

**THE JOURNAL**  
**of the**  
**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HISTORY SOCIETY**  
 (incorporating the Congregational Historical Society,  
 founded in 1899, and the Presbyterian Historical  
 Society of England founded in 1913).

EDITOR: Dr. CLYDE BINFIELD, M.A., F.S.A.  
**Volume 5 No. 2 July 1993**

**CONTENTS**

Editorial and Note .....	61
The Importance of the Lord's Supper to Seventeenth-Century Dissenters by <i>Margaret Spufford, M.A., Ph.D.</i> .....	62
Homerton Academy and the Beginnings of <i>Sub Rosa</i> by <i>Geoffrey F. Nuttall, F.B.A., M.A., D.D.</i> .....	80
Hymns and an Orthodox Dissenter: In Commemoration of Bernard Lord Manning 1892-1941 by <i>Clyde Binfield, O.B.E., M.A., Ph.D., F.R.S.</i> .....	86
Review Article: God's February by <i>Arthur Macarthur, O.B.E., M.A., M. Litt.</i> .....	110
Reviews by <i>Stephen Orchard, R. Buick Knox, Alan P.F. Sell, James H. Grayson</i> .....	113

**EDITORIAL**

Three of this issue's papers might be regarded as belated commemorations. Dr. Spufford's reconsideration of the Lord's Supper in seventeenth-century Dissent was originally delivered as the Society's annual lecture during the week-end school held at Hengrave Hall, Suffolk, in September 1988. Dr. Nuttall's bicentennial (or was it? That is the subject of his detective work) celebration of *Sub Rosa* was delivered in 1991 to that elect London ministers' luncheon club. Dr. Binfield's commemoration of the centenary of Bernard Lord Manning's birth in 1892 was delivered to the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland at Liverpool in July 1992. Dr. Nuttall's paper and Dr. Binfield's are published here in collaboration with *Sub Rosa* and *The Hymn Society*.

If the papers tend to look back on Congregationalism, most of the reviews look back on Presbyterianism. They address vexed issues. In drawing attention to recent biographies of Archie Craig and Roy Whitehorn, Mr. Macarthur and Dr. Buick Knox remind us of the part played by Presbyterians in that currently down-graded enterprise, ecumenism. Professor Sell adds an American dimension. In his reviews of George Hood's important contributions to Chinese missiology, Dr. Grayson (Director of the Centre for Korean Studies at the University of Sheffield, and a Methodist minister who served for many years in Korea) poses questions that are bound to fuel the historiographical debate.

*Note:* There is to be a service commemorating the centenary of the birth of *Leslie Dixon Weatherhead*, born 14 October 1893. It will be at Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London on 17 October 1993 at 11.00am. The Revd. Paul Hulme will officiate, the Revd. Dr. Colin M. Morris will preach, and there will be music by the choir of Farringtons School. Lunch will be provided for those who notify the church before 1 October.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER TO SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DISSENTERS<sup>1</sup>

I am a social historian interested in the practice of religion, and involved in a debate with other social historians of the seventeenth-century about the importance of religious practice. This paper concentrates on the sacramental content of seventeenth-century religion, which to the Dissenters was so inextricably connected with the Word.<sup>2</sup> Quite apart from the intrinsic vital importance of the subject, I am, as a social historian, interested in habitual, repeated experiences of a ritual kind. It seems to me that the importance of the experience of the dominical sacraments (and I would like to concentrate only on the Lord's Supper) is severely underestimated amongst social historians. Nor is their potential importance to the participants understood. For this reason I have been led from considering what contemporary social historians think of seventeenth-century religion, to what sacramental actions were regularly performed in the seventeenth-century: from there, very dangerously, since I am

- 
1. This piece was given as the Annual Lecture to the United Reformed Church History Society in September 1988. The serious illness and death of my daughter precluded publication until now. I would particularly like to thank Dr. Clyde Binfield, the Editor, for his kindness and forbearance and the members of the audience, including Dr. David Thompson and the Revd. Ronald Bocking, for their warmth and helpful suggestions. Parts of the text will be included in the 'Introduction' to my forthcoming book, *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1993). I should like to thank the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, which has given me the opportunity to revise it now.
  2. I owe the original remark which stimulated me to write this paper and to the exegesis of "Fat Things" to Dr. Eamon Duffy. He is in no way responsible, however, for any errors into which I have fallen.

neither an ecclesiastical historian, nor a theologian, to the significance of those actions, and the possible meaning to those participants who are actively rather than passively involved.<sup>3</sup>

I was much struck by an essay of Natalie Davis's<sup>4</sup> in which she suggests that one of the defects of historians of popular religion is a propensity to proceed as if their important task is to separate the grain from the chaff, to distinguish between beliefs and practices that are "truly" religious, and those which are "superstitious" or "magical". This, she suggests, is to do a serious injury to the complexity of the network of beliefs and practices to be found, for instance, in late seventeenth-century France. There the people made their required Easter Communion; the parish Mass was the centre of religious life: and yet the peasantry were also polytheistic, deflecting Christian Sacraments to this-worldly ends, or making use of pagan rites. If, says Natalie Davis, we stamp as "superstition" peasant ceremonial dancing, or the fires and leaping on the Feast of St John the Baptist, will we be able to see how these things were intended to protect the biological and agricultural life of the village, and comprehend how they perpetuated, in sacred celebration, moods of festivity and joyful ecstasy which were sorely lacking in the post-Tridentine Church?

It seems to me that Natalie Davis is right: that the separation of the investigation of "religious" beliefs and "magical" ones creates an artificial division which did not exist to the uneducated, and perhaps still does not. The *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of "religion" is "the human recognition of supernatural controlling power, and especially of a personal God" whereas the definition of "magic" is "the pretended act of influencing the course of events by occult control of nature, or of spirit, witchcraft". The two are very close. If Natalie Davis is right, then I, for one, stand convicted, of error because in the 1970s I studied religious beliefs amongst Cambridgeshire villagers, and only investigated the spread of beliefs which theologians would have recognised as "religious".<sup>5</sup> But I am in good company: Keith Thomas makes no distinctions between the truth or authenticity of the Catholic, Protestant, astrological and witchcraft beliefs he studies, but he does, on the other hand, make distinctions between the functions of magic and religion. Magic to Keith Thomas comprises the methods and practices intended to tap supernatural power for solving concrete problems and misfortunes; religion, to him, has functions of explanation and consolation, supplies a moral code, and has important connections with the social order, reinforcing it, suppressing it and sometimes criticising it.<sup>6</sup> It seems to have little or nothing to do with the believer's creed that

- 
3. Professor Patrick Collinson in his presidential address to the Ecclesiastical History Society in June 1988 drew attention to the fact that historians, unlike anthropologists, do not evaluate routine which he felt might be a useful thing to do.
  4. "Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion" in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. C. Trinkhaus and H.A. Oberman (Leiden, 1974).
  5. *Contrasting Communities* (PB, 1979, Part III).
  6. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971), pp. 26-8, 46-7, 73-77, 151-54.

he or she is establishing a relationship with a supernatural controlling power. Religion is "rational", magic is not.

Now I would like in this paper to question this assumption amongst social historians that religion is "rational", and primarily concerned with morals, social order, and even, at the Holy Communion, with social bonding, for according to Sir Keith "Communion symbolises the unity of believers". The symbols involved in the participation of the Lord's Supper are surely much deeper and much richer than that: so I want initially to consider the proportion of the seventeenth-century population regularly involved in the celebration of Holy Communion, the breaking of bread, or the Lord's Supper, and what it might have meant to them.

"Statistics" of religious practice, in the very limited sense that they exist for the seventeenth-century, are necessary, for they give an overall impression of the proportion of the community exposed to religious experience. They are important in establishing what is "normal" in seventeenth-century religious practice. But they are also misleading, for they include a whole spectrum of belief, ranging from those who are merely induced by social pressure and the fear of a 12d fine to conform, right through to people for whom the practice of religion was a conscious and important act of belief and, ultimately, to those who could, and did, face martyrdom for their beliefs. They are misleading in a deeper sense too: casual use by the historian implies the passivity of the subject, and this implies a flaw in the historian's relation to the people who are the object of study, a lack of respect for the human beings involved which was splendidly objected to by Richard Cobb in 1971:

I do not care to learn that members of the upper bourgeoisie of Elbeuf possessed from 6-20 servants, but members of the middle bourgeoisie of Elbeuf possessed from 2-6 servants, and the members of the lower bourgeoisie of Elbeuf possessed from 0-2 servants. I do not know what sort of a non-person a 0 servant can be: and I even find it distasteful thus to equate the number of servants to visible signs of wealth and status, along with knives and forks and silver teapots, pairs of sheets and household linen, even if this may in fact be a useful measurement for the assessment of relative wealth. Perhaps I am being sentimental, but it disturbs me to see ... country girls sweating it out below stairs, or freezing in the attic, the object of the lust of the Master and his sons, being further humiliated, long after their death, by being forced into graphs in the galleyships of ... doctoral candidates.

These girls after all, however poor, possess their own identity, and faces, sometimes pretty ones, though generally pock-marked, often a generous and open disposition, a great deal of naivete, a

prone to revere and obey their fathers and to love and slave for their brothers, even if their intellectual baggage was as limited as their wardrobe.<sup>7</sup>

What Cobb is objecting to, with a force for which "passion" is not too strong a word, is not the use of numbers, but the degree of depersonalisation that may go with them, the loss of the "wealth and variety of human motivations ... the myriad variations of human lives". Despite this, statistics are still indispensable to establish the experience to which seventeenth-century society was normally exposed, so long as we go further after establishing them. So I shall be using the figures for communicants in 1603, and the Compton Census of 1676, to establish this statistical "frame". But I shall try to take the exploration further: I want to end by considering, the words of Isaac Watts at the very end of the seventeenth century, and Philip Doddridge, in the early eighteenth century, what these routine sacramental actions might have symbolised to the tiny minority of Dissenters to whom, we may be quite sure, the practice of their religion was indeed a conscious and important act of belief.

There were, I have no doubt, equally convinced conformists: but it far more difficult to get at the meaning of the beliefs of conformists, who were not singled out, or persecuted, for the practice of their faith.

The great faith of the French school of religious sociology founded by Le Bras in the 1930s seems to me that its members are Catholics, who comprehend the tradition in which they are working, as well as, in Le Bras' own words "desiring to see things as they are" and therefore examining religious behaviour with scrupulous detached statistical exactitude. A splendid example is Toussaert's work on *Religious Belief in Late Medieval Flanders*.<sup>8</sup> Jacques Toussaert was an Abbé, and his book was originally a doctoral thesis, of which he wrote

This work is not only put in front of my examiners, it is also in the presence of an invisible multitude of bishops, priests, religious and the medieval laity themselves: they know, at this present time, what was their strength and what was their weakness: they have already seen their terrestrial history in the light of the Divine Presence and their eternal end is ruled by the sole True Judge who knows all ... and also will judge these lines.<sup>9</sup>

This is not exactly the normal phraseology to be found in an English PhD thesis. It would certainly startle the examiners considerably to be put so firmly in their place in the hierarchy of judgement. Moreover the comprehension of the whole passage depends on the comprehension of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, which might not be the first intellectual framework to

---

7. Richard Cobb, "Historians in White Coats", *Times Literary Supplement*, Dec. 3, 1971, pp. 1528-7.

8. J. Toussaert, *Le Sentiment religieux en Flandre à la fin du Moyen Age* (1963).

9. *Ibid.*, p. 487.

come to the minds of most English social historians. Because Abbé Toussaert works from inside the tradition, he is able to write of the Mass:

On each Easter Day, each Sunday, and every other day of obligation imposed by the Church, each Christian ... to affirm his faith in the Resurrected Church in an external gesture, by which he unites himself to Christ, and to His redemptive sacrifice, the Cross, the Resurrection and the Ascension. At the holy table, if the Christian wishes to unite himself more fully with the Person of Christ, he feeds on the Son of God himself.<sup>10</sup>

From these beginnings, anchored in a tradition, he understands he writes an exact, and in the French sense of the word "scientific" thesis, which concludes that the Flemish laity were largely indifferent to communion and confession in the fifteenth century; naive, excited and sensationalistic in matters of faith, timing their sporadic religious activity to occasions defined by family needs, natural catastrophes, and folk-tradition. There was a general religiosity, an extraordinary stress on peripheral details of piety and observance, a calendar marked off in the rhythm of the liturgical seasons and feasts, but an absence of what a theologian would recognise as genuine informal devotion.<sup>11</sup> Toussaert thus understates the importance of the "general religiosity" he finds, which to Natalie Davis would be of extreme importance. Yet it seems to me to be a great strength of his that he does understand what was supposed to be going on a fifteenth-century Mass, even if he feels that the ignorant Flemish laity probably did not understand it.

By comparison Keith Thomas ends his consideration of religion by writing:

Stoicism had become the basic religious message for those in misfortune ... it was the general social importance of religion which enabled it to outlive magic. For magic had no Church, *no Communion symbolising the unity of believers* [my italics] it remains an interesting question as to how religion's social functions made it possible to survive when magic had been found redundant. But it would be a question *mal posée* if it were not remembered that the official religion of industrial England was one from which the primitive 'magical' elements had been very largely shorn.<sup>12</sup>

I suggest that an interpretation of religion is not adequately full if it describes as "rational" and "socially cohesive" a set of ritual practices that involved at their heart, even for Dissenters who had no set form of service,<sup>13</sup> consecrating the

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-3.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 499.

12. *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 766.

13. Stephen Mayor, *The Lord's Supper in Early English Dissent*, (1972) pp. 154, 155-6, 157.

elements with Christ's words of institution at the Last Supper "take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of me... This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft ye drink it in remembrance of me."<sup>14</sup> These are surely not words shorn of primitive significance; nor are they words which express merely a comfortable social cohesion between those who say them, however they are interpreted. They express a belief in, and a search for, an exterior being who is supposed to be in some relationship with the participant; and their meaning could no more be expressed in purely "rational" terms than can the desire of Bishop Cooper in Lincoln in the 1580s that his parishioners might "eat the body and blood of Christ more effectually and fruitfully".<sup>15</sup>

It is no part of my general design, or competence, to trace the development of Anglican or Dissenting doctrine on the Eucharist or Lord's Supper and its application through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is only my design to consider the actions in which common people were routinely involved in those centuries, before considering the possible significance of those actions for them.

The laity were, as William Harrison wrote in his *Description of England* in 1577<sup>16</sup> expected regularly to be at Morning and Evening Prayer on Sundays:<sup>17</sup> Morning Prayer included the Epistle, Gospel, and Nicene Creed followed by a sermon or homily, unless there was to be a Communion. Cranmer, like Calvin, started off with the idea of a weekly, corporate Communion in English<sup>18</sup> but this idea was never realised. According to the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer in 1559 "every Parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in a year: of which Easter to be one".<sup>19</sup> One of my unresolved problems is to work out whether the common English parishioner in the sixteenth century, asked to communicate at a Holy Communion in a tongue he could understand, three times a year, compared with attending a Mass he could not understand every Sunday, suffered a diminution, or an increase, in the sacramental content of his life. Certainly the Easter Eucharist of obligation continued to be well attended. A.G. Dickens calculated there were 2.25 million communicants in England and Wales in 1603, which was probably something like seventy-five per cent of the

- 
14. I Corinthians 11, vv. 24-5 (Authorised Version).
  15. Thomas Cooper *A briefe homily wherein the most comfortable and right use of the Lords Supper is very plainly opened and delivered, even to the understanding of the unlearned and ignorant* (London 1580), A ii (a) – B i (a), cit John E Booty, "Preparation for the Lord's Supper in Elizabethan England". *Anglican Theological Review* XLIX (1967), p. 132.
  16. William Harrison, *Description of England*, ed. G.Edelen (1968), p. 34.
  17. Professor Collinson in his presidential address to the Ecclesiastical History Society in 1988 estimated that 500 hours were spent annually at the reading of Morning and Evening Prayer.
  18. John E. Booty, *art cit.*, p. 144.
  19. *Ibid*, p. 144.

adult population, that is the population over sixteen.<sup>20</sup> There are certain difficulties about this, in view of Dr. Wrigley's and Dr. Schofield's population figures for 1603, which suggest that the communicants' returns omitted something like a quarter or a fifth of the adult population. Nevertheless, even if all those omitted were non-communicants, which is the most pessimistic reading, and therefore the most suitable for our purposes, the figures still suggest that the laity cared about its Easter Communion despite the undoubted undermining of habit and continuity so vital to religious practice, which was precipitated by the constant upheavals in the clergy, in language and in the arrangement of church interiors symbolising the rearrangements of theological attitudes caused by the Reformation. In the Diocese of Ely, for instance, the altar was removed from chancels in 1550 and replaced by a "decent table suitable for the administration of the sacrament of bread and wine" in the nave: it was carried back up again with the reintroduction of the Mass in 1553, and carried down again on its reabolition in 1559. The constant disturbances in the position of the altar led churchwardens to fail to repave the place where the altar had stood, obviously uncertain of its lasting position. There was then acute disturbance over the repositioning of the altar in the 1630s.<sup>21</sup>

Until recently demographers have been the chief users of the returns of communicants made by the bishops in 1603. Peter Burke first used them in 1979 as they were originally composed, as a kind of census of religious conformists, and religious behaviour at the beginning of James's reign,<sup>22</sup> for the Diocese of Lincoln, where in Easter Week 1603, seventy-five per cent of those eligible to receive the sacrament had actually done so. Again, whether this indicates a low or a high attendance is not my concern, although three-quarters of those eligible seems to me not bad after a period of such great upheaval.

More recently, in an important article, Jeremy Boulton has examined the administration of Communion in two rapidly-growing London parishes, St.

20. A.G. Dickens, "Extent and Character of Recusancy in Yorkshire, 1604", *Yorks. Arch. Jo.*, XXXVII, Part I (1948), p. 32. I owe this reference to the kindness of Professor D.M. Palliser. Dickens relies on the figures of B. Magee, *The English Recusants*, who calculates a total of 2,250,765 communicants in England and Wales. He says elsewhere that Dr. Magee's figures should be regarded with reserve (*art cit.*, p. 28, n. 3). E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871* (1981), p. 569 arrive at a total of 2,091 million adult communicants, non-communicants and recusants in 1603 for England, excluding Wales. They suggest adding thirty-five per cent to these figures for the proportion of the population under sixteen, which would bring the population total for England to 3,217 million. They then suggest that the total should have been 4.156 million, so that the communicants' survey missed between a quarter and a fifth of the adult population. There is no way of reconciling Professor Dickens's figure with those of Dr. Wrigley and Dr. Schofield, because of the inclusion in one case, and exclusion in the other, of Wales.

21. *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 242-3, 268.

22. Lincolnshire Record Society, XXIII, p. lviii. Cited A.D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914* (Longman, 1976), p. 6. Peter Burke, "Religion and Secularisation" in Peter Burke (ed) *New Cambridge Modern History*, XIII (Companion Volume) Cambridge 1979, p. 309.



