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EDITORIAL

In this issue of the *Journal* we celebrate the expertise of our former editor, Clyde Binfield. He here records nineteenth-century Congregationalism at its most confident and yet also at its most ambivalent (or, perhaps better, nineteenth-century Congregationalists at their most equivocal?) Three men of trade and industry, and the dynasties they produced, are scrutinised, but their families, their business interests and practices, their exercise of care for their workforce and the decline of their empires all come clearly into focus. In each case we see how Congregational principles contributed to their understanding of wealth and their use of at least some of it in providing for the needs of their employees. The discussion clearly elucidates nineteenth-century *philanthropy*. It was decidedly paternalist, characterised here as "socialisation without socialism". Whether or not this is the most faithful application of the Christian gospel or of the teaching of Jesus will remain a matter of debate. There is little doubt, however, that even as they amassed great fortunes, these men recognised that wealth brought responsibility, namely the duty to spend wisely and in the common good. That, at least, is a point which could be rehearsed in our own age. Family and relationships (and inter-relationships) are highlighted as are architects and architecture along with the social impact of Nonconformists as they began to influence local and national politics – all of which constitute part of the author's interests throughout his academic career. A much reduced version of this article appeared in *Free Churches and Society: The Nonconformist Contribution to Social Welfare, 1800-2010*, edited by Paul H. Ballard and Lesley Husselbee and published by Continuum in 2012. The full version of the article is published here with the agreement of the editors.

Our other article in this issue is an extended review of Alan Argent's important new book, *The Transformation of Congregationalism* (2014), which is appropriate given the focus of Professor Binfield's work. Written by Alan Sell, the review draws attention to the book's discussion of Congregationalism's development during the twentieth century, including its apparent move towards centralization, (and subsequent union with the Presbyterian Church of England), as well as to the fortunes of the continuing Congregationalists after 1972. This is a history which needed to be documented. In his trenchant and erudite evaluation, Professor Sell draws attention to two of the historian's ever-present challenges: first, how events should be *interpreted* as well as *recorded*; second, how there will always be more events, characters and considerations to be considered. We must acknowledge, then, that in any discussion, it is difficult (if not impossible) to consider everything. Yet this also constitutes the historian's opportunity: there will always be something further to be said.

I am grateful to the two authors, and readers will see that the two articles in many ways complement each other.

INDUSTRY, PHILANTHROPY AND CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP: THE GREAT PATERNALISTS

England was the world's first urban nation. There were statistics to prove it. The census of 1851 showed that more people lived in England's towns than in its countryside. There was also a religious census in 1851 and that too was highly suggestive. It was in fact a census of religious attendance rather than of religious sentiment, but that sharpened suggestiveness. It was a snapshot of those counted in to church or to chapel on one generally dismal early Spring Sunday. It demonstrated that, on that Sunday at least, in a country shaped for generations by a resonating version of the Bible and a matching tradition of common prayer, and braced and graced by a nationally established church, a disturbing number of people were absent from public worship and a surprising number of those who were present had chosen not to worship with the national church. Statistics breed theories and encourage conclusions. These statistics, generally available from 1854, apparently pointed to an unexpected degree of godlessness and dissent that was intensified in the larger towns and especially in industrial towns with considerable working-class populations. Contemporaries were galvanised by these findings, historians continue to ponder them, ecclesiastical strategies have yet to escape from their presumed implications.[1]

Those two censuses of 1851, their results released in the course of a decade topped by the Great Exhibition and tailed by *The Origin of Species*, encapsulated a world of change. The change was economic, social and political. It was, therefore, cultural; mindsets were in process of transformation. The change was reflected in literature, in the decorative and applied arts, and in architecture. No institution was immune, and certainly no educational institution. The United Kingdom's Established and Dissenting churches were on the cusp of change, vulnerable to it in varying degrees. The Dissenting churches were manifestly in crisis. Administrative and doctrinal tensions interlocked, schism was endemic. Such things are inherent in Dissent, they are its occupational hazard. Crisis, however, is as much a point of decision as a moment of disaster. The Dissenting churches, however "Old" or "New", were institutionally young. Although spread nationwide in town and country alike, they were most prosperously rooted in towns and most flexibly rooted in rapidly expanded towns: exactly where the census struck most suggestively home. It was in such towns that their

1 H. Mann, *Census of Great Britain 1851: Religious Worship in England and Wales* (revised edn., London: George Routledge and Co., 1854). The attention of historians was alerted by K. S. Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963). It was pursued by D. M. Thompson, "The 1851 Religious Census: Problems and Possibilities", in *Victorian Studies*, XI/1 (1967), pp. 87-97; W. S. F. Pickering, "The 1851 religious census – a useless experiment?" *British Journal of Sociology*, II (1967-8), pp. 383-407. It has steadily been taken up on a county basis by local record societies and has informed continuing debate, e.g., R. Gill, *The Myth of the Empty Church* (London: SPCK, 1993).

membership was most at risk. Those words, "membership" and "risk", need emphasis. Membership, a registered commitment going beyond mere attendance, was at the heart of Dissenting ecclesiology; and the members of Dissenting churches were at risk socially and economically. Should circumstances work against them, they were at risk of sinking into that vast and anonymous fact of modern industrial life, the proletariat; should circumstances favour them, they were no less at risk from prosperity. Whether they were factory hands or stakeholders, they were at risk. Their place in the political nation was as precarious as their place in the divine economy was assured.

Institutional Dissent took many forms. It might be congregational or connexional, independent or presbyterian. Whatever the form, it was societal. It involved a polity of mutually committed responsibility, with a consequent understanding of authority. It followed that membership of a religious society was an apprenticeship in politics, whatever the member's place in the secular body politic. The political accent varied from one Dissenting polity to the next. So much depended on the role of a minister or of a leading lay person and on their relationships to each other across and within the differently constituted councils of their churches. There could be no doubt, however, of the political and social formation encouraged by membership of a Dissenting society.

It also followed that such a formation, set in the context of a new town shaping its own institutions in a disconcertingly if excitingly unpredictable economic climate, not to mention a changing, indeed expanding, perhaps exploding, political climate, gave scope for leadership beyond the bounds of any religious society. The social microcosm cried out to be explored. With adventurous explorers to lead the way, sure-footed and suitably equipped, the ideal society, practically realised to the moral and physical benefit of all concerned in it, became almost achievable. It promised to be a fact.

No decade of the nineteenth century was free from such idealism or its expression, but from the 1850s a remarkable sequence of such expressions punctuated the industrial and suburban landscape. These expressions had much in common. They were essays in community, model villages, sometimes almost towns, with a large industrial enterprise as their motor. They were shaped by masterful, often authoritarian individuals, people of powerful personality, considerable imagination, comparable executive ability, and with an equal flair for marketing and manufacturing, whose prime skills were promotional, although they also had a genius for borrowing. To that not inconsiderable degree, these communities were at the mercy of personal whim and they were wholly dependent on commercial success. They might be exemplary, they could never be normal. Not one of them, therefore, could ever be wholly ideal. Nonetheless, their realisation shaped attitudes to land use and land reform, to urban planning and aesthetics, to recreation and education, to the legislation proper and possible for improvement in all these areas, to the representative government most appropriate to an evolving community and to fostering the most natural relationships of class and gender within it. What began as the model industrial village led to the Garden Suburb and the Garden City and eventually to the New

Town. It certainly resulted in a transformed landscape and townscape; it also resulted in new, although hardly transformed, understandings of community.

There is, however, a further dimension to these expressions of community: the religious impulse which drove many of the pioneers. There is no inherent reason why the promoter of an industrial community should be a Christian or belong to a particular type of Christianity but, given a particular stage of society and the role of Christians within it, there may be several reasons why it might be so. Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, Quakers and Unitarians, for example, are to be found among the pioneers of nineteenth-century industrial communities. That is not surprising and in many ways it may be coincidental, not least because so many of the characteristics of these egregious individualists were shared by all of them, regardless of denominational label. Nonetheless the fact of their denominational affiliation has its bearing. It is relevant, for example, that Saltaire and Port Sunlight were shaped by Congregationalists, or that Bournville and New Earswick were shaped by Quakers.

I: Congregationalists and Social Radicalism

The rest of this article explores that bearing. It relates denominational affiliation to particular expressions of community. It considers the paradoxes and contradictions which contributed to their achievements and which explain their shortcomings. It suggests some consequences. Although its prime focus is the second half of the nineteenth century, its wider context stretches from the last quarter of the eighteenth century to the first quarter of the twentieth, from the evolution of what might be called philanthropic paternalism to its dissolution, or, if dates form more conveniently memorable waymarks, from 1803, the birth of Titus Salt, the founder of Saltaire, to 1925, the death of W. H. Lever, the founder of Port Sunlight and patron of Leverville and Leverburgh. It pays particular attention to Salt and Lever, but also to the Crossleys, an industrial dynasty whose contribution, though more diffuse, was perhaps more representative of a type of Nonconformity.

Salt, Lever and the Crossleys were Congregationalists. Apt epigraphs for this section might, however, be provided from other traditions. On a wet day in the summer of 2005, Chris Mullin, a Labour MP,

> ... drove to see Robert Owen's mills at New Lanark, beautifully restored and displayed and so moving to think what that great man inspired. How would he wish to be remembered? As a socialist, an enlightened capitalist or a mixture of both? Whatever, his message is as relevant today as it was 200 years ago. Namely, that it is possible to make a healthy profit without grinding the noses of your workers into the dirt. Globalisers, please note.[2]

2 C. Mullin, *Decline and Fall: Diaries 2005-2010* (London: Profile Books, 2010), p. 12.

Chris Mullin was that rare survivor, a Labour MP who was unashamed to call himself a socialist; his avowed agnosticism was in reaction to a Roman Catholic formation. Robert Owen (1771-1858), whose legacy Mullin explored on that wet June day, stands secure in the socialist pantheon; his rationalist deism slipped with old age into spiritualism. New Lanark remains Owen's enduring claim to fame, the sublime effrontery of his aspirations caught in the New Institution for the Formation of Character which he provided for it in 1816. New Lanark had, however, been founded thirty-three years before that by Owen's father-in-law, David Dale (1739-1806), a humanely progressive Glasgow merchant, banker and manufacturer whose intention was to turn New Lanark into Scotland's New Manchester. Neither Dale nor Owen (who in fact came to New Lanark from Manchester) succeeded in that, but their creation was for decades a magnet for visitors, most of whom deprecated Owen's wilder fancies as much as they were fascinated by his character and impressed by the general success of his enterprise. As expressed at New Lanark, Owen's was a rigorously autocratic idealism. This mill town's buildings were distinguished by what has been called their "robust and militaristic appearance",[3] but then these barracks were Glasgow tenements, naturally reflecting their Glasgow founder, for Robert Owen's Anglo-Welsh paternalism had been preceded by David Dale's rather less rigorous Scottish version, which should be seen as a natural reflection of his Christian development. For Dale had left the Church of Scotland to form "Dale's Kirk", the "Old Independents"; he acted as their unpaid minister. Dale's Kirk was a strand in the ragged evolution of Scottish Congregationalists and Baptists; it was equally part of the pre-history of the spirit of New Lanark.[4] It connects with much else in the long development of industrial Britain.

In 1905 Budgett Meakin (1866-1906), an enterprising journalist, later to be described in *Who was Who* as "writer and lecturer on industrial betterment ... and on Oriental life and customs" (he was an authority on Islamic culture), published *Model Factories and Villages: Ideal Conditions of Labour and Housing*.[5] It comprised

> … practical examples of what successful business men have found it worth while doing to promote the moral and social welfare of their employees, in the hope of provoking others to like good works. The various industrial betterment schemes described are not advanced as theoretical recommendations, or as the creations of the philanthropist, but as the actual experience of money-making men.[6]

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3 N. Jackson, J. Lintonbon, B. Staples, *Saltaire: The Making of a Model Town* (Reading: Spire Books, 2010), p. 29. For Owen and Dale see *ODNB*.

4 H. Escott, *A History of Scottish Congregationalism* (Glasgow: The Congregational Union of Scotland, 1960), pp. 26-30.

5 *Who Was Who 1897-1916* (London: A & C Black, 1920), p. 485; B. Meakin, *Model Factories and Villages: Ideal Conditions of Labour and Housing* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905).

6 Ibid., p. 7.

This sensibly down-to-earth approach was reinforced by 209 illustrations, "Many of them from the Author's Camera", and by two Indexes, one of "Firms, Etc", the other of "Model Villages, Etc". The latter listed sixty-one such places, eleven of them in the British Isles, twenty-two in North America, and twenty-eight on the Continent, chiefly in France and Germany, but also in the Low Countries, Italy and Bohemia. The firms, like the villages, were concentrated in the Continent, the British Isles and North America.[7]

Model Factories and Villages was not so much a gazetteer as an accumulation of useful evidence for what could almost be presented as an international missionary movement. Its Christian bias was quiet rather than insistent, taken for granted perhaps, presented as part of the evidence; denominations played no part in its thesis. That thesis, however, was understatedly persuasive: industrial enterprise reaped the best dividends when it was exercised in a paternalistic spirit; philanthropic paternalism reaped even better dividends, especially when consistently exercised close to the source of wealth, and particularly when accompanied by model communities. Here the dividends were moral rather than immediately financial, but there could be no doubt as to the benefit; and here the thesis opened itself to new directions. Not all model communities need be tied to industrial paternalism, however philanthropic; not all essays in co-operation or co-partnership need be kick-started by progressive capitalists. No conclusions were firmly drawn but an array of possibilities was beckoning in the infant twentieth century. *Model Factories* made no reference to New Lanark but Dale's enlightened concern and Owen's romantic imagination were released and brought back to earth in Meakin's catalogue of examples.

There was, moreover, a great deal of encouraging food for thought for the discerning Free Church reader. The book was published by T. Fisher Unwin (1848-1935), the most original although not the most financially successful of the celebrated publishing Unwins.[8] In Fisher Unwin's day most Unwins were active Congregationalists; Fisher Unwin's own Dissent was traditionary rather than confessional but his imprint attracted all that was advanced in literature, philosophy and political economy, and his marriage confirmed the attraction. As a son-in-law of Richard Cobden, the Free Trade statesman, he took much of Cobdenism's spirit into a new age. The book was printed by Unwin Brothers, of the Gresham Press, Woking and London. Like the publishing Unwins, the printing Unwins were active Congregationalists; they were listed, moreover, in the first of Budgett Meakin's two Indexes.[9] There was more. Budgett Meakin lived in Hampstead, and he took as epigraph a quotation from a fellow resident, R. F. Horton (1855-1934). Meakin did not say so, perhaps he had no need to, but in

7 Ibid., esp. pp. 475-9, 479-80.

8 *ODNB*; also P. Unwin, *The Publishing Unwins* (London: Heinemann, 1972); S. Unwin, *The Truth about a Publisher* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960).

9 Meakin, *Model Factories and Villages*, p.479; See also P. Unwin, *The Printing Unwins* (London: Heinemann, 1976).

1905 few London Congregational ministers were better known than Horton and his words were strikingly to the point. They were a clarion call for the new century:

> Why should we not frankly say: The housing question is our question; healthy conditions in workshops and factories are our concern; a living wage, reasonable hours of labour, provision of work for the unemployed, harmonious relations between landlord and tenant, between capital and labour, between master and employee, are our interest?
>
> These things touch us because they touch Christ.[10]

That quotation, reproduced on the eve of a new government and an eagerly awaited general election which was to result in a Liberal landslide, placed *Model Factories*, Horton and Meakin, firmly on the Progressive Liberal wing of the Nonconformist Conscience, and it is confirmed by Meakin's statement that he had presented documentary evidence gathered during his research to a promising new body, the British Institute of Social Service, of which he had been a founder.[11] For some years the Institute's Secretary was Percy Alden (1865-1944), in 1905 the Organising Secretary of the Friends Social Service Union. Alden continued and enlarged upon Meakin's work as social explorer and publicist. He had trained for the Baptist ministry, had been enrolled in the Congregational ministry, and had served as the first warden of Nonconformity's Toynbee Hall, Mansfield House, located in Canning Town. He was soon to become a radical Liberal MP and eventually, although briefly, a Labour MP.[12]

A socially radical apostolic succession is thus in formation, and Meakin belongs to it. His own background was Wesleyan Methodist; there were few prominent families in London and provincial, Conference and commercial Methodism to whom this expert on Islamic culture and industrial society was not connected. His maternal grandfather, the Bristol retail and wholesale grocer, Samuel Budgett (1794-1851), was the archetypal Christian philanthropist, an object lesson in true success: Budgett's biography, indeed, was called *The Successful Merchant*.[13] This background informs Meakin's evidence. Of his eleven British model villages seven had been founded by Nonconformists: four by Quakers, two by Congregationalists and one by a Primitive Methodist. Of his exemplary British firms, the jam-making

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10 Meakin, *Model Factories and Villages*, p. 17. For Robert Forman Horton see *ODNB*; C. Binfield and J. Taylor (eds), *Who They Were in the Reformed Churches of England and Wales 1901-2000* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2007), pp. 107-109.

11 Meakin, *Model Factories and Villages*, p. 9.

12 For Alden see *ODNB;* Binfield and Taylor (eds), *Who They Were*, pp. 3-5.

13 Meakin, *Model Factories and Villages*, pp. 296-7, 318. For Samuel Budgett, see W. Arthur, *The Successful Merchant: Sketches of the Life of Mr. Samuel Budgett, Late of Kingswood Hill* (43rd edn., London: William Mullan and Son, 1878); and *ODNB*; for the Methodist Budgetts, see John A. Vickers (ed.), *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2000), p. 47.

Chiverses and the sewing-thread Coatses were Baptists; John Brunner (chemicals) and Henry Tate (sugar) were Unitarians; William Pretty (corset manufacturer and retail draper), J. G. Graves (mail-order), and, of course, Samuel Budgett, were Wesleyan Methodists; and William Hartley, the jam-maker, was a Primitive Methodist. For the Quakers there were Cadbury of Birmingham, Clark of Street, Crosfield of Warrington, Fry of Bristol, Palmer of Reading, Richardson of Bessbrook, and Rowntree of York. For the Congregationalists there were the Colmans (originally Baptists), the Levers, Titus Salt, and also Selincourt (mantle manufacturers), Pascall (confectioners), Hazell, Watson and Viney (printers), and Unwin Brothers. Their range was wide: clothing and footwear; provisions, not least confectionery; soap and chemicals; printing and diffusion of the word. All aimed at quality for a mass market; all were blockbusters; all owed much to inspired advertisement and constant promotion; and all were significant employers of women. They were the capitalist standard bearers of industrial society. They were also Christian standard bearers. They flagged change.

II: Titus Salt

Their prototype was Titus Salt (1803-1876), called "The Great Paternalist" by his most authoritative biographer.[14] Salt's background was religiously dissenting and socially middling. The family was in trade. They were upwardly mobile but they were not self-made. Titus Salt, creator of Saltaire, builder of churches, benefactor of colleges and charitable institutions, dominates them. Like most men he was rich in ambiguity. His temperament, ability, methods, and indeed his religious profession, provide shade as well as light. There can be no doubt, however, about the Congregational background, its relevance, and its continuity.

Titus was baptised at Rehoboth, Morley, the Congregational chapel founded in 1763 as a secession from Morley's historic Old Chapel.[15] His father, Daniel Salt, was a Sheffielder who had married into a Rehoboth family. When the Salts moved to Bradford in 1822 they were quickly associated with the Congregational Horton Lane Chapel, already approaching its peak as a Nonconformist power house in Bradford life, and in 1835-6 Daniel Salt was a prime mover in building a second Bradford Congregational Chapel, Salem, which was also to be a Bradford Nonconformist power house.[16] In January 1836 he and George Haigh conveyed the freehold chapel to twenty-one trustees.[17] The

14 J. Reynolds, *The Great Paternalist: Titus Salt and the Growth of Nineteenth-Century Bradford* (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1983).

15 [Rehoboth Chapel] Book, p. 57. Baptismal Register: New Independent Chapel, Morley 1765-1967, in the care of St Mary's United Reformed Church, Morley, when consulted. See also: J. G. Miall, *Congregationalism in Yorkshire: A Chapter of Modern Church History* (London: John Snow and Co., 1868), pp. 320-4.

16 For Horton Lane and Salem see ibid., pp. 236-7.

17 Conveyance and Declaration of Trust of Salem Chapel, Bradford 2 January 1836. Bradford City Archives 53080/1/2.

terms were clear. Salem was to be held for Independents following "in general" the doctrines of the Shorter Catechism (1647). These were helpfully set out. In cases of communal dispute – about immorality, perhaps, or clashes of business interest – the minister was subject to the will of a majority of church members and trustees. In cases of doctrinal dispute, a majority of trustees and church members were to nominate a board of arbitration comprising between six and twelve Congregational ministers from Lancashire and Yorkshire. The trustees were to administer the pew rents, which paid for the minister's stipend and paid off the chapel debt. They also had powers to lay out a graveyard and extend the chapel; indeed, there could be no chapel extension without their permission. There were to be at least thirteen trustees, of whom at least nine must be church members and the rest members of the congregation.

Salem's trust is suggestive. It made no reference to the constitution of the church – that was a matter for the church's members – but there was room for judicious evolution, and the balance of responsibility between members of the church and members of the congregation was deftly outlined, with the trustees representing both groups. The denominational and doctrinal tradition was ensured, with the practical balance tipped in favour of Congregationalism rather than Independency; and the occupational hazards of Congregational (and congregational) life were recognized – the tendency to disputes, the vexed and ever-looming problems of burial, the chronic challenge of financial self-sufficiency, and the yearning for growth. It was a trust which reflected and shaped a community. A decade before Bradford's municipal polity came into operation, a civic polity had been envisaged for Salem, and the same citizens were prominent in both. Daniel Salt and George Haigh, the new chapel's chief movers, were described as "merchants". The twenty-one trustees comprised seven woolstaplers, five worsted spinners, three drapers, a dyer, a book-keeper, a bookseller, two joiners and a grocer. All, of course, were men. Among them was Titus Salt, then in his early thirties.

The Morley of Titus Salt's childhood had three Congregational churches, two of them – Rehoboth and Zion – the product of dispute and secession.[18] By contrast Salem, Bradford, was the fruit of growth and if the Congregationalists of Horton Lane and Salem were faithfully represented by the latter's first trustees, they stood for what was moulding a new phenomenon, a great industrial city. It made sense for newcomers to become associated with such chapels. For Titus Salt the association, already formed at Rehoboth, was lifelong and – in financial terms – costly. What, however, was its nature?

