY:
SOME REFLECTIONS CONCERNING CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH ORDER

The recent publication of the new Oxford Dictionary of National Biography has prompted most periodicals connected with the non-established churches to compile a portmanteau article on the coverage of their respective ministers and members. Having been asked by the editor to give some reflections on the coverage of Congregationalists, I started with the intention of following this pattern, but soon became intrigued by the way the articles approached the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972 and the existence of continuing Congregationalism. I am, I must make clear, not a member of the United Reformed Church nor of any of the continuing groups, but write as an interested and, I hope, understanding outsider.

In the usual fashion, I looked up, something possible given the wonders of the new electronic version, the mention of various names and definitions, coming up with some interesting results. Congregational minister produced 263 mentions, whilst United Reformed (Church) minister produced only three: Daniel Jenkins,[1] Lovell Cocks and John Whale. Intriguingly one of the Congregational ministers is John Huxtable, a leading and determined proponent of the United Reformed Church and then joint secretary of the new United Reformed Church with Arthur MacArthur. Lovell Cocks, depicted as close to Huxtable, is described as 'valuing Congregationalism's gathered church polity, which he construed as catholic, and his sympathies were ecumenical' despite the United Reformed Church adopting a Presbyterian church order. No such definite statement about Whale—Whale, Huxtable and Cocks are by the same contributor, Alan Sell,—although throughout the article there is the sense that he valued Congregational church polity, whilst his conviction that 'genuine protestantism is truly catholic and is therefore equipped for the ecumenical age' is stressed. Despite these suggestions about their love for Congregationalism, the contributor does not, sadly, give any reason for Whale and Cocks joining the United Reformed Church or, indeed, despite it being an important part of his life work, of the reason for Huxtable being such a firm proponent of its foundation. Ecumenism, perhaps the most obvious, is oddly not emphasised as a possibility.

Jenkins, by a different contributor, Elaine Kaye, is shewn as 'reminding his fellow Congregationalists and others that being true to one's tradition was part

1. Daniel Jenkins is not in the printed form of the *ODNB* but is included on line.

of the ecumenical task', but again no reason, not even ecumenism, is given for his acceptance of the United Reformed Church position. Regrettably such a prestigious publication has allowed, to misquote N.F. Simpson, 'a resounding silence' about such a significant event. There is no opportunity either to consider the continuing Congregational position. Nobody connected with the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, founded in 1966 after what these churches saw as the first moves towards union, appears, whilst the Congregational Federation is only represented by articles on Viscountess Stansgate and Elsie Chamberlain, both involved in its foundation. Both contributors give essentially negative statements. Lady Stansgate joined the Congregationalists 'whose puritan principle of local church autonomy she continued to defend' … 'with Elsie Chamberlain she refused to compromise and agree to the formation of the United Reformed church (Congregationalists and Presbyterians, 1972) and together they led the Nottingham-based 'rump', the Congregational Federation, of about 300 churches. Elsie Chamberlain was opposed to 'the union of the Congregational church with the English Presbyterians. This eventually took place in 1972 with the creation of the United Reformed church. Although she was subsequently involved with the ecumenical movement Chamberlain nevertheless defended those who wished to continue the ideals of congregationalism. It was therefore fitting that she helped lead the Nottingham-based splinter group, the Congregational Federation, that comprised about 300 independent Congregational churches'. Why did such contentious value judgements pass the general editing?

I have limited this contribution to one brief, if important, point of discussion, which merits further consideration than it is currently receiving in both United Reformed/Congregational circles and in general historical debate. The tendency is either to denigrate the Congregational past of the United Reformed Church and the continuing Congregationalists or to be uncertain how to treat, what is to many, unwelcome or unknown territory. Perhaps those with better qualifications than mine can now take this further. I also hope the next issue will have a longer article looking at the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography's more general treatment of Independents and Congregationalists, considering also the accuracy and even-handedness of the articles. They will become touchstones of interpretation, especially for those not specialising in the history of Nonconformity. In my own field, however, Grayson Carter's typically fine contribution—because of its impartiality rather than its partiality—on J.C. Philpot must be weighed against the far less satisfactory one on William Huntington. Compiling such a reference work is a high responsibility and its success must, therefore, be judged against equally high standards.

Jonathan C Morgan

BOOK REVIEWS

***A Day at the Westminster Assembly, Justification and the Minutes of the Post-Reformation Synod: The Congregational Lecture 2005*. By Chad B Van Dixhoorn. Pp 26. The Congregational Memorial Trust (1978) Ltd. Available from Dr Williams's Library, 14 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0AG. £2.00. ISSN 0963–181 X.**

Chad Van Dixhoorn is a British Academy post-doctoral fellow in Cambridge, specialising in the history and theology of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. He currently serves as general editor of the minutes and papers of the Westminster Assembly and he is also writing an introduction and an annotated bibliography of the published works of the Westminster divines.

