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*Please note that Helen Weller's hours at Westminster are now Monday-Thursday each week, 08.30-14.30.

EDITORIAL

This issue of the *Journal* celebrates aspects of the United Reformed Church's Congregational heritage. Gerard Charmley takes us to nineteenth-century Thetford and a most unfortunate story of how a powerful minority could undermine the minister, resulting not only in his loss of confidence, but almost to the disbanding of the local fellowship. The strength of the Church Meeting is highlighted, though this was not enough to secure the long-term commitment of John Ashby who left his charge as soon as he was able. The article shows that there are no winners when personal opinion and ambition take precedence over the mission of the whole church and the discernment of the vast majority of its members. Building on his researches published as *The Story of the Moderators: The Origin, Development and Future of the Office of Moderator in Congregationalism (1919-1972) and The United Reformed Church (1972-2010)* (London: URC, 2012), David Peel offers an account of the "gifts and graces" which moderators need, and have demonstrated, as they conduct their "trans-local" ministry. Introduced into Congregationalism in 1919, the article shows how the demands on those who hold this office have developed and expanded over the course of time, although the overwhelming sense in the denomination is that it is a ministry which contributes significantly to the *bene esse* of the church. This paper was presented at the History Society's study weekend at Shepherds Dene Retreat House, Riding Mill, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 6 to 8 September 2013.

We begin, however, with a tribute to Elaine Kaye. An accomplished historian and educationalist, she served the United Reformed Church History Society as President (1998-2002) and her work enhanced our understanding of Congregationalism, ministry and theological education, as well as our knowledge of the part women have played in the traditions which have contributed to the make-up of our church. Anthony Tucker's article paints an affectionate and appreciative portrait of this "remarkable woman".

We welcome Lucy Bushfield, Kenneth Padley and Alan Spence as reviewers, and note Tony Tucker's contributions in both sections of the issue.

Note: For information about a conference to be held at Girton College and the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, 30 September-1 October, contact Dr Simone Maghenzani, (sm955@cam.ac.uk). A number of distinguished scholars from Europe, the USA and Asia will contribute to "Converting Europe: Protestant Missions, Propaganda and Literature from the British Isles, 1600-1900".

ELAINE HILDA KAYE (21 JANUARY 1930-21 OCTOBER 2015): PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HISTORY SOCIETY (1998-2002)[1]

Everyone who knew Elaine would concur with the judgement of Baroness Helena Kennedy, Principal of Mansfield College, that "Elaine Kaye was a remarkable woman". Elaine herself would have stoutly demurred from such a tribute, as would have been typical of her modest and self-effacing nature. Outwardly her life followed the not unusual path of a well-educated woman of the twentieth century. She came from a family of strong Nonconformists who valued education and were willing to spend money on it. Her mother, Kathleen Mary Kaye, studied at Bradford Art College and became a professional calligrapher. Her father, Harold Sutcliffe Kaye, left school at the age of 15 but was later to study for ministry in the Congregational Churches at the Yorkshire United Independent College in Bradford, where one of his tutors was Cecil John Cadoux, whose biography Elaine would eventually write. Elaine was born during her father's first pastorate at Whitby, and was given her second name of Hilda after the eighth century Abbess. Two and a half years later her sister, Rosalind, was born, and soon after the family moved to Sutton Coldfield where Harold Kaye had been called to its large and flourishing Congregational Church of over three hundred members. Tragedy struck when Harold became ill with a brain tumour from which he died in 1940 at the early age of 42. The family lost their home and livelihood and returned to Bradford to take up residence with the maternal grandparents. Kathleen was determined that her daughters should have the best possible education and both attended the Bradford Girls Grammar School which had been their mother's old school. For sixth form studies Elaine attended Milton Mount College, a school for the daughters of Congregational ministers, which Rosalind had joined earlier. As the time came to think about university studies, Elaine considered various options but in the end decided on History and was offered a place in Oxford at St Anne's, then a non-residential Society for women students. On Sundays she attended services at Mansfield College, and became an active member of the thriving Congregational Society whose chaplain was the charismatic and brilliant Erik Routley.

After graduating in 1951 Elaine remained in Oxford to take a postgraduate teaching diploma, and then began her teaching career at the Leyton County High School for Girls, a traditional grammar school. She loved teaching although in her memoirs she recalled "the dread of Mondays and Thursdays at 2pm when I had to teach the Upper Fourth". But teaching was her vocation and later appointments included the Queen's College in Harley Street, a school with many pupils from diverse international backgrounds, many of them Jewish, which kindled a lifelong passion for building

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1 With thanks for their memories to Rosalind Kaye, Pauline Main, Joan Armstrong (née Cadoux), Margaret Clarke, Mel Giedroyc, Janet Lees, Kirsty Thorpe, Clyde Binfield, Charles Brock, Michael Hopkins, and many others.

relationships between those of Christian and Jewish faith, and South Hampstead High School, also a school with many Jewish pupils whose families had suffered great trauma during the 1930s and 1940s. One of her pupils at this school was Julia Neuberger, later to become Rabbi and Baroness. She then moved for seven years into adult education as Deputy Warden of Missenden Abbey Education Centre. Her now wide experience of education made her a strong candidate for the headship of the Oxford High School on the departure of its eminent head, Mary Warnock. Elaine was duly appointed and took up the post in September 1972. This was a school where educational matters were not left entirely to the Head's discretion. The students themselves, their parents, many from university families in Oxford, and staff members all had strong views on what the girls should learn and how they should be taught. The headmistress had to take into consideration conflicting demands and expectations and ultimately take decisions that might on occasion be unpopular. A former colleague noted that "Miss Kaye" managed to keep the school on track, not by pulling rank or always following her own personal path, but by listening, evaluating the different needs and demands, and consistently seeking the good of the whole school. These were successful years in which the School continued to flourish and maintain its high reputation. At its heart was a Head who is still affectionately remembered by her former pupils, one of whom, now a well-known television presenter, recalls her as "a gentle and kind presence, academic but warm, authoritative but approachable". Another recalls that "she seemed to glide quietly around school, always gracious and calm".

The headship of Oxford High School was the climax of her teaching career. After nine years in the post she took early retirement in 1981 to devote herself to a second career as writer and historian. This had already begun with her *History of the King's Weigh House Church* (1968), and *The History of Queen's College, Harley Street* (1972). Liberated now from the constraints of full-time employment, she fulfilled a long-standing ambition by teaching herself Hebrew and graduating with the post-graduate Bachelor of Divinity degree of the University of Oxford.

In the early years of retirement she began work on a biography of her father's former tutor, C. J. Cadoux, who had moved from Yorkshire United Independent College to Mansfield in 1933 as Professor of New Testament and Vice-Principal. The Cadoux and Kaye families had developed a lasting friendship, cemented for Elaine when she and the Cadouxs' younger daughter, Joan, both attended Milton Mount College. Dr Cadoux had been a doughty champion of theological liberalism and with strong pacifist convictions. He and the then recently appointed Principal of Mansfield, Nathaniel Micklem, were known to hold opposing views on the curriculum for ministerial training, the nature of Congregationalism and the direction which the denomination should take. Writing Cadoux's biography even forty years later was a sensitive task, requiring even-handedness in judgement without causing offence to either of the two families. *C. J. Cadoux: Theologian, Scholar and Pacifist* (1988) was a thoughtful and sympathetic assessment which threw new light on Cadoux's extensive contribution to scholarship and the religious and moral issues which had dominated the first half of the twentieth century.