The only Salt to have been in church membership at Horton Lane was Titus's wife, Caroline.[19] Titus himself seems not to have joined a Congregational church

18 Miall, *Congregationalism in Yorkshire*, pp. 323-4.

19 "Names and Residencies [*sic*] etc. of the Members of the Church at Horton Lane January 1835 [continuing to 1863-4]", in the possession of Northern College, Congregational and United Reformed, Manchester, when consulted.

until much later in life. This sheds an interesting light on Salt's temperament and beliefs, perhaps on his self-knowledge and on the tensions between conscientious Congregationalism and drivingly successful industry. It poses questions about how church membership was seen in nineteenth-century Congregationalism and, given Salt's chapel-building record, it sheds an instructive light on the chapel as a machine for worship and as community symbol, and on the Congregational church as a motor of community in what should be a free (and therefore competitive) society. The church-related schemes with which Salt was associated from the 1850s to the 1870s ran in parallel with community-related schemes, political commitments and industrial enterprise. They interacted, the entrepreneur in each in tension with the citizen and both in tension with the independently minded Congregationalist.

Salt's over-arching Congregational enterprise was the church at Saltaire.[20] Services began there in 1854, a few months after the opening of the works; they continued from 1856 in the works' dining room, were confirmed in June 1856 by the call of a minister and in April 1857 by the formation of a church. Its building was opened in April 1859, handed over to trustees, and followed seventeen years later by Sunday schools for over 800 children enthusiastically described in a local guide book as "without exception, the finest buildings in the country, specially designed for the purpose of Sunday school instruction".[21] In between, two other chapels had been opened, together seating 1,800. One was Wesleyan (1868) and the other Primitive Methodist (1872); Salt had provided their sites and he laid the foundation stone of the former.[22] There was no provision for Anglican worship but to all appearance the parish church was the Congregational chapel, an architectural focal point, a markedly urban and sophisticated building, more suited to an eligible metropolitan suburb yet as practically adapted to the needs of contemporary Congregational worship as it might on first impression seem alien to them.

Although by far the most expensive (the church reputedly cost £16,000, the schools £10,000) Saltaire's church was neither Salt's sole nor indeed his chief Congregational concern. He gave liberally to its denominational headquarters in London, appropriately to its northern school for ministers' sons and its school for ministers' daughters, and he provided a new site for its Bradford ministerial training college. He also concerned himself with the quality of Congregational worship and ministry wherever he holidayed or lived. Harrogate's Victoria Avenue Congregational Church (1862) and Scarborough's South Cliff Congregational Church (1865) benefitted accordingly. These were prominently spired Gothic buildings, strategically placed to attract prosperous visitors and newly enriched residents, South Cliff especially so since it was in competition

20 N. Chapman, "Saltaire United Reformed Church. Historical Notes. Titus Salt Centenary Year 1876-1976", unpublished typescript (1976).

21 W. Cudworth, *Round About Bradford* (Bradford: Tomas Brear, 1876): p. 315.

22 Ibid.

with the recently completed (1863) High Church St Martin's, almost across the way: their social catchment areas were identical. By contrast the Congregational churches at Castleford (1863) and Lightcliffe (1871) might be seen as squire's churches. Salt's interest in the former arose when he leased Methley Hall, ancestral seat of the Earls of Mexborough, between 1858 and 1867; the nearest Congregational church was at Castleford, four miles away, and Salt's generosity (and attendance) seems to have been spurred by the death of his daughter Fanny and his decision (put into effect at Saltaire) to become a communicant.[23] His interest in Lightcliffe was of longer standing. This coincided with his residence at Crow Nest, leased from 1844 to 1858 and owned from 1867. His wife had been in membership from 1844-5 and Titus himself was a member by 1871.[24] That was the year of the chapel's rebuilding on a new site. The new Lightcliffe Congregational Church was a rich man's church, surpassing that at Harrogate and rivalling that at Scarborough. It too was in spired Gothic, serving an eclectically prosperous community, a countrified Horton Lane for West Riding families enriched by worsted and wool. Here the Salts were at home.

Their Congregationalism survived into the next generation, actively so with Salt's youngest son and his wife, and with his three surviving daughters and the husbands of two of them. His eldest daughter, indeed, married one of London's leading Congregational laymen.[25] His eldest son also married appropriately – the daughter and granddaughter of Leicester hosiers, Baptists, whose commercial, civic and parliamentary role in Leicester paralleled that of the Salts in Bradford; but these Salts slipped effortlessly into Anglicanism.[26]

Such detail as this helps to relate a family's religious profession to changing circumstances. It suggests one way of charting an evolving society. However reserved he was about his personal religious stance, Salt's public commitment at local, regional and national levels was consistent. He mixed with nationally known denominational leaders and he expected them to make calls on his time and his pocket. The result was profound. It matched his wealth.

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23 The Harrogate, Scarborough, Castleford and Lightcliffe churches are outlined in Miall, *Congregationalism in Yorkshire*, pp. 270, 344, 247, 310-1; R. Balgarnie, *Sir Titus Salt, Baronet: His Life and Its Lessons* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1877), pp. 195-9.

24 "Names and Residencies … Horton Lane"; D. H. Mason, *Ten Thousand Sermons 1871-1971, The People, Parsons, and Praise of Lightcliffe Congregational Church,* (Lightcliffe: Lightcliffe Congregational Church, 1971), p. 66.

25 The family's Congregationalism is explored in Robert Balgarnie, *Balgarnie's Salt: With Commentary and Addition by Barlo and Shaw* (Saltaire: Nemine Juvante Publications, 2003), pp. 287-311. Amelia Salt (1842-1914) was the second wife of Henry Wright (1819-1893), railway carriage builder, deacon of Kensington Chapel, Chairman of London Congregational Union (1880-1), Treasurer of London Missionary Society, London Chapel Building Society, and the Coward Trust (1868-1888).

26 Sir W. H. Salt (1831-1892) married Emma Dove Harris (d. 1904), daughter of John Dove Harris (1809-1878), hosier, MP Leicester 1857-9, 1865-1874, and granddaughter of Richard Harris (1777-1854), MP Leicester 1848-1852.

III: Saltaire

The judgment of one historian, writing in 1976, remains valid: Salt "was one of the foremost employers of labour in England; perhaps the most outstanding representative in Bradford of that class whose activities transformed the economy, the social structure, the politics and the administration of this country between about 1830 and 1860".[27] His commercial formation was diverse. Daniel Salt had been, variously and sometimes together, a tinsmith, a drysalter and a farmer, before prospering greatly as a woolstapler. Titus Salt prospered even more greatly as a worsted spinner, but his manufacturing success owed much to his mercantile sense. By 1850 he was Bradford's largest employer, internationally known, and soon to be gratifyingly to the fore at the Great Exhibition. It was at this point that he decided to leave Bradford for Shipley, combining the work of five Bradford factories under one Shipley roof, with machinery to cope for every phase of the manufacturing process. The adaptation of Russian Donskoi wool to worsted spinning, quickly followed by the mixing of alpaca wool and mohair with silk or cotton to produce lustre goods and linings, and then by the manufacture of men's coatings, kept production buoyant throughout Salt's lifetime; the 2,000 employed in five mills in 1850, became the 3,500 employed in one mill in 1876, strategically placed for transport by rail, road and canal.[28] In their day the mill's almost seven acres, expanded to nearly ten, had been without parallel in Europe.[29] The statistics which mapped such growth were astounding, and the responsibility which accompanied it was daunting.

Salt's citizenship, propelled by his prosperity, marched with his Congregationalism. When Bradford was incorporated in 1847, Titus Salt became its senior alderman and he was its second mayor, 1848-9. He was a borough and county JP, and a Deputy Lieutenant for the West Riding, still relatively rare offices for Nonconformists. He was a Bradford MP from 1859 to 1861. Since he was a poor speaker – his imposing frame masked a speech impediment and a corresponding diffidence[30] – these public honours reflected a backstage and backbench usefulness compounded in 1869 by a baronetcy, at once the highest hereditary honour likely to come a Nonconformist's way in Gladstone's Britain and the lowest that the establishment could decently confer on a prominent citizen who was not yet top drawer.

Salt's social progress was exemplary. In his last decade he flourished at local, county, and national level as part of the commercial and political establishment,

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27 J. Reynolds, *Saltaire: An Introduction to the Village of Sir Titus Salt* (Bradford: Bradford Art Galleries and Museums City Trail No, 2, 1976), p. 5.

28 J. Roberts, "The Development of the Industry", in R. W. Suddards (ed.), *Titus of Salts* (Idle: Watmoughs Ltd., 1976) p. 25; Cudworth, *Round About Bradford,* p. 313.

29 Cudworth, *Round About Bradford*, p. 311; Reynolds, *Saltaire*, p. 18.

30 J. C. G. Binfield, "Salt, Sir Titus, 1st Baronet (1803-1876)", in J. O. Baylen and N. J. Gossman (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals, Vol. 2. 1830-1870* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984), pp. 446-450, esp. p. 450.

exceptional in many ways, but each of his exceptions serving to prove the rule of English society's assimilating power. Even so, the implications of his Congregational Nonconformity should not be discounted.

In 1853, the year of Saltaire's opening, he explained to Lord Harewood, one of the West Riding's grander Tory aristocrats, why he had not retired, as might have been expected of a successful man of his age and wealth.

> My Lord, I had made up my mind to do this very thing, but on reflection I determined otherwise. In the first place, I thought that by the concentration of my works in one locality I might provide occupation for my sons. Moreover, as a landed proprietor I felt I should be out of my element. You are a nobleman with all the influence that rank and large estates can bring. Consequently you have power and influence in the county. But outside of my business I am nothing. In it, I have considerable influence. By the opening of Saltaire, I also hope to do good to my fellow men.[31]

He was, in fact, announcing an alternative tradition. It too was dynastic, it too was founded on the business-like disposition and exploitation of property, it too was capable of a benevolent gloss; it was traditional, and it celebrated its environment. Salt expanded on this in the speech with which he inaugurated Saltaire, 20 September 1853: "Ten or twelve years ago I looked forward to this day, on which I have completed my fiftieth year. I looked forward to this day, when I thought to retire from business and enjoy myself in agricultural pursuits…"[32] But he had changed his mind; he had not retired, he had remained an industrialist, and the result was Saltaire:

> Far be it from me to do anything to pollute the air and water of the place … I hope to draw around me a population that will enjoy the beauties of the neighbourhood, and who will be well-fed, contented and happy. I have given instructions to my architect … that nothing should be spared to render the dwellings of the operatives a pattern to the country. If my life should be spared by providence, I hope to see satisfaction, happiness and comfort around me.[33]

Salt's rhetoric combined triumph with humility. It was not dishonest. Eighteen years later, Lady Frederick Cavendish, an aristocrat more shrewdly sympathetic than Lord Harewood (her husband was a local Liberal MP), assessed the result:

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31 Balgarnie, *Sir Titus Salt, Baronet*, p. 122.

32 Quoted in J. Waddington-Feather, *A Century of Model-Village Schooling: The Salt Grammar School; 1868-1968* (Bingley: Craven Enterprises, 1968), p. 11.

33 Ibid.

> We went to see the famous "Saltaire", a complete settlement built by Sir Titus Salt for the work-people employed in his mighty factory (woollen and mixed fabrics). There are numbers of pretty almshouses, beautiful schools, and cottages, a great self-supporting dining-hall, an infirmary, a splendid Mechanics' Institute in course of building, and a big heathen temple in the midst, serving as Independent Chapel. We saw as much as we had time for. 1,000 looms at work. The inside of the chapel surprised me, for I fancied the Independents did not differ much from the Church in doctrine and liturgy; but the arrangements did not look like this; the organ presides over the E. end, with the singers' seats in front of it, and in front of *them*, the marble slab that serves for Communion table.[34]

Lady Frederick's High Church sensitivities were affronted, but later in the decade and this time ("amid no end of luxury") in the company of the younger Titus Salt, she warmed to one possibly unintended consequence of such a settlement:

> Next day, in spite of pitiless rain, Titus took us … over the magnificent Saltaire schools. I never dreamt of anything on such a scale. He is especially proud of the Board Schools, which consist of Kindergarten and a great Mixed School; both departments ruled by women, without pupil-teachers: the plan being the class-room one throughout. The big central hall is only used for the religious lesson, and for drilling, marching, and games. Of course there is an Admirable Crichton of a Head Mistress of each school, on whom the whole thing depends, and who has the fullest possible freedom of action and control. She had mighty difficulty at first in getting the rough factory boys into order; but now the beautiful gentleness, discipline, and tone strikes one at once, and the happy faces. The recitals of poetry, even by the infants, a miracle of refinement and intelligence. The scrap of Kindergarten teaching which was all we had time for delighted me.[35]

Lady Frederick was a perceptive observer. In class and upbringing she came from another world but she was lively in intellect, liberal in politics and had advanced views on education. She was as alert to the commercial, cultural and spiritual totality of Saltaire as she was to its appearance. Here was self-help liberated by mutual help. And appearances counted.

At the time of Lady Frederick's first visit Saltaire housed 4,384 people in 775 houses (and forty-five almshouses), and a fourteen-acre park was about to be opened.[36] The houses were solidly built, appropriately planned and serviced, adequate to the best needs of the day as required by industrious operatives. There

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34 J. Bailey (ed.), *The Diary of Lady Frederick Cavendish*, Vol. II (London: John Murray, 1927), p. 93. Entry for 14 January 1871.

35 Ibid., pp. 224, 240. Entries for 30 September-6 October 1878, 1-7 December 1879.

36 Reynolds, *Saltaire*, p. 22.

was nothing new in the idea of a works village, as could be seen from Cromford to Copley, and Salt's woolstapling years had taken him to the sheep-rearing estates of enlightened landowners, with their picturesque model villages; Houghton, Edensor and Milton Abbas were celebrated examples, Harewood too. More recent and more efficient, larger though less picturesque, were the railway villages, Wolverton, Crewe and Swindon, and then there was the literary impact of Disraeli's *Sybil* (1845), with its resonating depiction of England's two nations, rich and poor, and Mr Trafford's model factory village. Whether or not Salt himself had read *Sybil* (he never professed to be a reading man), Disraeli knew of Bradford's hinterland through his Bingley friends, the Ferrands, and his novel was widely read by northern radicals, keen to provide an ordered alternative to the chaos, immorality and inefficiency of such places as Bradford.[37]

Order was the key. Order encouraged the sort of discipline which allowed for the exercise of responsibility. Saltaire's park, for example, had rules: no unaccompanied children under eight years old, no gambling, swearing, or smoking in alcoves, no games save where specifically designated, no political meetings without permission, but its riverside was widened for boating and swimming, and stocked for fishing.[38] Space was made here for leisure; recreation was to be allowed its moral due. This was where Saltaire struck new ground. It announced a moral economy. It clarified (and encouraged) the link between cleanliness and godliness. It exemplified, decades before the phrase came into use, the Nonconformist Conscience. It seemed to justify the belief that if such a community could willingly be regulated into morality, then a nation might be consensually moralized by legislation. All this was visible at Saltaire.

In 1966 the American, W. L. Creese, savoured Saltaire's mix of Italy-in-Yorkshire, its broodingly introspective *quattrocento*.[39] Such telling appearances owed most to the close working relationship between Salt, his engineer William Fairbairn, and his architects Henry Lockwood and William Mawson.[40] Lockwood and Mawson (joined later by William's brother Richard) were supremely competent provincial practitioners with a London grounding and eventually a London base. They were enlightened without being radical. Innovation was not their forte but they were up to the best contemporary mark in sanitation, ventilation, and fitness for purpose. They were abreast of fashion and versed in contemporary public, commercial, domestic and ecclesiastical building types, from terraced housing to workhouses. Their preference was for the Italianate; hence the axiality of Saltaire's plan and the Palladian disposition of its terraces. This chimed in with Salt's own preferences, (his beloved Crow Nest was a classical villa), but Saltaire's most recent analysts have commented

37 Ibid., p. 7.
38 Ibid., p. 28.
39 W. L. Creese, *The Search for Environment: The Garden City Before and After* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 31.
40 Suddards (ed.), *Titus of Salts*, pp. 49-58.

on the change in orientation and emphasis that came over the village; the axial modified by the picturesque, the infiltration of Ruskinian detail, the shift from Florence to Venice.[41] Salt's other churches, all of them by Mawson and Lockwood were Gothic; young Titus's Milner Field, the Salt house closest to Saltaire (by Thomas Harris rather than Mawson and Lockwood) was in a dramatically rogue Gothic. This change, more evolution than revolution, indicates aspects of Saltaire's community which the high-density grid of its streets and the austere if elegant massing of its façades disguised.

Saltaire's residents were overwhelmingly dependent on the works, notwithstanding a significant veneer of the tradespeople and professionals needed to service a rounded community. To the casual visitor all the gradations of industrial society were faithfully reflected in the rhythmically disposed hierarchy of semi-villas and terraces, with or without front gardens. In reality the residents were more socially mixed, their occupancy of particular houses depending more on the gross incomes of the families living in them than on their social status.[42] A household which included several independently minded, style conscious, mill girls lived relatively well, their ambitions encouraged at Salt's schools and furthered by classes at the Institute. An understanding of this community contributes to an appreciation of Saltaire's first public building, Lady Frederick's "big heathen temple", as a Congregational church. This Graeco-Italian edifice had a peal of bells, a drawing-room interior, and an opulent mausoleum for dead Salts. Later legend insisted that living Salts sat in a gallery from which their gaze could sweep over the family's workforce at prayer. In fact any living Salt who looked in from Lightcliffe and was agile enough to climb up to the gallery would have found the view obscured, and the seats taken by children. The works partner most consistently associated with the church was William Evans Glyde (1814-1884), lay preacher, Sunday-school teacher and superintendent, who had risen from an apprenticeship to a partnership in 1859, ever "as respectful towards his brother officers and the minister as any humblest member of the society".[43] With Glyde we return to an up-dating of the Dissenting tradition. He descended from generations of Devon Nonconformists, some of them ministers ejected in 1662, but he had grown into Bradford alongside the Salts. His father-in-law and brother were two of Horton Lane's most notable ministers, and when he died some verses were published in his memory. Their author, P. T. Forsyth, was a close friend of Saltaire's Congregational minister, and he had himself ministered to a small Congregational church in Shipley, regarded by many with some suspicion because of its minister's theological liberalism. Forsyth was not yet England's leading Congregational theologian but his lines in commemoration of "Our dear, brave Puritan ... Son of a godly race of large, antique/ And sober piety", with their

41 Ibid., pp. 97-8, 135-6, 159.
42 Ibid., pp. 76-7, 84, 86, 92.
43 *Bradford Observer* (22 August 1884).

anticipation of an age when "public minds shall public things dispose", in celebrating Glyde's active citizenship anticipated his own public gospel:

> When social men shall make the social hour
> At last not trivial but imperial;
> When personal concerns at last shall fall
> In modest tribute to the general power
>
> When once again our civic life shall be
> A liturgy; and altars smoke unseen
> To no unknown god, where hot hearts have been
> In streets and lanes, to cleanse, and heal, and free
>
> Thou hadst the earnest in thy savéd soul
> Of the salvation of the social whole.[44]

Salt's Saltaire did not long survive the death of the two Tituses, father and son. In 1892 the business, a public company since 1881, was wound up.[45] When Budgett Meakin came to consider it in 1905 the glory had largely departed. It seemed so "dismal and cramped" in comparison to what was now seen as ideal, and the life had drained from so many of its founder's initiatives (Meakin saw this as a telling commentary on the failure to ensure the continued cooperation of employees in the village's management and maintenance), that it was difficult to appreciate its pioneering quality.[46] That quality, however, obstinately survived, and in 1999 Saltaire was put forward for World Heritage Status. To be listed, a site needed to meet one of six criteria. Saltaire met two. It was "an outstanding and well-preserved example" of a mid-nineteenth-century industrial town, its layout influencing the development of the Garden City movement of the following century. Its layout and design also reflected contemporary "philanthropic paternalism" and the role played by the textile industry in Britain's economic and social development. It failed to meet a third criterion: that it provided "a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition … which is living, or… has disappeared".[47] Yet it is that which is most truly distinctive about Saltaire, as the Crossley connection might confirm.

IV: The Crossleys of Halifax

On 15 March 1866 Titus Salt Jr married Catherine Crossley.[48] Their marriage

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44 *In Memory of William Evans Glyde* ([Bradford], n.d. [1884]), unpag. [pp. 41-3].
45 Suddards (ed.), *Titus of Salts*, pp. 35, 40.
46 Meakin, *Model Factories and Villages*, pp. 32, 416-7.
47 Suddards (ed.), *Titus of Salts*, pp. 186-7; Balgarnie, *Balgarnie's Salt*, pp. 342-3.
48 E. Hampden-Cook, *The Register of Mill Hill School 1807-1926* (London: [priv.] Mill Hill School, 1926), p. 98.

was commercially, politically, dynastically and ecclesiastically sound. The Crossleys were to Halifax and its carpet industry what the Salts were to Bradford and its worsted industry. They too set their mark on their region's Liberalism, environment and economy. They too were Congregationalists and there was already a family connection between them. Catherine's maternal uncle John Smith had married young Titus's paternal aunt Anne Salt.[49] Their background too was socially middling, upwardly mobile but not self-made, dominated by three brothers, John (1812-1879), Joseph (1813-1868) and Francis (1817-1872), builders of churches, benefactors of colleges and charitable institutions, moulders of community. They too were rich in temperamental ambiguity.

Four previous generations of Crossleys had been associated with Halifax's Square Congregational Chapel and the direct connection continued for a generation after them. John, the eldest of the three brothers, was denominationally the most prodigal. He taught in Square's Sunday school from 1829, was a church member from 1833, and a deacon from 1836.[50] County-wide he was treasurer of the Yorkshire Congregational Union and nationwide he chaired the English Congregational Chapel Building Society. Such offices entailed a consistent financial commitment; buildings gripped him and he responded to appeals with money and advice which wise building committees did well to heed. His trusteeships and stonelayings were legion throughout Yorkshire and in strategic places from Newmarket and Cambridge to Llandudno. His patronage advanced the careers of several architects, most notably Joseph James (1828-1875), whose magnificent rebuilding of Square Chapel (1857) successfully reconciled good Gothic with sound Congregationalism.[51]

Congregational education came close second to Congregational chapels. That meant the new proprietary schools at Bishop's Stortford and Tettenhall and Silcoates, the school near Wakefield for ministers' sons, where he was an irrepressibly hands-on chairman and treasurer. It also meant the ministerial colleges in Rotherham, Bradford, Manchester, Cheshunt and Plymouth. His younger brothers echoed John's enthusiasm. Their largesse cascaded powerfully from Square. In Francis's case it extended from Harrogate to Cambridge and embraced a Baptist cause which came with Somerleyton, his country estate in Suffolk; there he encouraged a Congregational dimension – the church was a union of Baptists and Congregationalists; its ministry and the chapel which housed it were "wholly sustained by the proprietor of the Hall".[52] In the case of

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49 Balgarnie, *Balgarnie's Salt*, pp. 293, 350-1.

50 J. A. Hargreaves, "Religion and Society in the Parish of Halifax, circa 1740-1914", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Huddersfield Polytechnic (1991), p. 174; G. P. Wadsworth, *S.S.S. Square Sunday School: A Short History* (Halifax: Square Congregational Church, 1903), p. 17.