In this lecture Dr Van Dixhoorn, after a general introduction, describes the purpose of the assembly which had been summoned by the Long Parliament in the English Civil War to produce documents that both the king and his subjects could accept. After five false starts the synod finally met on July 1st 1643 in the Lady Chapel of Westminster Abbey but the audience was so large that the assembly moved to the nave. Parliament finally decided that the initial assignment of the assembly was to revise the 1563 articles of religion. The 'divines' spent July and August discussing the first ten of the thirty-nine articles and, by September 5th, they were ready to revise article 11 of 'our great debate' concerning, 'Of the Justification of man'.

The 'day' of the title of the lecture is actually part of two days, September 5th and September 6th 1643. Van Dixhoorn shows his familiarity with the text and his theological erudition in analysing alteration 1 to the proposed additions to the title raised on September 5th, by both the anti-Roman polemic of most of the 'divines' and the anti-nomianism bias of the assembly. Alteration 2, defining justification and covering 'soteriological anti-nomianism' (ie the doctrine that the moral law is not binding upon Christians as a rule of life because they are saved only by faith in Christ) was discussed with some vigour. Yet the next day (6 September) there passed for an hour, a 'tangled give and take' in which members attempted to defend or criticise the committee's formula and to define justification by excluding 'the erring views of sectarians, papists and a few fellow divines'.

Van Dixhoorn points out in his conclusions that different people spoke in the theological debate on justification from those in ecclesiological matters. He notes that those holding Anselm's understanding of atonement were mostly Presbyterians, with probably 'a subset' of 'modified Episcopalians', whilst those theologians in opposition were the Independent Thomas Goodwin, the Episcopalian Daniel Featley and the majority of the Presbyterians.

The intelligent reader needs, in order to understand the arguments of the Westminster divines, to know more of their religious convictions and political

stances. I should have preferred more biographical sketches of the 30 lay assessors, the notable laymen, and the other clergy, amongst the hundred and fifty nominated members. Of the 121 divines, there were a few Episcopalians, a large group of Presbyterians, a small group of Independents, wielding greater influence than their size would suggest, because of the support of Cromwell and the New Model Army, and the Erastians (who believed that the State should control the Church).

The Westminster 'divines' finally abandoned the thirty-nine articles and instead wrote a new confession which included the chapter on justification and the section condemning eternal justification'. One thanks Chad Van Dixhoorn for a glimpse of 'a day' at the Westminster Assembly, and look forward to his foregrounding some of the lesser known but influential participants in the debates.

Yvonne A Evans

***The Taunton Dissenting Academy*. By B Kirk. Pp viii, 86. Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, Taunton Castle, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4AA, UK, 2005. £9.95. Post free in UK, for Europe add £3.00 and overseas add £6.00. ISBN 0 902152 19X.**

The West Country has a central place in the history of religious dissent in England and Brian Kirk has become a dedicated chronicler of Taunton nonconformity. He and the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society are to be commended for a handsome volume which details the work of the town's dissenting academy.

Kirk begins with two chapters outlining the 17th and 18th century backgrounds. Then he describes the work of the academy, concentrating on three key figures—Matthew Warren who in the 1690s was chief among those who founded the academy which met in his home, Henry Grove who taught at the academy 1706–38 and brought it much success, and Thomas Amory, Grove's nephew, who succeeded him as principal in 1738 and remained there until about 1752. Kirk's researches are of most value when he attempts to list the students who emerged from Taunton. This has required some careful detective work and he makes no claim that his lists, especially those under Grove and Amory, are exhaustive or complete. Kirk offers a brief but useful guide to each student mentioned and his appendices add details of the assistants at the academy, those at its successor academies at Ottery St Mary, at Bridport, and lastly at Taunton again, and also some extracts from the register of Paul's Meeting, the ancient Independent church in Taunton.

The work contains a sizeable bibliography, an index of personal names, a map of Taunton in 1790, a family tree of the Rowe, Grove and Amory families and other helpful illustrations. All those interested in eighteenth century dissent and in nonconformist education will find this volume of great worth.

Daniel Brookes

***For So Great and So Good a Purpose: the First 350 Years of an Independent Church in Keswick*. By Pat Appleton. Pp 93. no date (2004?) Available from: Mrs Pat Appleton, 27 Lakeland Park, Keswick, Cumbria CA12 4AT. £5 + £1 p&p.**

The impetus for writing this book was the discovery in a local cellar of a volume of church minutes dating from 1865, combined with the 350th anniversary of the church's presumed foundation in 1654. There is little evidence of the very early years beyond occasional mentions in the extant church book of Cockermouth Congregational Church. Friendly relations clearly existed between the two churches and Appleton fills in the gaps in the data about Keswick conjecturally from the Cockermouth church book and other contemporary documents. The earliest known Keswick church book starts in 1715 although it is noticeable that it is with the commencement of the 1865 book that a more continuous narrative is available.