Botolph's-without-Aldgate and St. Saviour's, Southwark, on the south bank of the Thames.<sup>23</sup> St. Saviour's had a series of token books which was unique for London, although they exist for other large towns and cities, which recorded both tokens delivered out to intended communicants, and those received back again. This issue of tokens was not to exclude the "ungodly" from Communion, which was "open" to St. Saviour's, but was simply to pay for the expense of delivering Communion in both kinds, which included at St. Saviour's, for instance, the purchase of seventy gallons of wine in 1613. Dr. Boulton's examination of the issue and receipt of these tokens demonstrates that in this parish in late Elizabethan and Jacobean London between eighty and ninety-eight per cent of potential communicants made an annual Communion. This mass attendance, as he writes, "cannot be written off solely as a form of social control", although, as he adds,

Admittedly, there were the constraints of ecclesiastical penalties on parishioners to attend Holy Communion and the payment of 6d made for the communion tokens by a poor householder and his wife after 1620, representing nearly half a day's wages, might also have been a significant inducement to attend communion following the delivery of tokens.

Yet it was perfectly possible to receive a token, and not attend Communion, so the high proportion of tokens probably does, in Dr. Boulton's opinion, represent "an element of popular demand for the communion service".<sup>24</sup>

In 1981, I wrote:

The degree of importance that religion held in the lives of non-gentle parishioners will never be established... genuine popular devotion of a humble kind leaves very little trace on the records of any given time. The believer, especially the comforting believer, makes less impact than the dissentient. At no period is it possible to distinguish the conforming believer from the apathetic church-goer who merely wished to stay out of trouble.<sup>25</sup>

By that cautious judgement I stand. But I think that Dr. Burke's seventy-five per cent of communicants in 1603 in the Diocese of Lincoln, and Dr. Boulton's eighty to ninety-eight per cent of potential communicants in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth-century in Southwark demonstrate that the mass of the population were still participating in the major rituals of the Elizabethan

---

23. J.P. Boulton, "The Limits of Formal Religion: The Administration of Holy Communion in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart London", *The London Journal*, 10 (1984), pp. 135-153, especially 137 and 149. I believe that Dr. Susan Wright has a major piece of work in hand on the token books of other cities, although it may be more demographically focussed.

24. *Art cit.*, p. 149.

25. *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (London, 1981), pp. 194-5.

church, and that the weight of the evidence points to a participating mass, not to the "mass apathy" cited by some social historians. This participating mass was at least familiar with the Communion Service. Some of the people who made up this mass, even a majority perhaps, may have been the kind of people who, in their behaviour or beliefs, were the despair of the Elizabethan Reformers. In 1618, at St Saviour's in Southwark, communion tokens were delivered to Jane Toby, a single woman living in the churchyard, who had two bastard children living in her household. A third bastard child of hers was baptised in 1621.<sup>26</sup> So members of what Peter Laslett has described as the "bastardly prone sub-society" were, or could be, receiving Communion. And this is not at all unimportant considering the current belief amongst social historians that the poor were "hostile, or resistant, or at best indifferent to Protestant Christianity",<sup>27</sup> or that sections of the population "below a certain economic level" managed without religion altogether.<sup>28</sup> Some of the contemporary comments of the Reformers, meant only to condemn the ignorant rabble who made up their flocks, demonstrated incidentally the strength of popular religious practice among that same rabble. The Vicar of Redbourn in Hertfordshire complained in 1585 "at the verie time when I should minister the said Sacramente ... they comme thronginge and pressinge in great numbre commonly without all good order". Richard Leake, preaching in Westmorland in 1599, suggested the appalling harvest and epidemics of the 1590s were a consequence of the north-country people's behaviour at Communion, thronging and pressing forward to receive their "rightings" and making no better than "a common banket of it".<sup>29</sup> In both these instances, the common people were accused of too much eagerness to receive the Sacrament, along with ignorance. The picture fits with a need for reform, but the condemnation of the Reformers is not of apathy.

Amongst this possibly non-apatetic and ignorant mass there must have been a proportion, we shall never know how large or how small, to whom their participation was important, to whom their belief in practice mattered in a fashion even a theologian would admit to be "religious". I am strengthened in this belief by the work of Dr. Judith Maltby,<sup>30</sup> who has found in the ecclesiastical courts of the dioceses of Lincoln and Chester evidence of groups of active

---

26. Jeremy Boulton, *art cit.*, p. 143 and p. 153, n. 65.

27. Eamon Duffy, *Seventeenth Century Journal*, I, no. 1 (Durham, Jan 1986), p. 31.

28. Patrick Collinson, quoting Keith Thomas, in the *Religion of Protestants* (1982), p. 198.

29. Both quoted by Patrick Collinson, *ibid.*, pp. 211-12 and 213-214.

30. Judith Maltby, "Religious Conformity in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England" (unpublished Cambridge Ph.D. 1992). This thesis is being revised for print in the Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History. The diary of William Coe, a yeoman of Mildenhall after the Restoration, which is being edited for publication along with the *Diary of Isaac Archer*, his own incumbent, for the Suffolk Records Society by Mathew Storey, illustrates the life of the type of conformist the reformers would not have approved, very well. William Coe spent much of his time tippling, much repenting, and much on receiving the Sacrament, which was very important to him.

conformists, who attempted to prosecute their non-conforming ministers for failing to provide services according to the Book of Common Prayer, on Wednesday, Fridays and Saints' and Holy Days, and also for failing to celebrate Holy Communion. The churchwardens of Thurlleigh, in Lincoln, for instance, complained in 1608 that their vicar had failed to administer the Sacrament at least three times a year in the last two years. In Cheshire, Dr. Maltby has been able to identify the social and economic status of some of the parishioners who signed a petition in the late 1630s in favour of the Prayer Book. She has demonstrated that these parishioners crossed all economic groups in some parishes, and, most notably, included those on poor relief, even when one of the overseers of the poor failed to sign the petition. The poor did not necessarily therefore sign as a result of social pressure. So committed conformists practising their religion according to the Elizabethan settlement were to be found at all social levels, even amongst those on poor relief.

What was then the meaning of their participation in Holy Communion to the committed amongst the mass of participants at Easter Communion in the diocese of Lincoln in 1603? Again, we can never know, but Bishop Cooper of Lincoln in 1580 composed a homily on the "right use of the Lord's Supper" to be read "before everie celebration of the Lord's Supper, in all such Churches and Parishes as have not a sufficiently habile preacher" so his words were probably heard by a considerable number of people in the Diocese. He wanted his people, even the "unlearned and ignorant" to understand the benefit of the sacrament, and particularly how the eating of the outward elements "quickeneth, stirreth, strengtheneth and increaseth our faith, that we may eat the body and blood of Christ more effectually and fruitfully".<sup>31</sup> These are strong words, even possibly shocking in their purport to someone outside the eucharistic tradition. There was a drop-off in attendance in Brussels amongst nominal Catholics exposed to the Mass in the vernacular after Vatican II. These words cannot have been less startling, surely, to the Elizabethan peasant? Bishop Cooper would have his worshippers in the Diocese of Lincoln in the 1580s say to themselves:

even as certainly as my taste feeleth the sweetness of bread and wine... even so the taste of my faith and sense of my heart doth feel the sweetness of Christ his body and blood broken and shed for me and all mankind upon the cross.<sup>32</sup>

Ian Green traced over 280 different catechisms published between 1549 and 1646, excluding the longest forms.<sup>33</sup> The most popular of these went through as many as fifty-six editions. One of the four elements expounded in the majority of these catechisms was the doctrine of the sacraments, which only appeared in the official Prayer Book catechism from 1604 onwards. Until then, the

---

31. John E. Booty, *art cit.*, pp. 131-48.

32. Booty, *ibid.*, p. 146.

33. Ian Green, "'For Children in Yeeres and Children in Understanding': The Emergence of the English Catechism under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xxxvii, 3 (July 1986), pp. 399-400, 402, 405, 410-11.

importance of the omitted subject had been the motive behind the appearance of many of the alternative catechisms, which had preparation for Communion as one of their major objectives. They emphasised the "understanding of the precise nature and purpose of the sacrament, and the need for a rigorous self-examination before each Communion."<sup>34</sup>

Cranmer and Calvin had wanted a weekly Communion or Lord's Supper: Calvin wrote that the custom of communicating once a year was "a veritable invention of the devil".<sup>35</sup> The Anglican church did not manage to avoid this condemnation: although there are some hints that a monthly celebration was held by at least some Elizabethan and Stuart reformers. The vicar who grumbled at Redbourn in Hertfordshire in 1585 of his flock's unseemly eagerness to receive, himself celebrated once a month, after divine service and his sermon.<sup>36</sup> George Herbert in the early 1630s wished for a monthly celebration, but if this was not possible, "at least five or six times in a year: as at Easter, Christmas, Whitsuntide, afore and after Harvest, and at the beginning of Lent".<sup>37</sup> If we move away from parochial Communion to the conventicles of the godly, in which the separatist churches may often have been rooted, we find that some of the puritan exercises, like the "eager and vast crowds ... flocking to perform their practices" under the jaundiced eye of an imprisoned Jesuit in Wisbech Castle in 1588, ended with a Communion. He estimated the number involved, no doubt wrongly, as high as 1000.<sup>38</sup> In the same way the very different minister at Denton Chapel in the 1630s, John Angier, held monthly communions, which attracted "hundreds" of "godly folk", some of whom travelled thirty miles to attend. Patrick Collinson writes that "monthly sacraments" seem to have been a special feature of life in the north west.<sup>39</sup> Only local research would show whether this was rooted in earlier popular belief. When Richard Baxter established his monthly communions which "gather the faithful from a wide catchment area" in Kidderminster in the 1650s<sup>40</sup> he seems to have been building on long-established puritan practice.

34. George Herbert laid down "the time of every one's first receiving is not so much by yeers, as by understanding: particularly, the rule may be this: When anyone can distinguish the Sacramentall from common bread, knowing the Institution and the difference hee ought to receive, of what age soever. Children and youths are usually deferred too long, under pretence of devotion to the Sacrament, but it is for want of instruction: ... Parents and Masters should make hast in this... which while they deferr, both sides suffer. *A Priest to the Temple, or, The Country Parson His Character, and Rule of Holy Life* (Printed 1662) in *The Works of George Herbert* ed. F.E. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1941), pp. 258-9.
35. Stephen Mayor, *The Lord's Supper in Early English Dissent* pp. xiv-xv and x.
36. Patrick Collinson, *ibid*, pp. 211-12.
37. George Herbert, *ibid*.
38. Quoted *in extenso*, in my *Contrasting Communities* pp. 262-3.
39. Patrick Collinson, *ibid*, pp. 263-64.
40. Patrick Collinson, "Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition" (1975), reprinted in *Godly People* (London 1983), p. 537.

The next great religious census of the seventeenth century after 1603 is the Compton Census of 1676<sup>41</sup> which lists "Conformists", "non-Conformists" and "Papists" by parish. If we consider only the four per cent of the population in 1676 who were counted as Dissenters, then we shall be moving away from a consideration of a proportion of the population who had at least a general acquaintance with popular religion and religious practice, to a tiny minority, who, we can be quite sure, held beliefs a theologian would recognise. For the Dissenters in 1676 were a hunted and persecuted people. Their genuine religious convictions can never be in doubt. For them it was very costly to practice, whereas in 1603 it had been costly, albeit in a very minor way, not to conform.

Just as we found from Dr. Maltby's work in Cheshire that the active conformists desiring the continuance of the Prayer Book in the late 1630s crossed all social groups including those on poor relief, so also do we find that the Dissenters of the 1670s crossed all groups taxed in the Hearth Taxes of that decade, even including those exempt from taxation on the grounds of poverty. William Stevenson has worked on the social and economic status of Dissenters in the late-seventeenth-century. He has come up with a massive group of more than 750 non-conformists of all denominations identified in the relevant Hearth Taxes of 1674 for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. He collected enough members of the Quakers, Congregationalists, Baptists and Open Baptists to form satisfyingly large samples for each sect. The results are therefore the most thorough examination that we have or are likely to have of the status of Dissenters immediately after the Restoration. "It is the very 'ordinariness' of sectaries which is so striking" he writes.

They were not confined to any particular social rank or subgroup... they ranged from lowly servants and labourers to humble craftsmen and husbandmen, small retailers, prosperous wholesalers, yeoman, professionals and gentlemen.

The contemporary slur so often used by the Bishops in 1669 against them, that the congregations consisted simply of "mean mechanicks" and the "vulgar sort" was wrong.<sup>42</sup>

Post-Restoration Dissenters seem, in general, excluding the Quakers of course, to have lived a much richer sacramental life than their Anglican counterparts, although they still did not achieve the weekly Communion desired by both Calvin and Cranmer.<sup>43</sup> This is a change that has been missed.

---

41. Anne Whiteman (ed.), *The Compton census of 1676: a critical edition*, Records of social and economic history, N.S. x (British Academy, 1986).

42. W. Stevenson, "The Economic and Social Status of Protestant Sectaries in Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire, 1650-1725" (Cambridge Ph.D, 1990), pp. 251, 343-44. Dr. Stevenson is contributing two chapters to my forthcoming book *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725*.

43. Patrick Collinson, "Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition" (1975), reprinted in *Godly People* p. 537.

Stephen Mayor in the *Lord's Supper in Early English Dissent* writes, indeed,

it is of course true that the early Dissenters gave a smaller place to the Eucharist than many Christians have done... for those who believe it to be absolutely central to the Christian Faith, the place they gave it was inadequate.<sup>44</sup>

The magnitude of the change, to a Lord's Supper not three times a year but monthly, or at least six-weekly, on Baxter's model, may have been missed because of the format of the surviving seventeenth-century Church Books. They place very little emphasis on the substance of the routine meetings of which they record the dates: they hardly ever describe the "normal" events, which are assumed. The bulk of the business recorded is dealing with the errant and the aberrant, not the normal. Yet careful reading seems to show that groups of Dissenters, separated in doctrine from Arminian to Calvinist, and in geography from Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire to Yorkshire, celebrated monthly and sometimes even more frequently. This was true of the Open Baptists of Fenstanton and of Huntingdonshire in the 1650s<sup>45</sup> and of Bunyan's Open Baptist Church on the Bedfordshire border where the members agreed in 1659 "to entreat our brother Wheeler, brother Donne, brother Gibbs and brother Breedon to give their assistance in the worke of God in preaching and breaking of breade once every moneth or 3 weeks, one after another on the Lordes Dayes".<sup>46</sup> It also seems to be true of the strict Calvinist Church of Guyhirn and Isleham in north east Cambridgeshire, which covenanted in 1687,<sup>47</sup> and the

44. *Ibid.* pp. 158-9.

45. *Records of the Churches of Christ gathered at Fenstanton, Warboys and Hexham, 1644-1720* ed. E.B. Underhill (Hanserd Knollys Soc., London, 1854). Up to the beginning of 1654 the Church Book only gives details of disciplinary disputes. In 1655 it becomes evident that every general meeting opens with prayer, supplication and an exhortation, before the discipline, and business. (See for instance pp. 127, 135). During that year, the minutes also record that the meeting closes with praise, and a dismissal (p. 147). Soon afterwards, the "observation of some ordinances of God" or "the Most High" were recorded after the business, before the praise and the dismissal (p. 179). Once, the standard description varied helpfully, "after which praise was rendered to God: then we broke bread together", before the dismissal (p. 200). One explanatory clause was sometimes added "And so (the day being spent) the assembly were dismissed" (e.g. p. 201). This is interesting in view of the stress in the church that the "breaking of bread" should, scripturally, follow supper (pp. 36-7, 61, 67-70, 188). The general meetings were held monthly. It is impossible to say whether the change in recording in 1655, and the regular monthly "observation of some ordinances of God" represents simply a change in the detail of the minutes, or a genuine change in church practice. Anyway, by 1655, the breaking of bread, one of the "ordinances of the Lord", took place monthly.

46. *The Minutes of the First Independent Church at Bedford* (now Bunyan Meeting), p. 35.

47. *The Church Book of the Independent Church* (now Pound Lane Baptist) *Isleham, 1693-1805*, ed. Kenneth A.C. Parsons, *Cambridge Antiquarian Records Society*, 6 (Cambridge, 1984), p. 29-30 (1693/4 Covenant, nos. 5, 6 and 12) and pp. 62, 1756 Covenant, nos. 4, 16 and 63.

church of the non-conforming Presbyterian, Oliver Heywood, based in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the 1680s and 90s.<sup>48</sup> The magnitude of the change involved in the lives of the Dissenters of 1676 by the routine of the constantly repeated practice of breaking bread together in the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord seems very important indeed. It is a change that does not seem to have been stressed in the literature. It was of course theologically possible because the "gathered" churches were a people set apart, or in Isaac Watt's words:

A Garden wall'd around,  
Chosen and made peculiar Ground.<sup>49</sup>

They thus no longer faced the problems of discipline and the barring of unworthy recipients of Communion, whilst still collecting the essential tithes on which the incumbent lived, which had caused Ralph Josselin not to celebrate for nearly nine years in Earls Colne,<sup>50</sup> or Richard Baxter during his whole time in Bridgenorth.<sup>51</sup> On the contrary, for the members of these churches "preaching the Gospell and breaking of bread" were inextricably interlinked<sup>52</sup> or, as the same Church Book put it, "the nature of fellowship [is] the Word, prayer, and breaking of bread".<sup>53</sup> Withdrawal from this sacrament ordained by Christ was therefore an offence, as a long letter of rebuke written by Bunyan's Church to one of its members in 1669 shows. One of the chief accusations was:

In your so long neglecting to be conscionably found in the godly practise of the Lord's Supper, concerning which, had you bene tender, had not the table of the Lord bene too meene in your thoughtes, how could you for years have absented your self. And if by that bread and that cup, we show to our selves and each other the Lord's death, we had seen it by that but seldom had we therein taken you for example. In considering that appointment is such that is oft to be put into practise, and that for the help of our faith, both as to our remembering the Lord, and discerning of his body and blood, we cannot but judge you guilty.<sup>54</sup>

---

48. J. Horsfall Turner (ed.) *Autobiography, diaries anecdotes and eventbooks of Oliver Heywood*, (Brighouse, 1881), pp. 1, 32-3 and 35-6.

49. Considered in Donald Davie, *A Gathered Church: the Literature of the English Dissenting Interest, 1700-1930* (London, 1978), pp. 28-30.

50. *The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683*, ed. A. Macfarlane (London, 1976), pp. 77, 96, 234-7.

51. *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter*, ed. N.H. Keeble (London, 1974), p. 18.