51 For a contemporary description and illustration of Square, see *Congregational Yearbook* (1858), pp. 264-266.

52 J. Browne, *History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1877), p. 546.

Joseph's widow (a minister's daughter who became governess to Joseph's children by his first wife) the concern extended to Milton Mount, the school near Gravesend for ministers' daughters.[53] Here too the Crossleys replicated the Salts; girls' education was important.

In the next generation, Joseph's son Edward (1841-1905) and John's son Louis John (1842-1891) and their wives continued the commitment to Square Chapel. Mrs Edward Crossley, who taught in Square's Sunday school, came from Leeds's most prominent Congregational family; she was a Baines. Mrs Louis Crossley, a Birks, came from Sheffield; there her family were brewers as well as Congregationalists. It is as likely that London was the connecting link for these northern Congregationalists as Yorkshire. Westminster Chapel was where the Salts and Crossleys worshipped when in London for business, politics or the May Meetings. Its minister, Samuel Martin (1817-1878), was in the top flight of metropolitan pulpiteers. In the 1850s he preached at the opening of the church at Saltaire and Louis John Crossley lodged with him while a pupil at University College School. In the 1860s, in the four years before her marriage, Mrs Louis John Crossley was a member of his church; and her widowed mother followed her in the 1870s.[54] Provincial Congregationalism's metropolitan dimension was an invaluable mediating resource. Louis John was Sunday school teacher, young men's class leader, and organist at Square; Edward was a deacon from 1872 to 1888.[55] Both were inventive men who delighted to place their inventiveness at their church's service. They anticipated the world of J. Arthur Rank. Louis John's Crossley Transmitter set the pace in the telephone's earliest days; in 1879 it allowed a select group in Bradford "one Sunday evening" to hear "the sonorous tones" of Square's minister, Enoch Mellor, "announcing the hymns and preaching in his own church, eight miles away… the singing of the congregation could be heard with equal distinctness".[56] Four years later, Edward White, a veteran minister from north London, was the focus for a similar experience, this time thanks to Edward Crossley: "preaching on the Sunday in Halifax, he found that, by telephone, his words reached eight people at Bradford, Leeds, and Bermside [*sic*]" (Bermerside was Edward Crossley's Halifax house).[57] Edward Crossley's tolerance of new ways, however, had its limits. He was as opinionated and headstrong as he was intelligent and public-spirited, and

53 S. Hadland, *Annals of Milton Mount College* (London: Mackie & Co., [n.d.]), p. 52. Salts, Crossleys, and Henry Wright were among supporters in the 1870s.

54 *Halifax Courier* (31 August 1891); Westminster Chapel, Members List, 1849-66; Westminster Chapel, Members List, 1866-1908, (in the possession of Westminster Chapel when consulted). For Samuel Martin see *ODNB*. I am indebted to Mrs Mary Crossley for information about Louis John Crossley.

55 *Halifax Courier* (31 August 1891); D. Johnson, "Eric Lawrence, Edward Crossley, and the Conflict at Square Church, Halifax", unpublished typescript (1990), p. 60. I am indebted to Professor Dale Johnson for this information.

56 *Halifax Courier* (31 August 1891).

57 F. A. Freer, *Edward White: His Life and Work* (London: Elliot Stock, 1902), p. 169.

he decided that his views on the atonement were at variance with those of Eric Lawrence, the much younger man who had succeeded Dr Mellor at Square. In 1888 the dispute become public and Edward left Square for Heath, a new Congregational church in Halifax. Down in the Isle of Wight, where he had a holiday home, he built an independent Evangelical Protestant chapel; this was increasingly his spiritual home. It was a classic case of Congregational Independency: doctrine as understood by Edward opposed to interpretation as propounded by his minister.[58]

Thus the Crossleys's religious profession, less reserved than Salt's in explicit commitment, was – like Salt's – consistent at several levels. They too mixed with denominational leaders whom they expected to make calls on their time and their pockets. With them, too, the results were profound. They were useful Christians who, consonant with their wealth and its origins, announced a fresh dimension of citizenship.

The Crossleys's is as classic a story as Salt's: a foundation of hard work, an eye for opportunity, and the means to capitalize on the breakthrough when it came. Then, rapid riches, impressive but responsible public display, and consequent public recognition: first a baronetcy and then, a long generation later, a peerage. That long generation, fifty-three years, encompassed steady, ineluctable change. The Liberalism turned into Liberal Unionism and then Toryism, the Congregationalism became Anglicanism, and the admiration for Oliver Cromwell expressed by the Victorian first baronet came to be balanced by the appointment of his great-grandson as Master of the Horse, the third great officer of the Royal Household after the Lord Chamberlain and the Lord Steward, appointed 600 years after the first known Master; one cannot be more traditionary than that.[59]

The Crossleys are thus a dynasty. They were almost to Halifax what the Medici were to Florence, their sons and daughters marrying into competing hill towns and city states, with John and Francis as the Lorenzo and Cosimo of the family. They were, however, more Samuel Smiles (*Thrift* as much as *Self-Help*) than Bulwer Lytton, their romance beginning with the parents of John, Francis and Joseph.

The older John Crossley (1772-1837) was a weaver.[60] By 1801 he had worked his way to becoming a foreman, indeed a manager. That is when he married; marriage was his first breakthrough. Martha Turner (1775-1854) was a farmer's daughter in service at a house whose mistress ran a good school. There are three things to note about this. First, John Crossley is not too easily classified. His

58 Johnson, "Eric Lawrence, Edward Crossley, and the Conflict at Square Church, Halifax"; Hargreaves, "Religion and Society in the Parish of Halifax, circa 1740-1914", pp. 342-3; E. Webster, *Dean Clough and the Crossley Inheritance* (Halifax: Dean Clough Publications, 1988), p. 18.

59 "The Country Life Interview: Lord Somerleyton, Master of the Horse", *Country Life* (4 May 1995), p. 78.

60 This section is drawn from typed transcripts of John and Martha Crossley's reminiscences, in the possession of Mrs Mary Crossley when consulted.

head appears above the social parapet at an interesting stage in the evolution of social class. He was an artisan, an independent man with kinsmen who clearly stood on their own feet, well placed to help him stand on his own feet too. He was poised either to slip into the anonymity of the lower orders (not yet quite the working classes) or onto the edge of the political nation. It depended on circumstances and his ability to help himself. Secondly, his religion was as independent as his social status: the Crossleys were Dissenters. Thirdly, he married a manager. Martha Crossley bore him eight children and played an active part in her husband's business. Their joint success meant that none of her daughters or daughters-in-law would ever need to do that, nor would they have expected to, but, since she became enshrined in family myth and lived until 1854, we should set her experience alongside that of a younger, leisured generation of women reacting against the sort of leisure that they feared was being forced on them. They feared that a relentlessly evolving society would cut them out of what was opening up for their brothers. Their grandmother's example was in danger of being forgotten but it could not be quite forgotten and it makes for more interesting perspectives than we sometimes allow on the development of those problematic Victorian siblings, the "woman question" and the "man question", and how it was that responsible, intelligent, determined and relatively well-placed women and men fought for their rights.

In 1802, still sensibly continuing his manager's job, John Crossley leased a mill at Dean Clough on the edge of Halifax. Thus began 180 years of Crossley industry on that site. By the time of his death, in 1837, he was independent, well-to-do (he left £13,000), and the stage was set for Victorian expansion.

The story goes that back in the days when she had gone to work with everybody else at 4am, Martha had vowed: "If the Lord does bless us at this place, the poor shall taste of it".[61] That is how Samuel Smiles tells it. By 1837, 20,000 people lived in Halifax, 300 hands were blessing Crossley's place, the working day began at a more reasonable 5.30am (it continued to 8pm) and old Mrs Crossley refused to leave her home at the mill. She stayed on, so placing her parlour mirror that she could study the faces of her son's workmen as the hundreds turned into thousands, streaming past her window.[62]

In 1837 carpets were for the rich. They were a luxury like biscuits and much else soon to be taken for granted. It was the Crossleys who brought carpets into middle-class homes at the point at which the middle-class market became a mass market. The breakthrough came in 1851.[63] That was the year of the Great Exhibition at which the Crossleys, like Salt, exhibited and for which they carpeted the Queen's retiring room.

The problem had been power. Steam had easily been harnessed for linen,

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61 Hargreaves, "Religion and Society in the Parish of Halifax, circa 1740-1914", p. 173.

62 Creese, *The Search for Environment*, p. 16.

63 "On show around the world – since the Great Exhibition of 1851", *Face to Face: Crossley Carpets Magazine* (Summer 1969), p. 4; Webster, *Dean Clough and the Crossley Inheritance*, pp.9-11.

cotton and cloth. But carpet looms were complex. In the United States, Erasmus Bigelow, from Massachusetts, developed a power loom for carpets. That was in the 1840s. In England the Crossleys turned to George Collier, a Barnsley engineer. He crossed a steam-driven power loom with Bigelow's American prototype. A patent was taken out on the last day of 1851. The result was gratifying. Production rose twelve-fold, costs dropped, carpets appeared in every aspiring front parlour and crept upstairs. Crossleys branched out to the Continent, including Russia, and to the United States, including cotton plantations in Louisiana. Their rivals had either to give up or pay up for the right to use the Crossley patent and install the Crossley looms. By 1869 Dean Clough embraced eight mills in twenty-seven acres, and employed 4,400 men.[64]

John and Martha Crossley had eight children, of whom one lived for a month and two were girls; four of the five sons entered the firm and the three youngest, John, Joseph and Francis, transformed it.

V: Joseph Crossley

Joseph Crossley (1813-1868) was probably the richest and certainly the least known. At Dean Clough his business was chiefly in dyeing. For present purposes his family and his philanthropy merit attention.

Joseph was a dynast. His children married strategically: Edward into the Liberal (and Congregational) provincial press, Herbert into Quaker banking, Clement into Baptist railway and building speculation; Isabella went for Anglican wool and Catherine, as has been seen, for Congregational alpaca. We should also note Arnold, less for his marriage than for his name and education. Any Victorian called Arnold has to be named after Thomas Arnold of Rugby, the man who (according to the myth) engineered an educational revolution. Young Arnold Crossley was the first of his family and one of the first of his sort to go to Rugby School.[65] He went there in January 1867, just before Thomas Arnold's son, Matthew Arnold, poet and pioneer Inspector of Schools, produced a classic bombshell of a book, *Culture and Anarchy*, in which he pilloried the philistinism (his word) of middle-class England, his take on the Crossleyesque world of progress, plant and gadgets – and philanthropy.

Joseph lived well. His house, Broomfield, was set in twenty acres, but his great memorial is the almshouses on Arden Road which he began in 1863 and which Edward completed.[66] There were forty-eight of them and they cost over £26,000. Their architect, Roger Ives, was a local man, effectively the works architect. They illustrate what we have already encountered at Saltaire, a mix of

64 M. Girouard, "A Town Built on Carpets", *Country Life* (24 September 1970), p. 757.

65 A. T. Michell, *Rugby School Register 1842-74*, Vol. II (Rugby: Printed for Subscribers, 1902), p. 275.

66 Hargreaves, "Religion and Society in the Parish of Halifax, circa 1740-1914", p. 342; K. Powell, *People's Inheritance: The People's Park Conservation Area of Halifax* (Calderdale: Metropolitan Borough of Calderdale, 1984), unpag.

space and regulation. To qualify you had to be a Protestant, believing in the Trinity, and recommended by a minister of religion. You were to worship in the Almshouse chapel where to this day Joseph's bust commands an otherwise simple interior. You could not be absent overnight without permission. In return you received free medical attention, a generous weekly allowance, and two furnished rooms, all in a site so commanding and spacious that it was for all the world like an old Grammar School or a fine Oxford College or a great medieval charity from the days of faith. Here, at Halifax's Arden Road, Winchester's St Cross or Norwich's Great Hospital were beaten hollow. Here was Barchester's Hiram's Hospital as it could and should be run. Here tradition was turned confidently as well as comfortingly to the new age. The motives may have been mixed but mixed motives need not always be a mixed blessing.

VI: Francis Crossley

Frank, the youngest Crossley, was the public Crossley. He was Mayor of Halifax in 1849, an MP from 1852, a baronet from 1863. He was recalled in his early prime by a Congregational minister who had come over from Hull:

> When he was Mayor of Halifax, he stood beside me on the top of an old terraced-wall, holding my hand as I preached to a crowd of working-people, shod with clogs, the women with shawls over their heads instead of "hanging gardens".
>
> I remember at a great meeting, while he was making a speech, hearing an admiring workman shout, "Spak oot, Frank lad!" I still more remember his occupying the chair when I delivered a lecture on "Teetotalism", because at the close, as his practical approval of the "vote of thanks", he took a pen, and before his own people and fellow-citizens, signed the pledge.[67]

It is all there. Two public men, mayor and minister, still quite young (they were in their early thirties), exemplifying the worlds of self and mutual help, the reminiscence of one of them capturing that curious mix of deference and equality, of the power of money in tension with that of character.

As an industrialist Francis Crossley was commanding; he was an ideas man. As an MP he was important, one of that new phenomenon of Nonconformist industrialists, sitting for great northern constituencies, unevenly yet genuinely radical, never achieving office yet influential; hence the baronetcy, secured for him by the Whig Lord Palmerston prodded by Palmerston's stepson-in-law, the great Tory Low Church philanthropist, Lord Shaftesbury.[68]

Here we turn to Frank's environment. Bellevue was his Halifax house. He

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67 N. Hall, *An Autobiography* (London: Cassell and Company, 1898), pp. 103-4.

68 E. Hodder, *The Life and Work of the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury K.G.*, Vol. III, (London: Cassell & Co., 1887), p. 191.

bought the site from a grocer either in 1845 (the year of his marriage) or in 1851 (the year of the patent). In 1855 he built to one side of it a tight Gothic row of almshouses, twenty-one of them, with conditions and benefits similar to those set soon after by Joseph at Arden Road.[69] In 1856 he rebuilt the main house. His architect was G. H. Stokes, the son-in-law of Joseph Paxton, the Crystal Palace's creator, hence the persistent tradition that Paxton himself designed Bellevue's conservatories, of which one remains. Stokes did a good job. On a surprisingly small site and to a surprisingly modest scale he built a very passable copy of a Louis XIV château. Stokes had wanted Gothic but Crossley evidently preferred Bourbon baroque, well-planned, grandly-staircased, a suggestive setting for the cream of its contents, the celebrated painting by T. H. Maguire of "Cromwell Refusing the Crown of England".[70] For this was Versailles with a difference. Instead of temples and obelisks to close the vistas of Bellevue, there were almshouses and a Gothic tower built to hide the obstinate little house of a neighbour who refused to budge, while a Gothic spire rose over the trees, not of Squire Crossley's parish church but of Park Chapel built for Congregationalists by Roger Ives, and bolstered by the giving of several Crossleys, and in due course noted for its stained glass.[71]

Perhaps every industrial town has its Park Chapel and its Bellevue but the real eye, heart and mind catcher was the People's Park across the road, where Bellevue's pleasure grounds might otherwise have been. This was truly pioneering.[72]

Parks were not new. There was Regent's Park in London and The Park at Birkenhead became the prototype for New York's Central Park. Those, however, were parks for the leisured and opulent rather than for the people. Even if the people had the time, they would not know how to enjoy a park. They would gamble, smoke, spit, fight or fornicate in it. But shorter working hours meant more leisure and leisure needed to be filled – by museums, perhaps, or institutes, even by a People's Park.

Its genesis is instructive. Like many go-ahead Radical industrialists, the Crossleys were gripped by America. In 1855 Frank had been so moved by his first view of the White Mountains that he determined to re-create it for his home town. Despite Halifax's challenging topography, that was easier said than done. The only immediately available site was twelve acres of poor soil and few trees across the road from Bellevue and some distance from Dean Clough. It had, however, one special quality – it commanded a view across the intervening chasm of urban industry to the hills beyond. Here, under the supervision of Paxton and Stokes, using many of the tricks which Paxton had deployed on a

69 Powell, *People's Inheritance*.

70 Girouard, "A Town Built on Carpets", p. 759; Thomas Herbert Maguire (1821-1895) was lithographer to Queen Victoria.

71 Miall, *Congregationalism in Yorkshire*, p. 269; Girouard, "A Town Built on Carpets", pp. 758-9.

72 Powell, *People's Inheritance*; Creese, *The Search for Environment*, pp. 48-55; Girouard, "A Town Built on Carpets", pp. 758-9.

larger scale at Chatsworth, the Duke of Devonshire's palace in Derbyshire, Crossley built an elevated terrace, flanked by classical statues with summer houses and bandstand, a great fountain and room for two cannons from Sebastopol. At the same time, as the panorama lifted the gaze from this grand promenade to the distant horizon, so the park's landscape fell away from the terrace to an arcadian seclusion of paths winding among trees and rockeries to a serpentine lake with waterfalls, bridges and a weeping-willowed island. The neighbouring grid of workers' housing was here dissolved by nature as recontrived for ordinary people. The evolution which humanised Saltaire was achieved a little earlier in this part of Halifax.

The park was opened on 14 August 1857. Lord Shaftesbury, who had arrived the day before, wrote: "Went … to Halifax to attend opening of 'People's Park', the munificent donation of Frank Crossley, a manufacturer with a princely, and what is better, a Christian heart. He was kind enough to insist on my attendance as 'the best friend of the working classes'. Speeches of course, without end". Lord Shaftesbury's was one of them, since he proposed a toast to "the Well-being of the People".[73]

It was an extraordinary day, a combination of Whit Walk and Mardi Gras. It began in sun and ended in torrents of rain. Of course there was a great procession, largely composed of the People, Crossleys' weavers preceded by a working power loom (its steam engine hidden in a wagon). There was a cart heaped with coal, topped by "a queer looking collier". Ten bands swung alongside the United Order of Ancient Druids, the Halifax Temperance Society, the Order of Peaceful Doves, the Oddfellows, the Horticultural Society, the Ancient Order of Foresters, the Early Closing Association, the 6th West Yorkshire Militia, the Russian guns and the Mayor: the varied collectivities, tamed, traditional, and new age, of industrial society. The local churches provided 130 vocalists, whose task was to accompany the "Yorkshire Nightingale", the West Riding's own Jenny Lind, Mrs Sunderland.[74] And at luncheon Frank Crossley, now in his fortieth year, spoke from the heart. He described 10 September 1855; his party, he recalled, had just left Quebec and entered the United States:

> I remember passing through some of the most glorious scenery on that day which I ever saw in my life. I remember that, when we arrived at the hotel at White Mountain, the ladies sat down for a cup of tea, but I preferred to take a walk alone. It was a beautiful spot. The sun was just then reclining his head behind Mt. Washington, with all the glorious drapery of an American sunset, which we know nothing of in this country. I felt that I should like to be walking with my God on the earth. I said, "What shall I render to my Lord for all his benefits to me?" I was

73 Hodder, *The Life and Work of the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury K.G.*, Vol. III, p. 71
74 Powell, *People's Inheritance*; Creese, *The Search for Environment*, p. 51.

> led further to repeat that question which Paul asked under other circumstances – "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" The answer came immediately. It was this: "It is true thou canst not bring many thousands thou hast left in thy native country to see this beautiful scenery, but thou canst take this to them; it is possible so to arrange art and nature that they shall be within the walk of every working man in Halifax; that he shall go take his stroll there after he has done his hard day's toil, and be able to get home again without being tired".[75]

There spoke old Mrs John Crossley, who had died the previous year. There too spoke Titus Salt, who had opened Saltaire two years before. Walter Creese, the American historian, quoting this in his notable book, *The Search for Environment*, comments: "Romanticism had inspired these Victorians to see spontaneously".[76] Frank Crossley, the Romantic, was able to experience the "intense", the "intimate" movement and learn from it. Frank Crossley, the Victorian, must tell others of that moment and convert them to it; he must moralize it and improve it. That explains the park's rules: open from dawn to sunset, no cricket, no bowls, no hockey, no refreshment, no music on Sundays.[77] It sounds narrowly Puritan, but if the aim were total relaxation, with no distraction from such relaxation in a town that was so visibly and audibly polluted, then it was perhaps not so narrowly Puritan.

When his People's Park was opened, Frank's heir (and only child) was two months old; six years later came the baronetcy, to which that heir would succeed, and Frank, now Sir Francis, purchased Somerleyton, a Suffolk estate appropriate for maintaining the dignity of a baronetcy; Sir Titus Salt would be similarly concerned to ensure his eldest son's position. Somerleyton's previous owner, Sir Samuel Morton Peto, was a kindred spirit, the larger-than-life Baptist baronet (1855), and fellow MP who had contracted for Nelson's Column and was now in mounting financial difficulties. One of Peto's daughters later married a Crossley nephew. Like Bellevue, Somerleyton had its Paxton conservatories and at the park gate was a model village of cottages, school, and chapel, their cosy rusticity suggesting the Jacobean manor which Peto's Jacobethan prodigy house had replaced.[78]

In 1872, when Frank died, his widow shut Bellevue in favour of Somerleyton. "Cromwell Refusing the Crown of England" remained in the Halifax house which was bought by the borough of Halifax and became its Public Library. In due course Cromwell vanished, almost certainly destroyed during wartime storage.[79] The second baronet, Sir Savile, did his stint in the family firm and

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75 Creese, *The Search for Environment*, pp. 51-2.
76 Ibid., p. 52.
77 Ibid., pp. 54-5; Powell, *People's Inheritance*.
78 *Somerleyton: An Illustrated Guide* (n.d. [*c*. 1994]). For Peto (1809-1889), see *ODNB*; P. L. Cottrell, "Peto, Sir Samuel Morton", in D. J. Jeremy and C. Shaw (eds), *Dictionary of Business Biography*, Vol. 4 (London: Butterworth, 1984), pp. 644-53.
79 Girouard, "A Town Built on Carpets", pp. 759-60; private information.

succeeded his cousin Edward as its chairman in 1905; he was Halifax's MP for six years, sitting as an increasingly conservative Liberal Unionist, but his heart was in Suffolk where he had already been an MP for six years. He was Eton, Balliol, Master of the Waveney Harriers, and Lt Colonel in the Norfolk Militia, mentioned in despatches during the South African War.[80] When his peerage came (1916) he took the title of Baron Somerleyton. It was a far cry from Dean Clough and the mills at dawn and it calls to mind the comment made by one of Victorian Balliol's most influential tutors, the philosopher, T. H. Green:

> The English aristocracy, we are told, is not an exclusive aristocracy. In one sense that is true … A great capitalist generally ends by buying a great estate. When the recollections of the counter have sufficiently passed away, he or his son, is made a baronet. Perhaps in the next generation the family mounts a step higher still. Thus the oligarchy has a constant means of bribing the capitalists to its support. This corruption is eating the heart out of the upper commercial classes, and it is but the highest outcome of a flunkeyism which pervades English society from the top to the bottom and is incompatible with any healthy, political life. The English gentleman, we are sometimes told, is the noblest work of God, but one gentleman makes many snobs.[81]

So it might have seemed with Joseph's boy, Arnold, at Rugby and Frank's boy, Savile, at Eton but it was not quite like that with John Crossley, the eldest of the three brothers: his boy, Louis John, went to London's University College School.