Her next publication, co-authored with Ross Mackenzie, was *W. E. Orchard: A Study in Christian Exploration* (1990). As a former member, and Church Treasurer,

of the King's Weigh House Church, Elaine had long been fascinated by the unusual career of its minister from 1914 to 1932 and his progress from ordination as a Presbyterian Minister and minister at St Paul's Enfield (1904-14), through a nominal Congregationalism at the King's Weigh House Church (1914-32), where he was noted both for his opposition to the Great War, for which he gathered very large congregations, and the introduction of Catholic forms of liturgy which were more elaborate than in many Roman Catholic churches, to his eventual ordination in 1935 as a Roman Catholic priest, and relative obscurity thereafter.

In the 1990s Elaine Kaye developed her interest in theological education in the two major books which confirmed her reputation as a professional historian. They were very different publications. *Mansfield College: Its Origin, History and Significance* (1996) traced the story of how Spring Hill College, which opened in Birmingham in 1838 to train men for the Congregational ministry, found a new identity and purpose in Oxford as Mansfield College, named after members of the Mansfield family who had founded the earlier college. The new college, which required graduate status for admission to the ordination course, was not affiliated to, or formally recognised by, the University, although the University came to value the contribution of Mansfield's staff to the teaching of Theology in Oxford. Mansfield continued as a private college until the mid-1950s when it became a Permanent Private Hall of the University and began to admit non-theological undergraduates. Mansfield then began the long journey which led in 1995 to the granting by Royal Charter of full collegiate status in the University, and in more recent times to the demise of the ordination training course, due to diminishing denominational requirements. *For the Work of Ministry* (1999) tells another, and at times painful, story of the closure of four historic colleges – Lancashire, Yorkshire United, Paton and Western – all regionally valued and with distinguished records of service, and the emergence of Northern College to provide with its shared buildings at Luther King House a more ecumenical setting for ministerial training. *Mansfield College* was the published form of Elaine Kaye's PhD thesis conferred by Sheffield University, although as her supervisor, Professor Clyde Binfield, has emphasised, "Elaine, of course, had no need of a PhD; she was already a fine and proven historian – but she warmed to the discipline and her history of Mansfield benefited greatly, and – needless to say – so did her history of Northern. She was a model research student, unfailingly regular in producing drafts of her work and tutorials were a pleasure . . . she writes as an educationist who is actively involved in the challenges which enlivened contemporary education".

As well as writing about theological education, Elaine Kaye contributed to its delivery at Mansfield. With Donald Sykes, who taught early Church History, she taught the history of the Reformation and in particular the traditions which evolved into the United Reformed Church. She also served as a Trustee of the college before it became a full self-governing college, and convened the Ministerial Education and Training Committee, where she was often called upon to advise and adjudicate on sensitive matters. The ordinands and staff came to value her judgement, discretion, and her unobtrusive encouragement and support. As relief

from some of these often taxing duties, she was an enthusiastic – and always note-perfect – member of the Mansfield Singers who, under Carolyn Brock's inspired direction, contributed so powerfully to the musical and spiritual life of the college. An Honorary Fellowship would have been an apt recognition of all that she did for Mansfield over many years, and it is surprising that this was overlooked.

The cause of women's education and their contribution to church and society was her lifelong concern. This was reflected, as already noted, in her career as a teacher and headmistress. As a historian she was fascinated by the story of Constance Mary Coltman (née Todd) and her ordination in 1917 as the first woman to be ordained to Christian ministry in Britain. Constance Todd, who read History at Somerville College, Oxford, was the first woman student to be admitted to membership of the Junior Common Room at Mansfield for ministerial training. For many decades thereafter there were few women ordinands at the college, but by the time Elaine became involved with the ordination course their number had significantly increased. The question of women's ordination had also become an urgent and controversial issue for the Church of England, and this was an appropriate time for the experiences of women in the churches, both positive and negative, to be more widely shared. This resulted in a collaborative project between Elaine Kaye and two URC ministers, Janet Lees and Kirsty Thorpe (both of whom Elaine had taught at Mansfield), which bore fruit in their widely acclaimed book, *Daughters of Dissent* (2004) to which Elaine contributed an opening chapter on the role of women and the ideas of gender among the churches of the Congregational, Presbyterian, and Churches of Christ traditions, and further chapters on two issues of major concern to her, Ecumenism and Peace and Justice. Elaine was very different from her co-authors, "an unlikely threesome", as Kirsty Thorpe described them. But Elaine spoke of the project as "the fulfilment of nine years of research, thinking, frustration and enjoyment".

Reconciliation was a dominant theme of her life. She was chair of the Oxford Council of Christians and Jews, and spent three months at the Tantur Ecumenical Centre in Jerusalem. This experience, which she wrote up in *A Tantur Journal,* made her profoundly aware of the injustices suffered by the Palestinian Arabs, and deepened her commitment to reconciliation. For a number of years she was a member of the Oxford Project for Peace Studies which eventually resulted in the establishment by the University of the Chair in Peace Studies.

Another concern, Anglo-German relations, was kindled by the discovery during her researches for *Mansfield College* of the story of Adam von Trott, a young German law student who at the invitation of Principal Selbie had spent a term at Mansfield in 1929 during a visit to England for the SCM Quadrennial Conference. Later he returned to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar at Ballliol College, and after Hitler came to power in Germany he became part of the hidden opposition and was executed for his part in the plot to kill Hitler in July 1944. Elaine travelled to Germany to meet Adam's widow, Clarita von Trott, and other members of the family and was instrumental, with Geoffrey Beck and supporters in Germany, in setting up the Adam von Trott Memorial Appeal at Mansfield to sponsor promising young students from Germany to study for a Master's degree in Oxford. It was fitting that Elaine's last public appearance was at a ceremony at Mansfield in January 2014 when she and Geoffrey

Beck were each presented with the award of the Cross of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in recognition of their work for Anglo-German reconciliation.

Elaine also believed passionately in the cause of church reunion. When she came to Oxford to take up the headship of the Oxford High School, she debated whether to transfer her membership to the Congregational Church at Summertown, or whether to demonstrate her belief in church unity by worshipping at the parish church near her home in Wolvercote. She decided to remain within her own tradition but not in a sectarian spirit. As an Elder at what soon became the United Reformed Church at Summertown she helped to establish the Local Ecumenical Parish of Summertown with Wolvercote. One of her disappointments was that after many years of negotiation the two churches in Summertown were unable to reach agreement on sharing one building.