52. *Minutes of the First Independent Church at Bedford*, p. 35.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

The rules promulgated by Soham Church in the 1690s laid down that  
 abstaining from any instituted ordinance which the Lord may call  
 us to... is also a breach of covenant.<sup>55</sup>

At a later renewal of the covenant in the same church, the point was emphasised.  
 There was no acceptable excuse for

forsaking the assembling of ourselves together... to worship God...  
 when we break bread in the Lord's Supper, for there all ought to  
 assemble with the church let what gospel man soever preach.<sup>56</sup>

What then did this increased frequency of celebration of the Lord's Supper,  
 which I suggest is a very significant change, mean to these post-Restoration  
 Dissenters? The Savoy Declaration of 1658, drawn up by delegates from  
 Independent Churches<sup>57</sup> was orthodoxly Calvinist in its doctrine:

Sacraments are holy Signs and Seals of the Covenant of Grace,  
 immediately instituted by Christ to represent him and his benefit,  
 and confirm our interest in him... Our Lord Jesus Christ in the night  
 wherein he was betrayed, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and  
 Blood, called the Lord's Supper... for the perpetual remembrance  
 and shewing forth of the Sacrifice of Himself in his death, the  
 sealing of all benefits thereof unto true believers... and to be bond  
 and pledge their communion with him, and with each other.<sup>58</sup>

Richard Baxter wrote a programme of meditation for the communicant in his  
*Christian Directory* and emphasised the presence of Christ

When you behold the consecrated bread and wine, discern the  
 Lord's body, and reverence it as the representative body and blood  
 of Jesus Christ; and take heed of profaning it, by looking on it as  
 common bread and wine; though it be not transubstantiate, but still  
 is very bread and wine in its natural being, yet it is Christ's body and  
 blood in representation and effect. Look on it as the consecrated  
 bread of life, which with the quickening Spirit must nourish you to  
 life eternal... Even as in delivering the possession of house or lands,  
 the deliverer giveth you a key, and a twig<sup>59</sup> and a turf, and saith "I

---

55. *The Church Book of the Independent Church* (now Pound Lane Baptist) *Isleham, 1693-1805*, p. 29.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3.

57. Fully laid out and discussed in Stephen Mayor, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-85.

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 79 and 81.

59. This reference must have been extremely familiar to all copyholders who were given entry to their lands "by the rod, at the will of the Lord".



deliver you this house, and I deliver you this land": so doth the minister by Christ's authority deliver you Christ, and pardon, and title to eternal life.<sup>60</sup>

But the theology of the Savoy Declaration, and the devotional directives of Baxter still do not tell us of the relative importance of the Lord's Supper in the lives of ordinary seventeenth-century Dissenters, and what they made of this increasing sacramental activity. Was Keith Thomas right after all in postulating that seventeenth-century religion was really increasingly rational and socially cohesive? Was the religion of Dissenters, at least, as it emerged into the industrial eighteenth century, one "from which the primitive 'magical' elements had been very largely shorn"?<sup>61</sup>

To examine what seventeenth-century Dissenters made of the sacramental activity of the Lord's Supper, I turn to the literature. John Bunyan is writing for the same rural audience whose doings are recorded in *The Minutes of the First Independent Church of Bedford*, and whom we now know from Dr. Stephenson's work to be even poorer than the rural average. His verse disappoints us: his poem written in *A Book for Boys and Girls or Country Rhymes for Children*, printed in 1686, on the Sacrament is more concerned to warn against the dangers, than to stress the benefits of reception.

Two sacraments I do believe there be,  
 Ev'n baptism and the Supper of the Lord:  
 Both mysteries divine, which do to me,  
 By God's appointment, benefit afford:  
 But shall they be my God, or shall I have  
 Of them so foul and impious afford,  
 To think that from the curse they can me save?  
 Bread, wine, nor water me no ransom bought.<sup>62</sup>

Bunyan's prose is more revealing however.

Christian in the Palace Beautiful sat down, when supper was ready,  
 to... a Table... furnished with fat things, and with Wine that was well  
 refined; and all their talk at the Table, was about the Lord of the  
 Hill.<sup>63</sup>

In turn, Mr. Greatheart brings a token from the Lord to Christiana which is a "Bottle of Wine". And at supper in the inn where Christiana stays, which is a forerunner of the "Supper of the great King in his Kingdom" is a "Bottle of Wine,

60. Richard Baxter, *Christian Directory, Works*, IV, pp. 337-8, quoted Stephen Mayor, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

61. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 760-6.

62. *A Book for Girls and Boys*, p. 26.

63. John Bunyan, *Pilgrims Progress*, (OUP ed. 1904, reprinted 1945), p. 65.

red as Blood”, which is the “juice of the true Vine, that makes glad the Heart of God and Man”.<sup>64</sup>

But for more extensive and real insight into the importance of the Lord's Supper to the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Dissenters, we have to turn to the two great hymn writers of the Old Dissent, Philip Doddridge and Isaac Watts. Philip Doddridge was born as late as 1702, and ministered to the very important Dissenting congregation in Northampton.<sup>65</sup> We owe to him a hymn still regularly sung at the Eucharist in Anglican churches.

My God, and is thy table spread,  
and doth thy cup with love o'erflow?  
thither be all thy children lead,  
and let them all thy sweetness know.

Hail, sacred feast which Jesus makes,  
rich banquet of his flesh and blood!  
thrice happy he who here partakes  
that sacred stream, that heavenly food.

O let thy table honoured be,  
and furnished well with joyful guests;  
and may each soul salvation see,  
that here its sacred pledges taste.<sup>66</sup>

As well as his own work, he also gives us a glimpse which is even more important, since it is in the correct period, into the rôle and importance in the lives of rural people who formed the sort of congregations in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire we have been talking about, of the hymns of his senior, Isaac Watts. In 1731, he wrote to Dr. Watts, who was then aged 57,

When preaching in a barn to a pretty large assembly of plain country people, at a village a few miles off... we sung one of your

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 279 and 311.

65. *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge. DD. 1705-1751*, ed. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, H.M.S.O. joint publication 26 and Northants. Rec. Soc. XXIX (1979). I am particularly grateful to the Revd. Ronald Bocking who spent some time after my lecture searching for, and sending me, references to the observance of the Communion Service in the Castle Hill Church of Northampton while Doddridge was minister there. The tradition was a monthly evening celebration. The date varied according to the phase of the moon, so that the worshippers could get safely home by moonlight. Malcolm Deacon, *Philip Doddridge of Northampton* (1980), p. 72; C. Stanford, *Philip Doddridge* (1880), p. 127; John Stoughton, *History of Religion in England*, Vol. VI, p. 94.

66. *Hymns Ancient and Modern, New Standard* (1983) no. 259. Professor Alan Everitt points out to me (personal communication) that I should not properly use Doddridge's work to illustrate this paper, in view of the great shift in sensibility and taste that took place in just this period. See Alan Everitt, "Springs of Sensibility: Philip Doddridge of Northampton and the Evangelical Tradition", in Alan Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England*, (London, 1985), pp. 209-245.

Hymns... these were most of them poor people who work for their living. On the mention of your name, I found they had read several of your books with great delight, and that your Hymns and Psalms were almost their daily entertainment. And when one of the company said, "What if Dr. Watts should come down to Northampton?", another replied with a remarkable warmth "The very sight of him would be like an ordinance [i.e. the Lord's Supper] to me".<sup>67</sup>

Isaac Watts had been born in 1674, and may properly be regarded as a seventeenth-century author: his hymns were published in 1707<sup>68</sup> and were already being sung from manuscript in the Dissenting Chapel in Southampton in 1694 and 1695.<sup>69</sup> He himself wrote that he had "just permitted [his] verse to rise above a flat and indolent style" and was "sensible that [he had] often subdued it below" the esteem of the critics, "and because I would neither *indulge* any bold metaphors, nor admit of hard words, nor *tempt the ignorant worshipper to sing without his understanding*".<sup>70</sup> So Isaac Watts had deliberately pitched his words and their meaning at the type of congregation worshipping in a barn, "plain country people... poor people who work for their living" whom Philip Doddridge later observed singing them with such enthusiasm. Isaac Watts wanted them to understand the words. And what words, and what meaning, they were. If the Holy Communion, or the Lord's Supper was "instituted by Christ to represent Him and His benefits" in the words of the Savoy Confession of 1658, then the Dissenters singing in Southampton in the 1690s and in barns in Northamptonshire in the 1730s, were certainly not practising a religion from which the primitive magical elements had been shorn. For the Lord's Supper represented more than bonding between believers: it represented bonding and union with God. The last section of Isaac Watts's *Hymns* were those "prepared

- 
67. *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge*, p. 62. Professor Davie in *A Gathered Church* drew attention to Leslie Stephen writing on Isaac Watts's hymns. Stephen wrote that for many years 50,000 copies of Watts's psalms and hymns were printed annually. And Davie comments: "We a century after Leslie Stephen have no way of dealing with such phenomena, no method by which to translate the quantitative facts of so many copies printed and sold year after year, into the qualitative consideration of how they conditioned the sensibility of the English-speaking peoples. But what we can, and should do... is to confess and insist... just what a vast lacuna this reveals in our pretensions to chart cultural history". *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, p. 8. The Doddridge/Watts correspondence suggests that Watts's influence was indeed enormously widespread and should not be underestimated amongst the common people. At the end of the eighteenth-century, James Raines's grandmother, who was blind and had lived in an almshouse, taught him the whole of Watts's *Hymns* from memory. *A Raine Miscellany*, ed. Angela Marsden, Surtees Society CC (1991), p. 17.
68. Bernard Manning, *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts: Five Informal Papers* (Epworth, 1942), p. 81.
69. Donald Davie, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
70. Quoted Donald Davie, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

for the Holy Ordinance of the Lord's Supper".<sup>71</sup> And to Isaac Watts, in accordance with the doctrine of the Savoy Declaration, the Lord's Supper was more than a memorial.<sup>72</sup> These late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Dissenters do not seem to have been condemned to mere stoicism, for in Watt's own "flat and indolent style"

This holy bread and wine  
 Maintains our fainting breath  
 By union with our living Lord  
 And interest in His death.  
 Here have we seen Thy face, O Lord  
 And view'd salvation with our eyes;  
 Tasted and felt the Living Word,  
 The bread descending from the skies.

MARGARET SPUFFORD

71. Bernard Manning, *ibid.* p. 80.

72. Bernard Manning, *ibid.* p. 104.

## HOMERTON ACADEMY AND THE BEGINNINGS OF *SUB ROSA*

*Sub Rosa* is a United Reformed Church (until 1972 Congregational) ministers' Lunch Club in London. By common consent it is of long standing. But its history, especially its early history, is obscure and perplexing. Even its bibliography, such as there is, is complex and confusing.

Three documentary accounts, which we may call A, B and C, appeared in 1868, 1934 and 1960 respectively. Document C, a single sheet, typed and headed "Private: for Members Only", was composed by me when I was *Sub Rosa*'s chairman. Document B, in the *Transactions* of the Congregational Historical Society for April 1934, was put out by the editor, Albert Peel, at a time when he was a member. Of its twelve pages nine-and-a-half consist of a paper by W. Hardy Harwood read to *Sub Rosa* "some twenty years ago", which had come into Peel's possession and was printed by him "just as read", save that it ends in the middle of a sentence ("the last page... is evidently missing"). "There are no documents earlier than 1814", Harwood states, but he was able to draw on records from 1814 onwards. Peel states that he had examined cashbooks from 1816 (conceivably the same as the records seen by Harwood); also "the minutes from October, 1885 to October, 1888 have come to light". Today, it seems, neither minutes nor early cash books are extant.<sup>1</sup>

1. Information from the present (1992) Hon. Secretary of *Sub Rosa*, the Revd. A.J. Beeson.

Document A is a pamphlet of eight pages. Its title page reads:

*A Brief Historical Sketch of a Select Society of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, meeting once a month for friendly and confidential intercourse.*  
By Thomas James. *Sub Rosa*. 'Call to remembrance the former days'  
- Heb. x.32. London: Printed at the Gresham Steam Press, for the  
exclusive use of the Members, By Unwin Brothers, 24 Bucklersbury  
and 1, 2 & 3, Oxford Court, Cannon St., MDCCCLXVIII.

The author, a brother of the well-known minister John Angell James, had been admitted a member of *Sub Rosa* in 1821, and in 1868 was its senior member; since 1846 he has also been the Treasurer. His pamphlet, Document A, on which Documents B and (through Document B) C largely depend, is rare. It is not listed in the published *Catalogues* of the British Library, Dr. Williams's Library or the Congregational Library. A copy in Dr. Williams's Library is not included in its *Catalogue* because it is among the New College, London, MSS., now preserved in the Library, but by means of the Historical MSS. Commission's Summary Record of those MSS. it may be located as New College MS. 510.<sup>2</sup>

Mention of *Sub Rosa* elsewhere is hard to come by. After all, it was founded as, and remains, a private "Select Society" for "confidential intercourse". In my *New College, London, and its Library* (1977), I refer to it in passing as "formed at this time [1780-90]" (p. 20); the phrase is vague, and perhaps was intended to be so: precision or an attempt as it would have taken more space than was available.

For over the date when *Sub Rosa* was founded the documents are strangely at variance. Document C opens with the dogmatic statement that "*Sub Rosa* was founded in 1791" (and on 3 December 1991 its bicentenary was duly celebrated). But Document B, published in 1934, opens with the words "For 150 years [i.e. since 1784, if the phrase was intended to be exact] there has existed in London a Ministerial Society known as the *Sub Rosa*". Harwood's paper as printed by Peel is more precise. "The *Sub Rosa* had its beginnings in generous and chivalrous sentiments. In 1870 [a misprint for 1780]... The year of its first meeting was 1781". This is confirmed in Document A, which refers to "the beginning of the '*Sub Rosa*' Association, in the year 1781".

"As no documents exist", James continues "nothing is known of the early proceedings of the Association". But over the circumstances in which it came into existence the tradition is consistent. There was trouble with a number of students at Homerton Academy,<sup>3</sup> who were expelled without being heard in

---

2. For access to the New College, London, MSS. now in his care, and for a photocopy of this rare piece, I have to thank Dr. Williams's Librarian, Mr. John Creasey.

3. For some account of Homerton Academy 1730-1820, see H. McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts*. Manchester, 1931, pp. 175-88; and for the Academy's abundant archives, together with those of the King's Head Society, which governed it, see the Index to the Historical MSS. Commission's Summary Record of the New College, London, MSS.

their own defence; and some ministers whose sympathies were with the students, and on whose advice the students were later readmitted, decided to continue on a regular basis the confidential meetings they had been holding under concern over the issue. Do Homerton's archives, one may ask, confirm that there was trouble with the students at this time? And was it in 1780-1 or in 1791?

Unfortunately there is often trouble with recalcitrant students in theological (as in other) colleges, and Homerton had a tradition of it. There may be disruption over doctrine, division over political loyalties, or plain insubordination; and Homerton had its share of all three. The year 1790 saw a reprint of *A Declaration as to some controverted points of Christian Doctrine* (first printed in 1732),<sup>4</sup> with ten Calvinist articles, to which Homerton students were required to subscribe. This reprint was in defiance of opposition, for in 1787 four students voiced their opposition to subscription and left the Academy, in sympathy with a student who had been expelled in the previous year;<sup>5</sup> in 1783, also, three students had been engaged in painful correspondence about their beliefs;<sup>6</sup> while in 1780 one of the tutors, Thomas Gibbons, records in his Journal the expulsion of six students "for their bad Behaviour in Point of Insolence and Ingratitude".<sup>7</sup> In this case the trouble arose from a dispute between the students and another tutor, Daniel Fisher, who in the following year was advanced to the position of Divinity Tutor (in effect, Principal); he was not good at handling students, and was inclined to treat their misbehaviour with a heavy hand.<sup>8</sup> Relations were also difficult with another tutor, John Fell, who, after some years of correspondence filled with complaints, was summarily dismissed in May 1796.<sup>9</sup> Alexander Gordon says that his republican sympathies led to estrangement.<sup>10</sup>

- 
4. Copies of the *Declaration*, as reprinted in 1732, 1762, 1790 and 1812 are preserved in MSS. 191, L 19/19, 184/41 and 281/32.
  5. McLachlan, p. 180; cf. *D.N.B.*, s.vv. William Field and Charles Wellbeloved, two of the students who left in 1787, and David Jones, the student expelled in 1786. Each of these became Unitarians: in 1800 Wellbeloved wrote to Richard Fry (see no. 13, below), "Homerton Academy ... received me into her bosom during the first two years of my studies. There I became infected with heresy...": E.D.P. Evans, *History of New Meeting House, Kidderminster*, 1900, p. 114.
  6. See MSS. 239/5-9. Two of these students, Benjamin Hart and James Holt, also became Unitarians: see John Browne, *History of Congregationalism ... in Norfolk and Suffolk*, 1877, p. 271, and E.D.P. Evans, p. 50; and W. Densham and J. Ogle, *The Story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset*, Bournemouth, 1899, p. 20.
  7. Congregational Historical Society *Transactions*, ii.33, from Gibbons's Journal, MS. II a 3 in the Congregational Library, which Dr. Edwin Welch hopes to edit. For Gibbons, see *D.N.B.* The number of students expelled was in fact eight: see New College, London, MSS. 109, pp. 146-50.
  8. For Fisher, see *D.N.B.* and McLachlan, p. 178; and for the letters conveying his appointment and acceptance, MSS. 239/2-3.
  9. For Fell, see *D.N.B.*; for his letters of complaint, see MSS. 239/12-14 and 257/5; and for his dismissal, MSS. 110, pp. 73-8. Fell and Fisher were both natives of Cockermonth, Fell being Fisher's junior by four years, which conceivably may not have favoured good relations between them.
  10. *D.N.B.*

It was the dispute recorded by Gibbons, over “a question of prerogative”, and the expulsions resulting from it, which according to James (followed by Harwood) led to the founding of *Sub Rosa* in 1781. The course events were taking makes the statement plausible; but, as we have seen, the situation continued to be bad: a company of ministers in sympathy with disaffected students might equally well have come into existence at a later date; and, since James says that “no documents exist”, it is fair to bear in mind that, in interpreting what took place forty or fifty years before he joined *Sub Rosa* in 1821, he had only tradition to depend on.

Another line of investigation suggests itself. Who were *Sub Rosa*'s foundation members? James states that “The Society at first appears to have consisted only of ten members, and for many years did not exceed twelve”, which according to Harwood was still the number in 1814. James further provides a list of the first ten members - two lists in fact, which curiously are not identical. On p. 4 he states that the original members were Thomas Towle, Nathanael Jennings, John Winter, Charles Skelton, John Kello, Nathanael Trotman, Joshua Webb, William Bennett, James Kello and John Clayton; but on p. 6, in a list of “The Deceased”, in which the names are said to be “placed in the order of admission to the Society”, not only do the names of Skelton and Winter appear in reverse order, which appears to be of no significance, but the name of Clayton is fifteenth on the list, being preceded by those of John Fell, Joseph Barber, Benjamin Davies, Frederic Hamilton and John Berry. Now, if Fell was one of the ten original members, *Sub Rosa* was not founded in 1781, for he did not leave Thaxted for London, on his appointment to a tutorship at Homerton, until 1787.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, since James Kello, whose name appears as ninth on both lists, died on 4 February 1790,<sup>12</sup> it seems that *Sub Rosa* cannot have been founded in 1791, either.

This contradictory evidence must be interpreted. But first the question arises, whether the date 1791 in Document C should be dismissed as erroneous (or even a mere mistyping). I do not think so; partly because, if before looking into the matter afresh I had been asked “How did *Sub Rosa* come into existence?”, I should have replied “In 1791 a group of ministers in sympathy with students at Homerton, who were in trouble over republican sentiments arising from the French Revolution, began to meet regularly together”. I could not have made this up; presumably I was *told* it: conceivably by Sydney Cave, Principal of the College in which Homerton had long been merged, possibly by W.B. Selbie, who often talked to me about his life in London during his years at Highgate (1890-1902), but probably by Albert Peel, who before his death in 1949 may have found reason to change his mind since his publication of Harwood's paper in 1934 - he does not, in fact, vouch for Harwood's accuracy.