Appleton seems to be ignorant of some details of nonconformist history. There was much freedom for churches outside the parish system during the Protectorate in contrast to what she says. She tries to skate over the consistent description of the church as Presbyterian in its early days by blaming ignorant officials. Many Presbyterian churches became Unitarian in the 18th century and those that remained largely became Congregational. The use of the term interregnum to describe a ministerial vacancy is also regrettable as a Congregational minister in no way reigns over his church. A map of the nearby towns, mentioned in the earlier chapters, would also have been helpful to those unfamiliar with the area.

Nevertheless Appleton has done a useful work for her church, not least in encouraging the depositing of the old records in the county record office, a move that should be emulated by all churches which have such old records. She has also discovered the almost certain location of the church during the greater part of the 18th century. Previously it had been thought to be on the present site. She has clearly worked hard to chart the ups and downs of this gathered company of believers with such a proud heritage.

Peter Young

***Dame Sarah's Legacy. A History of The Lady Hewley Trust*. By R Potts. Pp 192. The Lady Hewley Trust, 2005. £7.99 (£6.99 to members of religious history societies before June 2006). P & p £3 extra. ISBN 978 0 9551588 0 3.**

The Lady Hewley Trust was specifically designed as a northern charity of national significance, as set out in its foundation title deeds of 1705 and 1707, and it continues to prove its worth. It offered support for "poor and godly Preachers" and their widows, the education of young men for the ministry, and the propagation of the gospel in "poor places". It also provided a hospital, or almshouses, in York for "widows or unmarried women", aged 55 years or more.

The money to finance such vast charitable enterprise derived from those properties, bought by Sarah's father from impoverished Royalists during the 1650s.

Sarah, Lady Hewley (1627–1710) was a remarkable benefactor, especially active in Christian good works, both before and after the death of her husband in 1697. John Hewley, the only son of a minor West Riding gentleman, probably married Sarah Woolrich (or Wolrych), whose father was an attorney and Hewley's legal associate, around 1649. They settled in a town house in York and also in nearby Naburn, at their country residence, Bell Hall. Playing a prominent role in public affairs from the 1650s onwards, their home was a refuge for preachers and a meeting place for Yorkshire Nonconformists. Oliver Heywood, the prominent northern Nonconformist divine, was a close friend. The Hewleys were happy and devoted to each other but, once both their sons had died in infancy, they decided to use much of their wealth for charitable and benevolent causes. Although a Presbyterian, John Hewley was knighted in 1663 for his part in helping to restore King Charles II. As occasional conformists, they seem to have escaped direct persecution themselves, yet throughout the years after the Restoration their sympathies lay clearly with the Nonconformists and they proved consistent friends to the ejected ministers of 1660–62.

Although a board of Presbyterian trustees (all men, of whom two had close ties with the Independents) was appointed in 1705, Lady Hewley exercised a strong influence over her charity's activities. In addition, she gave anonymously but generously to the meeting house in St Saviourgate, York, and left legacies to the corporation of York for the provision of coal for the poor, and for schools for poor boys and girls. From the outset grants from her charity were made to Independent, Presbyterian and Baptist beneficiaries. In the mid-eighteenth century the appointment of clearly Unitarian trustees caused some difficulty and led to its control falling into their hands.

Following her death, Sarah's will had been contested by relatives, themselves loyal to the established church, who claimed that the old lady had been unduly influenced by her Nonconformist minister. For about twenty years from 1830, the charity became the subject of a celebrated action at law, and the issues raised were debated in parliament. This involved the claim that the charity should benefit only Trinitarians and, therefore, questioned its use hitherto as a financial support, almost exclusively, for Unitarian ministers and students. Had the trustees behaved improperly? The House of Lords finally decided that the Unitarian trustees had no right to their position and were disqualified because their beliefs were at variance from those of Dame Sarah and from her intentions, as set out in her will and the charity's title deeds. The term "godly preachers" was interpreted as applying only to Trinitarian English dissenting ministers, that is Baptists, Independents (or Congregationalists) and Presbyterians. The new trustees—one Baptist, three Independents and three Presbyterians—met for the first time in 1849. At present the charity income remains substantial and grants are made to men and women beneficiaries.

This is a well produced and well illustrated publication. Indeed, from their portraits, Sir John and Lady Sarah Hewley appear to be an attractively fashionable and prosperous Restoration couple, far removed from the harsh world of their contemporary, John Bunyan. Little Nonconformist gravity seems to cling to them. How deceptive appearances may be! The book contains eight appendices, among them Dame Sarah's will, a helpful time chart, end notes, a bibliography and full indexes. The list of grand trustees includes, among the others, two representatives of the Congregational Federation who have served in this capacity. Richard Potts and the Lady Hewley trustees are to be thanked for a handsome and very modestly priced book. It should command a wide readership.