While committed to the cause of church unity, Elaine was deeply rooted in the Congregational tradition which she believed had much to contribute to the whole Church. In her last public lecture before failing sight made reading and writing impossible – the Congregational Lecture for 2008 – she took as her title "'A Way of Gospel Obedience': The Church Meeting in Congregational Tradition and Practice". She began with the assertion that "the theology and practice of the church meeting is the great contribution which those who have inherited the Congregational tradition can make to that united church for which we all long". The lecture drew on insights from the seventeenth century independent tradition of John Owen to the Congregationalism of Daniel Jenkins, Geoffrey Nuttall and Erik Routley in the twentieth century, with further references to Alan Sell and Donald Norwood from the United Reformed Church and Harold Hodgkins and Donald Swann from the Congregational Federation. Was there a hint of regret that the synodical church order of the United Reformed Church had diluted the primacy of the church meeting in the Congregational tradition? If so, it is not stated. Yet her closing words remain a continuing challenge: "In a post-modern age which shies away from commitment and belonging, ought the churches of the Congregational tradition to adapt their church practice to the spirit of the age, or should they remain counter-cultural and try to demonstrate that to belong to a community does not involve the suppression of individuality, but rather its true fulfilment? Is the church meeting capable of demonstrating how conflict may be resolved without leaving a legacy of resentment?" She welcomed signs that the councils of the United Reformed Church were experimenting with methods of decision-making by consensus.

Elaine Kaye was a deeply committed person. At the funeral service her minister, Pauline Main, observed that Elaine's personal recollections were more about events than her inner feelings. Her faith was undemonstrative, yet an essential part of her life with a profound sense of the heritage of God's people and Jesus' ministry of reconciliation. A colleague at the Oxford High School, who paid a tribute at the service, recalled the astonishment of a newly-appointed member of staff at the end of school prayers: "She took prayers as if she believed in what she was doing". What else would we expect of Elaine Kaye, this remarkable woman?

ANTHONY TUCKER

"THEY MUST HAVE THEIR OWN WAY OR ALL UNION IS AT AN END": THETFORD CONGREGATIONALISTS AND THE DEPARTURE OF JOHN ASHBY[1]

The relationship between pastor and people has long been of interest to observers of Nonconformity. Some have highlighted the minister's vulnerability to challenges from the diaconate and wealthy members of the congregation if he did not preach according to their dictates and tastes.[2] Others have emphasized the social prominence of the minister, and his role in moulding local public opinion.[3] Pulpit giants, such as R. W. Dale of Birmingham, William Gadsby of Manchester, Enoch Mellor of Halifax, James Parsons of York and Charles Haddon Spurgeon commanded large congregations; chapels were built or enlarged to contain the crowds who flocked to hear them. At the other end of the scale were ministers in villages and market towns, often receiving inadequate stipends, and thus forced to augment their income by taking additional employment, such as teaching.[4] For those whose congregations were able to provide a comfortable stipend there remained the task of attracting sufficient numbers to maintain the health of the church, especially when the environment in which the church was situated experienced demographic change. In many instances this was the movement of prosperous middle classes from town centres into the suburbs. However, the growth of new districts could raise expectations, leading to the erection of new buildings to cater for a population which never materialised.[5] Smaller country towns were not immune from the disruptive effects of urban change, as newcomers affected the previously stable world of the chapels as much as that of the small towns in which they were located.

Although a number of prominent individuals ministered to single congregations for most of their lives, the more usual pattern was a ministry of less than ten years.[6] While career progression played its part in this pattern,

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1 I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Clyde Binfield for his comments on an earlier version of this article, and to Keith Plant, minister of Stony Stratford Evangelical Free Church for his assistance in tracing Ashby's career after he left Thetford.

2 Leonard Smith, *Religion and the Rise of Labour* (Keele: Ryburn, 1993), p. 129.

3 Kenneth D. Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales 1800-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 198-99; Robert T. Henry, *The Golden Age of Preaching: Men Who Moved the Masses* (New York: iUniverse, 2005), p. 5.

4 Kate Easdown (ed.), *A History of the United Reformed Church Mattishall, Norfolk* (Swanton Morley: Mid-Norfolk Family History Society, 1999), p. 5; Alan B. W. Flowerday, *The Shoe-Maker Turned Soul-Mender: The Life and Work of Henry Hercock* (Thurgarton: The author, 2011), pp. 82-4.

5 Clyde Binfield, "The Story of Button Hill: An Essay in Leeds Nonconformity", in Alistair Mason (ed.), *Religion in Leeds* (Stroud: Sutton, 1994), pp. 103-4.

6 Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry*, p. 166.

tension within congregations could be a contributing factor.[7] The works of William Hale White and George MacDonald often present a sensitive, intellectual minister at the mercy of a congregation of poorly-educated tradesmen, suspicious of preaching which challenged their theological prejudices. Not every case where a minister found himself embattled conformed to this stereotype. In the late 1840s John Ashby, minister of Thetford Congregational Church since 1837, an uncompromising evangelical, resigned his charge after a lengthy battle with a faction determined to force his departure. Although he successfully marginalised the dissentients, Ashby was forced by circumstances to seek a pastorate elsewhere, and the disrupted church almost collapsed. This incident highlights some of the challenges which faced provincial Dissent in the mid-nineteenth century.

Thetford, Norfolk, was a fairly typical provincial town. In the early Middle Ages it had rivalled Norwich as the county's centre of commerce and seat of power, but secular politics and geography had conspired to reduce the town to a shadow of its former self. The former regional centre was, by the early nineteenth century, a sleepy market town answering to the description of Cowfold given by "Mark Rutherford":

> . . . one long main street, with a few other streets branching from it at right angles . . . There was absolutely no competition, and although nobody in the town who was in trade got rich, except the banker and the brewer, nearly everybody was tolerably well off, and certainly not pressed with care as their successors are now.[8]

Not until the 1840s did the town again experience real growth, when industry, in the form of fertiliser manufacture and engineering, began to put down roots.[9] The immigration which accompanied the town's industrialisation would have a dramatic effect on the Congregational Church which met in the Independent Chapel, Earls Street.

Thetford Congregational Church originated in 1816, when a number of Congregationalists pooled their resources to rent a room for preaching services in preference to travelling eleven miles to the nearest Congregational Church.[10] Charles Dewhirst, minister at Bury St Edmunds, where most of the congregation had formerly worshipped, and other local ministers undertook to preach for the

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7 William Raeper, *George MacDonald: Novelist and Victorian Visionary* (Tring: Lion, 1987), pp. 79-80.