- 
11. See the letters conveying his appointment and acceptance, MSS. 239/10-11; and T.W. Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in ... Essex*, 1863, p. 496.
  12. Walter Wilson, *History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches ... in London*, 1808-14, i.387.

An outlying document preserved into the present century which needs to be taken into account is a certificate in Latin commending a Homerton student, Richard Fry, for the ministry, after examining him.<sup>13</sup> Dated 14 May 1781, it carries eleven signatures, the first three being those of John Conder,<sup>14</sup> Gibbons and Fisher, then Principal and tutors at Homerton. Of the other eight it is noticeable that six (Towle, Winter, John and James Kello, Skelton and Bennett) are all in James's list of the ten original members of *Sub Rosa*.<sup>15</sup>

If we turn the coin, it is equally noticeable that the Homerton triumvirate were none of them at any time members of *Sub Rosa*. The first name of a Homerton tutor to appear is that of John Fell, which in James's second list replaces that of John Clayton; later in this second list, the name of Fell's predecessor at Homerton, Benjamin Davies, who had continued to live in London, appears, as does that of Fell's successor, John Berry.<sup>16</sup>

Remembering that Fell's republican sympathies led to estrangement, we may also recall that according to one tradition republican sentiments were involved in the founding of *Sub Rosa* in 1791. In that year Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) ran into eleven editions. Replies were many, from Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791) to Priestley's *Letters to... Burke* (Birmingham 1791; three editions in the year). In Birmingham, following a meeting of the Constitutional Society (in the framing of which Priestley had had a hand), called to commemorate the fall of the Bastille, with "any friend to freedom" invited, the mob rioted and Priestley's New Meeting was wrecked and burned. John Clayton, whose "mind inclined rather to conservatism than liberalism" and who "set his face like a flint against what he termed "the revolutionary mania",<sup>17</sup> published a sermon of alarm and restraint, *The Duty of Christians to Magistrates* (1791). This only exacerbated divisions among Dissenters, the best known retort to it being the Baptist Robert Hall's *Christianity consistent with a love of freedom* (1791). It was here that Fell also weighed in, with two anonymous pieces, *A Letter to Rev. John Clayton on his late political sermon* (1791) and *Remarks on a sermon lately published by Rev. John Clayton* (1791).<sup>18</sup> "A warm friend to civil and religious liberty", Fell "did not fear openly to avow

13. McLachlan, pp. 186-7, citing Evans, p. 88; q.v. pp. 87-124 (with silhouette) for Fry, who in 1798 published *No Shame in suffering for the truth ... a sermon preached at Billericay on occasion of being excluded from the meeting house for professing Unitarian principles*.
14. For Conder, see *D.N.B.*; and for a letter of 1738 from him, see *National Library of Wales Journal*, xxvii (1991), 67-8.
15. The remaining two signatories were Joseph Barber and his son-in-law Joseph Pitts (misread by Evans as Titts, and misprinted by McLachlan as Tibbs).
16. For Davies, see *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* and T. Stephens, *Album Aberhonddu* (Merthyr Tydvil, 1898), p. 9 (with portrait). For Berry, see *D.N.B.*, s.v. his father Charles; and for his letter accepting appointment, MSS. 239/16.
17. T.W.[B.] Aveling, *Memorials of the Clayton Family*, 1867, p. 145; for Clayton, see further *D.N.B.*
18. Copies of both pieces are preserved in the Congregational Library.



himself a friend to the liberties of mankind".<sup>19</sup>

Fell was a tutor at Homerton, not a student, but it is likely that at such a heady time for the young there were also students in the Academy with republican sympathies, all the more so when these were being publicly defended by one of their tutors. The fact that political radicalism was often accompanied by theological radicalism made the issue more complex and to some, no doubt, more attractive: some of the students who left Homerton became Unitarians. As Burke was aware, Priestley was by no means the only Unitarian to express sympathy with the Revolution - it was a sermon by Priestley's friend Richard Price that sparked Burke's *Reflections* - but Priestley was the lodestar.<sup>20</sup> Someone like Fell, whose sentiments were strictly orthodox but also republican, might well run into difficulties, one can see, with radical students as well as with conservative colleagues. His dismissal in fact divided the Academy's governing body, the King's Head Society, by twenty-eight votes to eleven,<sup>21</sup> and did not come about without a protest from some of his friends, two of them members of *Sub Rosa*.<sup>22</sup>

All things considered, the beginnings of *Sub Rosa* may be conjectured to have been as follows. In 1781 a number of ministers, the original ten, uneasy about the state of affairs at Homerton, began holding informal meetings, at which the principal and tutors were not present, to keep an eye on things. Thomas Towle, who is named first, was a senior London minister, orthodox in theology but with a reputation of being "a kind and liberal friend"<sup>23</sup> to students. The tenth and last member, John Clayton, was then a young minister not yet thirty, who had been at the Weigh House only a little over two years. Ten years later, in the year of alarms and public controversy, John Fell was elected in place of the recently deceased James Kelle, and meetings were established on a regular basis. Fell not only watched the students' interests but also later became himself the object of sympathy and support. It seems likely that Clayton, with whom Fell had crossed swords, withdrew, but later, perhaps after Fell's death in 1797,<sup>24</sup> perhaps also after the number of members had been increased to twelve, rejoined *Sub Rosa*, becoming now the fifteenth member on the list.<sup>25</sup>

GEOFFREY F. NUTTALL

19. *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine*, v (1798), 6.

20. In 1790 Priestley preached at Field's ordination (*D.N.B.*); in 1792 he commended David Jones as his successor at New Meeting, Birmingham (*D.N.B.*); in 1798 Fry wrote in glowing terms of Priestley's "laborious industry in the cause of truth" (E.D.P. Evans, p. 93).

21. See the King's Head Society Minute Book, MSS. 110, p. 78.

22. *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine*, iv (1797), 400, giving five names; the two who were members of *Sub Rosa* were Joseph Brooksbank and John Humphrys.

23. Wilson, ii, 552.

24. Within a year or two of Fell's death, two other deaths and a removal would have made a rejoining Clayton the tenth member.

25. In 1804 Clayton took part with Barber (cf. n. 15, above) and Humphrys (cf. no. 22, above) in the ordination of John Pye Smith as pastor of the Congregational church newly gathered in Homerton Academy: see *C.H.S.T.*, x, 164-5. "The blessed doctor" became a member of *Sub Rosa*, being the first Principal of Homerton to be so.

**HYMNS AND AN ORTHODOX DISSENTER:  
IN COMMEMORATION OF BERNARD LORD MANNING  
1892-1941**

Mrs Josiah Lockwood was a southerner. Her husband was from the West Riding. She was an Anglican, he a Wesleyan Methodist and a manufacturer. He thrived on it. She wrote about it. There was, for example, the hymn singing. She was particularly struck by the occasion when a Wesleyan pulpit prince, turn-of-the-century style, visited their chapel, Josiah's by heritage, hers by marriage, at Linthwaite:

The singing was splendid of its sort: we all gave tongue together in rhythmic cadence, pausing at the end of each line to gather up our forces again. I am not surprised that the majority of the village like the chapel better than the church, which stands at the hilltop and sings in an off-hand sort of way.<sup>1</sup>

Such a contrast defined the regular worship a few years later of a bachelor Cambridge don, East Midlander by descent but Dalesman by adoption, called Bernard Lord Manning (most artful of names, impossible to say aloud without the slight hesitation that must suggest a title rather than a forename). On Sunday evenings in term there was the chapel of Jesus College where the hymn singing, more public school than off-hand, was informed by the abilities of choral and organ scholars. On Sunday mornings there was another sort of chapel, Emmanuel Congregational Church, where the hymn singing, rolling and full-throated with town outnumbering a gown this time more grammar than public school, was informed by a Willis organ and its famous blind organist.<sup>2</sup> That term-time diet was varied for this don by the Sunday vagaries of lay preachments in village chapels and (by the later 1920s) Friday evening worship and dinner at Cheshunt, the theological college newly built off Bateman Street. As for the vacations, before 1918 there were the Congregational churches at Ravenstonedale, Lincoln, Stoke-on-Trent, Warminster, and Ravenstonedale again, where his father ministered. After 1935 there remained beloved Ravenstonedale where he bought and improved his own sturdy house; and there were sermon-tasting adventures in English seaside resorts or conference towns. Those apart, with their still modish dash of *Worship Song*, the vacation choral diet was hearty but restricted. When not the *Methodist Hymn-Book* of 1904 (or even 1933), it would in far corners still be the antique *Congregational Hymn-book* of 1859 or Barrett's *Congregational Church Hymnal* of 1887 or the

- 
1. Mrs Josiah Lockwood, *An Ordinary Life 1861-1924*, London 1932, p. 110.
  2. Herbert Warmington (1857-1951), blind from childhood, read Mathematics at Peterhouse and was thereafter a Cambridge 'coach'. He was organist at Emmanuel Church 1888-1933 and during the Second World War: H.C. Carter, 'A Colleague in the Ministry', *Congregational Quarterly*, Vol. XXIV, No.4., October 1946 pp. 318-323.

*Congregational Hymnary* of 1916. It might also be *Sankey*, particularly at weeknight services. There at least the repertoire would be wider than that drawn from *Hymnal* or *Hymnary*, for these on the whole were smallish congregations whose stalwarts remembered the days when hymns were 'lined' and there was an orchestra of sorts in the gallery.

This is Manning's context, that of a man vigorously educated in the intelligent conservatism of small town chapel Liberalism, confirmed by the instinctive conservatism, both lazy and intelligent, of such a college as Jesus, Cranmer's college as well as 'Q's', but tugged at by the anguished Liberalism of such a Church as Emmanuel where the Keyneses and the Ramseys still worshipped from time to time. To this add Manning's temperament, in which the commitment of a Christian who delighted in words and was sensitive to context was tempered by the scepticism of a historian whose discipline took him to the later Middle Ages although his natural home was with eighteenth-century order and measure. And to complete the picture we might note how this man, manse son and outsider in all save intellect and culture, was frequently faced at Jesus by that *nec plus ultra* of lapsed Dissent, Charles Whibley (1859-1930), a belletrist, biographer of Pitt and Lord John Manners, crony of politicians, gossip to Society, friend of high-born Souls and *habitué* of aristocratic Stanway, whose origins lay in the Congregational drapers and ironmongers of Sittingbourne and Gravesend.<sup>3</sup> Poor haunted Whibley; those Dissenting shops had preceded him to Cambridge where Congregational Whibleys traded on Market Place and one, who made Clarnico sweets, was an alderman on Cambridge council and even made it as Mayor.<sup>4</sup>

Whibley and Manning: what a contrast in Jesus! No wonder later generations of Nonconformist undergraduates handed round unofficial copies of Manning's informal paper on 'Some Lapsed Dissenters', too kind to pillory old Whibley but marvellously sharp on all others of the breed. That famous paper to 'Cong.Soc.' was just such a paper as those he gave to 'Cong.Soc.' and 'Meth.Soc.' between 1924 and 1939 on Watts and Wesley and Some Hymns and Hymnbooks. We shall return to them. Here it is enough to register their existence, to note that music was a natural part of our don's vocabulary, though by no means the whole of it, and to reflect that he shared that language with most of his audience. This needs further contexting.

- 
3. For Charles Whibley (and his equally characterful brother Leonard, 1863-1941) see *Dictionary of National Biography*. There is a vignette of Charles in F. Brittain, *It's a Don's Life, An Autobiography*, London 1972, p. 100. Whibley's parents moved to Bristol where they were members of Highbury Congregational Church. Whibley's second wife, Philippa Raleigh, was a granddaughter of one of London's best-known Congregational ministers, Alexander Raleigh (1817-80).
  4. Herbert George Whibley, first cousin of Charles and Leonard, and a pillar of Victoria Road Congregational Church, was mayor of Cambridge in 1908. A.A. Smith and D. Lawrence, *Victoria Road United Reformed Church, A History of its First Hundred Years*, Cambridge 1977, [unpaginated].

## II

For illustration, here is a metropolitan Congregational quartet of two fathers and their sons. The fathers, like Manning's, were ministers. The sons, unlike Manning, lapsed. To deal first with one of the sons and his father.

Henry Erskine Allon (1864-97) was a Trinity man.<sup>5</sup> He combined an English essay prize with a third in History. His father tried to get him a place on the schools' inspectorate and sensibly wrote to Matthew Arnold about it. Arnold was not too encouraging. Given that there was a Tory government and the office was in the Lord President's gift 'it will depend upon your means of making interest with Lord Cranbrook, more than on anything else... The number of inspectors is no longer being increased as it was formerly.'<sup>6</sup> In fact, music, not education, was young Allon's passion. He wrote chamber music, piano solos and cantatas. Though there was nothing Celtic in his ancestry (his father was from the West Riding and his mother from the Fens), his compositions had names like *Annie of Lochroyan* and *The Maid of Colonsay, May Margaret* and *The Childe of Elle*.

It was all promise. He died in his early thirties leaving his musical library to the Cambridge Union. As to the extent of his lapse, though he was a member of C.U.N.U., 'Cong.Soc.'s' interdenominational predecessor, his father received this letter from the great Birmingham Congregationalist, R.W. Dale: 'I was in Cambridge on Sunday, but did not see Erskine. By the way, Alfred [later Sir Alfred and Vice-Chancellor of Liverpool and a man who never lapsed] called on him but Erskine did not call again and so Alfred supposes that he does not care to see anything of him.'<sup>7</sup>

That father, Henry Allon (1818-92), was a Yorkshire builder's son and had been a builder's apprentice.<sup>8</sup> From 1844 to 1892 he ministered at Union Chapel, Islington. Once a 'schism shop' making 'merchandise of the House of God',<sup>9</sup> Union in Allon's day exploded into another air. He saw its membership grow from 318 to 693 by 1859 and it was still 670 in 1876. Musically, Union was an object lesson in confident growth. Before 1845 its worship had been a mixture of Watts and the Prayer Book. The Prayer Book went in 1845 and Watts went in 1846, together with the seventy-year-old precentor. Josiah Conder came in instead. A psalmody class began in 1848, chanting in 1856 and a choir proper in 1859. At that point Allon's own tune - and hymn-books took over: the

- 
5. See *Amersham Hall School, Register... 1841-1886*, Reading 1886, p. 25; J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Part II, Vol. I, p. 44; F. Boase, *Modern English Biography* 1908 (1965 edn), Vol. IV.
  6. Matthew Arnold to Henry Allon, 21 December 1887; A Peel, *Letters to a Victorian Editor*, London 1929, p. 171.
  7. R.W. Dale to Henry Allon, 13 March 1883; *Ibid*, p. 305.
  8. For Allon see W. Hardy Harwood, *Henry Allon, D.D., Pastor and Teacher*, London 1894.
  9. Thus 'Observator', 10 October 1806, Album of Letters, Cuttings etc, formerly in possession of Union Chapel, Islington.

*Congregational Psalmist* (1858, with new editions in 1868, 1875 and 1889); the *Choir Book* (1860); *Anthems for Congregational Use* (1872); *Supplemental Hymns for Public Worship* (1868); *Congregational Psalmist and Hymnal* (1886); *Hymns for Children's Worship* (1878) and *Tunes for Children's Worship* (1879). And then there were the famous organists, Kapellmeisters in all but name: H.J. Gauntlett, composer of (allegedly) 10,000 hymn-tunes, in the 1850s; Ebenezer Prout ('I wish you would look over these proofs *during the sermon*', Allon wrote to him, 'and give them to me after the service') in the 1860s; Fountain Meen of the Guildhall School of Music in the 1880s; and later, at least in the congregation, there were Gilbert Betjemann, musician-in-ordinary to the Queen and the man who introduced Wagner to Glasgow, and his singer wife, Rose Daffone.<sup>10</sup>

These people were tributes to Dr Allon's statesmanship, for his relentless accumulation of tune and hymn was above all things congregationally credible. 'In Nonconforming churches, Church song is the only congregational act', he reflected in 1861:

The people are preached *to*, and prayed *for*, surely they are not to be sung *to* as well... Whether, therefore, it be choir or precentor, organ or unaccompanied voices; whether the rural pomposities of the village church, or the artistic slovenliness of the town cathedral; whether the barbarous vocalisation of the 'Denmarks' and 'Polands', and 'Calcuttas', of the last generation, or the skilful combinations of Handel and Mendelssohn in this; in these things let every church be 'fully persuaded in its own mind'. I would 'lay upon it no greater burden than this necessary thing', that from a service of worship every form of song be resolutely excluded in which every worshipper cannot join. Worship is a sacrifice to God, not to musical art... I do demand that it be, not a choir song to which people must listen, but a congregational song in which people may join - a worship, not of priests, but of the whole church.<sup>11</sup>

Allon put his beliefs to the test in his new chapel, a grand oratorio of a building opened in 1877. He had prepared a formidable brief for its competing architects:

No hymn, chant, or anthem is sung in which the congregation does not join. The idea, very largely realised in Union Chapel, is that the whole congregation shall sing from music-books in four-part harmony.

The choir, technically so called, is therefore only part of the singing congregation; its function is simply to lead it. It should

---

10. For H.J. Gauntlett (1805-76) see *Dictionary of National Biography*; for Prout (1835-1909) see *Musical Times*, April 1899 and *Dictionary of National Biography*; for Betjemann (1840-1921) see B. Hillier, *Young Betjemann*, London 1988, p.7.

11. Harwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

therefore be in it, and of it - under no circumstances separated from it. It should be felt in its lead and control of the congregational song, but not seen or even heard apart from it...

These practical requirements of Congregational services are so essential that, however desirable architectural congruity and artistic beauty may be, they must, in my judgment, be paramount. Our church buildings are for use, not for the realisation of conventional ideas, which often unfit them for use.<sup>12</sup>

No wonder one who was so congregationally correct dared lay claim to vast territories of hymnody. As he wrote in 1886 in the preface to a new edition of his *Congregational Psalmist and Hymnal*:

In the Anglican Church the neglected Hymn has become prominent in Congregational worship, in the Puritan Churches worship has developed in aesthetic forms. The art-music of ritual worship has deepened and broadened into Congregational song, while the rude fervour of Evangelical Hymn singing has developed into a higher art-expression. Both tendencies have thus combined to produce what is perhaps a more consentaneous and extended culture of the worship of the congregation than the Church of Christ has ever known.<sup>13</sup>

In the early years of the twentieth century Union Chapel began to wane. Its people were now to be found in Highgate, Hampstead, Muswell Hill, Mill Hill, anywhere rather than Islington. These now were the churches whose gilded youth, emulating Erskine Allon, found their way increasingly to Cambridge. Once there, should they also find their way to Emmanuel Church, as many did, it was to a building designed by the architect of Union chapel, with an organ by the same famous firm, whose opening three years before Union's had been marked by a sermon an hour-and-a-half long from Union's minister. It had turned to his *Psalmist's* third edition in 1875 and his Choir Book six years later; perhaps copies still lay on its gallery pews.

If the common people are to be the core of the Church, its Hymnal must be an embodiment for their use. The Hymns of the Church, like the Ballads of the nation are for popular lyrical use, and are to be tested not by mere literary canons, but by the power of their devotional inspiration.<sup>14</sup>

---

12. *Ibid*, pp. 57-8.