Matthew Dawes

***The Early English Baptists, 1603–1649*. By S Wright. Pp x + 278. The Boydell Press, 2006. £50.00. ISBN 1 84383 195 3.**

In this scholarly work, Stephen Wright examines in detail the history of English Baptists in the first half of the 17th century. In 1604 James I's appointment of Richard Bancroft as archbishop of Canterbury led to a campaign to suppress puritan non-conformity which, in turn, resulted in the emergence by 1609 of a number of separatists, among them those early Baptists, associated with John Smyth and Thomas Helwys. Wright investigates the influence of continental Baptists and anabaptists on the development of Baptist churches and theology in this country, noting that twentieth century historians, both British and American, have tended to deny any link between them. Given that no records exist to prove that anabaptist congregations, or even native individuals rejecting infant baptism, were active in England 1575–1600, Wright asserts that those English emigrants whom Smyth baptised in the Netherlands about 1609 were not inspired by any native English Baptist tradition. They migrated from eastern England where the three counties of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire meet—exactly where their fellow separatists, led by Richard Clyfton and John Robinson, originated and from whose church the core of the Pilgrim Fathers emerged in 1620.

In 1609 Smyth and Helwys came to regard the baptism of the Church of England as false, on the basis not only of that church's defective ministry, but also because of its reliance upon the baptism of infants. Holding that baptism was for believers only, Smyth chose to baptise himself in January 1609, rather than seek it from the Waterlander Mennonites, Dutch Christians who similarly denied the validity of infant baptism. Smyth also baptised Helwys and over thirty English followers but soon came to believe that he should properly have asked for baptism into their fellowship and, by March 1610, he sought membership for himself and his followers of the Mennonite church in Amsterdam. Also in 1609 Smyth and Helwys adopted the doctrine of general redemption, opposed to the orthodox and widely held Calvinist stance which

taught that salvation was reserved to the elect. Smyth died in that city in 1612, although his followers were not admitted to the Waterlanders' church until 1615.

However the layman Helwys profoundly disagreed with Smyth's new stance that baptism should always be received by succession from those ordained and baptised in a true church. As a result, the English party divided, with Helwys and a minority of the group, perhaps only ten, excommunicating Smyth and the majority, and returning to London, in the winter of 1612/13. They held that, by accepting belatedly the priestly argument of succession, Smyth had rejected them. Helwys was clear that the English Baptists had not derived their Baptist doctrine or their faith from the Mennonites. From Helwys, a pioneer of religious toleration, and these returning exiles sprang the English Baptist movement.

Wright's examination of possible links between the early English Baptists and the continental anabaptists lead him to consider the unsuccessful attempts at reconciliation between the then five English Baptist communities and the Dutch Waterlanders which occurred 1624–30. He concludes that this shows that the English Baptists and their continental cousins were not close enough to achieve inter-communion but not so distant as not to make the attempt.

Wright states that during and after the pastorate of John Murton, who succeeded Helwys as leader of his Baptist church, the main body of the English Baptists retained Helwys's core beliefs. Maintaining that there has been "a strong tendency to exaggerate the fixity of divisions" between General and Particular Baptists, he asks, "What are the origins of these groups, which historians have tried to tidy up?" His research is not helped by the paucity of extant Baptist records from this time and that, in the main, only the comments of hostile critics survive. A further problem is the use of the word anabaptist by contemporaries as a term of general abuse for any religious radical causing the historian to treat its appearance in the records with caution.

Within a basic chronological framework Wright examines his subject in six chapters. He details the situation 1603–10 of those moving through the positions, 'Puritans, separatists and Baptists', beginning with Smyth and Helwys, the separatists in Holland, their relations with the Ancient Church in Amsterdam (deriving from the followers of Henry Barrow, the separatist martyred in 1593), their acceptance of believers' baptism, and relations with the Mennonites. Secondly Wright turns to the Baptists in England 1611–38, with Helwys and Murton in London, their links to the Calvinist mainstream, and the spread of Baptist congregations to the provinces. It is uncertain whether the Helwys-Murton line survived in London but, by the late 1630s, two traditions existed—one following Smyth and the Mennonites, teaching that the true church should be separate from the world which was to be shunned, and the other following Helwys and the English Baptists, dividing life into its material and spiritual aspects but setting no stark distinction between the church and the world.

During the 1630s the semi-separatist church founded by Henry Jacob (usually seen as that from which Congregationalism sprang), which was later led by John Lathrop and Henry Jessey, contained members who, like Jessey, would in time become believers' Baptists. Jessey's church differed from the Helwys/Murton tradition of general redemption by adhering to the conventional Calvinist teaching on election but, Wright argues, that it may not have simply grown into the Particular Baptist association of churches (distinguished from other Baptists by its adherence to particular election). Wright shows how Particular and General Baptists revived the practice of baptism by immersion in the 1640s, in ways that may not fully convince Baptist historians. His efforts to reconstruct the events surrounding the revival of immersion lead him to doubt the reliability of the traditional view that Particular and General Baptists were separate and opposed communions from their beginnings.