8 William Hale White, *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* (London: Unwin, 1881), Chapter 1.

9 Alan Crosby, *A History of Thetford* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1986), p. 96.

10 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Thetford Congregational Church Records: Short Account of the Origins of the Cause in Church Book.

infant cause.[11] These meetings attracted a sufficient congregation for "a plain substantial & respectable meeting house" to be erected in Earls Street in 1817.[12] The foundation stone was laid by Robert Cooper, a Hoxton Student ordained minister in 1818.[13] The generosity of the congregation and County Association made good progress towards extinguishing the debt upon the chapel. Not long after, however, the church ran into difficulties connected with its minister, who refused the church meeting's demand for his resignation. The resulting tense atmosphere thinned the ranks of the congregation to the extent that the church was dissolved; the chapel became a preaching station under direct control of the County Association.[14] The Church was reconstituted on 24 April 1821, with a membership of fifteen. James Elborough, another Hoxton student, was ordained, remaining until 1826, when he removed to Clare, Suffolk. His successor, John West, resigned in 1830, following a disagreement with some of the congregation, and was succeeded by Henry Edwards.[15] Edwards left at the end of June 1836; some members of the church felt that he had been forced out,[16] and in early 1837 the Church extended a call to a recent graduate of Newport Pagnell Academy.[17]

Thirty year-old John Ashby was a native of Kettering, Northamptonshire. As a boy, he had been an eager student, one of the "many cases of eminent piety that appeared" under the long and dynamic ministry of the Revd Thomas Northcote Toller of Great Meeting.[18] Between his sixteenth and eighteenth years, this youthful fascination with the ministry had deepened into a personal commitment, and on 2 April 1823, Ashby had been received into church membership, shortly afterwards beginning to preach in neighbouring villages. In 1830, Ashby was admitted to Newport Pagnell Academy, where he "evinced considerable power of mind, both in his studies and preaching".[19] Having completed his course, Ashby took charge of a newly-formed congregation at Brackley, leaving after a year.[20] Great things were expected of him at Thetford, and he did not disappoint. Congregations increased, with the result that a gallery was added, a schoolroom erected, and the chapel re-seated.[21] The completion of

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11 John Browne, *A History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk* (London: Jarrold, 1877), p. 358.
12 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Historical Account in Church Book.
13 Browne, *A History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk*, p. 358.
14 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Historical Account in Church Book.
15 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Note in the Church Book by H. Edwards, 12 April 1830.
16 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Note in Church Book, July 1836.
17 Browne, *A History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk* p. 358.
18 Thomas Coleman, *Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire* (Northampton: Taylor & Son, 1853), p.110.
19 *Congregational Yearbook* (1864), p. 198.
20 Coleman, *Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire,* p. 369.
21 J. E. Meek, *A Brief History of the Congregational Church in Thetford 1816 to 1919* (Thetford: Congregational Church, 1919), pp. 7-8.

this project in August 1843 was the occasion of a special address by John Alexander, minister of Princes Street Congregational Church, Norwich, since 1819, the leading figure in Norfolk Congregationalism.[22] At the beginning of 1844, Thetford Congregational Church organized a testimonial for their minister, congratulating Ashby "on the hopeful prospects that appear to be opening before us".[23] Membership had almost doubled, rising from 35 to 68, and much-needed reforms to the governance and finance of the church had been undertaken.[24]

The church meeting was typical of Congregationalism in the period. Although one-third of the founding members, including blacksmith Rainbird Clarke, were unable to sign their names to the original church covenant,[25] the majority of the 1844 membership were skilled artisans, small or medium tradesmen (such as master tailor William Christopher), auctioneers, insurance agents, while the wealthy and successful commercial classes were represented by James and Cornell Fison, fertiliser manufacturers, "perhaps the richest inhabitants of Thetford".[26] James had served as mayor of the town for 1840, and Cornell led the radical party on the town council.[27] The leading deacons were Francis Dulley, a grocer and draper with premises on King Street, and Henry Brown, one of the founder members of the cause and first trustees, who combined a successful ironmongery business with the activities of an insurance agent.[28] Brown was an active political dissenter, his name appearing prominently in records of Nonconformist gatherings in the county.[29] Twice married, the first time to a Baptist, Brown was able to rely on the support of a number of in-laws, both in Thetford and connected with other Congregational churches in the county, such as Harleston, from which Jonathan Pratt, husband of Marianne, Brown's eldest daughter, hailed.[30]

Pratt was among those brought to Thetford by the "hopeful prospects" of the formerly sleepy market town. Charles Burrell was expanding his agricultural engineering works, and the Fisons' fertiliser business was going from strength to strength.[31] These changes brought with them an expansion of the town, promising fresh accessions to the already growing membership of the church. Not all were employed by the expanding businesses, but came, via the family networks of Old Dissent, such as Francis Dulley, member of a Wellingborough

22 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/106: Historical notes.
23 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/55: Testimonial to the Revd John Ashby, 13 January 1844.
24 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Church Book.
25 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Church Covenant, 24 April 1821.
26 Crosby, *A History of Thetford*, p. 83.
27 Ibid., p. 97.
28 *Bury & Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald* (26 January 1869); *Morning Chronicle* (4 November 1929); *Bury & Norwich Post & East Anglian* (6 January 1847).
29 *Ipswich Journal* (20 August 1836); *Bury & Norwich Post and East Anglian* (23 June 1847).
30 *Bury & Norwich Post* (25 May 1842).
31 Crosby, *A History of Thetford*, pp. 113-4.

family represented in the Baptist and Congregational churches of the town.[32] Francis Dulley had come to Thetford in 1842, initially staying with one of the church members, while he tested the waters for the likelihood of commercial success.[33] His wife, who joined the church a year later, was received on letter of transfer from Amersham, where Mrs Ashby had also been a member.[34]

The testimonial presented to Ashby in early 1844 drew a grateful response. The minister confessed to worry and anxiety about his future in the ministry. Now, his fears dispelled by the church's testimonial, Ashby wrote: "It is my ardent wish & prayer that our present prospects may enlarge & brighten, until all may be constrained to exclaim 'what hath God wrought'!"[35] Ten members were added to the church in the following year, and a number of special services were held in hope of attracting more. By 1846, church growth had slowed appreciably. Most of the additions to membership were newcomers to the town, the growth of which had gained further impetus from the arrival of the railway in 1845.[36]

Among the migrants added to the church in 1846 was Thomas Lungley Prentice, a twenty-six year old cousin of the Fisons and native of Stowmarket, where his family were prominent in the affairs of its Congregational church. His grandfather, the corn merchant Manning Prentice, had been one of the first deacons of the reorganized church, playing a major role in its revival and reformation, after a period of numerical decline and doctrinal drift.[37] Manning Prentice's numerous children married within the wider Dissenting and trade community, his fourth daughter, Deborah, marrying into the Fison family.[38]

Like Ashby, Prentice had imbibed evangelical principles early in life, in his case from the ministry of William Ward, minister at Stowmarket from 1805 until 1846.[39] Inspired to dedicate his life to Christian work, Prentice enrolled at the Academy run by Richard Cecil of Chipping Ongar to prepare for the mission field, where he had been a contemporary and friend of David Livingstone. At the conclusion of his course, however, Prentice turned his back on the mission field (to Livingstone's disgust), preferring a commercial career.[40] In fairness to the

32 T. Stephens (ed.), *Album of the Northamptonshire Congregational Churches* (Wellingborough: Northamptonshire Printing & Publishing Company, 1894), p. 60.
33 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of church meeting, 3 February 1842.
34 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of church meeting, 2 February 1843.
35 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: John Ashby to the Church Members, 17 January 1844.
36 Crosby, *A History of Thetford*, pp. 110-2.
37 Edmund Banyard, *The First 300 Years: The Unfinished Story of Stowmarket Congregational Church* (Stowmarket: Stowmarket Congregational Church, 1970), pp. 18-19. Among the eighteenth century ministers was William Godwin, later a radical philosopher, Unitarian pioneer, and husband of early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft.
38 http://www.prenticenet.com (accessed 16 September 2014).
39 Browne, *A History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk*, p. 536.
40 Banyard, *The First 300 Years*, p. 22.