VII: John Crossley

John Crossley's Halifax house was Manor Heath, "a large prickly Gothic villa", designed by architects with a line in banks and clubs, a prominent, bustling house apt for a prominent, bustling citizen.[82] This Crossley was four times Mayor of Halifax (like Titus Salt he was his new borough's second mayor), and active in its politics from the 1840s. He was a founder of its famous Building Society (rather as Titus Salt had been a founder of the much less successful, indeed short-lived, Bradford Freehold Land Society), and of its Liberal newspaper, the *Halifax Courier*, and he was its MP from 1874 to 1877. A few months before his election he had a carriage accident, fell on his head and, many considered, was never the same again. His business and philanthropic speculations were clearly concussed; they became increasingly eccentric, even wrong-headed. He left the Commons and died in relatively straitened circumstances. Like Titus Salt, father and son, he

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80 *Somerleyton: An Illustrated Guide*, pp. 6,13; *Who Was Who 1929-1940* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1941), p. 1265.

81 T. H. Green, *Works*, III, pp. CX-CXI, quoted in M. Richter, *The Politics of Conscience: T. H. Green and His Age* (London: Routledge, 1964), pp. 356-7.

82 Girouard, "A Town Built on Carpets", p. 757.

had burnt his fingers in American speculations promoted by Alfred Allott, a highly respected Sheffield Congregationalist and one of the founders of accountancy as a regulated profession.[83]

With the possible exception of his nephew Edward, who resembled him in many ways, John was the most truly municipal Crossley. He systematically bought property in the town centre until he could impose on it a T of two fine streets, Crossley Street and Princess Street.[84]

Here were the Corinthian-pillared Marlborough Hall (later to become the YMCA) and the White Swan Hotel, a noble palazzo dignified by the Crossley coat of arms. Where the two streets of the T met he secured a site for the Town Hall. This was his greatest coup. Its architect was England's grandest architect, Sir Charles Barry, who proposed a civic palace in richest Renaissance, restlessly arched and vista-ed for Yorkshire's Montagus and Capulets. To crown it all, the Town Hall was opened during Crossley's last mayoralty by the Prince of Wales, who stayed at Manor Heath. It was 1863, the year of Frank's baronetcy and purchase of Somerleyton Hall. John, however, stayed on. By now speculation was in his bones. Around the People's Park John and Frank developed some handsome villas. Behind them, good of their kind but pure speculation, were back-to-back houses but then, from 1863 to 1868, John invested in something more interesting. Between Bellevue and the cemetery he laid out a freehold estate of carefully graded houses aimed at artisans and clerks: West Hill Park.[85] The name was instructive because the estate was carefully designed with small front gardens and judiciously screened service access. The curves which were a feature of the People's Park now became a feature of this working-class streetscape. Crossley expected a financial return from West Hill Park's bracingly named Cromwell, Hampden, Milton and Gladstone Streets, but it was to be five per cent rather than the more normal seven to ten per cent. A five-per-cent return ensured that mortgages taken out with the Building Society would be redeemed in thirteen years. John Crossley was that Victorian phenomenon, a five-per-cent philanthropist.[86]

The most remarkable of the Crossley philanthropies was, like Square's rebuilding, a joint enterprise, but it bears all the marks of John Crossley's directive and sometimes thwarted intelligence. It is what evolved after a long gestation as the Crossley Orphanage and Schools built in the 1860s on Skircoat Moor, not far from some of the family villas.[87]

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83 I am indebted for information about Alfred Allott (1824-1901) to Richard A. Frost: "Failure of Alderman Allott", *Sheffield Telegraph* (24 November 1876); "The Failure of Mr. Allott. Meeting of Creditors", *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* (4 January 1877).

84 Girouard, "A Town Built on Carpets", p. 757.

85 Ibid., p. 758.

86 Creese, *The Search for Environment*, pp. 46-50; Hargreaves, "Religion and Society in the Parish of Halifax, circa 1740-1914", p. 340; Powell, *People's Inheritance*. The concept is caught in J. N. Tarn, *Five Per Cent Philanthropy: An Account of Housing in Urban Areas between 1840 and 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

87 *Congregational Year Book* (1867), pp. 370-1.

The People's Park cost £30,000 with an endowment of £6,300. The Orphanage cost £50-60,000 with an annual endowment of £3,000. Its buildings (by John Hogg) were more château-of-the-Loire than Charles Barry's Town Hall or G. H. Stokes's Bellevue. Their grandeur tends to confirm the tradition that John Crossley originally had seen the site as ideal for the theological college which was always close to his heart; and indeed College Road runs behind it. As it was, they housed 400 children in "large and well-ventilated dormitories" and included workshops, gymnasia and two swimming baths. "As regards, warming, ventilation, water supply, and drainage, the arrangements are as perfect as modern improvements can make them".

What was their aim, and for whom were they intended? The aim was an education "to secure accuracy and thoroughness, and to avoid that which is superficial and incomplete". That meant geography, singing, drawing, natural sciences, Latin and a modern language, arithmetic, algebra and geometry: that was for boys. For girls it meant needlework and household service "adapted to their strength". Thus were genders stereotyped and roles enforced; the aim could not have been more contemporary, that is to say, more of its age. But the intelligence of that aim should not be underestimated. It was to fit Crossleys' orphans "for fighting the battle of life courageously and with that kind of self-reliance which is consistent with intelligent dependence on divine help". There is a strategy there, aimed neither at confirming nor overturning society but at changing it for the better; changing it, if possible, for good.

To qualify for entry an orphan needed to be aged two or over. A boy would be lodged, fed and taught until he was fifteen or sixteen; a girl until she was sixteen or seventeen. Their relatives could visit them on the first Tuesday of the month, between two o'clock and five o'clock in the afternoon. But did orphans have relatives? These orphans probably did. They needed to "have been born in wedlock and deprived by death" of their father and with no other relatives capable of assisting them. It helped if they had been born in Yorkshire, of Nonconformist or Anglican parentage, in reduced circumstances, and it helped if both parents were dead. It did not help if they were blind, deaf, dumb, had fits, were lame, paralysed, infectiously, contagiously, or incurably ill, were Roman Catholics, or workhouse paupers. If that seems to exclude all who were most in need, it might be recalled that there were already orphanages for the insane and incurable or incapacitated, some of them pioneered by the Congregational minister Andrew Reed (1787-1862) whose family were closely connected by marriage and friendship to that of Mrs Edward Crossley.[88] It should also be recalled that Roman Catholics looked after their own; it was the apparently less vulnerable who were in fact most vulnerable.

John Crossley died in April 1879. On the day of his funeral, work ceased in

88 For Reed see *ODNB*; I. J. Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action: Calvinism and the City, Manchester and London, c. 1810-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 279-322, esp. pp. 314-320.

Halifax and shutters closed along the route of the funeral procession.[89] The eldest of the three brothers was the last to die. In their faith, flair and imaginative radicalism they nonetheless remained men of their time. In the early 1870s a prominent Sheffield MP, A. J. Mundella, himself a large employer in Leicester, presented a bill to protect women and children who worked in small workshops, chiefly in the textile industry. Its opponents, who tended to be small employers supported by some big men, John Crossley among them, argued that it would interfere with the collective incomes of working-class families (such households, perhaps, as were represented by Salt's mill girls). To fight it, they formed the Association of Employers of Factory Labour; their opposition killed the bill in August 1873. *The Times* wrote of how old alliances of masters and men were being broken and of how capital and labour were moving into hostile camps. The employers referred to "the organised aggression that threatens the national prosperity", by which they meant Trade Unions. Mundella, however, persevered and in June 1874, with Disraeli now Prime Minister and John Crossley a newly-elected MP, Mundella wrote to a leading Sheffield newspaperman (and Congregationalist): "Everyone is much pleased with the debate on the Factories Bill … I resisted Crossley… and other *millionaires*".[90]

Yet Crossleys had a genuinely good reputation as employers. They boasted that as long as Crossleys were at the helm at Dean Clough no industrial dispute got to the stage of what was misleadingly called industrial action; in this their record was better than Salt's, which suffered a damaging strike in 1868, and their good reputation was accompanied by a remarkable continuity of business flair.[91]

This might be encapsulated in the career of Giulio Marchetti (1843-1931), of Broomfield and Manor Heath, associated with the firm from 1872, a director from 1879, managing director in 1902, and its chairman from 1919.[92] For an Italian born in Rome, though educated in Zurich, Marchetti was Congregationally well-connected. His second wife was the daughter of George Smith (1803-1870) who had been minister of the once famous Trinity Church, Poplar, and Secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales (1852-70), and a daughter was the first wife of J. H. Whitley (1866-1935), Halifax cotton-spinner, Congregationalist, Liberal MP, and Speaker of the House of Commons (1921-1928).[93] The linking factor had been Marchetti's first wife, Ann Crossley, John's daughter and Louis John's sister, after whom – perhaps none too tactfully – "Annie", the firm's big-beamed, horizontal tandem compound engine, was named.[94] In bringing Marchetti

89 R. Bretton, "Crossleys of Dean Clough, Part IV. John Crossley MP", *Transactions, Halifax Antiquarian Society* (February 1953), pp. 16-17, Creese, *The Search for Environment*, p. 58.

90 W. H. G. Armytage, *A. J. Mundella, 1825-1897* (London: Benn, 1951), pp.132-6, 145.

91 Webster, *Dean Clough and the Crossley Inheritance*; Suddards (ed.), *Titus of Salts*, p. 21.

92 O. J. Whitley, "Giulio Marchetti 5th June 1843 - 4th January 1931", unpublished typescript (1988). I am indebted to J. P. Whitley for this reference.

93 For J. H. Whitley see *ODNB*; *Who They Were*, pp. 242-3.

94 Webster, *Dean Clough and the Crossley Inheritance*, p. 17.

to Halifax and the firm, Annie Crossley also brought Italy, in a thrillingly contemporary way, for Marchetti had served under Garibaldi and fought at Solferino.[95] The world of the Medici had given way to that of Pio Nono and then been romantically reformed by the Lion of Caprera.

VIII: W. H. Lever

The Crossleys exhibit every public aspect of Nonconformist and especially Congregational life in the nineteenth century: its growth, its cohesiveness, its mindsets, its variety. W. H. Lever (1851-1925) combined their achievement with that of Titus Salt, magnified it and pushed it beyond the limit of Congregational credibility to the point of caricature.[96] His background, like theirs, was socially middling, upwardly mobile, but not self-made. Like them, Lever was a builder of churches, benefactor of colleges and charitable institutions, creator and moulder of community. Like them he was rich in temperamental ambiguity. His too was the classic story of hard work, an eye for opportunity, the means to capitalize on the breakthrough when it came, and then the riches, the public display, and their secular consequence – a barony (1917), and a viscountcy (1922), until by the third generation the political Liberalism, (the titles reflected the Liberal patronage of Asquith and Lloyd George), had been tamed into a steady Conservatism, a barely residual Congregationalism had been retained as an inherited responsibility, and the first Viscount's admiration for Oliver Cromwell (he owned Ford Madox Brown's "Cromwell on his Farm") had to be balanced by his grandson's Senior Stewardship of the Jockey Club (1973-1976), and his appointment as a Knight of the Garter (1988).[97]

In the 1970s H. A. Hamilton, a much loved United Reformed minister, recalled an incident from his first pastorate fifty years earlier.[98] Newly arrived in Bolton, he was sharing a Sunday school anniversary platform with the elderly industrialist who had built the magnificent Congregational church across the road in which Hamilton now ministered and had contributed to the contrasting but still very fine institute in which they were celebrating. The industrialist, now the 1st Viscount Leverhulme of the Isles but "Bill" Lever in his youth, turned to the young minister: "You know," he said, "I am mentioned in the *Te Deum* and churches sing about me each week: 'He has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Bill Levers!'" He died the following month.

That is a sad story. For one thing Bill Lever clearly tried it out on several people over the years, since there are other versions. Edward Thompson included

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95 W. H. Smith and W. T. Pike, *West Riding of Yorkshire at the Opening of the Twentieth Century: Contemporary Biographies* (Brighton: W.T. Pike, 1902), p. 312.

96 For Lever see *ODNB*; Binfield and Taylor (eds), *Who They Were*, pp. 129-31.

97 For Philip, 3rd Viscount Leverhulme (1915-2000) see *The Times* (6 July 2000). I am indebted to Anthony Clinch for further information, (1 June 2004).

98 Private correspondence, H. A. Hamilton to C. Binfield (25 February 1977). For H. A. Hamilton (1897-1977) see Binfield and Taylor (eds), *Who They Were*, pp. 95-6.

one in his novel *John Arnison* (1939), although he applied it, with a twist, to the Liberal landslide of 1906: "What fun those days were! Mr. William Lever, elected for the Wirral division, largely by Church votes, thought it might be because the Prayer Book said something about 'opening the Kingdom of Heaven to all Bill Levers' … "[99] For another thing, it might be doubted whether this Bill Lever, so munificent to Congregational causes, yet so drawn to liturgical propriety, was himself a full believer – except, perhaps, in himself. He could not commit himself to membership of the Congregational churches in which he had been reared, in which he continued to worship, and to which he demonstrated a lifelong attachment. Yet his achievements in expressing a sense of community and of the physical context for community, like his achievements in business and politics, cannot be understood fully unless the religious aspect and the tensions which it released are recognised.

In 1913, St George's Road, Bolton, the Congregational church in which Lever and his wife had been reared, celebrated the jubilee of its rebuilding with the first of several Social Tea Parties. The Levers were there, surrounded by people who had known them since infancy, many of them now family connections. Of course Lever spoke: "Fifty years ago he had his ears boxed in that room for talking, and he saw a lady in the room who was the daughter of the gentleman who did it. (Laughter). And now they were asking him to talk. (Laughter)". He recalled that year, 1863, when there was cotton famine in Lancashire and when the slaves were freed in the United States. In the intervening years Bolton's population had grown to nearly 200,000 and its goods were exchanged worldwide, "which added to the happiness of everyone":

> In celebrating the jubilee of the Church they ought to make them realise that their duty was to help to lift the present and coming generations to a higher state of civilisation and a greater enjoyment and comfort.[100]

Such was the tenor of Lever's Congregationalism. It was traditionary, domestic, familial, but there were corresponding social, commercial and political dimensions to it. Lever himself was born into it and he married into it. On his wife's side it went back several generations.[101] His father, however, had come new to it. In November 1831 James Lever (1809-1897) moved from Bolton to Manchester to make his way in the grocery trade. James was as yet a Churchman but the principals of his firm, the Sheldons, were Grosvenor Street Congregationalists and their example told on him:

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99 E. Thompson, *John Arnison* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1939), p. 38.

100 F. W. Peaples, *History of the St. George's Road Congregational Church and Its Connections* (Bolton: Tillotson & Son Ltd., 1913), pp. 183-6, esp. p. 186.

101 Leverhulme, 2nd Viscount, *Viscount Leverhulme: William Hesketh Lever* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1927), p. 272.

> Here I was placed (as it were) in a new hemisphere, having never before lived in the family of a decided Christian nor enjoyed the privilege of family prayer; I cannot express the effect it had on my mind; here for the first time I witnessed the solemn worship of God, not as I had been accustomed to, only in the Church, but at the domestic altar. I felt there was a power in religion I never before experienced … [102]

Manchester was in the grip of agitation for Reform. It was also in the grip of cholera. At Grosvenor Street James Lever was gripped by a sequence of sermons and by John Angell James's devotional best-seller, *Anxious Inquirer* (1834). He was also active in the Sunday school where he met his future wife, a cotton mill manager's daughter. So here too was middle management, retail this time rather than manufacturing, rising to the spiritual occasion in a dramatically shaping northern town. James Lever became a member of Grosvenor Street, Manchester, at about the time that the younger John Crossley joined Square, Halifax, and that Daniel and Titus Salt became trustees for Salem, Bradford. Those were momentous years for the bodies commercial and politic and James Lever clearly felt that he was taking a momentous step. He wrote formally "To the Church of Christ assembling at Grosvenor Street Chapel, Piccadilly, Manchester" to seek membership, submitting a detailed narrative of what God had done for his soul and ending in a tone of proudly humble independence:

> Having a desire to make a public profession of faith in Him by joining your Christian Church, intreating an interest in your prayers that I may press forward in my Christian course and "Stand fast in the liberty in which Christ makes His people free".
>
> I remain,
>
> Yours, etc.,
>
> (Signed) JAMES LEVER.[103]

The rhetoric was scriptural, it fitted a template with which Congregationalists were comfortable, it was contemporary, and it resonated across the generations. James's "Declaration of Faith" was printed and distributed *in piam memoriam* after his death. By then he had long returned to Bolton, to become "The Grand Old Man of St. George's Road".[104] Thanks largely to him, St George's Road had been built in 1863, a cathedral-like daughter church had been built in his honour and to his memory in Blackburn Road in 1897, and three generations of his

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102 *Declaration of Faith by James Lever 1809-1897 On Being Admitted To Membership of Grosvenor Street Chapel, Manchester, February 1845* (n.p.: n.d. [c. 1897]): 1845 should read 1835, as an examination of the text makes clear.

103 Ibid.

104 H. S. Stanley, *St. George's Road Congregational Church, Bolton. Reopening of Church and Dedication of New Chancel, September 1936,* (Bolton: St George's Congregational Church, 1936), p. 8.

descendants were to be found in the memberships – and leadership – of both. This was the spiritual climate which fostered the growth of his elder son and of a surprising number of that son's business associates and senior managers. That son never repudiated it. Indeed, much that was distinctive in his religious observance was consistent with the increasingly confident and modernising Congregationalism of St George's Road.

From 1874 to 1883 the minister at St George's Road was Charles Berry (1852-1899). Berry was a Lancashire man, a year younger than W. H. Lever, and straight from the college in Bradford: "I studied theology in full view of the busy industrial city of Bradford".[105] He hit St George's Road between wind and water, but he stayed the course. Berry, who was a short man, liked to call himself a "Broad Evangelical". He was recalled as "preeminently a man's preacher, with all a man's robustness and force", preferring when at Bolton to preach on practical and ethical issues rather than on "Christian mysteries".[106] Beginning as he meant to go on, he insisted on a "Ministerial Recognition Service" rather than an ordination service:

> I never wish to be more than or different from a *man* … I desire not the touch of a bishop's fingers. I allow not to any man the right to *ordain* me to the ministry of the Word, and I therefore enter and am this day recognised as a member of that ministry in which I need not sell my manhood for ecclesiasticism, and in which God's ordination is considered sufficient.[107]

There was, nonetheless, considerable development. "The great theme of his preaching was the Fatherhood of God which he conceived to be the central and essential attribute of deity".[108] Fatherhood bred brotherhood and brotherhood had implications for church relations. The man who abhorred ecclesiasticism and sacerdotalism, liked to wear his gown and hood while preaching: "I am a Churchman, I am a High Churchman, I am a Catholic Churchman", [109] and his Chairman's address to the Congregational Union in May 1896 was entitled, "Congregational Churchmanship: its Principles, its Privileges, its Obligations":

> Congregationalists are churchmen, as opposed to individualists. We are living members of an organism, not loose atoms wandering in eternal isolation ...Churchmanship is the natural, the protective, the educational, concomitant of discipleship.[110]

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105 J. S. Drummond, *Charles A. Berry DD: A Memoir* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1899), p. 16.
106 Ibid., pp. 246, 245, 34.
107 Ibid., p. 29.
108 Ibid., p. 33.
109 Ibid., p. 124.
110 Ibid., p. 139.

The apparent paradox, even effrontery, of such language was intellectually and aesthetically appealing and it left its mark on W. H. Lever's own religious profession even if he could never follow his father, or indeed his wife, sisters and son, in seeking church membership. In his son's words, the Church of Lever's dreams "was Congregational in government, Anglican in architecture, liturgical in its form of service, pastoral and not sacerdotal in its ministry";[111] and more than most Lever was able to put his dreams into practice with remarkable consistency. In middle and later life he found two such dream churches in London, conveniently close to each other to the north and south of Oxford Street. One was an Anglican proprietary chapel, St Peter's, Vere Street, where following in the footsteps of F. D. Maurice (one of Charles Berry's early heroes), from 1878 to 1907 an ex-Wesleyan, Canon Page Roberts, preached the purest milk of the Broad Church gospel.[112] The other was a historic Congregational transplant from the City, the King's Weigh House, which under the ministries of John Hunter (1901-1904) and W. E. Orchard (1914-1932) was *sui generis* in Congregationalism.[113] Hunter had taken part in Charles Berry's recognition service at St George's Road, in March 1875, and he preached at the opening of Lever's greatest ecclesiastical benefaction, Christ Church, Port Sunlight, in 1904.[114] Orchard would conduct the short family service which followed Lever's death in May 1925.[115]

Lever's obsequies were demonstrably Congregational.[116] At Christ Church, Port Sunlight, three of the four ministers officiating at his funeral were Congregationalists and the Memorial Service in London was held at the City Temple, a convenient walk from the London headquarters of Lever Brothers. It had been arranged by the Congregational Union of England and Wales "in recognition of the fact that the late Viscount had been prominently connected with that denomination all his life, and was once mentioned in connection with the highest office at the disposal of Congregationalism – the chairmanship of the Union".[117] Whatever the truth of that particular matter the service was held in the middle of the Congregational Union's annual assembly in the famous church

111 Leverhulme, 2nd Viscount, *Lord Leverhulme*, p. 274.

112 Ibid., p. 106. For Page Roberts, see C. Binfield, "'A tradition handed on by preaching': the Allure of Broad Sermons – William Page Roberts of Vere Street", in Anna M. Robbins (ed.), *Ecumenical and Eclectic. The Unity of the Church in the Contemporary World* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), pp. 86-128.

113 Leverhulme, 2nd Viscount, *Lord Leverhulme*, p. 106. For the King's Weigh House see E. Kaye, *The History of the King's Weigh House Church: A Chapter in the History of London* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1968), pp. 106-114, 118-140.

114 Drummond, *Charles A. Berry, DD: A Memoir*, p. 29; J. A. Pugh, "A History of Christ Church Port Sunlight", unpublished dissertation (n.d. [c. 1970]), p.29. I am indebted to the late Revd J. A. Pugh for this reference.

115 *Progress: In Memoriam William Hesketh Viscount Leverhulme Born 19th September 1851: Died 7th May 1925*, Vol. 25 (July 1925), No. 168, p. 85.