13. *Ibid*, p.95.

14. *Ibid*, p. 97.

## III

That argument greatly irritated Allon's chief rival-successor in Congregational song, who found it false. William Garrett Horder (1841-1922) is the second of our two fathers. He was 'strong, handsome and bad-tempered... he had a fine brain, a bad liver and a frighteningly large grey handlebar moustache'.<sup>15</sup> Thus a grand-daughter. His call was clear - to preach the Gospel 'not hardened into dogmas, or distilled into metaphysics, or materialised into magic'.<sup>16</sup> He did this in South Lancashire, West Yorkshire, South Devon and London. That was a catholic mixture of industry, suburb and resort but at its core were forty-five years in North-east and West London, twenty of them in Wood Green (1873-93) and twenty-five in Ealing Green (1896-1922).<sup>17</sup> Each of his charges, save perhaps the first, was the sort to produce examples of that important new phenomenon, the college or university graduate, some of them women.

Henry Allon was straight-down-the-line liberal evangelical. Garrett Horder was a straight-down-the-line liberal. Use of Allon's hymn-books stamped a congregation's evangelical catholicity - and in that respect Allon's mantle of Elijah fell on the man who is this paper's non-barking dog. He was G.S. Barrett (1839-1916), whose ministry at Princes Street Norwich (Colman's mustard at prayer) rivalled Allon's at Union in length and clout.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Princes Street had used Allon's *Supplemental Hymns* in the 1870s and Dr Barrett's own *Congregational Church Hymnal* came out in 1887 with the Congregational Union's benign *imprimatur*. As we shall see, Bernard Manning approved of it too. Use of Horder's hymnbook, on the other hand, stamped a congregation's refined adventurousness and cast a definite doubt on its orthodoxy. Henry Allon once called the Psalms 'the worship-song of the almost Universal Church'; Garrett Horder annexed that title, *Worship Song*, for his entire collection.

*Worship Song* was the best known of a large output of published sermons, reflections (*Is there a Future Life?*), anthologies (*The Sunlit Road*, *England's Panorama*, *A Treasury of Sacred Song from American Sources*), hymnals and hymnology (*Congregational Hymns* of 1884, which he described as 'the work of nearly 350 writers and translators'; *Hymns Supplemental to Existing Collections*, 1894; and *Worship Song* itself, 1898, with an enlargement in 1905; *Psalms and Canticles*; *Anthems Ancient and Modern*, 1906). Horder prided himself that he had a copy of every hymn-book ever published and delighted in astounding visitors by showing them the special room where he kept them all. The proof of this passion, *The Hymn Lover: An Account of the Rise and Growth of English Hymnology* came out in 1889.

- 
15. Barbara Horder West, 'The Horder Saga', typescript, October 1969, p. 2.
  16. *Middlesex County Times*, undated cutting [December 1922], in possession of Dr John Horder.
  17. For Horder see *Congregational Year Book*, 1924, p. 98.
  18. For George Slatyer Barrett (1839-1916) see *Congregational Year Book*, 1917, pp. 163-66, and *Hymn Society Bulletin* 170; January 1987, pp. 190-4.

One can see why Horder caught on. *The Hymn Lover* is deceptively spacious: two pages of bibliography, four for the Index of Names and nine for their First Lines, preceded by a compendious 509 pages whose twenty-four chapters range from the Old Testament (and Other Religions) to The New Era in Hymnody, taking in the Early Church and The Middle Ages as well as German, French and Others, and American Hymns. There are three chapters on Living Hymnists (three of whom died before publication) and one each on Children's and Mission Hymns. Its strengths are also, of course, its weaknesses. It lays claim to the traditions of the whole Church in the context of late Victorian Nonconformity. It is thus beyond all things relevant and it is therefore beyond all doubt dated. It rejoices in inbuilt obsolescence. Late Victorian Nonconformity as Garrett Horder saw it was articulate, intelligent and refined. It was so ready for the treasury of the Church Catholic (and particularly the Church American, Horder's special field) that it took for granted its own treasury:

Of Hymn-writers concerning whom much has been previously written, such as Isaac Watts or Charles Wesley, I have said comparatively little; and sufficient to indicate their special characteristics, and the influence they exerted. Of others, concerning whom little, if anything, has been written, such as T.H. Gill, and T.T. Lynch, I have said more, in the hope that their writings might thus be made more widely known.

Horder practised what he preached. *Worship Song's* 803 hymns, 149 chants and 131 anthems placed Watts and Wesley on a par with Horatius Bonar, Father Faber, John Ellerton, T. Hornblower Gill, Thomas Toke Lynch, George Rawson and John Bewley Monsell - and in that sort of proportion they were sung Sunday in and Sunday out in *Hymnary* and *Praise* alike for at least sixty more Congregational years. The Americans, Whittier, Hosmer and Longfellow, claimed forty-seven hymns between them; and forty or so Unitarians contributed 103 of *Worship Song's* contents. And Horder would have accounted all of it to himself for righteousness. He knew that the hymn was the growth industry of contemporary liturgy. It was enough for him that the good hymn should be addressed to God (he found 'a kind of incongruity in the singing of verses addressed by the worshippers to one another', and was unimpressed at the thought of a congregation singing an entire hymn to the man in the pulpit, as in 'Tell me the old, old story'.<sup>19</sup>) He was also quite certain that there was no place for explicit doctrine in hymns: 'A hymn should be a lyric poem. Rhymed prose dealing with theological doctrine is not a hymn'; 'Doctrine should be spoken from the pulpit, not sung from the pew'.<sup>20</sup>

And the consequence? Seven pages each in *The Hymn Lover* on 'The Lyric Fire' of the Wesleys and Watts and the distinct feeling that if only they had been

---

19. W.G. Horder, *The Hymn Lover*, London 1889, p. IX.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. VII, 493, X.



born a century-and-a-half later their output would have been less and their finish greater. Yet 'Even Dr Watts... now and then catches the poetic fire', while Charles Wesley 'is the most fertile, and taken altogether, probably the most brilliant of English hymnists', responsible for 'some of the grandest hymns in the English language... They are songs that soar. They have the rush and fervour which bear the soul aloft... They are a kind of cardiphonia, caught from the beating of his own heart...'. And 'Come, O Thou Traveller Unknown' is 'probably the finest sacred lyric in the language'; 'Isaac Watts is the founder of the choir, but in it Charles Wesley's is the noblest voice'.<sup>21</sup>

Given Horder's comprehensive purpose need more be said? Certainly Bernard Manning would never say fairer or better, and for the rest there are lots of useful facts in his compendium and several suggestive views. His chapter on Children's Hymns, for example, contains this gloss on that now much derided Victorian doctrine of Separate Spheres:

...it was not till Women, with their deeper insight into, and tenderer sympathy with child life, entered on this field, that anything like adequate or suitable provision was made for children's song. Indeed, it may be that the way in which the church repressed woman, and kept her from bearing a part in its work, accounts, to some extent, for the lateness of the development of children's hymnody. With the entrance of women on this sphere there arises a new era. Henceforward she becomes the chief contributor.<sup>22</sup>

The Horder context for this must be his granddaughter's memory that 'when the aunts and Granny got too talkative he would bang on the table fiercely and say 'Not another word. You women talk too much', after which a deadly silence would fall'.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly his chapter on Mission Hymns reflects that hymns 'of a revival kind' were well and good for those whose Christian life was young but quite unsuitable as the sole collection for worship. They led to a religion 'more erotic than spiritual'. They 'even cast contempt on what Christ laid so much stress - the doing of the will of God';<sup>24</sup> and he cast his own contempt on this one:

Nothing either great or small - nothing, sinner, no;  
 Jesus did it, did it all, long long ago.  
 'it is finish'd!' Yes, indeed, finish'd every jot,  
 Sinner, this is all you need; tell me, is it not?  
 Till to Jesus' work you cling by a simple faith,  
 'Doing' is a deadly thing - 'doing' ends in death.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 494, 110, 112-13.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 437-38.

23. *Horder Saga, op. cit.*

24. *The Hymn Lover, op. cit.*, pp. 476, 477.

Cast your deadly 'doing' down - down at Jesus' feet.  
Stand 'in Him', in Him alone gloriously 'complete'.<sup>25</sup>

It's no wonder that when Horder heard that a small Sheffield Congregational Church had decided to dispense with its *Sankey* as well as its old hymn-book and to replace them with a hundred copies of *Worship Song*, he gave them some of their new copies.<sup>26</sup> One must sympathise with Horder's civilising mission to the new age with all its spread of culture:

The scheme of national education now at work includes the teaching of English literature... Literature, once the possession of the few, is fast becoming the privilege of the many. It will not be long before it will be impossible to present a hymnal too poetic for common use.<sup>27</sup>

Then again, there was 'the free theological spirit of the day':

Hymns are regarded less and less as the media for the expression of *theological* opinion, and more and more as the expression of *religious* feelings... They move more in the realm of poetry, which deals with the essentials rather than the accidents of the faith... Dogmatic theology strikes at the very life of poetry. Even the dogmatist ceases to be a dogmatist when he becomes a poet... Dr. Newman ceases to be the theological disputant whilst dealing with the essentials of Christianity in his verses. There is scarcely a trace of Calvinism in the hymns of Dr. Bonar. No one would know that Sir John Bowring was a Unitarian from him hymns... As someone has said, 'there is little heresy in hymns'...<sup>28</sup>

Altogether the outlook was bright. Horder looked back over past glooms:

The hymns of earlier days were chiefly written by men whose religious ideas were so saturated by theology that their hymns become of necessity theology in verse - their prayers, their hopes, their joys, expressed themselves naturally in theologic language... the hymn-book became a modified manual of theology.<sup>29</sup>

The Psalms had especially suffered in this regard:

Here the Jewish singer becomes often a Calvinist of the purest type, all 'the five points' are brought in and the struggles, needs, yearnings, fears, proper to the life of that day, and even of this, are rejected, to be replaced by others of quite a different kind, proper

25. *Ibid.*, p. 477.

26. Jean Bradley, *Tipton Hill Congregational Church 1853-1986*, Sheffield 1986, p. 10.

27. *The Hymn Lover*, p. 495.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 496.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 498.

only to men living in an atmosphere poisoned by the fume of creeds - sovereignty, satisfaction, purchase, perseverance, and perdition usurping and utterly transforming the words and thoughts of the sweet singer of Israel.<sup>30</sup>

And the consequence? Horder picked out the contrasts between the time when 'very rarely did... hymns grow out of Scripture scenes or events, save those on which theology has too often exclusively fixed its gaze, such as the Birth, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord', and today when the 'representation of Christ is... much fuller. It is no longer an outline sketch, but more like a finished picture. This has rendered our modern hymns more picturesque, more vivid, and so more helpful to the worshipper... A really good hymn-book ought to be a companion to the New Testament - a veritable 'Christ in Song'.<sup>31</sup> It should also be a very cultured Christ in Song. 'Culture' was a feature of the new hymnody:

In this the Universities have exercised a deep and widespread influence. Our modern hymnody owes not a little to the classical training, especially the verse-making of Cambridge and Oxford, particularly the latter... University culture is a very marked feature in... hymn-writing... Dr. Newman's hymn, written whilst he was in the English Church, 'Lead, kindly light', has almost taken the place of the Welsh hymn, 'Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah', a fine hymn, but disfigured by the unpoetic line 'Death of Death, and hell's destruction'...<sup>32</sup>

By now we see a chasm gape: for the English version of that fine Welsh hymn had been written for the college at which both Henry Allon and Garrett Horder had trained. Culture and appositeness were slippery guides for a high Victorian, and Horder was led sweetly astray by them. We are, for example, unlikely to share his enthusiasm ('What can be finer...?') either for the hymn which Whittier wrote in 1882 for the American Horticultural Society:

And still with reverent hands we cull  
Thy gifts each year renewed;  
The good is always beautiful,  
The beautiful is good.<sup>33</sup>

or for Newman Hall's children's hymn ('which, he tells me, came into his mind as he was walking down Hampstead Hill')

---

30. *Ibid.* pp. 498-99.

31. *Ibid.* pp. 499-500.

32. *Ibid.* pp. 497-98.

33. *Ibid.* pp. 427-28, and *Worship Song*, p. 647.

Robin blithe is chirping,  
 Glad the night is o'er,  
 Larks the light are greeting,  
 Singing as they soar:  
 I'm Thy little birdie,  
 May I ever sing,  
 Goodness making music  
 Unto Christ my King.  
 ('I omit the doxology').<sup>34</sup>

Horder was much admired. When Rhondda Williams, the doyen of Congregationalism's New Theologians, moved from Bradford to Brighton (a transition so literally from darkness to light that for some months he had to wear dark glasses), he persuaded his people within the year to replace Barrett's 'old congregational hymn-book' with Horder's *Worship Song* ('a much better book than the more recent *Congregational Hymnary*', he reflected thirty years later).<sup>35</sup> Posterity has been less kind. Ian Sellers, fifty-five years after Horder's death, found *Worship Song* the 'most bizarre memorial' of 'the new evangelism, as it was sometimes called'.<sup>36</sup> And two years after Horder's death a classically educated Cambridge man could be heard remarking to others that 'If you open a book like *Worship Song*, that perfect product of the Hampstead mind, the faint odour of a literary Keating's powder assails you; a sort of spiritual insect killer, fatal to worms'.<sup>37</sup>

#### IV

With that, though it means keeping the fourth of our quartet of fathers and sons in reserve, we return to Bernard Lord Manning. His encapsulation of *Worship Song* is rhetoric as it should be. It savages the sweet pretension of the title, *Worship Song*. There cannot have been an undergraduate among his hearers whose mother did not possess a tin of Keating's Powder but would have died sooner than admit it. And then there is the marshalling of associations: each product of Hampstead must by definition be perfect and literary and *sui generis* and faintly incense-laden and very serious and spiritual, for Hampstead is all mind and no body. Here is undergraduate wit as it used to be, unerring without being quite accurate: 'that perfect product of the Hampstead mind'. At least that is how Manning was reported in *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*. In *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts* the phrase is omitted.<sup>38</sup> Why?

34. *Ibid.*, p. 465.

35. T. Rhondda Williams, *How I Found My Faith*, London 1938, pp. 149, 161.

36. I. Sellers, *Nineteenth-Century Nonconformity*, London 1977, p. 23.

37. B.L. Manning, 'Some Hymns and Hymn-Books', *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, Vol IX, 1925, p. 140.

38. B.L. Manning, *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts*, London 1942, pp. 128-29.

Not, I hope, because The Epworth Press could not stand cruelty to Hampstead. Perhaps, more creditably, because it knew its London suburbs better than Manning, for Horder was not Hampstead; he was Wood Green and Ealing Green, and they are not Hampstead even if people who lived in Ealing were sometimes the sort to have relatives who lived in Hampstead. If, as I believe, Manning knew his *Hymn Lover* as well as his *Worship Song* then he might have been thinking of the dire effect of that Hampstead walk on Newman Hall. Likelier still, he had on his mind Percy Dearmer, who was almost Hampstead and to be avoided at all costs. But let that pass. Our concern is now with Manning.

To concentrate on Manning, as with any rational being, is to concentrate on paradox.<sup>39</sup> His life was short, its horizons narrow: born Caistor, December 1892; died Cambridge, December 1941. Educated Caistor Grammar School. Scholarship to Jesus College, Cambridge, which was his home from 1912 save for the briefest of forays to Magdalene. He never married. He never travelled abroad. He was the quintessential college man, Fellow, Bursar, Senior Tutor. He had a genius for companionship with the college hearty. Although he was a prize-man he wrote little and most of what he wrote was fugitive - lectures given here, papers there, frequently to non-specialist audiences; the sort that might be gathered posthumously into attractively slim volumes. Even his *magnum opus*, a history of the Protestant Dissenting Deputies, was published posthumously, and shows it.<sup>40</sup>

That is a fine focus for paradox. A history of the Protestant Dissenting Deputies is not in the nature of things a hearty read. This college man beloved of rowing men had health so poor that all sport and strenuous exercise save horse-riding was out. There was to be no question of a good war for this cadet of the Rupert Brooke generation. This college man, whose published output was so slight that today he would be the despair of any research selectivity exercise, would nonetheless today be hailed as an 'innovative' teacher (he supervised the Ph.D., itself rarer than than now, of the founder of British historical geography who had warmed to Manning's undergraduate lectures).<sup>41</sup> But then again this innovative teacher and memorable lecturer was in fact rather bad at lecturing: his Habsburg jaw - he called it his Dissenting mandible - signalled what amounted latterly almost to a speech impediment. And this son of the manse who had never really lived in the world turned out to be a very business-like bursar, of the sort who gets colleges built. He was even a bursar twice over since he served Cheshunt College in the same capacity.

It is at this point that we recall that Cambridge between the wars was changing and growing place. There were steadily increasing numbers of undergraduates

---

39. See F. Brittain, *Bernard Lord Manning, A Memoir*, Cambridge 1942.

40. B.L. Manning (ed. Ormerod Greenwood), *The Protestant Dissenting Deputies*, Cambridge U.P. 1952.

41. H.C. Darby (1909-1992). *Independent* 27 April 1992. The dissertation was on the Fenlands in History; it set the pace for research in what became Historical Geography.

to be excited by its stimulus and of these more than ever before were from grammar schools and more were from Nonconformist homes; and where these linked up with those flourishing new phenomena, the denominational societies, a larger proportion were women. The sensible undergraduate who lacked background but still sought the company of Girton, Newnham, even (perhaps especially) Homerton, went to Wesley or Emmanuel or the Baptist St. Andrew's Street and joined 'Cong. Soc.' or 'Meth. Soc.' or S.C.M. But the first generation grammar school Free Church undergraduate of the 1920s and 1930s could find the tensions between Zion or Wesley and Jesus or Trinity perplexing and hard to bear. It was hard enough even for those from such schools as Mill Hill or Bishop's Stortford and from cat's-whiskers churches like Bristol's Redland Park or Bournemouth's Richmond Hill. For all of them there was Manning, most deceptive of college men, to show that these tensions could be resolved into pure liberation and that it was possible to have a foot in each camp, home chapel as well as college chapel, and that a friend of rowing men could also be a village preacher on Sunday afternoons and sit in the gallery front row on Sunday mornings.

Yet if he was a deceptive college man he was also a deceptive Dissenter. Manning was indeed a son of the manse. He was to that extent denominationally well-earthed, the more so because his father's churches, though varied (East Midland cathedral city, Dales village, West Midland industrial town, South-Western country town), were small. They were acceptable but not eligible pastorates. They included no leafy suburbs or palmy resorts. There were no haunts of *Worship Song* among them. They might even seem to announce the narrowness that a man of parts would do his best to escape. In fact Manning was born into neither the manse nor Congregationalism, for his father was a schoolmaster and both parents were Wesleyan Methodists. Congregationalism came into view only when the schoolmaster responded to a call to ministry. So Manning's Dissent, though lifelong, was recent. And hymn-wise, we might note that Henry Allon (whose own origins were also Wesleyan) died a few months before Manning was born, and that, when the Mannings left Caistor for Bradford so that George Manning could train at Yorkshire United Independent College, the local Congregational ministers briefly included Garrett Horder at the now down-town College Chapel. No doubt George Manning encountered him, perhaps sat under him. I doubt whether the three-year-old Bernard recalled him, even if they had met. What is certain is that in the 1890s Bradford's Congregationalism fostered everything in up-to-the-mark Congregationalism that the mature Bernard Manning most disliked, or, rather, most condemned (since he always condemned most powerfully what I suspect he most enjoyed).