Before 1645 no evidence exists that some of those who would become noted General Baptist preachers, Edward Barber and Thomas Lambe, had contacts with other churches of the General Baptist tradition. Yet Barber and the Particular Baptists, Richard Blunt and Thomas Kilcop, were probably aligned in their understanding of the church, which resembled that of Smyth and his followers who joined the Mennonites. Little evidence exists to argue for a Particular Baptist body before the theologically orthodox confession of seven London churches of 1644 which, with the revised confession of 1646, provided a basis for an association of Particular Baptist churches. By 1645 Lambe had embraced principles (a deep attachment to local lay influence in religion and a suspicion of centralisation by bishops, presbyteries and state) which led him and others to become political activists.

The eventual breakdown in relations between the Independents and Presbyterians in the Westminster assembly of divines drove the former to forge alliances with the Baptists and to defend lay preachers. Both Particular and General Baptists also played a role in the army as chaplains, soldiers and officers yet their numbers were small. Wright seeks to identify them and, in exploring their political involvement, he examines the links between Baptists and the Levellers.

Are Wright's conclusions justified on the basis of this oft researched material? Surely he is correct to re-visit these sources and to ponder possible links between the early English Baptists and the Mennonites although, as he admits, no direct lines of influence can be certainly established. With regard to the relations between General and Particular Baptists, might he be on firmer ground in asserting that the divisions were neither unbridged nor unbridgeable at this early stage? The significant free spirit Thomas Lambe is perhaps too individualist to represent a more general position. How helpful his writings and actions are in forwarding Wright's case is debateable. It is by no means clear that Wright has proved his argument, either with continuing links between the early English Baptists and their Dutch cousins, or in terms of meaningful contacts between the Particular and General Baptists.

This is a serious study of the original, mainly printed, records and it asks important questions of the evidence during a time of vital importance for both Baptists and Congregationalists who share much of their history and some, at least, of their principles—adherence to the gathered church, suspicion of the state, a direct dependence on the Spirit. In the recent past Congregationalists have asserted too frequently and often misleadingly their adherence to Calvin and their close relation to Presbyterianism, thus downplaying their kinship with the Baptists.

This erudite work must be read by those interested in the origins of the Baptist traditions but its concern with detail and the interpretation of intricate controversy gives it a limited and specialist appeal. Wright's research has been thorough and scrupulous but his scholarship is let down by poor expression ("several groups of this semi-separatist church" p 75) and at times he introduces new characters or concepts without adequate explanation. We read of Murton (pp 9 and 10) before we are told who he is and of "Munter's bakehouse" (p 43) without being told what this is. Is Wright consciously only writing for the few other scholars in his narrow field?

CHC members, and others, may find it curious also that he fights shy of the term Congregationalist. He uses the contemporary term Independent often and yet "congregational Independents" (p. 130), "congregational and Baptist churches" and "congregationall societies" (p. 173) appear thus, and he footnotes John Cotton's *The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared* of 1648 (pp. 16 and 24). The term Congregationalist occurs in neither text nor index. Is he unsure what to do with this title after the fragmentation of Congregationalism in 1972, fearing that readers will not understand it?

The index is perplexing. Several characters in the text are not included—Anslo (p 62) for instance and, more worryingly, Thomas Kilcop, a leading character in chapter 3, are both omitted, as is also the modern scholar, Patrick Collinson, whose work is referred to on p 48. In addition "Hemel Hemstead" loses its p on page 128. Wright places Spitalfields in north London (p. 46), not to the east of the city, and refers to Lambeth and Kennington as south London which would be true today but is at best questionable in the early 17th century. I wonder also if a genealogical chart or family tree, detailing the various lines of descent for these early Baptists, would have helped the reader. Wright includes five appendices, reinforcing his academic credentials. His scholarship deserves careful attention yet this book may not serve him as well as he would like.

***The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*. By Ian M Randall. Pp xxvi + 600. The Baptist Historical Society 2005. Paperback £30.00, hardback £40.00. ISBN 0 903166 35 6 (paperback), ISBN 0 903166 36 4 (casebound).**

This book completes the admirable series on English Baptists which was begun in 1983 and covers each century from the 17th to the 20th, with earlier volumes by Barrie White, Raymond Brown and John Briggs. The death of Morris West in 1999 prevented his writing the volume on this last century. Even in a work of

considerable length such as this, Ian Randall has had the daunting task of selection and, in writing about the recent past, the issue of judgment is crucial. This is not, therefore, a work of originality but a distilled summary of other work, covering the most significant events and characters.