Prentice brothers, the decision of their father (also Thomas) to leave the Congregationalists for the Plymouth Brethren in the 1840s, disrupting the family networks, may have played a part in their decision to remain in Britain.[41] Nevertheless, Thomas Lungley Prentice's marriage in 1841 to Catherine, daughter of William Ridley, a Congregational brewer and corn merchant at Felstead, cemented his links to the Nonconformist middle classes.[42] Catherine's sister, Ann, married Joseph, brother to James and Cornell Fison,[43] a factor which doubtless contributed to the decision of the Fisons to admit their cousin into the family business.

Prentice, together with his wife and young family, moved to Thetford in 1845, entering into partnership with the Fisons. The Thetford Church waived the usual waiting period of one month when Prentice applied to be received into the church in late 1846.[44] The talents, prosperity and reputation of the Prentice family, and the Stowmarket church in which they were leading lights, led a number at Thetford to expect that this fresh accession to the church would prove to be a blessing. Ashby, whose fears about his call had been exacerbated by the apparent coolness of T. L. Prentice towards him, saw this as a sign of continuing Divine approval.[45]

Unknown to most church members, a storm was already brewing. The day before the meeting at which the Prentices were received into membership, Ashby had received a long letter from Henry Brown, expressing dissatisfaction with the ministry at Earls Street:

> Thirty years have now passed since the first attempt was made to establish a ministry of our own denomination in Thetford, the greater part of which has been a time of discouragement from the limited number in our church and congregation. There did appear a brightening of our prospects some two or three years ago, but during the last twelve months, the principal additions have been from new residents in the place.
>
> The number of those forms a new era in our religious affairs, and while I earnestly desire not to wound your feelings, it is an obvious duty to say that your ministry fails to interest those who form a considerable portion of our people. While good appeared to be doing among that class from which the additions to our church were chiefly gathered, my own views were held in abeyance, but I must confess that my judgement coincides with those who think that a change would be beneficial.[46]

41 http://www.anatpro.com/index_files/Manning_Prentice.htm (accessed 15 September 2014).
42 *Bury & Norwich Post and East Anglian* (18 August 1841).
43 http://www.geni.com (accessed 16 September 2014).
44 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Church Book, entry for 2 October 1846.
45 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: John Ashby to T. L. Prentice, 9 December 1846.
46 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Henry Brown to John Ashby, 1 October 1846.

Brown urged Ashby to resign, warning that any division would alienate "many who will probably soon be left to take the most influential part in the support of this cause".[47]

The deacon's letter caused Ashby, until then unaware of any desire for change, considerable personal distress. Nevertheless, Ashby confessed that the lack of progress at Earls Street had led him to consider whether a change would be beneficial for minister and church. He concluded his reply to Brown with an exhortation for prayer "that I may be upheld and conducted to some other sphere of usefulness".[48]

The letters between minister and deacon were confidential, and would probably have remained so had Ashby not made further enquiries as to the composition of the party desiring change. In the course of informal soundings, Ashby discovered that one of the leaders of the movement for change was Thomas Prentice. He became convinced "that Mr. Prentice had entered the church with the intention of using his utmost power for the minister's ejection".[49] Ashby addressed a curt note to the young businessman:

> In consequence of a communication from Mr Brown, I beg to say, that while you are at liberty to do as you please in your own establishment, you must be assured that you have no such liberty in the church of God, and that a ministerial mind is not to be harassed by any communication from a Christian in his private capacity, whatever may be his position in society. Any communication affecting a minister's removal is to be by the act of the church, not of any individual member.[50]

Convinced that he was the victim of a conspiracy, Ashby took no further steps to seek another ministerial charge.

Brown attempted to force the issue in early April, reminding Ashby of his comments of October about his earnest desire for "a removal to which providence seems to point", and deploring the minister's failure to seek another charge in the six months since his first letter.[51] For a second time, Brown criticized Ashby's failure to attract new members:

> When I look at the number of new residents in the town, some disposed to attend the ministry of our denomination, but do not join us and others who do attend expressing the views held by many of the older standing as to the inefficiency of your labours I cannot resist the conviction as to the real interests of religion requiring a change.[52]

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47 Ibid.
48 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: John Ashby to Henry Brown, 2 October 1846.
49 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Thetford Congregational Church, church meeting minutes, 26 April 1847.
50 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: John Ashby to T. L. Prentice, 9 December 1846.
51 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Henry Brown to John Ashby, 9 April 1847.
52 Ibid.

Brown informed Ashby that he would no longer be responsible for maintaining his stipend, but would be leaving the matter to Francis Dulley. As one of the guarantors of Ashby's salary, should it fall below the promised amount, Brown implied that if Ashby would not go willingly, he would be starved out.[53] Whether the church meeting wanted Ashby to go or not, if he could not support his family, he would have to move on.[54]

Ashby, after consultation with colleagues, former tutors and church members, decided to confront the opposition. A special church meeting was called for 26 April, at which the correspondence on Ashby's ministry was read, with comments on the role of T. L. Prentice in the affair. Then Ashby spoke for himself:

> I feel that I am placed in a very painful position – that I have not merited this treatment – that the newcomers alluded to would not have treated me thus if they had been here during the whole of my residence, and could have known fully all I have to grapple with.
>
> I feel that the measures adopted are a violation of church order, and that they cannot possibly lead to a good issue.
>
> I have taken the advice of many ministers in whose judgement I fully confide, all of whom have counselled me to stand fast in my determination. My revered tutor, speaking of the malcontents says "don't yield for a moment".[55]

Thomas Palmer Bull, tutor at Newport Pagnell since 1814,[56] had no doubt come across such situations before, for they were not uncommon. A northern journalist, describing the Congregational churches of Preston, observed that all had been "in hot water concerning their pastors", on several occasions removing refractory ministers by withholding part, or all of their salaries.[57]

Having criticized Prentice's interference in the affairs of a church of which he had not then been a member, Ashby moved on to the conduct of Henry Brown:

> I did not expect such a letter as the last from my old friend Mr Brown. That young men should be somewhat precipitate I am not surprised, but that one who has seen sixty years should have taken such a step as in writing that document I am grieved.

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53 Ibid.

54 For example, George MacDonald's departure from Arundel would be precipitated by repeated reductions in his stipend. See Raeper, *George MacDonald,* pp. 90-2.

55 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Thetford Congregational Church, church meeting minutes, 26 April 1847.