116 Ibid., pp. 85-122.

117 Ibid., p. 115.

which was hosting the assembly, and it was conducted by J. D. Jones, a long-standing acquaintance, indeed friend, and newly inducted as Chairman of the Union, assisted by Sidney Berry, Charles Berry's son and in his third year as Secretary of the Union.[118] A third minister took a leading part, A. G. Sleep, Secretary of the Colonial Missionary Society.[119] Sleep's role cannot have been easy to formulate since Lever, as will be seen, was not a missionary-minded man, but at least the Colonial Missionary Society was not concerned with the Belgian Congo where Lever's largest and most questionable enterprise was based. Memorial Masses were celebrated in several Congolese mission stations and at the Protestant Mission Church in Kinshasa the preacher prudently quoted Lever's own words:

> That any other principle than the Golden Rule would not give permanently successful business... In all the great firms of this country, you will find that the greater the prominence of the firm, the closer they adhere to the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and the practice of the Golden Rule.[120]

IX: Lever's Churches

W. H. Lever was a church builder. He built three ambitious Congregational churches (Blackburn Road, Bolton; St George's, Thornton Hough; Christ Church, Port Sunlight) and was a significant benefactor of two more (Chorley Old Road, Bolton; Neston, Wirral). He also initiated a visionary cooperative scheme for sustaining the ministry of Bolton's Congregational churches.

Blackburn Road was the first of Lever's church building schemes. It was an exercise in filial piety, a soaring essay in accomplished Free Perpendicular Gothic by Lever's Wesleyan-born schoolfellow and lifelong associate, Jonathan Simpson. The stonelaying was in May 1895 and the opening came on 6 June 1897 by which time it had become an "enduring cenotaph" to the recently deceased James Lever.[121] The celebratory rhetoric was suggestive. John Watson, the pulpit prince of Liverpool Presbyterianism, nationally known as the writer "Ian Maclaren", preached extempore on the family, an institution so vital to Church and State that its absence would bring anarchy to both; it was the family which revealed the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.[122] Langford Burrows, the new church's minister, stressed the brotherhood. He was sure that the new building's "very atmosphere inspired devotion".

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118 Ibid., pp. 115-118. The *Congregational Year Book* (1926), in listing the annual assembly's arrangements, makes no reference to the service. For J. D. Jones (1865-1942) and Sidney Berry (1881-1961) see Binfield and Taylor (eds), *Who They Were*, pp. 116-119, 13-15.

119 For A. G. Sleep (1888-1965), see Binfield and Taylor (eds), *Who They Were*, pp. 207-8.

120 *Progress: In Memoriam William Hesketh Viscount Leverhulme*, p. 122.

121 Peaples, *History of the St. George's Road Congregational Church and Its Connections*, p. 287.

122 Ibid., p. 289. For John Watson (1850-1907) see *ODNB*.

> He wanted to feel sure that the working men, for whom especially that Church had been built, would come in their hundreds to worship there and to join in a service which he promised them, as long as he remained minister of that people, should ever be marked with brotherly feeling and tender sympathy and Christian love.[123]

There were Lever family connections in most Bolton Congregational churches, several of them at Chorley Old Road, to which Lever gave £1,500 and which Lever's wife opened in December 1900.[124] Chorley Old Road was perhaps the first of the Bolton churches to benefit from a scheme for ministerial sustentation which Lever promoted from autumn 1916 and instituted in 1919 with a generous endowment. Its minister had resigned but Lever had already intimated that, "Subject to conditions incorporated in a trust deed", he was prepared "to augment the stipend of the Chorley Old Road Pastor by the sum of £150 per annum". Church meeting agreed, "provided the choice of a pastor by the Church was not fettered".[125] Building on a collaborative foundation laid by Charles Berry, Lever wished to guarantee an adequate stipend for Bolton's Congregational ministers provided that, for their part, the Bolton churches would cooperate through ministers, deacons, and members in Christian enterprises of common concern, "such association … not intended to infringe or violate the fundamental principle of Congregational or independent Churches". An advisory committee was to be appointed with a particular concern for vacant pastorates: no candidate would preach "with a view" without the committee's concurrence.[126] Not all of Bolton's ministers or churches agreed with this, for the concept of endowment ran counter to Congregational voluntaryism but fifty years later the young minister who had shared that anniversary platform with Lever recalled his scheme with gratitude:

> The Ministers had regular fortnightly meetings. Deacons had quarterly conferences and Church Members an Annual Festival. As a young fledgling minister, I found this fellowship a great strength. We not only shared monthly statistics and had regular pulpit exchanges we actively helped each other in practical ways.[127]

Fifty years ahead of its time, the Bolton Group anticipated key aspects of the United Reformed Church's conciliarity.

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123 Peaples, *History of the St. George's Road Congregational Church and Its Connections*, p. 288.

124 *Congregational Year Book* (1901), p. 155; T. Whittaker, *The History of Chorley Old Road Congregational Church, Bolton, 1895-1945: A Record of Fifty Years' Progress and Achievement* (Bolton: Chorley Old Road Congregational Church, 1945), p. 8.

125 Ibid., p. 16.

126 Ibid.

127 Private correspondence, H. A. Hamilton to C. Binfield (5 May 1977).

Structures, whether in brick and stone or flesh and blood, engaged Lever's intellect. His Wirral trio of churches demonstrated this beyond peradventure. Each was built and endowed by W. H. Lever. Each was legally and constitutionally Congregational. None could be described as naturally Congregational but two survive in the United Reformed Church, although they are to all appearance fine parish churches.

Christ Church, Port Sunlight, epitomised the Lever ideal. It was as prominent a focal point as the church at Saltaire although its style was that of a prosperous market town or comfortable village: "It speaks of strength and endurance and a sincere love and study of traditional English Gothic",[128] according to Raffles Davison, one of the age's most appealing architectural draughtsmen, and a son of the Congregational manse. It had an "open and lofty spaciousness"; the "light of day comes softened and glorified through the large stained-glass windows of the chancel". Davison enjoyed the "elaborate carving of the organ frame, the canopies and tracery and linen-patterned panelling of the reredos". He relished the choir stalls carved by inmates "of a Lancashire home, dumb and afflicted with deafness. Even so can the pursuit of beauty triumph over the tribulations of the body". As at Blackburn Road there was a Willis organ and, as at Saltaire, a peal of bells. At Port Sunlight each bell was "inscribed with two-line extracts from the storehouse of immortal compositions".[129] Lever set the context for all this at his church's stonelaying:

> They decided to build a church in which worshippers would learn that the way was clear and open between their souls and their God. They had selected Gothic as the most suitable form of architecture and they had called the church Christ Church because it was their wish that nothing should be stressed that tended to divide. They wanted a church that would be a visible expression of Christian unity, a church in whose worship all Christian people except those of extreme views could share.[130]

Like most gathered churches, Christ Church had an eclectic beginning and, as with many, that beginning was driven by a characterful individual. A new settlement presupposed provision for services of worship. Worshippers needed room and ministry if continuity were to be ensured – but what sort of ministry should there be and what sort of church, what sort of duly constituted Christian fellowship, would take root most naturally? Lever provided room and ministry, he facilitated the fellowship's legal establishment and he influenced the style of what evolved. Given that Christ Church was primarily a works church in a works

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128 T. R. Davison, *Port Sunlight. A Record of the Artistic and Pictorial Aspect* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1916), p. 33.

129 *A History of Christ Church, Port Sunlight* (Port Sunlight: Christ Church, n.d. [*c*. 1931]), pp. 6, 9, 10. See also K. J. Howell, *Christ Church United Reformed Church Port Sunlight. The First One Hundred Years 1904-2004* (Wirral: Creativo Ltd., 2004).

130 *A History of Christ Church, Port Sunlight*, p. 4.

village and that works and village were the creation of one man, it was inevitable that the fellowship would display a wide spectrum of tensions as it developed into a Congregational church.

Its minute books illustrate this movement of *congregationalism* into *Congregationalism*: the structured fellowship, the concerns for financial self-sufficiency and ministerial leadership, the mission to children and to the peripheral poor.[131] They also illustrate the tensions: the relationship in Christian fellowship of managers and workers whose church office did not necessarily reflect the works hierarchy, the expectations of newcomers from a wide range of denominations, the explosion of temperament in choir and Sunday school, the constant awareness which church members and officers had of W. H. Lever and, in due course, his son, and the corresponding determination of Lever and his son to stand at arm's length from church decisions whatever the overpowering temptation to intervene. All Congregational churches with successful businessmen in their memberships or on their diaconates had to contain such tensions and many did so more fruitfully than is realised; this was their largely unsung contribution to the accommodation of democracy in the secular body politic.

Christ Church began characteristically: almost a decade of informal services, loosely rooted in cottage meetings run by the nearest parish church but soon replanted in the suggestively named Gladstone Hall for Sunday evening sacred concerts and lectures (the latter frequently attended and sometimes delivered by Lever), and in the Village School for regular services (an Anglican-led one on the first Sunday of each month, and Free-Church-led ones on the rest) until on 15 February 1899 there was a celebratory prelude to a more formal reconstitution.[132] A Social and Business Meeting of Congregation and Friends attended by 350 people, began with "an enjoyable tea" and ended with "a successful Exhibition of the Cinematograph". Lever presided, accompanied by his wife, a sister, her husband, and a sister-in-law.[133] Lever's presence was indispensable. The stage was set for a structured advance.

Two months later, having discussed the need for a "Resident Minister", a deputation was instructed "to wait upon Mr. Lever to obtain his views". Duly "favoured by Mr. Lever with an interview", they found him shrewdly amenable: there were difficulties – a minister needed a stipend, "it was absolutely necessary that the Minister should be entirely undenominational", and no local man was

131 The following, all in the possession of Christ Church United Reformed Church, Port Sunlight, when consulted, have been used: Port Sunlight Divine Services Committee Minute Book 1899-1914; Christ Church Port Sunlight Minute Book 1914-1925; Christ Church Port Sunlight Minute Book 1925-1937; Trust Deed etc. of Christ Church Port Sunlight: Minister's Copy, typescript, 23 December 1903. Hereafter MB 1899-1914, MB 1914-1925, MB 1925-1937, Trust Deed.

132 Pugh, "A History of Christ Church Port Sunlight", pp. 12-15; MB 1899-1914, (15 February 1899).

133 MB 1899-1914, (15 February 1899).

suitable.[134] Thus an Anglican was effectively ruled out. Three months after that, it was proposed that Lever himself should chair the "Divine Services Committee" and, when he agreed, all expressed "their deep sense of the honor [*sic*] he had paid them by this act, each member expressing his intention of doing his best to make the office easy and agreeable".[135] Lever took his duties seriously; he found a minister to undertake the "Religious and Social Work of the Village" – and to take over his chairmanship.

Samuel Gamble Walker (1866-1936) was a Wesleyan minister in full Connexion, with a reputation as "a young man who championed the people's cause".[136] Now he was Lever's man and remained so until his departure in 1907; but his ministry thereafter was in Congregational churches and from the moment of his appointment Christ Church (the name became official in September 1900) was effectively Congregational. Its trust was vested in the Congregational Union of England and Wales; it was stipulated that all future ministers should be Congregational ministers in good standing.[137] In 1901 this was the closest one could get to an orderly, mainstream, undenominationalism. On 1 April 1901, at a meeting attended by fifty people (in instructive contrast to the 450 who had thronged the previous summer's annual meeting), a church was formed; there were arrangements for quarterly church meetings and monthly committee meetings (many contemporary Congregational churches preferred a committee to a diaconate). Christ Church's committee comprised eight men; Lever was not among them.[138]

Christ Church was by any measurable standard a thriving church. By 1925 it had 324 members, a Sunday school of 950, with 150 teachers.[139] That made it the second largest Congregational church in Cheshire, with by far the largest Sunday school. It was listed in the *Congregational Year Book*; it was not, however, affiliated to the Cheshire Congregational Union and a great-nephew of Lever's, a life-long Congregationalist who made his career in the Lever firm, and had first been received into membership at Blackburn Road, Bolton, declined to transfer his membership to Christ Church, preferring to join a neighbouring Congregational church. Christ Church was not, in his view, a true Congregational church.[140]

X: Christ Church, Port Sunlight

We are back to the Levers, and their firm Lever Brothers. Christ Church was W. H. Lever's personal gift to the village and he steadily dignified his gift. The

134 Ibid., (3 May, 31 May 1899).
135 Ibid., (6 September 1899).
136 *Congregational Year Book* (1937), pp. 692-3.
137 Trust Deed.
138 MB 1899-1914, (1 April 1901).
139 *Congregational Year Book* (1926), p. 202. The *Year Book*'s statistics paint a rosier picture than the Minute Books.
140 Private correspondence, W. Atherton to C. Binfield (24 March 1977; 10 April 1977).

choir, for example, was paid, gowned, and surpliced at his expense, and – not surprisingly – "the suggestion of Sir William Lever that boys might be introduced into the choir was heartily approved".[141] From 1912 his son, and only surviving child, W. Hulme Lever, played an increasing part in Christ Church's affairs. On the occasion of his marriage, the church committee resolved that should the young couple "desire a pew in Christ Church allocated to them, the pew near the pulpit in the nave of the Church be mentioned".[142] The birth of an heir to what was now a baronetcy, however, prompted debate as well as congratulation. The Hulme Levers wished to commemorate this by giving a silver cross for the communion table, but a cross for the table or elsewhere in church, other perhaps than in stained glass, was a contentious matter for many Nonconformists. It was three months before this cross was "gratefully accepted".[143] Hulme Lever's liking for ordered, indeed choreographed, worship came disturbingly close to notorious congregational flashpoints. Christ Church's choir was a perennially bubbling cauldron of hurt feelings and affronted dignity. This might explain the committee's hesitation in October 1918: "A suggestion by Mr. W. Hulme Lever was discussed and finally the Committee agreed that subject to the Choir consenting they would not object to the Choir marching from their vestry to the stalls via the East aisle and the centre aisle'"[144]

Meanwhile Mrs Hulme Lever, Lady Leverhulme in due course, did her duty. Her mother-in-law ("We know how she loved our Sanctuary and we rejoice that for so many years she found it a congenial spiritual home")[145] had died in 1913 and now, as Lady Lever's successor, she presented a banner to the Women's Helpful League to celebrate their union with the Women's Guild (to be hung in the church), and a prayer desk, and she provided flowers each month for Sunday services.[146]

This was industrial squirearchy, however Congregational the accent. Each wish of the Levers was communicated to the committee (although it remained a committee, its members were called deacons by 1923), discussed, and not always acted on at once. The careful but uneasy relationship was brought to the forefront with W. H. Lever's death. His industrial and commercial empire was in disarray. It was in danger of unravelling. His son had – for the time being at least – to rein in his expenditure. Christ Church had been Lever's gift and financial responsibility; it remained a family concern but the firm, now steadily restructuring, took over some of the family's commitments. In the aftermath of the death of its "donor and benefactor", resting now with his wife in the canopied mausoleum that took the place of a great west door, a Lancastrian

141 MB 1899-1914, (28 September 1911).
142 Ibid., (2 May 1912).
143 MB 1914-1925, (5 July, 6 September, 11 October, 6 December 1915).
144 Ibid., (13 October 1918).
145 MB 1899-1914, (4 September 1913).
146 MB 1925-1937, (29 December 1930; 15 January, 26 February 1931). In May 1919 Hulme Lever had offered to supply flowers on alternate Sundays; by July 1929 the supply was monthly and from his wife.

nobleman ready at last to enter the church, the committee "reported that a possible Founder's day would be observed on Sunday Sept 20th". That was the Sunday nearest W. H. Lever's birthday. The committee also noted its "sense of obligation to preserve those ideals of Catholicity and Congregational government which were dear to him…"[147]

Those ideals were tested in 1929. R. W. T. Middleton, minister since 1919, was leaving Port Sunlight for Birmingham.[148] At once the tensions within Christ Church were focused on the question of his successor. Who appointed him? Who, to use Congregational terminology, issued the call? In thirty years roles and personalities had changed. The new Lord Leverhulme, though properly filial, was quite unlike his father, and there was a relatively new figure in the Congregational polity, the Provincial Moderator, one of whose duties was to "assist in all matters connected with Ministerial Settlements and Removals".[149] For Congregational purposes Cheshire was in the East Midlands Province; its moderator, H. H. Carlisle, lived in Tooting. Although not a member of the Cheshire Congregational Union, Christ Church had recourse to him as well as to the new Lord Leverhulme. That was appropriate; the old Lord Leverhulme had provided the financial basis for Congregationalism's new moderators.[150]

H. H. Carlisle (Mill Hill School and St John's College Cambridge) was a seasoned operator.[151] He suggested various names. The committee wrote a careful minute: "After a discussion on the relation of Lord Leverhulme to the Church for successor to Mr Middleton, it was agreed to sound the Moderator on the advisability of taking any action of the kind".[152] The result was a discreetly high-powered meeting in London. Sidney Berry, now entrenched as Secretary of the Congregational Union, conferred with H. H. Carlisle, Lord Leverhulme and C. W. Barnish, who was the most Congregationally minded as well as the most senior of Port Sunlight's directorate.[153] This was the prelude to a church meeting in Port Sunlight's Collegium: 115 members were present in addition to the deacons. B. D. Morris, a retired local minister with useful experience of small and difficult churches, took the chair. The Moderator and Lord Leverhulme addressed them and a Vacancy Committee was set up, charged with consulting Berry and Carlisle. It was a large committee since it comprised the Church Committee and representatives of the Choir, Sunday School, Women's Guild, Women's Helpful League, Lever Brothers, Boys' Brigade, Girl Guides, the Village Advisory

147 Ibid., (2 June, 24 July, 15 July 1925).

148 Ralph Wardlaw Thompson Middleton (b. 1887). His names denote an exemplary Congregational profile, confirmed by Liverpool University, Mansfield College, Oxford, interests in languages, football "and most sports". *Who's Who in Congregationalism* (London: Shaw Publishing Co. Ltd., n.d. [1933]), p.71. He emigrated to Canada in 1948.

149 *Congregational Year Book* (1930), p. 55. Moderators were first appointed in November 1919.

150 J. D. Jones, *Three Score Years and Ten* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940), p. 119.

151 For H. H. Carlisle (1863-1945), see *Congregational Year Book* (1946), pp. 437-8.

152 MB 1925-1937, (21 January 1929).

153 Ibid., (16 April 1929).

Committee, the Co-Partners Club, the Comrades Federation, "Masonic Bodies", and Lord Leverhulme. B. D. Morris chaired this committee too. These representatives were, if possible, to be members of Christ Church.[154]

That expectation hinted at underlying difficulties. Members had lately lapsed and left; there had been "unpleasantness", indeed "no regular meetings of church members have been held for a considerable time"; the meeting took the opportunity – "no offence meant" – to set matters straight:

> That, inasmuch as Christ Church was intended by its Founder to serve the religious needs of the village of Port Sunlight, it is suggested that the members of the Church Committee should be as far as possible representative of the members employed in Port Sunlight, not to the exclusion of members outside the village but in proportion to the number of outside people who are members of the Church.
>
> That in view of the design of the founder, the Church Members recommend to the Church Committee that the officers of the Committee, Treasurer, Secretary, and Registrar of the Burial Board, should generally be elected from those members employed in Port Sunlight.[155]

Offence may not have been meant, but it seems to have been taken, and significant resignations followed. Much of this was the small change of Congregational life, but more of it showed the difficulty of being a truly Congregational "parish" church, representative of a community at once wider and yet more geographically defined than a gathered church.

The difficulties were overcome. A minister was found. He was Thomas Webster (1869-1942), a man with thirty-five years' experience of solid northern pastorates. Lever Brothers arranged his Public Welcome. The women of the church presented him with a silk gown and cassock. His induction was a model of its kind:

> All the ministers attending were gowned; they met with a surpliced choir in the choir vestry; and walked in ordered procession to the door of the church, where the new minister was received by them and taken with them up the central aisle, preceded by choir boys and other choristers singing a processional hymn. Officiating ministers took up their position in the choir stalls; the other clergy sat in the further seats of the chancel. The Moderator, Minister and Church Secretary made their statements standing at the front of the chancel; the concluding part was taken within the Communion rails, where the new minister remained until the Benediction. The whole was dignified and impressive.[156]

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154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.

In the first months of his pastorate Webster carefully explained the terms of Christ Church's newest endowment, of 7,500 Preference Shares in what was now Unilever, at seven per cent interest, subject to the proviso that no pew rents were charged; he reminded the committee that "the appointment of a new minister must receive the approval of the holder of the Viscountcy of Leverhulme"; and he intimated his wish to hold early morning communion on Easter Day.[157]

XI: Other Lever Churches

The Wirral's other two Lever churches, St George's Thornton Hough and Neston, were studies in endowed contrast. Neston was the most recent and the shortest lived. It originated in a village cause which, having done "good work of its own on Independent lines", was taken in hand by W. H. Lever.[158] He converted a Liberal Club which had fallen on hard times into a church, an unassuming timber structure, weather-boarded and tiled, but enlarged within a year to allow for chancel, apse, organ chamber, and vestries, with three stained-glass windows to commemorate the seventeenth century.[159] A manse was built for the minister, whose stipend was assured by an endowment which produced £300 a year, and an institute, playing field, tennis courts and bowling green, emphasised the cause's role in the social and recreational as well as the spiritual life of the village. It lasted for thirty years (1908-1938), but there was already a well-established Presbyterian congregation to attract prosperous newcomers. There was less opportunity for village Congregationalists to take root and grow. Each of Neston's five ministers in those thirty years was a man in the Lever mould, testimony to the active interest taken by the Levers, father and son, in ministerial settlement. Indeed, James Knox, the first minister under the Lever dispensation, later moved to Port Sunlight to run the Christ Church mission and subsequently to direct the firm's staff training centre.[160]

Thornton Hough lies midway between Port Sunlight and Neston. Here – shades of Somerleyton – was agricultural squirearchy. Thornton was unmistakably the squire's village and St George's was a fine squire's church. It need not have been that way. Its architect was convinced that Lever would never have built St George's had there been a proper parson at the parish church, and memories long flourished of past *froideurs* between the two churches; relations between them were "like a knife".[161] Lever went about it with a mixture of high-handedness, bonhomie, genuine principle and an eye for opportunity. F. J.

157 Ibid., (27 February, 22 March 1930).

158 F. J. Powicke, *A History of the Cheshire County Union of Congregational Churches* (Manchester: Thomas Griffiths & Co., 1907), pp. 266-7.

159 Pugh, "A History of Christ Church Port Sunlight", p. 26.

160 I am indebted for information about Neston to A. R. Connell, H. W. Foote and the Revd R. W. Kidd.

161 Private correspondence, J. Lomax-Simpson to C. Binfield (25 February 1977); Mr and Mrs G. Jellicoe to C. Binfield (17 March 1977).