After an introductory chapter, headed "Missionary Purposes", Randall tackles his task chronologically, giving each decade to 1999 its own chapter, and providing a conclusion, entitled "Rejuvenating change". The century begins neatly with the period in office of John Howard Shakespeare, the reforming secretary of the Baptist Union, who took charge of affairs in 1898 and shared the optimism of the Baptists and of the Free Churches in general throughout the Edwardian era. We meet such giants as Alexander MacLaren, F B Meyer and John Clifford, after whose speech in 1905 at The City Temple (a Congregational chapel, reinforcing the truth that denominational boundaries then were more fluid than later), Meyer commented, 'a moral hurricane swept through the building'. Even in mid-century the annual Baptist Union assembly usually was held in The City Temple.

In the 1910s Shakespeare's centralising programme, the accreditation of ministers, the sustentation scheme and the establishment of area superintendents amounted to a revolution in the denomination. Similar changes would occur also in the Congregational Union but the Baptists blazed the trail. Women begin to enquire about training as Baptist ministers in 1910, with Edith Gates the first female minister in 1918. By 1925 there were also over 40 deaconesses active in the churches. Deaconesses were eventually transferred to the ministerial roll only in 1975. The 1914–18 war had far-reaching implications for the Baptists, as for other Christians. Shakespeare also turned his attention to advocating firstly Free Church federation and then a wider union with the Church of England but these initiatives failed to gain widespread support.

After the war Douglas Brown, the evangelist, discerned a lack of dynamism in the churches—we are living "in days of much programme and little power, many schemes and little sanctity, multitudinous activity and small progress"—an interesting comment for his years and for ours! An *Appeal to all Christian People*, issued by the Lambeth Conference, resulted in prolonged discussions on reunion between the Free Churches and the Church of England though little of substance emerged from the talks. Baptists, like other Free Church people, were cool towards episcopacy and episcopalian ordination, among other issues. In the 1920s fundamentalism gained ground, with the fear that church unity entailed theological compromise, but Shakespeare's retirement in 1924 marked a turning away from reunion and a return to "Baptist distinctives" under the new BU secretary, M E Aubrey. H Wheeler Robinson, the principal of Regent's Park College from 1920, was the driving force behind the college's move to Oxford. He noted that most British Baptist churches practised open communion but was unhappy about the trend towards open membership. Another influential figure was the Cambridge classicist, T R Glover, BU president 1924–5. Aubrey steered the denomination along, what Randall calls, "central evangelical" lines, resisting pressures from fundamentalists and liberals alike, but with evangelism remaining

a priority. Large funds for union purposes were collected and concern was expressed about low numbers entering the ministry—5 English colleges produced only 20 students each year in contrast to 50 before 1914. The Oxford Group of Frank Buchman, appealing to young adults in particular, was deeply influenced from the outset by Meyer and Glover.

Efforts at renewal during Aubrey's time failed to revive the denomination and church membership consistently declined. In the early 1930s the discipleship campaign aimed to raise the "temperature" in the churches and the emphasis moved away from ecumenism to Baptists drawing closer together. Hugh Martin, the ecumenist, and Robert Wilson Black, once a member of the Churches of Christ, offered differing approaches to Baptist witness at this time. A special committee spent five years considering union with the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians, only to conclude that Baptists could not recognise the validity of infant baptism. Organic church unity seemed impracticable. Christians were drawn together informally through the Keswick Convention and the Oxford Group (5,000 gathered for a single Group house-party in Oxford in 1933).

Aubrey adopted a non-partisan political stance, in contrast to that of his predecessor, although, like others, Baptists supported the League of Nations at a time of international tension. Aubrey was appointed a Companion of Honour in 1937—though Randall does not tell readers that Clifford became CH in 1921, among the first to receive this honour, and the under-rated J C Carlile in 1929 (the latter curiously omitted from the *ODNB*). The churches suffered during the Second World War—with bombing, evacuation, recruitment to the forces, death, and differing attitudes to conscientious objection. The characteristic Baptist response lay in evangelism, with F Townley Lord's booklet *The Great Decision* the BU's best seller. Happily in 1938 Spurgeon's College affiliated to the BU and after 1945 all the colleges were full. In the late 1940s about 65 'union churches', practising both believers' and infant baptism, were identified.

In the mid-1950s the numbers of yearly baptisms which had been steadily declining rose markedly as a result of evangelism. After Aubrey, the scholarly ecumenist, Ernest Payne, became the unlikely, as he thought, BU secretary, serving 1951–67. In 1954 Billy Graham led his successful mission to London, many conversions were noted, and new churches were founded (42 new causes 1946–54). Immigrants from the Caribbean presented challenges to the churches, only partly tackled successfully, and the 1960s saw a rejection of Christian culture. Yet a renewed interest in liturgy and worship was evident among ministers and in 1962 the *Baptist Hymn Book* was published. Another feature of the times was the beginning of the charismatic or neo-Pentecostal movement while former Baptists were involved in the formation of new bodies such as New Frontiers and the Fountain Trust. Baptists were becoming less denominationally bound. However theological strains, broadly between liberals and conservatives, revealed themselves within the denomination.