56 Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies: Dissenting Academies Online: Newport Pagnell Academy (accessed 21 November 2012).

57 Lancashire OnLine Parish Clerk Project: Cannon Street Independent, Preston: www.lan-opc.org.uk (accessed 20 November 2012).

> I cannot resist the conviction, that the time will come, and that not very distant, when my opponents will regret what they have done.[58]

Having said his piece, Ashby retired to await the verdict of the church. After a lengthy debate, the church agreed to appoint a delegation of six members to meet Ashby and consider the situation. Francis Dulley and Henry Brown would be joined by T. L. Prentice, William Christopher, Rainbird Clarke and Matthew Diver, a long-standing member, in coming to a decision on Ashby's future.[59]

The first and only sitting of the committee was on 1 May 1847, when they met with Ashby in the chapel vestry. Four members expressed support for their minister, while Prentice and Brown refused to yield to the majority's wishes, suggesting an adjournment of one month before a final decision was made. The majority, led by Francis Dulley, replied "that another meeting of the delegation would be useless", and a second special church meeting was called.[60]

The church meeting which took place in the chapel schoolroom on 5 May was attended by 54 members, practically the entire church membership. William Christopher read an account of the delegation, concluding with a protest against the actions of Brown, Prentice and their supporters:

> I much regret that anything should have occurred to render such a meeting as this necessary, at the same time it is my firm conviction that any matters concerning the church should be conducted by and with the consent of the church.
>
> I wish therefore to record my views, viz., that a change in the pastorate of this church is not called for, either by the circumstances of the church, or the altered state of the town, that the means resorted to in order to bring about such a change are quite unconstitutional and at variance with the principles and practice of Independent Congregational Churches, and also, that the persons with whom conference has been held previously to the announcement to the pastor of the desirableness of a change were not the only persons who ought to have been consulted.[61]

It was moved that this protest should be adopted by the church. Forty-six members stood up to signify their agreement with the protest, leaving only eight in favour of Ashby's removal.[62] At a further meeting one week later, the church re-affirmed its decision. Ashby addressed the meeting:

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58 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of special church meeting, 26 April 1847.
59 Ibid.
60 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of delegation, 1 May 1847.
61 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of special church meeting, 5 May 1847.
62 Ibid.

> After that decision I shall feel it my duty to remain with you, till it shall appear to me I have a plain call in providence to occupy some other sphere, if that should occur, I shall call you together and confer about it. In the meantime, if I am about to be called to suffer, I am prepared for it.[63]

Concluding the meeting, Ashby exhorted the church "to hold together and cooperate with him".[64] Francis Dulley added a lengthy entry in the church book, placing the blame firmly upon:

> Thomas L. Prentice, a member, and Mr Jonathan Pratt, a hearer ... Their opinion seemed to be that providence had sent them into the town to reform the Independent Church, that they had a right to do it; that the minister and all the members ought to yield to them, and that they would run every risk of compelling them to it. The members stood upon their right, and told them they would do without them. Thus fared the men who thought their money would rule.[65]

Prentice's plans for the church drew inspiration from the actions of his grandfather, Manning Prentice. Manning had been admitted to the Stowmarket Independent/Presbyterian Church by transfer from the church at Bungay in 1799. Finding the church at a low ebb, partially due to Arian doctrine, he had employed his administrative talents to reorganize and revive the cause. Manning Prentice was given ample freedom of action, and the coming of the energetic and evangelical William Ward, under whose pastorate the church revived, has been attributed in large part to Manning's efforts.[66] Manning had also reorganized the church on Congregational lines.[67] Having grown up with the tale of his grandfather's reform of the Stowmarket church, it seems that T. L. Prentice had decided to follow his example. Finding Ashby's ministry uninspiring, he had sought allies for his proposed reform of the church. Brown, as a pillar of the church, had sufficient weight to pressurise Ashby into considering resignation. To other church members, however, these actions had appeared as the attempt of a wealthy clique to subvert the order of the church, ignoring the church meeting, where such decisions ought to have been made.

The dissidents continued to make felt their disapproval of Ashby's ministry. The church meeting of 3 December 1847 censured Prentice for refusing to pay the arrears of rent due for the pew which he continued to occupy. At the same meeting "the conduct of Mr and Mrs Brown was severely censured".[68] Brown

63 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of special church meeting, 12 May 1847.
64 Ibid.
65 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Entry by Francis Dulley.
66 Banyard, *The First 300 Years*, pp. 18-20.
67 Browne, *A History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk*, pp. 535-36.
68 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of church meeting, 3 December 1847.

had written to the church in mid-September, expressing a desire to leave, with his family.[69] Now the dissentients began to meet together for worship, Prentice taking the role of minister to the little flock.

The continued strife among the Thetford Congregationalists took its toll upon their minister. At the church meeting of 3 December, Ashby announced that he had received and accepted a unanimous call to the pastorate at Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire, and would preach his last sermon at Thetford on 12 December.[70] His final letter to the church dwelt on the painful circumstances attending his departure:

> When I think of the conduct pursued towards me through a course of more than twelve months I think it is not too strong language to characterise it heartless, cold blooded, refined cruelty; and I would no more trust myself again in the confidence of people capable of it than I would in that of an assassin. They have thrown me off with a haughty nonchalance; they have treated me as if I possessed no feeling; they have scorned the grounds of equity, honour and truth, and at the same time speak smirkingly of conscience and doing good. They have intentionally sought to ruin my reputation as a preacher, and while I can pass this by in one who is scarcely more than a boy, who is but a stranger to me, and who seems fonder of his own plans than of any others, I cannot so lightly regard it in others, who, not long ago, spoke as if they preferred my preaching to that of any other minister. Of them I have discovered this, they must have their own way or all union is at an end.
>
> For you I feel an amount of the difficulty in which you are placed in reference to the future. I think you are bound in consistency to exclude Prentice without the slightest demur. This is the first step; then, if he wish ultimately to return, you ought by no means to allow it till he acknowledge his fault with contrition, and engage never again to disturb your community.[71]

Ashby's resignation was accepted with regret, and his last Sunday as their minister was 19 December.[72] Ashby made mention of the circumstances surrounding his departure in his final sermon.[73] The deacons arranged supplies up to early January, and at the annual church meeting on 3 January hopes were expressed that the unity of former days would soon be restored, and that "the friends who had absented themselves would speedily return to their places amongst us".[74]

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69 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: entry in church book, 15 September 1847.
70 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of church meeting, 3 December 1847.
71 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/58: John Ashby to the church, 12 December 1847.
72 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of special church meeting, 13 December 1847.
73 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/57: T. L. Prentice to Francis Dulley, 13 January 1848.
74 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of annual church meeting, 3 January 1848.