This background helps to explain the greatest paradox of all: the extraordinary influence of this Cambridge man of slight connexions who died quite young and wrote so little. It was the influence of personality mediated through strategic and expanding networks at a time when those networks were still distinct and manageable. The rippling world of Cambridge fellowship here

intersected with the twin worlds of Nonconformist ministry and laity in some thirty years of personal contact with intelligence at its most alert, prolonged thereafter by affectionate memory and well-chosen publication.

So, at last, to the publication still in print fifty years on: *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts*.<sup>42</sup> It is a collection of 'Five Informal Papers' on related themes, published after their author's death, probably at the instigation of the Methodist Minister, Henry Bett, who had once met him. Three of the papers are on the hymns of the Wesleys, one is on Isaac Watts; the fifth is more miscellaneous but is particularly focused on Barrett's *Hymnal*. At least four, and I suspect all five, were first delivered to primarily undergraduate audiences, two each to 'Meth. Soc.' and 'Cong.Soc.', between 1924 and 1939. The last in the collection was the first to be delivered.

Their 'informality' (but the 'informality' of, for example, true extempore prayer: most carefully shaped and wrestled with) explains their genius. These papers must have hit their hearers between wind and water. For Henry Allon and Garrett Horder had done their necessary work very well indeed. They had opened and broadened horizons. But it follows that young men and women bred on refined catholicity, sanitised and dogma-free, were ready for inspired fogeydom; and there was more than a touch of the young(ish) fogey about Manning. He was no musician, though he could very passably pick out the tunes, so there was a comforting element of 'I know what I like' about him. He was no poet either, although he could more than passably pick out the words for he had all the precision, clarity and apparent simplicity of language of that now quite lost generation of classically educated Cambridge men. Consequently there was also a comforting element of no-nonsense, entirely free of pedantry. His talks were not the sort to need parentheses or footnotes, yet they were manifestly those of the educated man with a well-furnished mind whose assertions could always be documented and vouched for. His talks about hymns and what he called 'Orthodox Dissent' were popular history in the proper sense. They were the popularisation of a culture as understood and interpreted by a scholar who knew his audience and could reach across to it. Thus he talks to 'Meth. Soc.' about Wesley's theology. He talks about the 'puny daring' of 'some of your modern theologians' who suggest that Wesley 'denies the true humanity of the Son and flirts with patipassianism'.<sup>43</sup> I am not sure that Meth. Soc. in 1932 knew much more about patipassianism than Meth. Soc. in 1992, but I am sure that for a moment those who heard Manning sixty years ago were convinced that they knew all there was to know about it and that it was a shocking slur by modern pygmies on a giant of the past. And they believed that to be so because they and their speaker shared enough of a common heritage to have confidence in each other, the ice once broken. So, as a lecturer should be, he was passionate and he was rigorous as well. He could happily go to town with

---

42. B.L. Manning, *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts: Five Informal Papers*, London 1942.

43. B.L. Manning, 'Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists', *Ibid.* p. 28.

his pet dislikes because he knew that he probably enjoyed singing them quite as much as his audience did. He certainly knew that they had helped and healed and liberated many of them, but that did not mean that such hymns should not be put under a microscope and compared and analysed and criticised with the special heritage of those with whom he shared their shortcomings.

And what were these shortcomings? They included *Hymns Ancient and Modern* ('wretched versification, doubtful grammar and questionable theology');<sup>44</sup> and 'what I may call the jazz music of Vaughan Williams';<sup>45</sup> 'that casual Papist rhymers', 'the wishy-washy Faber';<sup>46</sup> and *Songs of Praise*, which he found only a step away from his greatest bugbear, Unitarianism;<sup>47</sup> and they could all be summed up in his disdain for the omniscient littérateur (or -teuse):

Miss Rose Macaulay has now attained that age, or that circulation, at which popular novelists become omniscient; and like others of her class in that condition she has tried her prentice hand on religion. Works on *The Outline of History* and *How to Reconstruct Europe* will follow, no doubt: but the attraction of a religious subject is such that only the very shrewd can resist attacking it first. In an article on 'How to Choose a Religion', as I expect you know, Miss Macaulay lately displayed all that ignorance of essential detail which Mr Wells has taught us to associate with omniscience. In the course of some not unpleasing observations on the several sects of Christendom, Miss Macaulay speaks of the Greek Church as if it had not revised its calendar; she flounders in a vain effort to distinguish Presbyterianism and Calvinism; she says that the ugliest building in a village is sure to be the chapel, obviously forgetting that, true as this may have been in her youth, village halls have been built since; she adds that Unitarianism is a suitable religion for people who cannot believe much; when, as everyone knows, the precise opposite is true: Unitarianism asking people to believe all the most improbable part of Christian doctrine after removing all the reasons that begin to make it credible.

But if you shy long enough, you are sure to hit something sooner or later, and Miss Macaulay has observed accurately one thing; she says that if ever you pass a Wesleyan or Baptist or Congregational chapel you will hear hymn-singing proceeding inside.<sup>48</sup>

There every phrase, every word, every nuance tells. Better yet and shrewder far than Manning's damning is his damning with faint praise. Take Walsham How,

44. B.L. Manning, 'The Recall to Religion in the Hymns of Charles Wesley', *Ibid.*, p. 33.

45. *Ibid.*

46. 'Wesley's Hymns Reconsidered', *Ibid.*, p. 67; 'The Recall to Religion...' *Ibid.*, p. 38.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 44-45.

48. B.L. Manning, 'Some Hymns and Hymn-Books', *Ibid.*, p. 106.



for instance, of whom 'it might be respectably if not successfully maintained that he was, "taking quantity and quality into consideration" (as the Methodist Index says of Charles Wesley), the greatest hymn-writer of the nineteenth century'.<sup>49</sup> Yet who, hearing this, could then view 'For all the saints' in the same light on being told that 'It is perhaps a trifle too luscious and romantic to ring quite true' with its 'touch of King Arthur and the Round Table about the distant triumph song, the golden evening brightening in the West, and Paradise the blest'. So much for this Glastonbury 'combination of Malory's tinsel and a young lady's water colour of a sunset'.<sup>50</sup> Or what of the 'perfectly well-intentioned J.D. Burns' or Sabine Baring-Gould, the author of that ditty, "Through the night of doubt and sorrow", 'a writer for whom, despite my better judgement, I have a sneaking affection'?<sup>51</sup> Or 'Praise to the Holiest in the height', which is 'almost a great hymn. It has some very great verses', until it ends 'as a Unitarian might have ended, as indeed a Unitarian did end, his Passion hymn'.<sup>52</sup> So the well-meaning procession of the faintly-praised damned lengthens. Horatius Bonar is glimpsed in it, 'a useful, pedestrian sort of man, who is never very good and not often very bad'.<sup>53</sup> Bickersteth, Monsell and Ellerton follow on, as 'a sort of Anglican Horatius Bonars'.<sup>54</sup>

Thus are those whom such as Horder had cherished most held up to the light and found wanting, together with the whole paraphernalia of their hymnody - those endless subsections for New Year, Spring, May, Morning, Noon, Evening, Hospitals, Social Services, Absent Friends, that for Horder (and Dearmer) had so nuanced the devotional day but for Manning were so defective in exclusively Christian or Biblical content. Had he then any thesis to replace what he so sharply demolished? Having undermined what remained of his hearers' hymnodic faith (and it is recalled that he caused uproar when he talked about such things to the men's meeting at Oxford's Wesley Memorial Church),<sup>55</sup> how did he present a convincing alternative? Had he a case to mount?

Youth likes to be recalled to basics, particularly if they are not the basics of the immediately preceding generation. Youth may be iconoclastic but it is terribly old-fashioned. Manning managed to strike both chords. Thus he is a master of a sense not just of a place but of *childhood* place and of grandparents' even more than parents' place. So what could be better to warm the hearts of young Methodist hearers than this, for starters?

Come with me to John Wesley's own country: Lincolnshire. Come to the North Wolds, where from the Earl of Yarborough's woods at Pelham's Pillar you can see the line of the Humber and the North

49. *Ibid.* p. 115.

50. B.L. Manning, 'Recall to Religion...', *Ibid.* p. 36.

51. *Ibid.* pp. 38, 39; 'Wesley's Hymns Reconsidered', *Ibid.* p. 69.

52. B.L. Manning, 'Recall to Religion', *Ibid.* p. 40.

53. B.L. Manning, 'Some Hymns...', *Ibid.* p. 115.

54. *Ibid.*

55. I am indebted to Professor W.R. Ward for this information.

Sea, and the Dock Tower of Grimsby by day; and by night the lantern of Spurn lighthouse, the dull glow of Hull on the north, the duller flow of Gainsborough on the west, and between them the flaring furnaces of Scunthorpe. Come to the place where the hill-country of the Wolds ends suddenly with a sharp escarpment. Away to the west stretches the chess-board of variegated woodland, meadows, and ploughed fields till it rises suddenly on a far horizon to that sharp ridge on which, thirty miles away, stands the cathedral church of Lincoln. Half-way down this steep western escarpment of the Wolds in the hungry forties of last century, in the ancient Roman town of Caistor, the Methodists built a new chapel, square and high and red, in a county of red bricks and curly red tiles. Inside, the chapel had a deep gallery, and a lofty rostrum. Under the rostrum was the vestry, and through a trap door in the rostrum floor the preacher climbed from the vestry to his place. You saw him enter the vestry below by an ordinary door, and then in due time appeared his head and beard, and you hoped he would forget to shut the trap door, but he never did.<sup>56</sup>

Formation follows contexting: the sharing of childhood fancies moves insensibly into the shaping of faith, all of it within 'the resources of my grandfather's pew':

Attempts to read the one plain tablet at the side of the rostrum always failed. I grew weary of wondering why the bright yellow blinds were fitted only the south side of the chapel, not on the north (I was very young, you see). I knew by heart the beauties of the thin iron pillars painted by some very ingenious person to deceive us into thinking they were marble. I had to wait for the hymns before the boy who blew the organ would begin his attractive diving and jumping. I had tried to imagine what would really happen if I suddenly put both my hands on the bald head of our friend there in the pew in front until the fascination of the experiment became so great that I was compelled for safety's sake to put away the thought. What, then, was left? Only the pile of Bibles and hymn-books in the left-hand corner. The Bibles, I regret to confess, did not attract me; but *Wesley's Hymns*, *Wesley's Hymns with a Supplement*, and *Wesley's Hymns with New Supplement*, upon these I fell week after week. And there in that pew began an unregulated, passionate, random reading which has gone on ever since.<sup>57</sup>

And note this: that Methodist faith (and its Congregational continuation) is itself within the Catholic faith of the Church:

---

56. B.L. Manning, 'Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists', *Ibid*, p. 7.

57. *Ibid*, pp. 7-8.

I could inflict upon you, but I will not, a description of the other chapel that I knew well in those days: the 1662 meeting-house of my father's Congregational Church. There I found sermons less dull, for my father preached them; but the casual ministrations of strangers drove me to Part II of Dr Barrett's *Hymnal*, where among 'Ancient Hymns of the Church' I found Irons's noble translation of the most moving of all medieval hymns - *Dies Irae*; and from *Dies Irae*, not knowing what I did, I caught the infection of a love of Medieval Christianity. To boring sermons, then, I owe two of the best things that I know.<sup>58</sup>

His hearers were ready now for such hymns, and in particular for consciously, recently, discarded hymns, *Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists*, to be explored with such a learned passion as might restore them all to fundamentals:

You may think my language about the hymns extravagant: therefore I repeat it in stronger terms. This little book - some 750 hymns - ranks in Christian literature with the Psalms, the Book of Common Prayer, the Canon of the Mass. In its own way, it is perfect, unapproachable, elemental in its perfection. You cannot alter it except to mar it; it is a work of supreme devotional art by a religious genius. You may compare it with Leonardo's 'Last Supper' or King's Chapel.<sup>59</sup>

'Just think', he is telling them, or, rather, he is making them say for themselves, 'my childhood too is part of the *national* heritage; my chapel gave song to music as powerful in its genius as any voice by King's College Chapel. My chapel is fit for the conversation and improvement of Senior Combination Rooms.' That surely is far-fetched; save that some Manningesque scene-setting can be called as evidence here too:

In the last years of the War and the first years of the peace, Arthur Christopher Benson was Master of Magdalene. He lived, not in the new Lodge, but in the old Lodge in Magdalene Street, a house turned now into sets of rooms. It was my good fortune to be one of the many on whom he showered kindnesses, and often in those years I used to call on him and go out with him walking or bicycling. You rang a bell at the street door, and after a rather long delay you were admitted: not, as you at first expected, to the house, but to a short cloister open on one side and leading to a french window. Before you passed through the french window, you often heard the comfortable notes of organ music proceeding in a smothered sort of fashion from an inner room. The french window admitted you to an

---

58. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

outer hall, dark with tapestry and crowded with pictures; from it you entered an inner waiting-room, sandwiched (as you learnt later) between the Master's study and his bedroom. This room looked out on the Master's garden. It was lighted by windows partly filled with quaint Dutch painted glass of the seventeenth century. In this inner wide waiting-room you found the Master playing, with apparent carelessness and with infinite satisfaction, a small organ.

What was he playing? Well as often as not, Charles Wesley's hymns to such tunes as *Stella*....<sup>60</sup>

And then, having got his audience where he wants them, there can be the gospel note, surely, unerringly, boldly given, set, as only a historian can set such things, in the sweep of eternity:

Most men and women merely disgust us when they talk about their souls and their secret experiences; they did this quite effectually even before psychology became the rage; but Wesley's common sense and scholarly taste kept him from mawkish excesses without crushing his spirit. The result is that few people have been as successful as he was in speaking at once with passion and with decency about God's work in their own lives. For him the important things are the great, external, objective truths about God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and the definite impact of faith in these on his own life and other men's. Through all the book there rings an absolutely overmastering note of confidence, certainty, and happiness. 'The best of all is, God is with us', with us especially in Emmanuel, the incarnate Son: nothing can make Wesley forget that. Historic Christianity applied to the individual soul and the sharing of this experience with other men who know it too - so Wesley reaches that sense of a common life which all 'real' Christians - Wesley's word - live. So, too, he comes to yearn over the great troubled world that is missing this heavenly treasure.

Lastly, there is something else. There is the solid structure of historic dogma; there is the passionate thrill of present experience; but there is, too, the glory of a mystic sunlight coming directly from another world. This transfigures history and experience. This puts past and present into the timeless eternal NOW. This brings together God and man until Wesley talks with God as a man talks with his friend. This gives to the hymn-book its divine audacity, those passages only to be understood by such as have sat in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and being caught up into paradise have heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.<sup>61</sup>

---

60. B.L. Manning, 'The Recall to Religion...', *Ibid.*, p. 32.

61. B.L. Manning, 'Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists', *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

To appreciate such gospel Manning makes his hearers work. This expert at the tightly packed, punchy argument, where every word counts, knows that it is the wrestling with meaning which gives the work of art its power, so he patiently releases such power for his listeners. He explores Wesley's mastery of metre with them:

Nothing shows Wesley's superb mastery of metre more than his use of the perverse, unnatural, and almost ludicrous metre 2.6s and 4.7s. On this tight rope, to all appearance fit only for acrobatics, Wesley moves with ease and confidence and grace. In this metre, indeed, he writes some of his most characteristic hymns. The metre 2.6s and 4.7s is so artificial as to be at first, even in Wesley's hands, slightly irritating and precious; but once you have made yourself familiar with it (especially if you have taken the trouble to see precisely what Wesley is doing) it holds you.

How weak the thoughts, and vain,  
Of self-deluding men;  
Men, who fix'd to earth alone,  
Think their houses shall endure,  
Fondly call their lands their own,  
To their distant heirs secure.

Fairly flat that seems; an uninspired, almost solicitor-like version of a not very attractive psalm. Yes, but wait till Wesley has left the solicitor's office. By the time he has reached verse 4 he is finding his wings:

High on Immanuel's land  
We see the fabric stand;  
From a tott'ring world remove  
To our steadfast mansion there:  
Our inheritance above  
Cannot pass from heir to heir.

Those amaranthine bowers  
(Unalienably ours)  
Bloom, our infinite reward,  
Rise, our permanent abode;  
From the founded world prepared;  
Purchased by the blood of God.

Unless you have in mind the precise wording of Psalm xlix; unless you catch the reference to the fourteenth chapter of St. John in *mansion*; unless you lick your lips over the contrast between the Saxon language of the earlier verses and the gathering Latinisms as the hymn proceeds: *mansion*, *inheritance*, *amaranthine*, *unalienably*,

*infinite, permanent; unless you relish the pure Latin construction from the founded world; unless you catch the deftly sudden change in the position of one stress in*

High on Immanuel's land;

you do not begin to learn the art of Wesley or to understand why he dominates the lesser fry as he does.<sup>62</sup>

Manning demonstrates Wesley's mastery of the simple to encompass the full range of evangelical truth and 'the peculiar and pungent doctrines of uncompromising Christianity' in all their full-orbed catholicity.<sup>63</sup> For here, in Methodism or Old Dissent, there is not some species of despiritualized Quakerism or some concoction of Anglicanism-and-water; rather here there remains, if only we care to look for it, the catholic heart of the matter in theology, churchmanship, worship and ministry:

Here I must turn aside for a moment to triumph in Wesley's scholarship. To that we owe a feature of our eucharistic worship which neither the confused and truncated canon of the Roman Mass nor the Anglican rite has preserved. The epiclesis takes us back to the earliest and purest celebrations of the Supper of the Lord. This link with primitive catholicism which Rome and Canterbury threw away, Wesley restored.

Come, Holy Ghost, Thine influence shed,  
And realize the sign.  
Thy life infuse into the bread,  
Thy power into the wine.

I need not quote more. Wesley gave us what Canterbury now struggles illegally to recover and what Rome stupidly lost in the Dark Ages and still rejects in these days of her wanton and self-conscious schism from ancient orthodoxy. We have almost nothing to learn even liturgically that we cannot learn from Wesley.<sup>64</sup>

Manning proves that most audaciously and movingly in his finest scene-setting of all:

You remember that [Doddridge's 'My God and is Thy table spread?'] contains an interesting, startling word:

Was not for you the victim slain?  
Are you forbid the children's bread?

---

62. B.L. Manning, 'Wesley's Hymns Reconsidered', *Ibid.* pp. 55-57.

63. B.L. Manning, 'Hymns for the Use...', *Ibid.* p. 27.

64. B.L. Manning, 'Recall to Religion...', *Ibid.* p. 42.

'Victim': that is hardly the expression that conventional notions lead us to expect a Protestant Dissenter, writing in the basest of Latitudinarian times, to use at the Lord's Table? 'Victim': it is the word of the Roman mass, too strong for the Book of Common Prayer. It is the highest of high sacrificial doctrine. Yes, but it is *there*. Doddridge said it.