In 1967 David S Russell succeeded Payne as BU secretary, at a time when evangelicals suspected the union of being pro-ecumenical and of undermining

local church autonomy. Anti-Catholicism had been evident in the Baptist refusal to send observers to the Second Vatican Council, against Payne's wish. In the 1970s theological tensions intensified, especially following an address to the 1971 assembly on the manhood of Jesus by Michael Taylor, principal of Northern Baptist College. Stopping short of saying that Jesus is God, Taylor's paper resulted in a storm of protest and in ministers and churches, including the Metropolitan Tabernacle (Spurgeon's old church), withdrawing from the BU. Members of the Baptist Revival Fellowship decided that they could not remain associated with the BU while it tolerated the denial of Christ's divinity among its ministers. In April 1972 the assembly debated a motion proposed by Sir Cyril Black MP and seconded by George Beasley-Murray, principal of Spurgeon's College, which stressed the "fundamental tenet of the Christian faith that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour, truly God and truly Man". The BU leadership faced the truth that most ministers and church members were more conservative theologically than those who frequented Baptist Church House. Yet those leaving the BU did not unite as an alternative and no lasting anti-BU body came into being.

In 1982 Bernard Green became BU secretary and the years since have seen many significant changes. In 1989 the BU and BMS were at last brought together in one modern office block in Didcot, Oxfordshire. Margaret Jarman 1987–88 was the first woman BU president. The church growth and charismatic movements and evangelical renewal all influenced Baptist churches positively and the inter-denominational Evangelical Alliance, which grew significantly, attracted many Baptists. Since the 1970s the Focus Group and Mainstream had brought new insights to Baptist churches. No lack of courage or commitment is evident in these bold moves. The socially concerned evangelical, David Coffey, aged 48, became BU secretary in 1991 and his appointment underlined the theological shift among leading Baptists—that year a census reported that 84% of Baptists claimed to be evangelicals. Three BU presidents in the 1990s trained at London Bible College, in direct contrast to earlier views of such training. In the 1990s 200 new Baptist churches were planted and attendance figures at Baptist worship revealed an upturn. Increasingly it was felt that new denominational structures were needed and in 1999 the BU council agreed a framework, with twelve new associations in England and Wales, replacing the former county associations. Instead of the former area superintendents, regional team leaders were appointed, with responsibility for mission and pastoral care, while ministerial settlement was undertaken by a national strategy team. These changes became effective in 2002. In addition, Baptists have become more confident about inner-city witness. In the present day churches with black majority congregations have made great advances and have the largest membership figures in the BU. Steve Chalke and the Oasis Trust, among others, have shown that Baptists successfully combine social action and evangelism.

This is a fascinating story and one from which Congregationalists and others can only benefit, in analysing the witness of the past and in discovering possible initiatives for the present and future. Despite the tensions involved in keeping

the diverse elements together, the Baptists have displayed a remarkable resilience and have not been afraid to take initiatives. Randall's narrative is never dull and, though he is a serious historian, his language should not deter the general reader. Indeed, as far as possible, he avoids becoming bogged down in minor denominational detail. I should have liked him to investigate more fully the contacts between Congregationalists and Baptists, and especially the influence on some leading Baptists of their education at Mansfield College, Oxford, and I should also have liked some consideration of the contribution to Baptist life of the Baptist Historical Society. Although this is a 'family' history, as Roger Hayden states in the preface, and not a history of the BU, Randall does not include the Strict Baptists in his account—Kenneth Dix has recently recounted their story. The work is stronger on narrative than analysis. The many illustrations are welcome but are often grainy and indistinct but this is a mean grumble. More precision would have upped the price and the book is a good buy and not expensive for its content and scholarship.

F J Walkey (p. 173) should be Walkley. The AEBC appears thus on p. 379 without explaining that it is the Association of Evangelical Baptist Churches.

Alan Argent

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

The Baptist Quarterly (vol 41 no 3 July 2005)

Peter J Morden "Andrew Fuller and the Baptist Missionary Society". Toivo Pilli "From a Thunderstorm to a Settled Still Life: Estonian Baptists 1959–1972". Frank D Rees "The Worship of All Believers".