Powicke, the historian of Cheshire Congregationalism, describes what happened. In 1903 Thornton's Nonconformists were Wesleyans:

> Then, by negotiations with Conference, their chapel came into the possession of Mr. Lever, who, at a meeting held on Tuesday evening, September 27, 1903, "explained that in future the chapel would be known as the Congregational Chapel, and that on or after the following Sunday the services would be conducted according to the methods of Congregationalism"… [162]

The transfer of loyalty, style and polity seems to have been painless. The leaders of the Methodist society provided the core of the new Congregational church committee, elected annually by ballot; Langford Burrows, who for ten years had ministered at Bolton's Blackburn Road, was enticed to Thornton Hough; an iron church was erected on the new site; day schools were opened, with a headmaster who also came from Bolton; and a permanent church speedily replaced the iron one, its name, St George's, recalling Bolton St George's Road as much as England's patron saint, and its roll of members including Lever's son and four of Lever's sisters, with a Lever brother-in-law as church secretary.[163]

Most Congregational church buildings resulted from creative committee work. They reflected a balance of building committee, minister and architect. Blackburn Road, Christ Church, and St George's resulted from the partnership of Lever and his architects, Jonathan Simpson, William and Segar Owen, and James Lomax-Simpson respectively. James Lomax-Simpson was Jonathan Simpson's son and he became a director of Lever Brothers.[164] He was also a fine architect; the old Bolton connection, sustained for too many years, remained in this instance a fruitful connection. For young Lomax-Simpson, St George's was a dream-like opportunity.[165] His memories were crisp: "The Old Chief rang me up when I had started sketching and said: 'Come up to Thornton. I think I'd like the church in the Norman style'". Lomax-Simpson was intrigued: "We young architects had only studied Norman in a very off hand way"; and with a

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162 Powicke, *A History of the Cheshire County Union of Congregational Churches,* p. 267.

163 St George's Thornton Hough, Church Roll, in possession of St George's United Reformed Church, Thornton Hough, when consulted. This seems to date from 1935 (?1925) and was recommenced in 1953. The original list seems to have been compiled in 1907. The 2nd Lord Leverhulme, his aunts Emily, Alice and Harriette Lever, of Hesketh Grange, had joined in 1907, as had his aunt Mrs Jane Ferguson, of Thornton Lodge; her husband, John Smith Ferguson, was "for many years the devoted secretary of the Church": "The Story of 'The First Fifty Years'", unpublished typescript, (n.d.) p. 2. See also D. Stewart, *St. George's United Reformed Church, Thornton Hough, The First Hundred Years 1907-2007* (Thornton Hough: St George's United Reformed Church, 2007).

164 For James Lomax-Simpson (1882-1977) see *The Times* (22 June 1977); *Journal Royal Institute of British Architects* (September 1977), p. 396.

165 Private correspondence, J. Lomax-Simpson to C. Binfield (25 February 1977). This section draws from these memories.

Liverpool craftsman he spent ten days visiting Norman churches, meticulously drawing and measuring "to get the feel of the thing".

The "Old Chief" could never be taken for granted but he approved of Lomax-Simpson's work at St George's ("I copied nothing but I used my sketches"). Lever's preference for Norman at Thornton and a free late Perpendicular at Blackburn Road and Christ Church was not a matter of whim. An article on "English Architecture" in *The "Sunlight" Year-Book For 1898* made a number of shrewd points about churches and public buildings: when it came to the latter, French and American architects excelled in "the elements of grandeur and scale", but for the former, the best contemporary English architects were unsurpassed "in the production of characteristic, refined and beautiful Gothic churches".[166] One challenge lay in the fact that "the conditions of worship, which called forth our great Gothic churches, are now so different to [*sic*] the time when the English laboured under the stern rule of priests and soldiers". A second challenge lay in the fact that the "one great striking example we have of a complete Gothic church in one style, the Cathedral of Salisbury, is undoubtedly monotonous to a degree". The solution lay in a mixed economy: "Some of the most charming results in our English churches are where the massive Norman work is in keen contrast to the elegance and richness of the Perpendicular style".[167] The Lever churches were not in such boldly mixed contrast, but their scale was surprisingly well adapted to genuine congregational need and this applied quite as much to St George's, a sturdily elegant Norman essay in flecked Runcorn stone, and stone slated roof, with a tower "prepared for bells", a hexagonal stone lychgate, nave, transepts, choir, and a circular apse with stone groined roof, sheltering a stone altar.[168] St George's remains a satisfying if surprising machine for congregational worship.

Like Christ Church, St George's was comfortably endowed for contemporary needs, and like Christ Church, St George's had the Congregational Union of England and Wales as trustee.[169] Its minister, choir and organist too were robed and if its church meetings were far less frequent than at Christ Church, it held relatively regular committee meetings, and their acquiescence too could not always be wholly taken for granted. In February 1921 Hulme Lever wished to present, with other gifts, a brass flagon for the font and "a Brass Cross for the Communion Table". The brass cross was as much a sticking point for St George's as a silver cross had been for Christ Church in the previous decade: "Considerable discussion ... ensued in regard to the suggestion of a Brass Cross on the Altar Table. The general feeling of the meeting was against the idea".[170]

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166 "English Architecture", *The "Sunlight" Year Book for 1898* (Port Sunlight: Lever Brothers, n.d. [1897]), p. 241.

167 Ibid., pp. 241-2.

168 *Congregational Year Book* (1908), pp. 163-4.

169 Trust Deed, 17 January 1906, in possession of St George's when consulted.

170 Church Meeting Minutes 1921-1958, in possession of St George's when consulted, 1 February, 8 February 1921. This is the earliest surviving minute book; in fact it recorded meetings of the Management Committee.

St George's was nonetheless the Levers's church, even more so than Christ Church. Photographs of the first, second and third Viscounts Leverhulme were displayed in the vestry into the 1970s, almost as if they were patrons of the living. In September 1925 it was suggested that the Sunday nearest 19 September be observed as "Founder's Day" (as at Christ Church), to keep alive "the memory of the late Viscount Leverhulme's Birthday" and from the 1920s to the 1960s W. H. Lever's son and grandson served as church treasurer; the prudent decision in November 1922 to "have Church Accounts dealt with at the Estate Office" was not necessarily as convenient as it sounded.[171] In February 1923 Hulme Lever arrived late at the church's annual meeting. He assured his hearers that the finances had improved while regretting that he could not present the annual accounts because they were "locked up in the Estate Office and the Key was not available". He was, even so, accorded a "hearty vote of thanks" for "his presence and for his statement".[172] Well into the 1960s church flowers were provided monthly from the Manor and house parties came from the Manor for the Christmas services. With its congregation of farmers, tradesmen, estate workers and domestic staff, St George's was socially and numerically on a par with All Saints, the real parish church. Snelson, the Lever Schools' headmaster, succeeded J. S. Ferguson, W. H. Lever's brother-in-law, as church secretary; the village postman was door steward; and Langford Burrows, minister from 1904 to 1933, played the part of country parson to perfection. With a rich wife, a maid, and a motor-car, he was recalled as a friendly, sporting fellow, grand at visiting (his calves' foot jelly was an unfailing remedy), and a "lovely cricketer" (he could "handle the bat"). His gift for staging operetta led to a particular rapport with Hulme Lever. He was in short the antithesis of Herbert Bull, unbending at All Saints. He afforded proof positive of what Bull's daughter much later recalled as W. H. Lever's declaration that competition was as good for the Church as it was for commerce.[173]

XII: Lever's Business and Mission

No Free Trade Liberal could have regarded that as a declaration of war, however uncomfortable it made life for Parson Bull and his parishioners. It was competition which had brought success to Lever on an international scale; and it was competition which was his weakness and almost his downfall. Successful competition, single-mindedly pursued, leads to monopoly and monopoly implodes; it overreaches itself. Monopoly is incompatible with Congregationalism, yet successful Congregationalists sailed increasingly close to the monopolistic wind

171 Ibid., (4 September 1925; 8 March 1921).

172 Ibid., (8 February 1923).

173 I am indebted to the recollections of Mrs Elsie Burrell, A. Carter, S. Ford, Mr and Mrs G. Jellicoe. The Revd Derek E. Fathers forwarded the recollection of Miss Marjorie Bull (25 March 1977), daughter of Herbert Ashley Bull, Vicar of All Saints 1898-1945. For Thomas Langford Burrows (1867-1944), see *Congregational Year Book* (1946), p. 437.

whether in state or commerce. Lever, the Bolton and Wirral Congregationalist, practical, constructive, imaginative and widely travelled (this quintessential little Englishman, five feet five inches tall, was no Little Englander), ultimately lacked imagination when it came to the religious, that is to say, the missionary aspect of the commercial internationalism to which he gave a wholly new dimension.

Through the London and Colonial Missionary Societies, Congregationalists had been among the more creative pioneers of overseas mission. Their system provided ways of overcoming the prejudices natural to people of their creed and class. No Congregationalist of Lever's prominence and generation could have been unaware of the claims of overseas mission. Lever's increasingly complex overseas operations tended to steer clear of London or Colonial Missionary stations, but missionaries too were keen advocates of their wares and their achievements and their perspectives could be searchingly different from those of secular entrepreneurs, however enlightened. Lever's missionary perspectives were too shrewdly calculating to be truly insightful, however sensibly he justified them. An early winter visit to Egypt convinced him of the uselessness of missions to Muslims:

> It appears clearer than ever that the money spent on missionary efforts is worse than wasted; that the same money spent in taking the little children out of the gutters in England, feeding, clothing and educating them decently until they are fifteen, then putting them in respectable service or the Colonies, would do ten thousand times more good.[174]

He approved of medical missions. He admired what he regarded as truly practical missions; the Jesuits of the Belgian Congo scored highly there but Lever's sense of practicality had its limits. The medical side of the Baptists' Bolobo Mission was "as near perfect as possible"; the self-improvement side aroused his scorn:

> All this show and parade of hand printing, book-binding, compositor's tables etc. … is merely a white man's fad. The books, pamphlets, etc. could be printed at one quarter of the cost in Europe and in as little time, including time lost on voyage, and the energies of the missionaries concentrated on farming.[175]

Put like that, it was hard to argue with Lever, but such snap judgements opened the doors to the accusations of forced labour which dogged his Congolese operations in the last decade of his life and diminished if not destroyed his reputation.[176]

Perhaps the key to this lies in the nature of his belief, or lack of belief, as revealed by his platform joke about the *Te Deum,* and as explored by one of his most

174 Leverhulme, 2nd Viscount, *Lord Leverhulme*, p. 58.

175 W. P. Jolly, *Lord Leverhulme: A Biography* (London: Constable, 1976), p. 126.

176 This aspect is developed in J. Marchal, *Lord Leverhulme's Ghosts. Colonial Exploitation in the Congo* (London: Verso, 2008).

perceptive business associates. Angus Watson (1874-1961) achieved fame and fortune as a fish processor (Skipper Sardines) followed by a knighthood for public and social service.[177] Like Lever he was a lifelong Congregationalist, but unlike Lever he was a church member and he became Chairman of the Congregational Union (1935). Watson's business career was jump-started by Lever, for whom he worked between 1898 and 1903, and it was ended by Lever, who took over the controlling interest in Watson's firm in 1923. In a telling pen-portrait Watson pinpointed the contradictions in Lever's character and beliefs.[178] He recognised "the living power of his spiritual faith", and the "background in his life that was definitely Christian". He found it reflected in "an intimate knowledge of the Scriptures, particularly the Old Testament", but he noted that Lever:

> had no faith in immortality, and said more than once to me that he believed that death ended all. This was one of the keys to his complex character. Material things meant much to him, because the preparation for the spiritual life was, after all, secondary.

He also noted that Lever "was not a creator . . . but he had a genius for adaptation".[179] That has an interesting bearing on Lever's understanding and presentation of community. It has an equal bearing on his attitude to church membership, and his brief attraction – common to many intelligent but unevenly educated members of his generation – to Christian Science and Spiritualism;[180] and it explains his Freemasonry. In 1902, and not yet a Mason, Lever attended the banquet which followed the inauguration of Port Sunlight's William Hesketh Lever Lodge No. 2916. He became a Mason (indeed he was the new Lodge's first initiate), and thereafter Grand Warden of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Cheshire and Past Junior Grand Warden of the United Grand Lodge of England, and he provided a carefully furnished Masonic Room in the Art Gallery which he built at Port Sunlight and named in memory of his late wife.[181]

With this we return to Lever's obsequies and the extent of their Congregationalism. They began quietly with a service at The Hill, the London house in which he died. The funeral itself was at Christ Church (admission by ticket) in spring rain.[182] Almost simultaneously there were memorial services in Bolton, Boston (Mass.), Bristol, Kinshasa, London and Stornoway. First,

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177 *ODNB*; R. Perren, "Watson, Sir James Angus", in D. J. Jeremy and C. Shaw (eds), *Dictionary of Business Biography*, Vol. 5 (London: Butterworth, 1986), pp. 686-90.

178 A. Watson, *My Life: An Autobiography* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1937), pp. 140-44.

179 Ibid., p.143.

180 Leverhulme, 2nd Viscount, *Lord Leverhulme*, p. 275.

181 Ibid., pp. 260-1; "The Leverhulme Collection, Thornton Manor, Wirral, Merseyside", *Sotheby's Sale Catalogue*, Vol. I (2001) pp. 130-33; *Progress: In Memoriam: William Hesketh Viscount Leverhulme*, pp. 129-30.

182 *Progress: In Memoriam William Hesketh Viscount Leverhulme*, pp. 85, 98-105.

however, the deceased peer lay in state in his Art Gallery, amidst rivers of flowers, surveyed by a fine portrait of himself, between busts of his late wife and himself, and in front of Lord Leighton's *Daphnephoria*, a Roman romp of plump young men scampering and ripe young girls simpering.[183] This almost pagan grandeur was for a man who was a Congregationalist, although the only body to which he could commit himself in membership was the Freemasons: they expected no belief, just the ritual of comradeship and the comfort of service in brotherhood. A church he could not join, only attend. By birth and sympathy he belonged to the oldest, most democratic, of the English Free Churches but, by temperament an autocrat, he could not surrender. He remained an Evangelical Free Churchman for whom there was not to be an Evangelical experience. That is the most suggestive clue to the magic of Sunlight.

XIII: Lever and Soap

Sunlight owed everything to soap. Soap was a staple of solid grocery businesses, and William Hesketh Lever was the son of an increasingly prosperous retail and wholesale grocer. He was born 19 September 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition, of the Crossley patent, and of the birth of Saltaire. He died 7 May 1925, the year before the General Strike. The Levers were part of a network of steadily rising Boltonians, many of them associated with what in 1863 became St George's Road Congregational Church. In 1870 W. H. Lever's sister Mary married W. F. Tillotson (1844-1899) who in 1867 had founded the *Bolton Evening News*, the first cheap and successful provincial daily evening newspaper.[184] Thus began an influential chain of provincial newspapers which remained in Tillotson control for several generations. W. F. Tillotson had a promotional and entrepreneurial flair that matched Lever's. The Tillotsons, like the Levers, were St George's Road Congregationalists; the fortunes of the two families were intertwined for several decades. In 1872 Lever became a partner in his father's firm with the generously large salary of £800.[185] In 1874 he married. His bride, Elizabeth Ellen Hulme, came from a St George's Road family; the minister who married the young couple had baptized them over twenty years before.[186] At the end of the year Charles Berry was called to the Bolton pastorate. It was a new age, commercially and spiritually.

From 1877 the firm spread outwards, first to Wigan. By the early 1880s it was the largest wholesale grocery business between Liverpool and Manchester and by the mid-1880s, prompted – fatefully in the light of later years – by a summer holiday in the Western Isles in 1884, Lever could contemplate

183 Ibid., p. 93. Leighton's *Daphnephoria* had been purchased in 1913: *Sotheby's Sale Catalogue*, Vol. II, p. 519.

184 For Tillotson see *ODNB*; F. Singleton, *Tillotsons 1850-1950: Centenary of a Family Business* (London: Tillotson, 1950).

185 W. H. Lever, *Lord Leverhulme*, p. 30.

186 Ibid., p. 31.

retirement.[187] A retired commercial gentleman in the prime of life needed an occupation. It was here that the soap breakthrough came. If Lever had not considered retirement, he might never have become a millionaire.

Lever's commercial training had been grounded in the mutuality of a respectably sized family business and honed by a stint of commercial travelling, at which he excelled. Since 1874 the firm had marketed Lever's Pure Honey Soap. Honey, of course, had nothing to do with it. Now Lever determined to market a perfect soap under a perfect brand name, as facilitated by the 1875 Trademarks Act, and he determined to aim down market. He would produce an attractively packaged product for customers used to buying tallow soap hacked from a long and unappetizing bar. It was to be entirely a matter of packaging. It was a matter of appearances. There was at this stage no intention of making the soap. He only turned to that when he was frustrated by the difficulties raised by existing manufacturers. To cut a long story short – and as so often happened throughout his career it was a surprisingly convoluted and often cut-throat story – he fastened on the name "Sunlight".[188]

In 1885, in association with his younger brother, James Darcy Lever (1854-1910), whom he consistently overshadowed but who was the other principal in Lever Brothers, Lever leased a soapery in Warrington.[189] He took over its staff of soap boilers and advisers. He benefited from one advance, the use of vegetable oils rather than tallow, and he benefited even more from ruthless advertising. He keenly observed his likeliest customers. He was alert – especially after visiting North America – to American business methods and their techniques in sales promotion. Hence a poster of a youth gazing at a picture of a woman and wondering, "Why does a woman look old sooner than a man?"[190] No wonder that by the 1890s Sunlight Soap was the best selling brand of soap in the United Kingdom, with the stage set for Lever to become, after years of takeovers, lawsuits and relentless publicity, the head of a multinational combine which embraced the Western Isles and the South Seas, which ran from Bolton to the Belgian Congo, in each of which he was the most powerful individual, and which flourished in the Americas, Australasia, and the Continent of Europe. In 1890 Sunlight Soap sold 18,000 tons in Britain. In 1914 the Lever Group produced 125,000 tons.[191] By 1925 there was a workforce worldwide of 86,000 with 18,000 co-partners and 187,000 shareholders; Lever was Sole Ordinary Shareholder.[192] This Free Trade Liberal had built up one of the biggest commercial and industrial combines in history. There was excitement: in 1919 the firm's authorized capital leapt from £40m to £100m.[193] There were short

187 Ibid., p. 37.
188 Ibid., p. 38.
189 Ibid., p. 39.
190 Ibid., p. 43.
191 C. Wilson, *The History of Unilever*, Vol. I (London: Cassell & Co., 1954), pp. 67, 124.
192 Ibid., p. 290.
193 Jolly, *Lord Leverhulme: A Biography*, p. 188.

cuts: in 1920, in its determination to pre-empt openings in West Africa, the firm agreed to purchase for £8m the Niger Co. Ltd., whose accounts they had not examined. When they were examined it was found that Lever Brothers had taken over an immediate obligation to repay an overdraft of £2m.[194] This was business as international politics. When asked its secret Lever, the Englishman whom the *Toronto Globe* bracketed with Carnegie, Rockefeller and Ford, on whom all depended for too long, replied: "I organize, deputize, and criticize".[195]

The weakness lay in the deputizing and increasingly affected the organizing and the criticizing. The authoritarian aspects of Lever's character grew with success, age and deafness. The strong collectivity of the Bolton years – strong because so many of Lever's early associates were thoroughly able men – mellowed into the acquiescence of yes-men. However unchanging and universal human nature might be in the eyes of a keenly observant marketing man, Bolton and Wirral were not the Outer Isles let alone the Solomon Islands or the Congo. This Liberal Free-trader naturally promoted both mutuality and self-improvement in mutuality, those secular expressions of Congregational Independency. He had a genuine horror of monopoly. Yet his personality, business methods, and cumulatively buccaneering success ensured that he was the ultimate monopolist. This was played out in his business empire from accumulation to the verge of disintegration. Disaster was averted by a structured de-personalizing which had begun even before his unexpected death. His son and grandson played their parts in the ongoing empire, but theirs was an increasingly nominal role. These trends furnished the undercurrents to the "Old Chief's" distinctively consistent views of politics and social organization.

XIV: Lever's Philanthropy

Lever was most certainly a steadily thinking citizen. His upbringing in Bolton and his formation in business encouraged what W. J. Reader called his "lifelong passion for planning, for building, and for regulating people's lives for their own good as he saw it" and what W. P. Jolly called his "continuing interest in the social microcosm, especially one conceived, constructed and furnished with inhabitants by himself".[196] From the turn of the nineteenth century it was expressed by his advocacy – and practice – of what he called prosperity sharing (the welfare and benefits schemes), out of which grew his interpretation of co-partnership (the sharing of profits). He justified the former in a lecture to the Birkenhead Literary and Scientific Society in 1900:

194 Leverhulme, 2nd Viscount, *Lord Leverhulme*, pp. 224-5; Jolly, *Lord Leverhulme: A Biography*, p. 197; R. Davenport-Hines, *Dudley Docker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 165.

195 *Progress: In Memoriam William Hesketh Viscount Leverhulme*, pp. 154, 141.

196 W. J. Reader, "Lever, William Hesketh", in D. J. Jeremy and C. Shaw (eds), *Dictionary of Business Biography*, Vol. 3 (London: Butterworth, 1985), p. 748; Jolly, *Lord Leverhulme. A Biography*, p. 8.