Now hear Wesley. There is between the Wolds and the sea in Wesley's county (and mine) within tolerable distance of Lincoln Cathedral, the pitiful ruin of Bardney Abbey, left as Henry VIII and his followers left it, when they had no more use for it. They had melted down the bells and the lead of the roof and had stolen the sacred vessels. You may see the place in the centre of the nave of the abbey church where they lit their fire and melted the lead; and you may see more. You may see close by, unharmed because it was only of use to pious men, the altar of the five wounds of Christ, with its five signs of the Cross; one in each corner and one in the centre. Who thought of this or the five wounds in the eighteenth-century England? Who preserved the continuity of Christian devotion in Bardney? Not those Anglican farmers of Bardney who carted away the abbey stones to build their cowsheds. But Wesley was teaching their Methodist labourers that same catholic and evangelical faith, that 'Enthusiasm', hateful to bishops and scorned by modernists, in almost the same accents as the Bardney monks had known. Within a stone's-throw of the altar of the five wounds, the Methodists were singing:

Weary souls, that wander wide  
 From the central point of bliss,  
 Turn to Jesus crucified,  
 Fly to those dear wounds of His.  
 Five bleeding wounds He bears,  
 Received on Calvary;  
 They pour effectual prayers,  
 They strongly plead for me.

It is odd, is it not? to find the language of medieval devotion coming back on the lips, not of archbishops and deans in apostolic succession, but of Doddridge and Wesley. This language, these images of

The Master's marred and wounded mien,  
 His hands, His feet, His side

(to use Montgomery's words), I am aware, have come once again to be familiar in the thoughts and speech of all English Christians,

Anglican and Nonconformist. They could not indeed be lost permanently unless Christian emotion was itself to perish. They had been wrongfully suppressed by the Arianism and Latitudinarianism of the eighteenth century. But the way of their return: that it is that interests me, first by hymns and afterwards by catholic ornaments. It reminds us of the possibility (or is it a probability?) that the modern Romish worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus owes something to a devotional book by Oliver Cromwell's Congregational chaplain, Thomas Goodwin, *The Heart of Christ in Heaven towards Sinners on Earth*.

So, in piety, do extremes agree: Catholic and Evangelical meet, and kiss one another at the Cross.<sup>65</sup>

And should any still need an argumentative 'i' dotted or 't' crossed, Manning obliges:

Every clause in the Nicene and in the Athanasian Creed has its parallel in our hymn-books; and if we use no crucifix, no stations of the Cross, no processions, no banners, no incense, you must attribute it not to the fancy that we have neither need nor understanding of what these things represent. We do not use these things because our hymns revive the sacred scenes and stir the holy emotions with a power and a purity denied to all but the greatest craftsmen. There *are* pictures of the Crucifixion that rival, and perhaps excel, the passion hymns of Watts and Wesley; but those pictures are to be sought in distant lands by the few and the wealthy for a few moments only. They hymn-book offers masterpieces for all who have an ear to hear, every day and in every place, to every worshipper. When I am informed that Dissenting worship is bare and cold, making no appeal to the emotions because it does not employ the tawdry and flashy productions of fifth-rate ecclesiastical art-mongers, I am at no loss for an answer. I am only at a loss when I am asked to explain why, holding these treasures, we turn so often from them - the great passionate, doctrinal, emotional hymns - to the pedestrian rhymers of ethical commonplaces.<sup>66</sup>

When Wesley and Watts are seen thus, it is hard to view even the best-loved Victorians (let alone their successors) ever again in quite the same way. It becomes only too easy to let go of 'O Love that wilt not let me go'. Manning's achievement through those five informal papers was to alert the new generation to the sheer mastery of the masters' hymns, their technique, their Christian scholarship and orthodoxy, their passion and their mysticism. That mastery fascinated Manning because it fitted his own genius. Here were words that were

65. B.L. Manning, 'Some Hymns and Hymn-books', *Ibid*, p. 132-33.

66. *Ibid*, p. 136.



deeds and the cause of deeds in which he had revelled since he first read them and, *reading*, knew that they must be *heard*.

Dissenting hymnody could not be the same again for those who heard him. Neither, by the same token, could Dissenting worship or ecclesiology. I am sure that Erik Routley, Caryl Micklem, Alan Gaunt, Peter Cutts, Brian Wren (at least in his pre-inclusive days), would have written and composed differently had those five informal papers never been given or subsequently collected.

And yet... I have not forgotten my fourth man, my second son. Manning had his feet on the ground or, rather, in his neighbour's pew. He could enter the spirit of what he criticized. I am sure he knew Garrett Horder's *The Hymn Lover*; I know he knew 'Holy Murder', Garrett Horder's impossible son, P.R. Morley Horder. For Morley Horder was, under Manning's bursarship, the architect of Jesus College's most ambitious building scheme for generations; he designed the staircase on which Manning lived and got Eric Gill, that other lapsed Dissenter, to sculpt cherubs for Jesus. More yet, for Morley Horder was also the architect of Cheshunt College, including its chapel, the last of that college's buildings to appear, at a time when Manning's involvement in Cheshunt's life was growing.<sup>67</sup> It was in that simplest, most subtle of chapels that Manning preached his last published sermon - on the Burial of the Dead - and though today the chapel is dismantled (one of the saddest acts of recent Cambridge philistinism), some of its fittings - its pulpit and its lectern - elegant, measured reflections of eighteenth-century Dissent, have found a home in Manning's loved High Chapel, Ravenstonedale. There they commemorate him, but they also commemorate their designer, Morley Horder, son of *Worship Song*, lapsed Dissenter, Chesterbellocian Roman Catholic, friend, admirer, and for a time parishioner, of Percy Dearmer. So *Worship Song* and *Songs of Praise* commingle with the Hymns of Wesley and Watts and high in the Dales the Lion of Orthodox Dissent lies down with the *English Hymnal*.

CLYDE BINFIELD

---

67. For P.R. Morley Horder (1870-1944) see *Dictionary of National Biography*; see also C. Binfield, 'Holy Murder at Cheshunt College; the Formation of an English Architect: P.R. Morley Horder, 1870-1944', *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, Vol. 4, No. 2. May 1988 pp. 103-134.

## REVIEW ARTICLE

*God's February: A life of Archie Craig 1888-1985.* By Elizabeth Templeton. ISBN 0-85169-210-9, Pp. 196. £14.95. London: CCB1

Elizabeth Templeton must have wondered what she was about when she agreed to write this biography of a man who was born thirteen years before Queen Victoria died. Delving into the vast collection of letters and papers stored in the garage at Doune where Archie and May Craig spent the last twenty-five years of their life together, she must have wondered even more whether she could present us with a coherent portrait of a life spanning ninety-seven years of the history of the Church and of the World. The success of this readable book lies in the way she treats the memories with affection, uses the wise-cracks to reveal the seriousness of the issues and in recording the dilemmas with which his soul wrestled, presents us with questions that we too must face and offers answers that are still current options. Archie Craig emerges from these pages as a man in conversation with his friends, his colleagues, his congregations, his students but above all with God. She engages us in the dialogue - a word he used before it lost meaning by over employment. The bundles of letters seem mostly to have been of those received, rather than copies of his own writing, so that the man is seen in a mirror. But, as Leslie Newbigin writes in a foreword, Archie's importance was in the lives of people. If in the end his place in the developments of his time seems like one of those limestone streams that emerge and then hide themselves in the earth, it was because his life was like that. There was a deliberate behind-the-sceneness about him which had nothing to do with deception but a great deal to do with the humility before God that he took in with his mother's milk.

The early pages show a kindly but penetrating light on life in a border town of 4000 people with eleven churches and on the nurture of a boy's soul in the Free Church manse in the last years of the nineteenth century. His life-long watchfulness about indulgence, his sense of life as a strenuous battle in which each must discover a vocation, his deep respect for the family, his warm human affection, his awareness of the importance of the State which required for the Church a freedom to criticise lest the civil sword should betray its duty and above all a reverence for truth in its wholeness that sprang out of the deep awareness that life is the gift of the Sovereign God, were all owing to the treasured inheritance of that background. What he rejected was the fear of beauty which injected a severity and drabness into life and worship which Archie with his love of life, of gardens, of music and of fun knew to be a distortion of the right relation between the splendour of the Creator and the creatures made in His image. Those brought up in the lush world of twentieth-century England would be unwise to miss the positive qualities of a seed bed that produced some admirable plants.

In 1914, already a teacher and late entrant into studies for the ministry, he faced the question of what to do about the war. As a student for the ministry he had a free choice, but enlisted and won the MC for some hidden bravery,

possibly for intelligence work behind the enemy lines. Like his younger contemporary George Macleod who also won the same decoration, he emerged a life-long and outspoken pacifist. His trenchant wit and his aptitude for writing light verse meet in a poem, printed on pp. 26-27, whose bitter ironies reflect the tension he felt between the claims of Christ and the glorification of war. Here is one of the questions we cannot avoid. Archie read the Sermon on the Mount and accepted it as a programme for present living. Having made up his mind about it, he deliberately put it to the test by a long, costly endeavour to love a lout who sinned with a high hand. The sins and folly, the endless pleas for help, the much criticised involvement with this man's dirt, must have tested Archie's convictions about the endless patience of God in love and forgiveness, but he held them firmly to the end. His pacifism was based in that theology which we would now call "incarnational". He ranged himself against the upstart Barthianism because it seemed to put off the issues beyond time. He shrivelled when it seemed to him that Niebuhr too readily accepted the compromises of the current culture. The Kingdom became incarnate in Jesus and in the Cross and therefore its values must neither be compromised nor left to eternity. He was at home with Oman, Farmer and Dodd.

All of this grew with his experience as the first Chaplain to Glasgow University and a life-long association with students, through his years as the first General Secretary of the British Council of Churches and on into his long love-hate relationship with the Church of Scotland. When Edinburgh 1910 made its impact on William Temple and set J.H. Oldham on his creative career as prophet of the wholeness of the Church in the wholeness of the world, Archie earned the esteem of the leaders of the British Churches. At an interview in an ABC cafe in London in 1941 he was persuaded by some of them that he was the man to shape the embryo Council. W.T. Elmslie, whose name heads the memorial in 86 Tavistock Place, was one of them. He only served for five years before returning to his native Scotland and a year's colleagueship with Macleod on Iona, but by then the Council had taken a place in Britain that is one of the best things in the church history of our time. He gave it coherence, he drew to its service strong hearts and strong minds. Perhaps his most creative influence came through the Religion and Life Weeks that swept over war-time England to engage thinkers and common folk in the search for a faith authentic in its centre and yet universal in its reach. The SCM in which some of the origins can be found had conducted open air campaigns with the text book "Christ the Lord of *all* life". The italic is mine because it represents something new in the orthopractice of the whole movement. Archie had conducted such weeks in Glasgow amongst the students, but what happened in England engaged the attention of whole communities and left as its rich gift Councils of Churches in the cities, the towns, and even the villages from Cornwall to Northumberland. It was a sad irony that the Churches beyond the Tweed did not like it.

From that high tide in the ecumenical movement and the enthusiasms that were evoked by the first Assembly of the WCC and the creation of the Church of South India he went back to fight his influential corner in Scotland from 1947

until he died in 1985. He took with him his vision of the Universal Church and in due course was made Convenor of the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the Assembly. It was a moment to make the Church of Scotland discover the wonder which its own missionary enterprise had helped to bring to birth - the World Church - the great new fact of our time as Temple called it. But it was also the time when that vision challenged the separateness of the divided churches. How could two national churches make known this new discovery when one denied communion to the Moderator of the other even in the Coronation service in 1953? That refusal rankled in the Scottish soul and introduced a poison of national as well as ecclesiastical pride into the conversations that aimed at the breaking of that barrier to table fellowship. It also made their urgency obvious. When by 1957 Archie was able to take to the Assembly a scheme of adjustment thrashed out in long discussions between the two national churches and the smaller Episcopalian and Presbyterian churches north and south of the Border, some of the high enthusiasm of the post-war years had faded. In Scotland the word "Bishop" became an emblem of apostasy so that the Assembly listened to the proposals in an atmosphere of distrust. The defeat when it came ended with Archie's public resignation. It was not pique that drove him to this unusually dramatic action. The form of the rejection seemed to him to be a fundamental turning from all that he believed about the Church: he had no ground left on which to put his feet for future leadership. It was a real defeat for the whole movement which those talks represented. It left the Church of England free to ignore the deep questions of ecclesiology which had been there to challenge easy assumptions about the marks of catholicity.

For Archie Craig it was as final in its meaning as the rejection of the Covenant proposals in England proved to be twenty years later. He felt that it implied a long sabbatical from such negotiations. His call to be Moderator of the Assembly in 1961 must have eased any sense of personal rejection. His visit to the Pope lit new lamps of hope. Whether or not John XXIII actually bid him farewell saying "arrividerci Erchie", the spirit of their talks which left that myth behind was tribute to the spirit of both men. This life then moves onto what might seem the domestic but the path to the house in Doune trodden by laden postmen and innumerable friends was a path which carried the influence into many unrecorded places. He had served on the Committee that published the *Church Hymnary* in 1927 and his musicology called him to serve again in the production of the Third Edition in 1973. His friends found him often on his knees, his letters and endless preaching and lecturing up and down the country were still alive with deep conviction and bubbling humour. His garden was a place of beauty. He first met May Laidlaw in 1906, married her in 1950, cared for her through her last sad decline and died four days after her in 1985. The book never quite captures a man of single stance, there was no such thing as Craigism, but there was a man of lovable holiness whose wisdom was served with the salt of fun and friendship was golden but given freely to all who sought him. If this reads more like a digest of a life than a review of a book, it is because it required little conversation to discover that Elizabeth Templeton's first task was to rescue

Archie's memory from oblivion. To live to ninety-seven and to spend most of those years in what the English will ever regard as Scotch mists, is to be in danger of being lost in time and space. Her lively writing should rescue Archie from that undeserved limbo.

It is a good life. Occasionally the shrewd epigrams quoted for their brightness and humour may overload the canvas but the portrait is clear and attractive. There is perhaps a question as to whether the book will engage its readers deeply enough in the questions behind the events. Why did Archie suddenly fold up his tents in 1947 and return to Scotland? Is there a question there about the significance of ecumenical instruments? His great attempt to find a way of reconciling Anglican and Presbyterian ecclesiology failed. Why did that have such a profound and deadening effect on the Church of Scotland? There is a sea change to be accounted for between the Scottish Churches with their place in the missionary and ecumenical tide and the Church which allowed the Beaverbrook Press to capture the popular mood. Should Archie have fought on? Was he too easily forced into retreat or is mere reunion of church structures, such as the Union of 1929, a recipe for safe mediocrity in which the Church loses its nerve? His wrestling with such issues is now a matter of history but the questions are alive and those who make church history to-day and to-morrow will learn much from this book.

ARTHUR MACARTHUR

*The Congregational Library.* By John Creasey. Pp. 22. Congregational Memorial Hall Trust (1978) Ltd: 1992. £2.00

The trustees are to be congratulated for departing from the usual subject of a Congregational Lecture on this occasion and inviting John Creasey to give an account of the Congregational Library itself. The lecture is composed with the rigour we would expect from the Librarian of Dr. Williams's Library and modestly stops short of the last decade when he has himself contributed so much to the good of the Congregational Library now housed in Gordon Square. It is a story of individuals and institutions, of the lovers of good scholarship in contest with the practitioners of ecclesiastical business. The first great proponent of the Library, Joshua Wilson of Highbury, intended it to bring the two interests together. He had a vision of a London meeting place for Congregationalists at once more reputable than a tavern or club and providing a proper ambience of learning for the denomination. A former music hall in Blomfield St., now the site of Liverpool St. underground station, was the first home of the Congregational Library and meeting rooms (1831-1866). From the first the Library relied on room letting to provide the income for the employment of librarians. John Creasey tells us the story of how this unendowed institution embarked on a regular cycle of crises, rescued at intervals by the dedication and passion of individuals.

Joshua Wilson took the opportunity of the compulsory purchase of the Blomfield St. premises to propose the building of Memorial Hall itself. When

that building was opened and the Library brought out of store it was found that damp and vermin had destroyed much of the stock. The acquisition of much of Wilson's own library after his death remedied some of the losses. Still there was no proper Librarian and only the age-old remedy of finding a "retired" person to take over saved the Library from utter muddle in the late 1880s. The person in question was Dr. Newth, former Principal of New College, which institution has provided many of the Library's friends over the years. He was succeeded by T.G. Crippen, himself 55 when appointed in 1896, only to retire in 1925 at the age of 84 knowing the work was then beyond him. Crippen was the first of three distinguished people who combined a care for the Library with the promotion of Congregational history through the Congregational Historical Society.

The early volumes of the CHS *Transactions*, which precede this Journal, were heavily dependent on Crippen's work for the Library. He promoted the study of rare materials in the Library at the same time as raising consciousness of the importance of Congregational history. In this he was succeeded eventually by Albert Peel, who from 1929 built up the Library and its usefulness until the outbreak of war in 1939 plunged it into uncertainty again. The third person to champion the Library was never its Librarian but has been a staunch friend of it for many years, that is, Geoffrey Nuttall. He organised students to re-establish the Library when it finally returned to Memorial Hall from its evacuation to Manchester. He was one of the group who first raised the possibility of its moving to Dr. Williams's for proper cataloguing and maintenance, and he did not allow it to be forgotten when it could so easily have slipped from view and been dispersed in the rebuilding of Memorial Hall and the changes consequent upon the creation of the URC.

The merit of John Creasey's lecture is that it reminds us that this Library is more than a collection of volumes. It is a source of authenticity within a tradition, a place to which we need to return in order to understand our origins. From the rare seventeenth-century books, through the pamphlets and church histories, the volumes of Congregational studies to the personal papers of Congregationalists which are preserved, the Library tells of a tradition which is important in our self-understanding. This is a message which needs to be reiterated in every generation. The successors to the Congregational Church within the United Reformed tradition already face something of the same problem with their own archive. No-one is prepared to provide the space and time needed to keep the record going. The spare time and devotion of the unpaid is what sustains the collection at Tavistock Place. It is salutary to be reminded by John Creasey that it was ever thus and that deputations have waited on church bureaucrats in the name of scholarships for over a hundred and fifty years. That the Memorial Hall Trust has secured the continuance and accessibility of the Congregational Library in the present time is very much to their credit and they are to be further congratulated for having the story thus far so well told by John Creasey.

STEPHEN ORCHARD

*Roy Whitehorn: "A Servant of the Word": 1891-1976.* By Michael Whitehorn. Pp. 147. 1991. £3.75 from the author at 5, Fenners Lawn, Cambridge, CB1 2EH

This fine biography will not only confirm the memories of all readers who knew Roy Whitehorn, it will also give them a further knowledge of his many interests and achievements; readers who did not know him will be introduced to a scholar and churchman who influenced the life of the Churches in Britain and further afield.

This biography, written by his son Michael, traces Whitehorn's life-story from his birth in London. His father was a notable jeweller and goldsmith and a leading Presbyterian elder. His mother was a Drummond who had among her kindred several Moderators in various branches of Scottish Presbyterianism. This background shaped the course of his life. He had a splendid academic career at St. Paul's School in London and at Trinity College in Cambridge. He was an outstanding classical scholar and won so many prizes that he was called "the Rockefeller of Cambridge". He held a leading place in many societies, especially the Student Christian Movement, and in the sports of rugby, swimming, rowing, and water polo.