(no 4 October 2005)

Ian M Randall "'The Breath of Revival': The Welsh Revival and Spurgeon's College". Toivo Pilli "From a Thunderstorm to a Settled Still Life: Estonian Baptists 1959–1972". Neil E Allison "Shakespeare's Man at the Front: The ministry of the Revd William Cramb Charteris OBE MC during the Great War (1914–1918)". Alec Barber "Association Records of the Particular Baptists of the West Country to 1659: Some Queries". Brian Bowers "Baptists in the New *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*". Faith Bowers "Another way of being Christian in France: Review article".

(no 5 January 2006)

R E Davies "Strange Bedfellow: Isaac Hollis and family, Baptist benefactors". Christine Lumsden "A Family's Service: The Andersons of Bristo Place, Edinburgh". John Hough "Clifford Cleal: A fresh approach to social responsibility".

The Journal of the Friends Historical Society (vol 60 no 2, 2004 (issued 2005)

John Punshon " Presidential Address: the Significance of the Tradition: Reflections on the Writing of Quaker History". Diana Morrison-Smith "A Seventeenth Century Friend on the Bench *The Testimony of Elizabeth Walmsley*". Sue Smithson and Hilary Pinder "The

Historical Importance of Jordans Meeting House". W Raymond Powell "Charlotte Fell Smith, Friend, Biographer and Editor".

(no 3, 2005)
Sir Christopher Booth "Presidential Address: The Quakers of Countersett and their Legacy". Betty Hagglund "Sackcloth and Ashes: Robert Barclay's 'Sign'". Ariel Hessayon "Jacob Boehme and the early Quakers".

The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society (vol 7 no 6 May 2005)
Stephen Orchard " What does the Picture Tell Us? Edward VI, John à Lasco, Zinzendorf and the Presbyterians". Frank Grace "The Path to Dissent: Ipswich Puritans during the English Revolution". Isabel Rivers "Joseph Williams of Kidderminster (1692–1755) and his Journal". Gordon Daniels "Tadeo Yanihara and Mrs Cook. I: Colonies, Letters and Christianity". "Tadeo Yanihara and Mrs Cook. II: The Letters". Clyde Binfield "Tadeo Yanihara and Mrs Cook. III: The Cooks":

(vol 7 no 7 October 2005)
Stephen J Pigney "Theophilus Gale (1628–79), Nonconformist Scholar and Intellectual: An Introduction to His Life and Writings". John Handby Thompson "A Note on William Coward". J Gwynfor Jones "Reflections on the Religious Revival in Wales 1904–05". Clyde Binfield "A corrective note on the Cooks".

Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society (vol 55 part 2 May 2005)
John A Dolan "The Voluntary Ministry of the Independent Methodists". John H Lenton "Some Printed Donation Lists". Norma Virgoe "The Whitehead Controversy: A Provincial View". John A Vickers "Indexing Wesley's Journal and Diaries". Colin C Short "Nineteenth-Century Methodist Hymn Books".

(part 3 October 2005)
Gareth Lloyd "Repression and Resistance: Wesleyan Female Public Ministry in the generation after 1791". Arthur Mignot "'Upon this Rock': The story of Philippe Tourgis". John Lenton "More on Methodist Donation Lists". "Son to Sophia".

(part 4 February 2006)
Clyde Binfield "Victorian Values and Industrious Connexions". R F S Thorne "Branches Report

The Strict Baptist Historical Society Bulletin (no 30 2005)
Norman Hopkins "The Strict Baptists of Kent and Sussex from their rise in the 1830s to the present day".

Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society (vol 23 no 4 April 2006)
Audrey Burrell "Thomas Percival—pioneer of medical and social reform". Arthur Long and Alan Ruston "Unitariorum in Anglia Part 2". "James Martineau—200th Anniversary of his birth". Alan Ruston "James Martineau—Political, Social, Personal". Reviews of two books on Martineau. Notes: "Sir Neville Chamberlain and Snooker", "Ramsey MacDonald", "Joseph Cooke: transcript of a letter".

(Supplement to vol 23 no 4 April 2006)
"Index to the Obituaries of Unitarian Ministers 1850–1899" compiled by Alan Ruston.

Secretary:
Rev. C Price
The Congregational Chapel
Pound Green
Guilden Morden
Royston
Hertfordshire
SG8 0JZ

Treasurer:
Rev. CJ Damp
Kentish Town
Congregational Church
Kelly Street
London
NW1 8PH

Distribution:
Peter I Young
125 Sudbourne Road
Brixton
London
SW2 5AF

Membership Secretary:
Michael G Mackintosh
The Flat
Trinity Chapel
St Matthew's Road
London
SW2 1NF

Editor:
Dr A Argent
160 Green Lane
Morden
Surrey
SM4 6SR

Reviews Editor:
J C Morgan
19 Elia Street
Islington
London
N1 8DE

Contributions to the *Magazine* should be addressed to the Editor.
Please note that the views expressed are those of the contributors and not those of the Congregational History Circle.

Typeset and printed by Quinta Press, Meadow View, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 7RN
01691 778659 www.quintapress.com