These hopes were soon dashed. Although Prentice expressed a willingness to meet with the church in order to reach a settlement of their differences, given Ashby's departure, Henry Brown felt reconciliation was impossible.[75] Prospects further darkened when the seceders demanded a guarantee that any proposals they might bring to the church after their return as to a suitable minister, or "any other way of doing good", would not be "opposed in the same spirit as had been displayed on Mr. Ashby's a/c".[76] At the 3 February meeting of the church it was reported that Jonathan Pratt had stated that hopes of reunion were:

> Farther off than ever, unless some better security could be obtained that if the party returned with a determination to try what money and devotion combined could do, they should not be annoyed by any remains of the spirit breathed by Mr. Ashby.[77]

The church membership demonstrated its frustration at the intransigence of the party led by Brown and Prentice in its own resolution, passed at its meeting.

> … it continues to be a subject of much deep regret to the church that those who absented themselves from communion and from public worship on account of their disapproval of the late pastor should (now the cause is removed) still absent themselves, and the more so as the church has done all that can consistently be done to invite their return and the members have pledged themselves to maintain unity and peace.[78]

The meeting directed Francis Dulley to communicate with Prentice, offering to meet with a deputation from the seceders to discuss reunion, and suggesting the appointment of a mediator, ideally John Alexander of Norwich.[79]

In the event no mediator was appointed. T. L. Prentice attended a church meeting on 9 March 1848. He adopted a conciliatory tone, proposing a return to the *status quo ante*:

> … no doubt all had been wrong in some way, but that it was the duty of all to make some sacrifice of feeling to bring about a union of all; he thought that as most of the members were satisfied with the management of the concerns of the church at the time when he first came to the town it might be possible to forget the transactions of the last two years and to pass them by as if they had not been, and this would take us back to the

75 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/57: T. L. Prentice to Francis Dulley, 13 January 1848; 115: minutes of church meeting, 13 January 1848.
76 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of church meeting 20 January 1848.
77 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of church meeting 3 February 1848.
78 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of church meeting 2 March 1848.
79 Ibid.

> time when Mr. Brown & Mr. Dulley were deputed to conduct the affairs of the church – if such a state of feelings could be secured – Mr. Prentice would give up preaching to his little band of friends & do what he could to induce them to return to the chapel.[80]

The church meeting readily agreed to Prentice's proposal. Christopher, who had taken Brown's place on the diaconate, stood down, and the meeting voted unanimously that Dulley and Brown "manage the affairs of the church as office bearers at once".[81]

The split was healed – at least formally. However, the dissension's immediate effects were disastrous, attendance fell off to the extent that plans were made to close the chapel at the end of January 1849. Only the gratuitous aid of a group of local ministers and lay preachers, led by Alfred Griffin, minister at Watton, and Aaron Duffy, subsequently minister at Woodbridge, kept the doors open, while John Alexander sought the aid of the Congregational Home Missionary Society for the struggling cause.[82]

Their efforts were enough to set the church back on an even keel. The guarantees permitted the church to call a minister; Henry Thomas, a student at Homerton Academy.[83] Ordained on 28 September, Thomas remained in the pastorate until 1851, when he removed to Garden Street Congregational Church, Sheffield. The church enjoyed a series of short pastorates for the remainder of the century, only one of which exceeded Ashby's eleven years.[84]

Probably due in part to the efforts of his former tutor, John Ashby found a more congenial field of labour, in Stony Stratford, close to the place of his studies. He remained there for sixteen years and served as secretary to the North Buckinghamshire Congregational Union for many years. His death on 1 June 1863, just short of his fifty-eighth birthday, was widely mourned, and there were well-attended memorial services in the Baptist and Congregational chapels of Stony Stratford.[85] The mural tablet erected in his memory stressed his firmness of character: "He swerv'd not to the right hand or the left to please friends or appease enemies and thus pursued the noiseless tenor of his way with firm confidence in the truths he had preached".[86]

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80 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of church meeting 9 March 1848.

81 Ibid.

82 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/116: note in the church book, January 1849; minutes of church meeting, 2 February 1849; 58: John Alexander to J. W. Massie, 9 February 1849; 58a: J. W. Napier, 8 February 1849.

83 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/116: minutes of church meeting, 16 February 1849.

84 Browne, *A History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk*, p. 358. The longest pastorate at Thetford during the nineteenth century was that of Morgan Lloyd (1854-67).

85 *Congregational Yearbook* (1864), p. 199.

86 Mural tablet at Stony Stratford Evangelical Free Church (transcription courtesy of Keith Plant, minister).

Francis Dulley remained on the diaconate of Thetford Congregational Church until his death on 16 January 1869, having seen two more ministers come and go.[87] Henry Brown, too, retained his connection with the church until the end of his days; dying in 1855, he was laid to rest in the chapel's burial ground.[88] In contrast, Thomas L. Prentice, whose connection with the church had served as catalyst for the breach between Brown and Ashby, did not remain long in Thetford. Perhaps influenced by his failure to become the moving spirit of the Thetford church in the same way that his grandfather had been in Stowmarket, he dissolved his partnership with Cornell Fison in April 1849. The 1851 census finds Prentice a corn factor in Leeds.[89] Clearly, he prospered in this line of business, for ten years later he is recorded as having moved to the fashionable suburb of Far Headingley. By the time of his death in 1878, Prentice was master of a substantial villa in London suburbia.[90]

Thetford Congregational Church was in many ways typical of market town Independency; its ministers were never denominational leaders, its diaconate comprised prosperous tradesmen rather than commercial powerhouses, and the crisis which engulfed the church in 1847 did not arise from doctrinal differences. Ashby had ministered in Thetford for more than a decade, during a period when more than half of all Congregational pastorates lasted five years or less, and when those of his predecessors had been of short duration.[91] The early years of Ashby's ministry had seen a revival in the fortunes of the church, renovations and additions to the church fabric, and growth in numbers. When momentum was not maintained, a small party began to form, comprising both newcomers to the town, led by Thomas Prentice, and leading founding member Henry Brown, seeking to oust the minister. They hoped to take advantage of Ashby's concern for the state of the church in order to convince him to leave, making way for someone more congenial to their taste. Ashby's discovery of the role played by Prentice in the affair caused the plot to be revealed to the church meeting before Ashby's removal, and the revelation tipped the scales against the plotters at the church meeting, where wealth counted less than numbers. In the aftermath of the vote, Ashby's position seemed unassailable, yet within a year he was gone, the diaconate were negotiating with a view to healing the split, as the church was plunged into an almost fatal crisis which required the intervention of the Congregational County Union to prevent closure.