He decided to enter the Presbyterian ministry and began the course of preparation in Westminster College, but this was interrupted by service with the YMCA from 1915 to 1919. He was posted to India where he became responsible for the organisation and management of the YMCA's army centres; he was awarded the MBE for his services. On his return to England he resumed his studies. At the end of the course he was appointed to the SCM staff; this took him on visits to universities and colleges all over Britain and Ireland and he got to know many of the present and future leaders of the different denominations, kindling his belief in the need and possibility of Christian unity. During this period he married Constance Ryley, also a Cambridge graduate. She supported him in his work and it is a tribute to the atmosphere of their home that their two sons and one daughter entered the service of the Presbyterian Church.

He then began his ministry in Kuala Lumpur in Malaya. This was the centre for a ministry in various out-stations, mainly to expatriates, though he had some Chinese people in the congregations. On completion of this he returned to England, where, after a brief ministry at Aston Tirrold, he was called to York. There the congregation grew under his ministry and there he got to know the Archbishop, William Temple; this friendship further stimulated his commitment to the cause of Christian unity. He then moved to Oxford where he had the responsibility of making the church a centre for Presbyterian students.

In 1938 he was called to the chair of Ecclesiastical History in Westminster College in succession to Professor Carnegie Simpson. For the next thirty years this was to be the centre of Whitehorn's work and in 1955 he was made Principal. Here he influenced many generations of students. He was thoroughly at home in Cambridge and had a comprehensive knowledge of its traditions, customs and personnel. He was invited on five occasions to preach the University Sermon in Great St. Mary's Church and he served as a University Proctor. He became well-known all over the Presbyterian Church and was

already a leading figure in many committees of the General Assembly when he was called to be Moderator in 1950.

His activities ranged far beyond his own Church and he was among the foundation members of the British and World Councils of Churches. Whitehorn firmly believed that there is only one Church, though it is now divided into many branches; the division had come about for many reasons and each branch treasured its own particular inheritance. He himself treasured his Presbyterian lineage but he spent much time and effort hoping, praying and working for the time when all the branches would recognise their common membership of the one Church. He was often disappointed by the failure of attempts to reach that mutual acceptance, particularly by the Presbyterian and Episcopalian Churches of England and Scotland, but he also rejoiced in the greater friendship and recognition which had developed in his lifetime. He was glad to be present at the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972. Negotiations had begun in 1945 when a committee was set up with him and Nathaniel Micklem of Mansfield College, Oxford, as the joint Chairmen. In the uniting service in Westminster Abbey, the Dean, Eric Abbott, included Whitehorn among the list of those to whom all the Churches owed much for their pioneering work.

His Presbyterian loyalty was kept fresh by constant involvement in the work of the World Presbyterian Alliance and he was the preacher at the service held in St. Giles's Cathedral in 1952 to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of its formation. In 1944 he had already been the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council. Across the years he was invited to preach and lecture on a vast variety of celebratory occasions such as the work of the Westminster Assembly and the lives of Baxter and Doddridge. Among his many radio broadcasts was his part in "The Anvil", a series when a panel answered questions sent in by listeners.

All this and more is covered in this biography to which are appended three examples of his addresses and sermons. One of these is the sermon which he preached in Great St. Mary's Church in 1947 when he was the Mayor's chaplain; it is a clear statement of the duty of councillors to recognise that all power comes from God and is to be exercised with a sense of responsibility to God. In it there is what must be an early example of the now common call for "Christian action upon our environment".

This book is well-produced, and, though written by his son with a clear sense of debt and affection, it is an objective and balanced account of a distinguished life.

There are a few misprints. I felt a slight twinge of disappointment that Ernest Davey, one of the great figures of Irish Presbyterianism, should be passed over as "a Professor Davey"; Davey, like Whitehorn, was a brilliant Cambridge student with a double First in Classics and Theology and a Fellowship at King's College; he becomes a friend of Whitehorn's and was with him at meetings of the Presbyterian Alliance and on other occasions.



Readers of this Journal will be pleased to note his deep interest in the Presbyterian Historical Society; he made many contributions to its Journal and was a President of the Society. He was glad to see the formation of its successor, the United Reformed Church History Society.

Those who knew Roy Whitehorn well have their memories of him. I only knew him when he had retired but I can add at least three distinct memories. First, when I went to Cambridge as one of his successors as the teacher of Church History he and his wife showed me great kindness and made me feel at home in a world which was new to me. At many meetings he took special trouble to introduce me to many Cambridge figures among whom he seemed to have a comprehensive range of acquaintances. Secondly, I travelled with him to London on several occasions to attend Presbytery meetings and I learned much about his experiences and convictions. I learned that his favourite hymn was by Richard Baxter beginning "Lord, it belongs not to my care whether I die or live" and containing the verse:

My knowledge of that life is small,  
The eye of faith is dim;  
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all;  
And I shall be with him.

Thirdly, I was struck by his abiding mastery of the classics. When I consulted him about some obscure sentences in the Greek or Latin Fathers he translated them with enviable ease; this ability he shared with his contemporary Principals, Nathaniel Micklem of Oxford and W.R. Williams of Aberystwyth.

When, as Secretary of the Senatus of the College, I had to prepare the wording for the memorial tablet in the College, my draft was accepted by the Senatus and by his family. All who knew him and all who read this biography can join in the words upon the tablet and "Give thanks to God" for the life of this faithful "Servant of the Word".

R. BUICK KNOX

*A History of the Evangelical and Reformed Church.* By David Dunn *et al.* [1961], with a new Introduction by Lowell H. Zuck. Pp. xxx, 371. New York: The Pilgrim Press 1990. \$14.95

As with natural families, so with churchly: we may well know more about our neighbours than about our relatives overseas. With the republication of this book the American Evangelical and Reformed branch should become much better known to its British Reformed cousins. For good measure, this new edition contains Lowell H. Zuck's account of the first thirty years of the United Church of Christ, the 1957 union of the E and R Church with the Congregational Christian Churches.

As its name suggests, the E and R Church was already a union of the old German Reformed Church (1725) with the Evangelical Synod (1840). The union was consummated in 1934, and there followed just twenty-three years of church growth and the increase of ecumenical zeal before the still wider union of 1957.

Indeed, when less than ten years into its new life the E and R Church was already contemplating its death as a distinct denomination.

The bulk of this book is occupied by the prehistory of the E and R Church. It is a story of immigration from different parts of "Germany" (with some Reformed coming from Hungary), in two very different centuries, to different regions of a vast "new" country. The Reformed brought with them the heritage of Zwingli, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Palatinate Liturgy and consistorial church order; the Evangelicals, fortified by the Augsburg Confession, Luther's Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism, were tempered by the irenic spirit of Melancthon. The latter had to make their nineteenth-century way in what was for them a dramatically new context of the separation of Church and State. In practical terms this meant that, in the absence of state funding, they had to learn to give voluntarily to Christian work.

Both traditions experienced the impress of pietism; neither succumbed to the excesses of frontier revivalism; both established schools, colleges and seminaries; engaged in home and foreign missions; undertook publishing and social welfare ventures; and struggled with the language issue (German or English?). If the German Reformed of Pennsylvania were divided in their response to Zinzendorf's attempts of 1736 to unite German confessionalists with pietists, Evangelicals (already of mixed Lutheran and Reformed heritage) had to carve out a path between German immigrant freethinking ministers who baptised in the name of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality, and the Saxon Lutherans of Missouri who "consider it a sin to serve a united church, since, according to their opinion, the Reformed are the children of Satan".

The theological contribution of the two streams is of particular interest. To the nineteenth-century German Reformed we are indebted for the catholic-incarnational Mercersburg theology of the former Presbyterian J.W. Nevin, and Philip Schaff; from the Evangelical side in this century have come the Niebuhrs. Given the history of fracture within the Reformed family, it is cheering to note that no permanent secession had occurred when, following nearly four decades of strife between the Mercersburg party and their Reformed traditionalists opponents, among whom J.H.A. Bomberger of Ursinus College was prominent, the peace commission of 1878 brought matters to a conclusion.

The story is enlivened by such information as that "When the British Army was approaching Philadelphia in 1777, Zion Reformed Church in Allentown ripped up the floors of its church to hide the Liberty Bell until the city was evacuated by the British." We are treated to two lines of a nineteenth-century revivalist hymn:

Once I was blind, I could not see,  
The Calvinist deceived me.

Eden Theological Seminary is named, not after the biblical garden, but after its nearest station on the Wabash Railroad. The London Missionary Society cooperated with the Basel Mission in securing German and Swiss missionaries for the American Mid-West. And, during the course of his sermon preached at the

final pre-union conference of the Reformed Church on 26 June 1934, F. William Leich quoted P.T. Forsyth: "The great issue within Christianity is not between systems and doxies, but a battle for the holy as the one all-inclusive gift of Christ."

The Pilgrim Press is warmly to be thanked for reissuing this most informative book, the value of which is enhanced by portraits, statistical data, an updated bibliography and an index.

ALAN P.F. SELL

*Mission Accomplished? The English Presbyterian Mission in Lingtung, South China: A Study of the Interplay between Mission Methods and Their Historical Context.* By George A. Hood. Studien zur Interkulturellen Geschichte des Christentums, Band 42 (Frankfurt am Main, Verlag Peter Lang, 1986). Pp. vii, 437. n.p. ISBN 3-8204-8995-9.

This book, based upon George Hood's doctoral dissertation at the University of Birmingham, is an important description of the English Presbyterian Mission in South China, and the growth of the Christian Church in that area. The author, a former missionary to Lingtung, takes seriously the demand of the late historian of Christian missions, Kenneth Scott Latourette, that ecclesiastical and especially missiological history must examine thoroughly the political, social and cultural factors of and influences of Christian mission. Consequently, Hood sets himself the aim of seeing in what ways "one small part of the present Church in China was established" taking as his theme "the interplay between the purposes and practices of the mission body and the historical circumstances in which they were working". From this there emerge three objectives: "to add to our knowledge of the history of the Church in China"; "to add to our understanding of the Church in China today"; and "to understand our own past mission history more clearly."

The history of the Lingtung Mission of the Presbyterian Church of England is intended to be a thematic rather than a descriptive history of the development of the mission and the establishment of the Church. Not all periods and aspects of the mission's history are discussed in this book, but only those which highlight the methodological theme of the book's subtitle "A Study of the Interplay between Mission Methods and Their Historical Context". Following the Introduction, the book is divided into five chapters. Chapter One, "Prelude", is a critical biographical study of the mission methods and influence of four early missionary evangelists to the Lingtung area, Karl Gutzlaff, Rudolph Lechler, William Chalmers Burns, and James Hudson Taylor. Chapter Two discusses the origins and establishment of the formal territorial mission body, while Chapter Three examines the mission theory and work of John Campbell Gibson, who is taken to be a typical example of the missionary thinking of the English Presbyterian mission in Lungtung. In this chapter, Hood thoroughly considers Gibson's ideas on a Romanized script, schools for a well-trained ministry, the development and independence of a self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating church. It is in this chapter that we can see the author's

methodological interests most clearly illustrated. Chapter Four looks in detail at the period 1919 to 1929 and examines the three-way relation between the Lingtung Church, the Presbyterian mission and general social atmosphere of growing and intense Chinese nationalism. Chapter Five examines events from 1929 to the present, and asks whether the tumultuous events following the establishment of the communist government and the withdrawal of missionaries constituted an example of a missionary debacle, or a sign of the maturation of the Chinese Church. It is this last chapter which is the most contentious.

George Hood's essential thesis exemplifies, in my opinion, the assumptions made by many leaders of the churches in Britain and America that the ecclesiastical bodies created by the communist regime (the Three Self Patriotic Movement - TSPM - and the China Christian Council) are freely-formed associations which can speak openly and honestly about their history and work. But can that be so in a totalitarian state? Hood is very critical of any "Romanticism" in approaching the historical understanding of China, but it is at this very point that he is most vulnerable in his own analysis of the current church scene, for his own approach to Christianity in communist-ruled China is tinged with more than a little "Romanticism".

Thus, he always refers to the establishment of the communist regime by their own term, "Liberation" and he assumes too easily that the government-created and authorized ecclesiastical bodies, especially the TSPM, represent the Christian Church in China. Thus again, in the discussion of what a fully indigenous church would be (in contrast to the problems of a Church dominated by a mission and missionaries), he says that "For a Church to be indigenous means determining its relationship to the State, community, and the culture, both traditional and contemporary". This indicates that the TSPM is both free to speak and act on its own, and that it is fully "indigenous". Yet there is sufficient evidence from Dr. Hood's own book to show that this cannot be so.

For instance, though he cites two examples of intervention by the Religious Affairs Bureau in the Lingtung area (the prevention of the ordination of a ministerial candidate, and of the appointment of certain persons as officials of the local TSPM body), in summing up he says: "In the political area the Church accepts the view that the Bureau is better placed and informed to make such judgements. By acting in this way the Church does not see itself as subservient to Government, but rather as true to itself, in supporting a Government whose policies it sees as best serving the needs of the country". Similarly, in discussing the political dimension of Christian mission: "There is historical irony in the fact that the Church in Lingtung, carrying the burden of its past association with politically compromised missionaries, should now be seeing a department of the State, the Religious Affairs Bureau, as a guardian of its religious freedom". Can that really be so?

Another issue is the conflict between what he calls universality and particularity. These are code words for the refusal of the communist government to allow the Church in China to have any other representational body than that

which it has created, or to have any contacts with the outside world other than those which are officially sanctioned. We are told that the protection of particularity is necessary because of a host of factors which might overwhelm the "Church" (the TSPM), most especially the "personal commitment of Chinese Christians outside China". Because of these dangers which their leaders "feel ill prepared to cope without some form of protection, either self or government imposed". But are not totalitarian regimes based on the tight control of information, which means in turn the limitation of all forms of communication, including contact with people outside the society? Surely, the reason for the present "post-denominational" Church scene in China and the "protection" of the TSPM is largely if not entirely a matter of state policy, a result of the desires and fears of the regime? If this is so, then just how "indigenous" can the official church be? This failure to examine critically the issue of the current political scene in China detracts from Hood's important analysis of the earlier history of the mission.

JAMES H. GRAYSON

*Neither Bang nor Whimper: The End of a Missionary Era in China.* By George A. Hood. Pp. xviii, 288. Singapore: Presbyterian Church in Singapore, 1991. n.p. ISBN 981-00-2837-7.

This densely written book is the fruit of many years of the author's research and reflection on an important missiological event in which he was intimately involved - the withdrawal from China of British Protestant missionaries. The author has striven to be neutral in his evaluations of that event which was spiritually and emotionally one of the most dramatic episodes of twentieth-century Christian history. Nonetheless, it is impossible not to have opinions about such a traumatic and significant event. The author's point of view is clear and consistent throughout. Whilst, this reviewer has high praise for the depth of research which is represented in this book, and for the efforts which the author has made to produce a balanced view, he remains sceptical of his interpretation of the rise of Communism in China and its implications for the life and teaching of the Church.

This book's aim is to describe the history of the withdrawal of British missionaries from China as viewed from the perspective of the mission board secretaries in Britain. The book consists of six chapters, three documentary appendices, and a bibliography of source material. The first chapter outlines the history of Protestant missions in China, beginning with the Opium War, the Boxer Rebellion, the rise of Chinese nationalism in the 1920s, and the emergence and triumph of Communism in China. Chapter Two describes the contemporary political context around the time in which missionaries were withdrawn from China, including a consideration of the Cold War in general, and the Korean War in particular. Chapter Three is the core chapter of the book in which the history of the relation of Christian missions in China to the tumultuous political circumstances of the time is described. Emphasis here is placed primarily on the view from Britain, taking into consideration various

local (Chinese) concerns. The period covered, the four years 1949 to 1953, is described in over 130 pages, representing nearly half of all the material in the book. Chapter Four discusses not only the decisions which were taken with regard to missionary withdrawal, but also the reflections made by mission secretaries and other church leaders on what had happened in China. Did the withdrawal of the missionaries represent a “debacle”, a “judgement”, or what? The final two chapters deal with the attempts which were made to restore contact with the Church in China during the period 1953 to 1959, and following the end of the Cultural Revolution the creation of various Church organisations in Britain which have established relationships with the Christian bodies formally recognized by the Chinese government.

I would take issue with the way in which the author tackles (or, in my view, fails to tackle) the nature of a totalitarian regime concerned for decades to eliminate sources of criticism of a single party state. Surely when the Communists came to power in China, it was no longer possible for the Church - or any other institution - to exist as a freely-formed association? From the time that a Communist regime was established as the government of the nation, all organisations in Chinese society had to be re-formed and were made to adhere to the policy of the party. That leaves open the question, which I do not feel that Dr. Hood has addressed, of whether what groups and organisations in a totalitarian society say is an accurate reflection of what they actually think. Yet surely pronouncements which come from government-created organisations will reflect government/party policy and not the ideas of the individuals themselves? It has always struck me that although Soviet and East European Communist regimes were frequently criticised for their brutality, and for the way in which they attempted to control the Church, China has been treated differently. Whenever brutal instances are revealed, they are often treated as aberrations rather than as symptomatic of the way in which the regime actually functions.

This failure to examine the nature of the regime which took control of China in 1949 means that during the critical period from 1949 to 1953 events are treated as if they represent merely a change of government, rather than a wholesale alteration in the nature of the state and the way in which any opponents of the state would be treated. The question of the nature of the political system cannot be left from the discussion of this critical period - or of any other period of recent Chinese history - if we are to arrive at a clear idea of historical events. Dr. Hood tends to see key events as if they are free from the political influences of the time. Thus, his discussion of the “Christian Manifesto” of 1950, which stated the position of the Church in China and the relation with fraternal churches abroad, gives the impression that this document really was the creation of Christians who for the first time were able to speak their own minds. However sincere was the nationalism of the authors of the document, or however heartfelt was their desire for a truly independent and Chinese church, the reason for writing this manifesto was the result of party pressure and reflects party thinking.

This problem of the interpretation of the intentions of the Communist Party can be seen elsewhere. The discussion of Protestant mission history in China in Chapter One selects events used by the Chinese government to justify claims that missionaries were agents of Western imperialism. It virtually ignores the pre-Opium War missions, the attitudes of many missionaries toward gunboat diplomacy, and the positive attitude taken by a large number of missionaries towards Chinese culture. More recent events are seen in the same light. One needs to ask why it is that the Chinese government is so concerned that there be only one Protestant body in China? Why should Christians in China not be allowed free contact and intercourse with Christians in other countries? Why must the government control affairs of the Christian community? The answer must be that, in a totalitarian society, the government and the party must have control of the people and the information which is given to them. Totalitarian regimes cannot tolerate alternative sources of information or alternative ideas. The flaw in this important book, is the failure fully to consider the influence of totalitarian regimes on the people whom they control. This is an issue which greatly concerns me personally as well as an historical issue for my father-in-law was a member of the Confessing Church in Nazi Germany and well knew the way in which a totalitarian regime wanted and needed to pervert the Church.

JAMES H. GRAYSON