> Adam Smith is largely responsible for the antagonism of Labour towards Capital through his statement that Labour is the source of all wealth … A greater mistake was never made … Labour of itself can never produce wealth … But if Labour is well directed, if the fairy of good management appears on the scene, all is changed, and Labour can and does produce wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.[197]

This is how he put it to his employees three years later:

> If you leave this money with me, I shall use it to provide for you everything which makes life pleasant – viz. nice houses, comfortable homes, and healthy recreation. Besides, I am disposed to allow profit sharing under no other than that form.[198]

Sharing, whether of profit or prosperity, was a function of paternalism. It was arguably a step up from philanthropy. While philanthropy allowed for imagination, and might even be prodigal, sharing implied mutuality, it opened the door to equality. In theory co-partnership opened that door more widely. It was a further step. In the early years of the twentieth century it appealed to many Nonconformist employers. It was a responsible businessman's alternative to the Co-operative Movement. It had a moral flavour which Charles Wilson, the historian of Lever Brothers, described as "a curious mixture of the ethical principles of the Band of Hope and the precepts of Samuel Smiles" and – at least in Wilson's view – it was bound to fail. Full co-partnership was impossible in an enterprise of such scale and complexity, and Wilson noted that the average annual dividend for each co-partner never exceeded £20. Lever, "individualist though he was...failed to grasp the delicacy or the importance of these problems of social obligation which he had set himself".[199]

Even so, Lever did not shirk legislative action if there were no other way of securing a manifestly just outcome. He was the first Wirral employer to introduce the eight-hour day and ten years later he advocated a six-hour day.[200] The radical young Congregationalist, Stanley Unwin, who combined Fisher Unwin's publishing genius with consummate financial acumen, edited Lever's *The Six-Hour Day and Other Industrial Questions*; but Lever proved unable to implement his scheme of a working day of two six-hour shifts because of what it would mean for the established patterns of his employees' lives and because of trade union opposition.[201] He supported the payment of MPs in 1906 and the introduction of Old Age Pensions in 1907 and he favoured women's suffrage. In

197 Quoted in Leverhulme, 2nd Viscount, *Lord Leverhulme*, p. 142.
198 Reader, "Lever, William Hesketh", pp. 748-9; Wilson, *The History of Unilever*, p. 147.
199 Wilson, *The History of Unilever*, pp. 154, 151.
200 Leverhulme, 2nd Viscount, *Lord Leverhulme*, pp. 84, 198.
201 Ibid., p. 202. For Stanley Unwin, step-nephew of T. Fisher Unwin, see *ODNB*.

such cases he was ahead of many seasoned men of affairs.[202] His argument for pensions was a characteristically blunt mix of contemporary pragmatism and classical Liberalism. He was "not sure that thrift was the highest form of citizenship ... the State should do for the individual citizen what it was out of his power to do for himself, and when it was for the advantage of the State and the well-being of the citizen to have it done".[203] It was natural for *Progress*, the firm's magazine, to quote the assessments of three leading journals in its memorial issue for the Old Chief. For the *Morning Post*, Lever's life was "a standing refutation of the Socialist doctrines; for no social effort could have created what the world owes to his individuality". For *The Times*, "Lever had the ideal of socializing and Christianizing the machinery of industry and adapting to modern requirements the old spirit of brotherhood which characterized at their best the days of hand labour". And the *Spectator* suggested that it would "pay Labour to encourage, even very carefully to cultivate, men like Leverhulme".[204]

Socialization without socialism allowed for comfortably limited horizons but there was one area in which the horizons constantly expanded. The Levers, like the Crossleys and Salts, took education seriously. They too did their denominational duty. W. H. Lever took a characteristic interest in the Cambridge rebuilding of Cheshunt College; he warmed to its nondenominational foundation as a training college for evangelical ministry.[205] Hulme Lever was a benefactor of Caterham School, although his donation came at a difficult time and it was felt that he could have been more generous.[206] The real impact, however, was to be seen in the schools at Port Sunlight and Thornton Hough and in the reconstitution of Bolton School, that long transformation of an old foundation which allowed W. H. Lever the enjoyable conceit of being founder's kin: his version for young Bolton of the Crossleys's almshouses for old Halifax.[207] Lever's impact was even more radically to be seen in his schemes for the University of Liverpool, where his endowments of the Schools of Town Planning and Civic Design, Tropical Medicine, and Russian Studies gave a bracing edge to Red-Brick University scholarship.[208] Educationally his legacy was almost without bounds. His industrial empire was a shambles but his will established a trust with research and education among its objects. At the last, the Old Chief, having organized, had no option but to deputize, and leave the criticism to

202 Leverhulme, 2nd Viscount, *Lord Leverhulme*, pp. 118-120, 177.
203 Jolly, *Lord Leverhulme: A Biography*, p. 72.
204 *Progress: In Memoriam William Hesketh Viscount Leverhulme*, pp. 151-2.
205 Leverhulme, 2nd Viscount, *Lord Leverhulme*, p. 254.
206 H. Stafford, *A History of Caterham School* (Shrewsbury: Wilding & Son Ltd., 1945), pp. 89, 92, 100, 109; Private correspondence, E. De C. Blomfield to C. Binfield (17 March, 26 March 1980).
207 Leverhulme, 2nd Viscount, *Lord Leverhulme*, pp. 124-6; E. Hubbard and M. Shippobottom, "Architecture", *Lord Leverhulme: Founder of the Lady Lever Art Gallery and Port Sunlight on Merseyside* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1980), p. 194.
208 Leverhulme, 2nd Viscount, *Lord Leverhulme*, p. 139; Hubbard and Shippobottom, "Architecture", pp. 192-3; Liverpool was the original "Red-Brick University".

posterity. His trustees shaped the Leverhulme Trust into "the chief non-governmental funder of individual research in the second half of the twentieth century".[209] Here, perhaps, was the most imaginative issue of Congregational Independency and its encouragement of self-improvement in mutuality.

Shortly after Lever's death the journalist, Harold Spender, reminisced about him. Spender, like Lever when in Town, lived in Hampstead, and he was a member of R. F. Horton's congregation at Lyndhurst Road, where Lever sometimes worshipped.[210] The Lever whom he knew and liked to visit at The Hill, on the edge of the Heath, was a man of civic and political clout, Chairman of Bebington Urban District Council (1902), Mayor of Bolton (1918), High Sheriff of Lancashire (1917), an unsuccessful Liberal parliamentary candidate on five occasions, Liberal MP for Wirral 1906-10, and a Liberal peer from 1917. This Lever was a journalist's joy: a homely man of simple tastes ("except that he loved space and big houses"), with a broad Lancashire accent, indeed "rather a rare type of the rich man in England. He was more like an American millionaire".[211] Such comparisons were inescapable. Lever's deafness, which he attributed to an overdose of quinine but seems to have been a family trait, reduced his conversation to a series of non-sequiturs, a sort of thinking aloud. He remained, however, a good platform speaker with a gift for simplifying his origins ("My father, who kept a little grocer's shop …")[212] and for simplifying his methods. His story of the birth of Mac Fisheries, his nationwide chain of fish shops, is a successful retelling of Titus Salt looking in frustration at the seashore near Scarborough, convinced that a fortune was to be made in seaweed, if only he knew how:

> I was staying by the sea, and as I looked at it one day I began thinking – here was a country where you paid no rent and yet reaped a harvest all the year round. Here was a badly conducted trade. Why not a service from sea to shop?[213]

Why not Mac Fisheries?

Socialists loathed him; their sharpshooters pursued him. Once Spender presided at a lecture which Lever gave in Hampstead. Socialism's chatterers were out in force. Lever, smiling and genial, celebrated the God-given attributes of Capitalism. "He conceded nothing and he was absurdly, intensely provocative. The Socialists glared and prepared questions. They were going to give him a bad time". At which point Lever turned to Spender: "It is useless for me to stay.

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209 *ODNB*.

210 A. Peel and J. A. R. Marriott, *Robert Forman Horton* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1937), p. 148.

211 H. Spender, *The Fire of Life* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, n.d. [c.1926]), pp. 300-301.

212 Ibid., pp. 301-2.

213 Ibid., p. 302.

I shall not be able to hear a word they say. So I am going. Goodbye!"[214] And this fat Cheshire cat left Spender alone with the Socialist tigers.

XV: Port Sunlight

A decade earlier A. G. Gardiner, who was another of R. F. Horton's Lyndhurst Road journalists, turned his gaze on that pioneer "in the new kingship of trade", that "real russet-coated captain of industry", W. H. Lever.[215] He found in such a man, who "could no more miss material success than you, sir, with the retreating chin and the uncertain eye … can miss failure", a "vague menace to the commonwealth".[216] Gardiner's Cromwellian tone was carefully contrived and no less carefully married to Napoleonic language. His Lever was "of the Napoleon breed, born to marshal big battalions and win empires, if not in war, then in peace",[217] and in the thoroughness of Lever's "private enthusiasms" Gardiner found another form of empire-building, no less disturbingly attractive to his Liberal mind:

> He has built at Port Sunlight a garden city which is one of the first and still one of the best object-lessons in the science and art of industrial housing; he has elaborated a great co-partnership system which makes all his workpeople after certain service sharers in the prosperity of the firm; he buys a mountain and presents it as pleasaunce to his native town; he buys the town of Lymm and commences a great garden city enterprise; he buys an agricultural estate in Cheshire and begins roadmaking and experimental farming; he prepares an elaborate design for the reconstruction of the town of Bolton; he purchases Stafford House and gives it to the nation; incidentally – and at this I am grieved – he extends the outer ramparts of the house at Hampstead so that they dominate and despoil the most sylvan beauty spot of the wonderful Heath …[218]

In 1887 Lever, with an architect friend, William Owen, feeling that the Warrington soaperies were unfit for purpose, looked for, found and bought an apparently unpromising site: fifty-two Merseyside acres of creek and marsh. He paid £10,400 for them. In fact the unpromising site promised excellent land and water transport, it tapped on to a plentiful labour supply, and its marshiness had been greatly overstated. Twenty-four acres would do for the soaperies, the rest for the village.[219]

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214 Ibid., p. 303.
215 A. G. Gardiner, "Sir William Lever", *The Pillars of Society* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., n.d. [1916]), pp. 184, 191.
216 Ibid., p. 186.
217 Ibid., p. 188.
218 Ibid., pp. 189-190. The scheme for Lymm proved abortive, and the gardens of the Hill are now public and an adornment to Hampstead Heath.
219 Creese, *The Search for Environment*, p. 109.

Building began in 1888. The first houses came in 1889. By 1907 there were 720, rising to nearly 900 on well over 200 acres and housing 4,000 people.[220] So developed a striking union of art and nature. The creeks were first used, then drained and transformed into gardens and dells. Houses and trees were placed to give an artfully leafy informality to the streetscape. The density was low and the spaciousness was accentuated by building the houses in blocks, enclosing allotments on the inside but fronted outside by gardens which the firm maintained lest individual householders turn them into chicken runs. Each cottage block was designed as a whole, to suggest a rambling mansion built of antique materials – brick, roughcast, tiles, sandstone, half-timbered and pargeted, vividly patterned, a Cheshire vernacular straying into the rest of Olde England and crossed by the Low Countries, as if Bruges had come to Birkenhead, all of it carefully and expensively handled by a series of distinguished architects, none of it sham. By 1910 the village was said to have cost £350,000 and its upkeep took 20 per cent of the rent roll; there was no profiteering in that.[221] Much of the building, so joyously traditional (even the inn, which at first was run on temperance lines, looked like a manor house), was nonetheless fresh, sensible and well planned. A representative house had piped hot and cold water, an inside bathroom, and no attics; the living room was fourteen feet by twelve, its smallest bedroom was twelve feet by nine.[222]

Then an interesting thing happened. As at Saltaire, only more dramatically so, there was an aesthetic change. The University of Liverpool's developing architectural school was increasingly subject to American ideas, to concepts of the City Beautiful realized in the American Beaux Arts style. Lever was impressed. In 1909 he offered prizes to Liverpool students for a scheme for the future development of Port Sunlight.[223] The result, won by Ernest Prestwich, imposed a formal axis of avenues on the existing informality. There would be two great boulevards, one leading to Christ Church and the other, at right angles, would culminate in an Art Gallery where the traditional English village was metamorphosed into a temple, or perhaps a capitol. The firm which carried out Prestwich's scheme was headed by Thomas Mawson (1861-1933), the Windermere and Morecambe Congregationalist who transformed Lever's private landscapes at Thornton Manor, Rivington Pike and The Hill, Hampstead. Mawson was an entrepreneurial landscape architect (he refused to call himself a gardener) with a considerable civic consciousness, wide international contacts and influence to match.[224] His fruitful collaboration with Lever brings into relief the paradoxical nature of Lever's most visible legacy.

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220 Ibid., p. 111.
221 Ibid., p. 125; Meakin, *Model Factories and Villages*, pp. 426-433.
222 Meakin, *Model Factories and Villages*, pp. 413-2.
223 Creese, *The Search for Environment*, p. 133.
224 Ibid., pp. 133-4; T. H. Mawson, *The Life and Work of an English Landscape Architect: An Autobiography* (London: The Richards Press, n.d. [c. 1927]), esp. pp. 115-7, 125-9, 190-1, 207-8.

Port Sunlight was the most lavish expression of Lever's prosperity sharing: in the words of the *"Sunlight" Year Book for 1898*, "Messrs. Lever Brothers, Limited, have built a whole village for their workpeople on lines as far removed from the ordinary type of artisans' dwelling ... as Windsor Castle is from 1,002 Deadly-dull Terrace".[225] The impact struck some as no less unreal. A Bolton trade union official told Lever in 1919 that "No man of an independent turn of mind can breathe for long the atmosphere of Port Sunlight. That might be news to your Lordship, but we have tried it. The profit-sharing system not only enslaves and degrades the workers, it tends to make them servile and sycophant".[226] A Congregational minister who had been "quartered" there told Angus Watson that at times he felt "intended to be an advertisement for 'Sunlight Soap' more than for the Kingdom of God".[227] The retrospective, small-scale, villagey, unreality of the rich man's whim almost perversely downplayed the magnitude of his enterprises; and his art collections, the cream of them extracted for public display in the Lady Lever Gallery, intensified the contradictions. These were a mixture of sentiment and sensuality, a combination of conventional contemporary taste with an eye to their promotional value. Yet they also demonstrated an increasingly discriminating knowledge of furniture, *objets d'art*, and paintings.[228] W. H. Lever was by any standards one of the foremost collectors of his age and not the least of his contributions was to communicate that in and for Port Sunlight. It took a cultural *attaché* at the German embassy, Hermann Muthesius, to recognise the force of this and to discern why, whatever the criticisms, Port Sunlight worked and was important. Its houses were only factory workers' houses: "But they contain the whole repertoire of contemporary means of expression in such accomplished form that the estate may be considered the flower of the small modern house in a small space".[229] It was traditional – or, better, it was vernacular – in atmosphere but it was modern in plan. It furnished "an ideal combination of comfort, ease and artistic quality with the economic possibilities appropriate to their status". It had brought "art to the life of the working classes" in such a way that social questions had "been firmly linked to questions of art ... greatly to their advantage".[230]

It was a rare achievement and it demonstrated and celebrated Lever's wider commitment to the Garden City ideal. Port Sunlight was not simply a rich man's whim. From the late 1890s Lever had been exercised by questions of land ownership. He increasingly advocated the municipal ownership of land and new methods of communal regulation to cater for city living.[231] Despite appearances

225 "English Architecture", *The Sunlight Year Book for 1898* (n.d. [1897]), p. 244.
226 Creese, *The Search for Environment*, p. 108.
227 Watson, *My Life: An Autobiography*, p. 138.
228 E. Morris, "Paintings and Sculpture", *Lord Leverhulme: Founder of the Lady Lever Art Gallery and Port Sunlight on Merseyside*, pp. 14-82.
229 H. Muthesius, *The English House*, Vol. I (London: Frances Lincoln Ltd., 2007), pp. 199-200; this is the first complete English edition of *Das Englische Haus* (2nd ed. Berlin: 1908-11).
230 Ibid., pp. 201-2.
231 Creese, *The Search for Environment*, pp. 139-40.

Port Sunlight did not reflect a flight away from the city and back to the land and Lever, although never an easy associate for civic idealists, was to the fore in supporting the Garden City Association and kindred bodies.[232] Port Sunlight replaced Saltaire and vied with Bournville as the place to be visited by socially-concerned tourists, from princes to prime ministers. By 1905 parties were admitted "five times a day at stated hours, once only on Saturdays". In 1909, 54,000 visitors toured the works.[233] It could not be a template but it was an inspiration.

At the end of his life Lever, most urban of men, was one of Britain's largest landowners as well as a world-class capitalist. Commentators referred loosely to Black Port Sunlights, but Leverville in the Belgian Congo was in all respects a parody of Sunlight and the company's justification of its increasingly criticized policies reads as uncomfortably with a contemporary as with a twenty-first-century gloss.[234] Leverburgh, in the Western Isles, was never given the opportunity to develop but Lever's understandable failure to grasp the complexities of Scottish attitudes in Lewis and Harris was nonetheless inexcusable in a Nonconformist Liberal of his generation.[235] It was the more so because this last enterprise really was a retirement occupation, exciting, visionary, if strangely misconceived, and separate from the increasingly irksome trammels of Lever Brothers.

The inescapable paradoxes accumulate. Each one captures an element of the Congregational experience and its social impact. On the Wirral there is Port Sunlight, its life enhancing experience confirmed by a complex of benefits and opportunities, with the works to one side, embracing an equal complex of benefits and responsibilities, profits shared to a degree, prosperity shared beyond doubt. There is also Thornton Hough, the quintessential village, with the manor house and its pleasure grounds to one side and the village children encouraged to tug at Lever's coat tails, "Hullo! Uncle William", as if Squire Lever had lived there from time immemorial instead of being a Radical Dissenting soapboiling grocer from Bolton. And there are the squire-turned-baronet's two steps up in the peerage: Baron Leverhulme of Bolton-le-Moors, epitomising true civic success, and Viscount Leverhulme of the Isles, in standing testimony to a lost cause. And at the last, in London, there was a City palace fit for a multinational empire.

That was apt in all respects. In 1921, Lever Brothers transferred their headquarters from Port Sunlight to London, taking over the old De Keyser's Royal Hotel on Blackfriars and calling it Lever House.[236] Lever saw a building opportunity and entrusted James Lomax-Simpson with it. In fact it was not built

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232 Ibid., pp. 141-3, 202.

233 Meakin, *Model Factories and Villages,* p. 116; Hubbard and Shippobottom, "Architecture", p. 175.

234 Marchal, *Lord Leverhulme's Ghosts*, pp. 15-16, 23, 27, 34, 86-8, 95-8, 134, 165-6, 170-1.

235 See R. Hutchinson, *The Soapman, Lewis, Harris and Lord Leverhulme* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2003).

236 Wilson, *The History of Unilever*, p. 272.

until 1930-2, after Lever Brothers had merged with the Dutch Margarine Unie and Lever House had become Unilever House, with Sir John Burnet, Tait and Lorne as executant architects, although Lomax-Simpson never ceased to insist that his was the design.[237]

The site was historic. Long before it had been De Keyser's Royal it had been a royal palace, the Bridewell, until the City had taken it over in 1553 and the palace had become a prison, at first notable rather than notorious as a house of correction. The Bridewell's new role was to "correct the unprofitable". It was to be an agent in remodelling London's social life and institutions and a European pioneer in combining custodial sentences with useful work.[238] That would have appealed to Lever although it is unlikely that he would have viewed its history as it is now seen. In the two decades before the Second World War, Lever House, now Unilever House, announced a still Congregational ascent from Blackfriars Bridge to Holborn Viaduct, past Blackfriars House, the hardly less grand headquarters of Spicer Brothers, the Congregational paper men whose merchandise facilitated the packaging and advertising on which Lever Brothers had relied, past the corner block which had briefly (1905-1920) housed the London Missionary Society, across Ludgate Circus, carefully by-passing St Paul's Cathedral, for the Memorial Hall, Congregationalism's headquarters on the site of the Fleet Prison, built to commemorate Separatist Martyrs as well as the Ejected Ministers of 1662, and so to the City Temple, the Congregational St Paul's on Holborn Viaduct, the City's remaining great Dissenting pulpit, as rebuilt by Titus Salt's architects, Mawson and Lockwood, in 1874, the year of W. H. Lever's marriage and John Crossley's election to Parliament; such a sequence of an alternative society's contradictory symbols.[239]

XVI: Conclusions

The Salts, Crossleys and Levers were at once exceptional and representative. As Congregational captains of industry they were the victims of their own success. Generations pass. The claims of responsible living may not change but the interpretation of them does, and it does so within society as well as within churches; and profession of faith cannot be taken for granted even within the most committed of church families. The engagement of manufacturers with housing and co-partnership schemes for their workforces and with lifestyles in general, continued into the first half of the twentieth century. Sir Halley Stewart

237 Personal correspondence, J. Lomax-Simpson to C. Binfield (25 February 1977); Hubbard and Shippobottom, "Architecture", p. 198.

238 J. Sharpe, "Police for a naughty pack", *The Times Literary Supplement* (16 January 2009), p. 12, review of P. Griffiths, *Lost Londons: Change, Crime and Control in the Capital City 1550-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

239 F. W. Troup, the architect of Blackfriars House, Spalding, the architect of the London Missionary Society building, and Tarring, the architect of Memorial Hall, were all of Congregational stock.

(1838-1937), the brickmaker and founder of Stewartby, in Bedfordshire, was a less stellar type of Congregationalist than W. H. Lever, but his career provides a parallel rather than a contrast.[240] F. H. Crittall (1860-1935), the metal window frame manufacturer and founder of Silver End, in Essex, though latterly "indifferent to all organised religion", was reared in Congregationalism, and Silver End had its Congregational church.[241] J. S. Ruston (1869-1939), whose engineering firm industrialized Lincoln and whose family had been Lincoln's leading Congregationalists, envisaged a "Ruston Garden Village" in the immediate aftermath of the Great War; it was to be called Swanpool.[242] Planned as a blend of Garden City and City Beautiful on cooperative lines, Swanpool failed to materialize, only 113 of the intended 3,000 houses were built.[243]

That was a sign of the coming age. The economics and politics of model villages were changing. The future of the Quaker Cadburys' Bournville and the Quaker Rowntrees' New Earswick had been assured by making them over to trustees. Budgett Meakin called this "propaganda by deed".[244] The propagation of the ideals of community and co-partnership, of industrial mutuality, now lay less with industrial and commercial entrepreneurs than with a new breed of expert, knighted crusaders some of them. They were organised busybodies, practical visionaries, entrepreneurial networkers, experts in social exploration, pioneers of a new politics, men like Percy Alden to whom reference has already been made and, most representative of them all, W. H. Lever's contemporary, Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928), the Congregationally-formed pioneer of the Garden City.[245] From the first, Letchworth and Welwyn, Howard's prototype Garden Cities, had flourishing Free Churches with strong Congregational components and Hampstead Garden Suburb's Free Church must have seemed like the future at prayer, with its radical sprinkling of Labour MPs, discriminating journalists, and well-placed civil servants. It was Lyndhurst Road for a rising generation of Baptists and Congregationalists, freeing themselves of mere denominationalism.

The Second World War induced the birth of the Welfare State. The post-war New Towns were social necessities, not philanthropic luxuries. Health and education were as necessary to national security as profit and the armed forces.

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240 For Stewart, see *Who They Were*, pp. 219-21; D. Newton, *Sir Halley Stewart* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968).

241 E. Crittall, "Crittall, Francis Henry", D. J. Jeremy and C. Shaw (eds), *Dictionary of Business Biography*, Vol. 1 (London: Butterworth, 1985), pp. 831-34.

242 N. Chapple, "C. H. James (1893-1953)", unpublished Postgraduate Diploma Thesis in Building Conservation, Architectural Association (2011), p. 11.

243 Ibid., pp. 11, 13. For J. S. Ruston, see *Who Was Who 1939-1940*, p. 1185; for his father, Joseph Ruston (1835-1897) see D. C. Phillips, "Ruston, Joseph", in *Dictionary of Business Biography*, Vol 4 (1985), pp. 994-5.

244 Meakin, *Model Factories and Villages*, p. 433.

245 *ODNB*; D. Macfadyen, *Sir Ebenezer Howard and the Town Planning Movement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970 [1933]).

The state was the nation and the nation was a confederation of communities. The ideal was possible. Or so it seemed. The Free Churches, with Congregationalists strongly representative among them, had to a remarkable degree staked out the ground for this and those embarrassingly tall poppies, their great paternalists, had played their part, at once fleeting and determinative. Their later counterparts were less and less likely to be Free Churchmen, less and less likely to be locally based and locally credible. They were more likely to be global figures yet unlikely to be world citizens. Representative government would not shape their mindset.

These tendencies, too, had long histories. In 1921, the year that Lever's headquarters moved to Blackfriars, Francis D'Arcy Cooper (1882-1949) joined the unofficial "inner cabinet" which W. H. Lever belatedly instituted.[246] From 1923 Cooper was formally a director, and indeed Vice-Chairman. From 1925 he was Chairman. From 1921 the director in charge of Port Sunlight was C. W. Barnish, the Wigan-born Congregationalist, son of W. H. Lever's doctor. The heir-apparent, Hulme Lever, who was generally agreed to be a thoroughly competent businessman, was not deposed; he became the company's Governor. Cooper, however, belonged to a new breed. He was neither a Lancastrian nor a Congregationalist and he was not an industrialist although he proved to be an outstanding industrial manager. He was a chartered accountant. It was Cooper whose advice extricated Lever Brothers from the mess into which the purchase of the Niger Company had threatened to precipitate it; it was Cooper who rationalized, modernized and depersonalized what had turned into a perplexing dictatorship and who engineered the merger with Margarine Unie which made Unilever one of the largest companies in Europe. The accountant was replacing the paternalist as the face of large-scale industry, and the responsibilities were different.

The legislative constraints were also different. In 1939, Pitman's published *The Community and Social Service*.[247] This was one of an occasional series dealing with social administration, public assistance, and local government. The author was William Blackshaw (1866-1953), a recently retired Congregational minister.[248] Blackshaw was a model of contemporary ministry, He was well-educated (City of London School; degrees from Oxford, Dublin and St Andrews; spells at the Universities of Marburg and Berlin), soundly married (his wife's family, the Bantocks, were leaders in Wolverhampton's philanthropic and civic life and in the church to which Charles Berry had moved from Bolton),[249] with contrasting but

246 J. R. Edwards, "Cooper, Sir Francis D'Arcy", in Jeremy and Shaw (eds), *Dictionary of Business Biography*, Vol. 1, pp. 781-5.

247 W. Blackshaw, *The Community and Social Service* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1939).

248 *Congregational Year Book* (1954), pp. 505-6.

249 The Bantocks had been railway agents in the Midlands since 1858; Alderman Thomas Bantock (1823-95) was Mayor of Wolverhampton 1869-70; his son (and Blackshaw's brother-in-law), Alderman Baldwin Bantock (1862-1938) was Mayor 1905-7, 1914-15: *Wolverhampton Express and Star* (9 February 1938). I am indebted to Mr W. Blackshaw for much information.

demanding pastorates in the centre of Sheffield and the London suburbs. His experience incorporated the worlds of Free Church philanthropy and paternalism. The heart of his experience, however, lay in the Settlement movement. In Sheffield he was founder and warden of the determinedly unconventional Croft House Settlement (1901-1913) and in London he was co-warden of the Mansfield House University Settlement, Canning Town (1926-1938).

In Sheffield he was felt to be "an intellectual man brimming over with enthusiasm for the poor".[250] His vocal position on the theologically and politically liberal wing of Congregationalism aroused the scorn of P. T. Forsyth who had moved on from the days when he had played a not dissimilar role in Shipley, Saltaire and Bradford. Blackshaw had refused to restrict ministry to the pieties of pulpit and pew; he called that sort of thing "Coddling Saints".[251] Forsyth replied with a grand irritability, speaking of "impatient reformers who take a tone of superior realism, and coarsely speak of Church life and the edification of believers as a mere 'coddling of the Saints'".[252] These were Commonwealth rumblings. They had a Cromwellian sound.

Blackshaw was sure of his ground. In 1905, during Forsyth's Chairmanship of the Congregational Union, Blackshaw had delivered a paper to the Leeds Autumnal Meetings on "Institutional Churches". His message was straightforward: "The Congregational Church must be the Church of the poor as well as of the rich if it is to continue to be the Church of Christ". It must, therefore, be "the home of the people of the slum, and, taking them as it finds them, it must endeavour, from the basis of their common and felt needs, to lift them to a higher level of manhood and womanhood"; and those ministering to it, preaching "in the main, outside in the streets and courts", should be "educated, cultured men, who have philosophical tastes and broad human and social sympathies".[253] Fifteen years later Blackshaw addressed the fourth International Congregational Council at Boston (Mass.) on "The Church and the Social Order", and five years after that he was in Stockholm for the seminal Conference on Life and Work.[254]

The Community and Social Service was thus the issue of considerable practical and theoretical experience. It originated in lectures delivered in the Training Department of Mansfield House University Settlement, intended as historical and contextual introductions for groups of Free Church and Anglican ordinands meeting professionals in the statutory and voluntary sectors of social service. The aim was to bring the ordinands to grips with social structure and social

250 *Sheffield Congregational Year Book* (1908), frontispiece.
251 Ibid., p. 218.
252 P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (2nd Edn London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), p. 75.
253 W. Blackshaw, *Institutional Churches. A Paper read before the Congregational Union of England and Wales at Leeds, October 11th 1905* (London: *Examiner* Office, 1905), pp. 3, 6, 8. I am indebted to Professor John Roach for this reference.
254 I am indebted to Dr J. H. Thompson for this information.

function; in short, with human reality. The result was a manual summarising where matters stood with regard to health, environment, housing, insurance, the poor law, juvenile delinquency, education, administration, local government and London government, and the relation of statutory and voluntary social service.[255] His surveys included a brisk reference to Saltaire and those later products "of individual action", New Earswick, Bournville and Port Sunlight, what Budgett Meakin had described as "the actual experience of money-making men".[256] For Blackshaw they were already the admirable legacies of a world that had moved on; and Blackshaw's manual, so up-to-date for 1939, was itself rapidly to be superseded by the world of William Beveridge and a post-war determination in which socialization was at last poised on the edge of socialism.

CLYDE BINFIELD

255 Blackshaw, *The Community and Social Service*, pp. v, vii.
256 Ibid., p.192; Meakin, *Model Factories and Villages*, p. 7.

REVIEW ARTICLE

Alan Argent, *The Transformation of Congregationalism 1900-2000*. Nottingham: The Congregational Federation, 2013. Pp. xii + 557. £35.00. ISBN 978-1-904080-03-9. Illustrated.

This volume, sturdy and very reasonably priced, is the fruit of a labour of love on the part both of its author and of its publisher. Dr Argent has been occupied for some years on his project. He has examined books, pamphlets and manuscripts; and having toiled through volume after volume of *The Christian World*, he has surely seen more advertisements for those Flatlock Seams that allegedly give "strength and beauty" to underwear than any other living soul.

A vast amount of material is covered, book-ended, as it were, by Joseph Parker's vision (following a *volte face*) of a United Congregational Church, which failed to materialize, and the reality of the United Reformed Church (following Howard Stanley's *volte face*), which did appear in 1972, albeit some Congregationalists declining to proceed with it. Between the book-ends we find studies of theological liberalism, the New Theology of R. J. Campbell, and the response to it of P. T. Forsyth; the trauma of the two World Wars; the impetus towards ecumenism and liturgical renewal; Congregational theological colleges and publications; theology and history; the steps leading to the formation of the United Reformed Church and the ways in which the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, the Congregational Federation and the Unaffiliated Congregational Churches have subsequently sought to remain faithful to their not-entirely-identical visions. The principal themes are illuminated by brief biographies of significant individuals, and by images of some of these, and of the Memorial Hall, one college (Mansfield), and three London chapels.

There is much of interest throughout: the way in which J. H. Shakespeare, the Baptist advocate of Free Church unity, allowed his commitment and urgency to take him ahead of his denomination, whereas Congregationalism's judicious J. D. Jones, though equally keen on wider union, did no such thing; the agonising over the World Wars by pacifists and many non-pacifists alike; the relations of the Congregational Union with the International Congregational Council and the missionary societies, and the way in which Christianity advanced in some Pacific islands during the Second World War, in the absence of British missionaries; the perennial difficulty of keeping more serious denominational journals afloat.

I fear that there are also some slips, among them the following: Memorial College, Swansea, removed to Aberystwyth in 1981, Bala-Bangor Independent College, in 1988 (p. 285); the Church referred to on pp. 305 and 306 is the United Church of Canada; the evidence supplied suggests that Albert Peel was Nathaniel Micklem's most prominent *antagonist*, not *protagonist*, as stated on p. 312; James Allanson Picton is described as a "former Congregational minister" (p. 363), though we might note that he felt not that he had left the denomination, but *vice versa*; the Canadian educational institution is Mount Allison (p. 436); the URC Synod of Wales dates from 1972, not 2000 (p. 502).

I: A Miscellany of Observations

How is John Huxtable's description of the minister as "God's messenger to men" and "the people's spokesman to God" at variance with the views of R. W. Dale, E. J. Price and the Reformation, notwithstanding the absence of "apostle" from Ephesians 4 (p. 113)? Is it not putting the most suspicious interpretation upon a minister's actions to say that J. D. Jones "overturned the traditional understanding of the Congregational pastor and preacher" by strengthening the Congregational Union of England and Wales (CUEW) and creating "a professional Congregational ministry which resembled a career structure" (p. 134)? For Jones's objectives were to support small churches and to assist many ministers who were "traditionally" expected to survive on a pittance, and this required a measure of central organization. Dr Argent needlessly speculates that Tudur Jones's reference to Sidney Berry's "reign at Memorial Hall … may imply that Berry, with his cheerful, open face, became monarchical – benign, condescending, and above contradiction" (p. 175). Equally, it may imply that Tudur Jones was being pleasantly playful, and that Berry was genuinely loved – as indeed one would reasonably conclude from much of the evidence Dr Argent supplies concerning him.

Again, we are informed that Berry's "statement that church unity discussions could decline into debates about mechanisms … rather than about sharing faith and discovering wider Christian fellowship, implied a criticism of the Presbyterian/Congregational conversations" (p. 179). Surely his words amounted to no more than a general, non-specific, caution. By the end of the 1940s, we are told, "important individuals had become convinced ecumenists, in time placing such commitment above denominational loyalty" (p. 218). No evidence is supplied, but the thought occurs that if Congregationalists believe that by his Holy Spirit God has gathered one Church under Christ its one Head, ought they not, out of loyalty to their denomination, bear witness to this in the widest possible churchly circles? And is not God's gathering of visible saints (wherever they are) the root of the catholicity of which the *Savoy Declaration of the Institution of Churches* speaks?

Where is the evidence that "Greater formalism in worship and clerical dress was driven in part by ministers hoping to end the humiliation meted out by the establishment" (p. 220)? "Campbell Morgan and Martyn Lloyd-Jones . . . represented a conservative evangelical tradition which may have swayed those who did not share their theology to adopt clerical dress" (p. 232). Were the liturgical reformers really as weak-minded as that? "In the 1920s," we are assured, "Congregationalists expected to be in church for Easter, falling as it does on Sundays", but when James Todd published his *Prayers and Services for Christian Festivals* (1951), this "provision occurred without protest" (p. 235). I should think so, for in the 1920s Congregationalists also expected to be in church for Harvest Festivals and Sunday School anniversaries, and it might be argued that Christmas Day and Whitsunday recognise truths at least as central to the faith as these relative liturgical novelties. Dr Argent thinks that Congregationalists have traditionally "administered" the sacraments, whereas

Anglo-Catholics "celebrate" them, but the former term might suggest something mechanical being "done to" the people: the very nub of the Nonconformist criticism of the "high Church" party in the Church of England (p. 235). He further thinks that "orderly" is "a catchword for Congregational liturgical revisers", and that it implies that "free worship might be disorderly" (p. 235). This would seem unlikely at best. For freedom within order, the happy blend of reverence with holy joy: these are our "catchwords".

"Undoubtedly," he boldly asserts, some saw the Church Order Group "as partisan and subversive of contemporary Congregationalism" (p. 401), but if it was as obvious as that, why no evidence to support the claim? It might have been made clearer that while much of the impetus of the Church Order Group came from Mansfield College, the Group had a much wider reach. Some of the evidence is hidden behind the names of the officers and eight of the committee members which are given (p. 401); for on inspection we find that the chairman had come to the ministerial list *via* the China Inland Mission and the Congregational Union examinations; the secretary from Lancashire College, the treasurer from Mansfield. Cheshunt supplied two committee members, Mansfield three, Yorkshire United College one, and the Irish Congregational Union examinations the last. Calling P. T. Forsyth in support, Dr Argent contends that the ideas promulgated by the Church Order Group left little room for the Anabaptist-Separatist strand in Congregational faith and experience (p. 402); but Forsyth's case for the influence of the Anabaptists upon the Separatists, though plausible, cannot be demonstrated, not least because much of the evidence is circumstantial only (See Alan P. F. Sell, *Dissenting Thought and the Life of the Churches: Studies in an English Tradition* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990), ch. 20). "Should order and conformity to the Word, the creeds and confessions take priority over obedience to the Spirit?" (p. 403), Dr Argent rhetorically enquires with respect to the "Genevans". The answer is (a) no, and no evidence is supplied to show that it did; and (b) the separation of Word from Spirit, thereby making them alternatives, in Dr Argent's question does not show Congregationalism at its best, for we are guided by the Spirit through the Word within the fellowship.

It is true that John Huxtable, like others, queried the place of Christian world communions alongside the World Council of Churches, but he nevertheless understood that while the WCC was ideally placed to initiate across-the-board discussions among the churches, it was not in a position to urge particular traditions towards unity. This was a task for the Christian world communions themselves, hence his willing participation in the international Reformed-Methodist dialogue (p. 261). As for the changes within Congregationalism itself, Dr Argent speculates that after he had come to London from Lancashire, Howard Stanley may have changed his mind about the propriety of making the CUEW a closer-knit body because he took on "the colour of his surroundings" (p. 448), or because he was influenced by those now around him (p. 458). Given Stanley's personality, which could veer towards the stubborn, neither is likely. It seems that he genuinely changed his mind, and was courageous enough to say so. Dr Argent can even say that "Stanley had no real idea how to lead the CUEW" (p. 452).

But "The Next Ten Years" review of all the work and witness of the denomination, launched by Stanley in 1958, was carefully planned and denominationally approved; and it is odd that Dr Argent should present the reference of commission reports to local church meetings as signifying that Stanley needed to be told what to do, rather than that he was properly guarding the rights of the local churches to reflect upon their future and voice their opinions, and as many as 600 submitted written responses to *The Short Confession of Faith* (p. 457). It is far from being the case that "To have decided against the commissions would have rendered the CUEW leaderless" because Stanley would have "been forced to resign" (p. 459).

II: Theological Matters

Some statements regarding theological matters prompt the raised eyebrow. Dr Argent states that the Congregationalists abandoned Calvinism for Arminianism, but it is not clear whether he is thinking of rationalistic or evangelical Arminianism (pp. 33, 34); and it is at least as likely that across the country at large a vestigial moderate Calvinism was proclaimed in the churches. He presents W. F. Adeney as a liberal biblical critic (p. 33), but he does not reckon with the possibility that thanks to such "believing critics" as Adeney, W. H. Bennett, the Primitive Methodist A. S. Peake, many of the Nonconformist contributors to *The Century Bible*, and a number of Church of England biblical scholars, England and Wales did not suffer the ravages of biblical fundamentalism that were experienced elsewhere. Dr Argent frets unduly over Forsyth's detecting Gnosticism in the New Theology, for this was simply a protest against the idealising of Jesus off the stage of human history, thereby undermining the doctrine of the incarnation – a pit into which some immanentist thinkers of the day tumbled (pp. 64-5).

Selbie's *Schleiermacher: A Critical and Historical Study* (1913) and *The Fatherhood of God* (1936) might have been noted in the discussion of his works, for they reveal most about his theological stance (pp. 300-301). Of H. F. Lovell Cocks, Dr Argent writes, "we may ask whether he lacked a critical edge and the originality to question current trends, rather than merely accept the spirit of the age" (p. 320). One wonders what evidence might have been consulted in order to reach such a conclusion. Lovell Cocks had a sharply analytical theological mind which could take on Barth and others; challenge and, as appropriate, repudiate, the "spirit of the age"; and deliver gracious but uncompromising reviews of the work of others; and all of this in addition to a remarkable facility for speaking theologically to people of all ages, types and abilities. Of Hubert Cunliffe-Jones we learn (noting the weasel word "seemed") that "his later position seemed to leave no place for revelation, indicating a change in his views" (p. 323). No supporting evidence is supplied, and I should be staggered if the suggestion could be substantiated. To present, in one paragraph, Barth, Brunner, Bultmann and Tillich as if they were all looking up the same periscope obscures more than it reveals (p. 388). In Dr Argent's view "the link between [John] Owen and Geneva was broken by Owen's … disavowal of Presbyterianism" (p. 405) in favour of

Congregationalism. *One* link, surely: otherwise we mistake the ecclesiological part for the doctrinal whole; for a glance at the *Savoy Declaration*, and Owen's manifold writings, would at once reveal a clear debt to Calvin, among others.

III: The Heart of the Matter

We may approach the heart of the matter by setting a quotation from A. E. Garvie side by side with one from Dr Argent. Garvie was referring to chaplains to the forces, but his words apply more widely. He suggested that a "legitimate tradition of the past" might "become an illegitimate prejudice of the present" (p. 106). Dr Argent speaks of Union officials "who tended the denomination and saw their callings as lying beyond the gathered churches" (p. 145). Taken together, these words encapsulate the predominant theme of this book, namely, the propriety or otherwise of increasing centralization in a denomination rooted in the gathered church construed locally. This is by no means an issue of the twentieth century alone: the argument raged when the formation of the CUEW was first mooted, and it has never been entirely dormant since its establishment in 1831; one Congregational person's development has quite regularly been another Congregational person's declension.

There can be no question that over the twentieth century English and English-speaking Welsh Congregationalism was transformed in a least two respects, both of them discussed by Dr Argent. First, the sizeable and politically well-connected Congregationalism of the early years of the century had, by 2000, become numerically diminished overall, and distributed among a united Church, two formal bodies, and one cluster of unaffiliated churches. So far, so statistical.

Secondly, and much more importantly, while the numerical decline was in part attributable to the effects of World Wars and societal change, the more serious transformation was, according to Dr Argent, caused by those who betrayed true Congregational principles by advocating a greater degree of centralisation, more active ecumenism, the transformation of the CUEW into the Congregational Church in England and Wales (CCEW) in 1966, and the formation of the United Reformed Church (1972). Principal promoters of the defection, in his view, were J. D. Jones, "who was an innovator and no Independent" (p. 144), whose objective was a centralized body; Nathaniel Micklem, here presented as the inspiration of the Church Order Group; and John Huxtable, whose contribution is discussed in a chapter bearing the sepulchral title, "Vision and Destruction: The Ascendancy of John Huxtable".

One senses that in tracing these developments Dr Argent struggles to be even-handed (and very frequently succeeds), but what comes through loud and clear is his strong disapproval of anything that appears to threaten the autonomy and freedom to act of the local church. Any who, in his judgement, undermine this, have sold the pass. "To overthrow Congregational Independency," he proclaims, "challenged foundational principles" (p. 459, cf. p. 136). He declares, for example, that the establishment of the Home Churches Fund, designed for the support of ministers, "Inevitably . . . affected local autonomy, the essential

principle of Congregational order" (p. 449), as did the introduction of lists of recognized ministers (pp. 151-2) – a practice which, we later learn, the Congregational Federation has introduced (p. 516).

Much could be said in response to Dr Argent's insistence upon the autonomy of the local church, but I must be brief as I suggest that his understanding of it may not be as balanced as it could be. If we attempt a long view of Congregationalism's history, it does seem to be the case that during the nineteenth century, despite, and in some cases, perhaps, because of, the founding of the CUEW, and of co-operation in overseas and home mission and sundry religious organizations, a "hands off" attitude in respect of the autonomy of the local church remained strong, and in some places and some individuals it grew ever stronger. But this was not the only strand of Congregational testimony. Some never lost the idea of the local gathering of the visible saints as being an expression of the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church, while others emphasised the spiritual unity shared by Congregationalists and others. I have elsewhere made bold to suggest that we are not bound to choose between autonomy and the Spirit, since God the Holy Spirit gathers the saints in the first place, guides them in both worship and the local Church Meeting, and engrafts them into Christ the Vine, with all the saints, visible and invisible, so that none may say to any other, "We have no need of you".

With this I come to a significant omission from this book. One would have thought that the transition from the Congregational Union to the Congregational Church would have been grist to Dr Argent's mill; but while he does not balk at devoting some four pages to an analysis of *Year Book* obituary notice photographs with a view to analysing the neckwear of deceased ministers, he is strangely slight regarding this transition (See D. Bebbington and T. Larsen (eds), *Modern Christianity and Cultural Aspirations* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), pp. 309-344; reprinted, Alan P. F. Sell, *Testimony and Tradition: Studies in Reformed and Dissenting Thought* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), ch. 12), to which, until its demise, *The Christian World*, and also *The Congregational Monthly* and *The British Weekly* gave generous space. He names some of those who were branded "Anxious Congregationalists" (p. 469), and later (p. 510) implies that they all joined the Congregational Association – the forerunner of the Congregational Federation – which they did not. The impression is thus given that all of the "Anxious" declined to enter the CCEW, and this is unfortunate, for some of them felt that in the course of the discussions their concerns had been met (See *The Congregational Monthly*, June 1969, p. 4). In particular, it was conceded that the use of "Church" in a denominational sense was not found in the Bible (it hardly could have been); and, more importantly, it was carefully explained that there would be no hierarchy of councils in the CCEW (as, theologically and logically, there could not be if at each focus of churchly life the mind of Christ, may under the guidance of the Holy Spirit be sought and discerned); and that instead the principle of mutual *episcope* as between local and wider expressions of church life would prevail. This principle was carried over into the United Reformed Church, and in my

opinion this did more to enable many once troubled Congregationalists to enter the union than anything else. Because the voice of the "anxious but calmed" is omitted from Dr Argent's story we are left with an over-simplified "autonomy *versus* ecumenism" debate.

It can hardly be denied that church polity has ever been influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the interpretation of particular biblical passages, and by the socio-political circumstances in which Christians have found themselves. It is perfectly possible to agree with Dr Argent – indeed, it is manifestly the case – that Congregationalism underwent a more-than-numerical transformation during the twentieth century. We may, however, add the rider that former Congregationalists in their now united home can bring their witness to bear upon, and be tempered by, that of others who share Congregationalism's (and Calvin's, and Paul's) catholic conviction that there is but one Church because there is but one Head of the Church, and Christ cannot be divided. Former Congregationalists of this turn of mind are persuaded that it is their responsibility to manifest that oneness which God has given to all his visible saints, and that if this requires a measure of transformation which does not violate that fundamental principle, this is not something to be regretted.

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