The departure of Ashby brings to the fore a question which has long troubled churches of the Independent order, whether Baptist or Congregational – how is a minister's service in a pastorate to be terminated? Indeed, the question at stake

87 *Bury & Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald* (26 January 1869).
88 Christopher Stell, *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in Eastern England* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2002), p.273.
89 *Bury & Norwich Post and East Anglian* (9 May 1849); 1851 Census.
90 www.thetreeofus.net (accessed 28 November 2012).
91 Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry*, p. 166.

was not doctrinal in nature, but whether a ministry which had been acceptable for a decade could appeal to a changing population. Eschewing both the older Anglican notion of ministerial freehold, and the Wesleyan Methodist concept of a termed pastorate, Independent churches must work out the question of ministerial removals according to their own light. In practice, this has often taken the form of the circulation of criticism, both privately and in public, often referring to poor or non-existent numerical growth. In Great Yarmouth, a church formed by seceders from the Congregationalists' New Meeting[92] dissolved, returning to the parent cause after their minister failed to attract a sufficient congregation.[93] John Bartlett, of Park Church, Halifax, voluntarily resigned his pastorate in the face of mounting criticism of the lack of progress.[94] Ashby certainly did not fall into the same camp, having overseen significant growth in church membership between 1837 and 1845. However, initial ministerial success could, if not maintained, become a stick for a minister's back. Even that high Calvinist champion, William Gadsby, after a ministry of thirty-seven years, during which his chapel had to be extended more than once, experienced a secession from his Manchester church by dissatisfied members who alleged that his "ministerial usefulness" had come to an end.[95] In some cases, this could lead to a chapel emptying, as a minister refused to move on, while a younger minister might, like Ashby, seek fresh pastures.[96]

While the church meeting could, in theory, simply vote to dismiss an unsatisfactory minister, in practice this was a rare event, despite the insinuations of Anglicans that dissenting ministers were at the mercy of their churches. A movement for change had to overcome the innate conservatism of the church meeting. Unless the feeling was general, such a movement required leaders, lending it the air of a conspiracy, designed to circumvent the authority of the church meeting, as at Thetford. Besides, unless the minister was incompetent, differences of opinion as to his performance were inevitable; as is still the case today, some members of the church and congregation may find value in a ministry which leaves others unmoved, while what some see as a temporary lull in the fortunes of the church may be interpreted by others as a sign that the blessing which once rested upon the minister's work has been withdrawn. Henry Brown certainly felt that the initial success of Ashby's ministry was now past, while T. L. Prentice, a newcomer, believed that the church could not expand while Ashby remained minister. For Francis Dulley, as for the remainder of the church, a considerable number of whom had been added during Ashby's pastorate, his ministry remained valuable, and they were loath to part with him.

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92 So-called, because it was itself formed by seceders from the original Congregational Church.
93 William Walford, *Autobiography of William Walford* (London: Jackson & Walford, 1851), pp. 142-3.
94 Calderdale Archives: WYC1446/2/1: John Bartlett: letter of resignation, 30 August 1875.
95 B. A. Ramsbottom, *William Gadsby* (Hapenden: Gospel Standard, 2003), p. 260.
96 Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry*, p. 165.

The action taken by Prentice, Brown and Pratt, in seeking to bring about Ashby's resignation was explicitly associated with their position as employers of labour. In his first letter to Prentice after discovering the young businessman's role in the effort to remove him, Ashby referred to his liberty "to do as you please in your own establishment", contrasting this with the church in which he had "no such liberty".[97] Francis Dulley, in his account of the church meeting which censured Pratt, Brown and Prentice for their "unconstitutional" conduct, characterized them as "the men who thought their money would rule".[98] Used to hiring and firing their own staff, it was implied that Prentice and Brown were treating Ashby as though he were their employee, rather than the minister of a Congregational Church. Brown's refusal to guarantee Ashby's stipend adds to the impression that he believed his wealth entitled him to a special role in the government of the church.

As for Prentice, it is instructive to return to the role of his grandfather, Manning Prentice, in the reconstitution of Stowmarket Congregational Church. Prior to Manning Prentice's time, the church comprised a mixture of Independents and Presbyterians. According to the common practice of the Presbyterians, the government of the church was in the hands of trustees, subscribers and seat-holders, generally people of substance.[99] Such a system of church government, with its concentration of power in a few people, was more open to the influence of a few men of money than the Congregational system of government that prevailed at Thetford, in which the church meeting, where all members were (theoretically at least) equal, had the final say on church matters. For a few of the wealthier members of the congregation to attempt to induce the minister to resign without bringing the question to the church meeting was contrary to the constitution of the church at Thetford, and it was this which called forth the censure of the church meeting.[100]

The events at Thetford point also to the level of support which a minister might normally expect from church members. Initially convinced, on the strength of Brown's letter, that his resignation would be for the good of the church, Ashby changed his mind when he discovered a groundswell of opinion in his favour. Once the leading role of T. L. Prentice in the affair was discovered, the stage was set for a confrontation. Ashby appealed to the church, and at the special meetings held to discuss his position, a majority of church members supported Ashby. A parallel may be drawn with the ministry of Henry J. Martyn at Cannon Street, Preston, twelve years later. Martyn's fictionalized account of conflict with a powerful minority, finally brought to a head at the church meeting, in which the

97 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: John Ashby to T. L. Prentice, 9 December 1846.
98 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: Entry by Francis Dulley.
99 Jeremy Goring, "Introduction", in C. Gordon Bolam, Jeremy Goring, H. L. Short and Roger Thomas (eds), *The English Presbyterians: From Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), pp. 25-6.
100 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of special church meeting, 5 May 1847.

numerical insignificance of his opponents was exposed, leading to their withdrawal from the church, is almost identical to the Thetford Church Book's account, down to the resolution passed supporting the minister against "certain persons who had created so much disturbance".[101] His victory, too, was bittersweet; Martyn soon afterwards left the church for fresh ministerial pastures.[102] George MacDonald's opponents at Arundel, similarly proved "a small party", unable to depose a minister they believed to be a heretic.[103]

Although church meetings might pass resolutions condemning cliques who sought to use their wealth and connections to oust ministers, perseverance was another matter. Ashby at Thetford found that the connections of the minority, especially Brown, a founding member of the church and major financial supporter, contributed to an air of crisis. The decision of the dissentient minority to meet independently added visible disunity to the mix. As with George MacDonald, the atmosphere created by the conflict led Ashby to depart after a period of reflection, concerned that his presence was only fostering division and discontent.[104] Division in a church carried with it the danger of creating "ministerial" and "anti-ministerial" parties, rendering the position of the minister untenable, much as a later rupture at Halesworth, Suffolk, over alleged ritualistic tendencies on the part of the choir, led to the departure of the minister, Henry Coleman.[105] Welsh Baptist minister Christmas Evans, who twice had to leave churches after falling out with members and deacons, warned in a sermon on Moses that a minister "must be clothed with meekness from heaven, or the provocations of the people will be apt to embitter his spirit", rendering him unfit to work among them.[106] Although the church meeting upheld Ashby, the events created a breach in the church which Ashby felt impaired his ministry at Thetford. Indeed, given the conduct of Brown and Prentice towards him, Ashby felt unable to receive them back into the church.

The wounds left by the attempt to remove Ashby were felt even after his departure for Stony Stratford. Not only did Ashby's parting letter to the church caution them against allowing Prentice back too readily, the majority of the church, which had supported Ashby, could not but resent the role played by Brown and Prentice in causing their minister's removal. At the same time, the

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101 Henry Julius Martyn, *Chapters from the Autobiography of an Independent Minister* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1882), pp. 189-92.

102 Benjamin Nightingale, *Lancashire Nonconformity; or, Sketches, Historical & Descriptive of the Congregational and Old Presbyterian Churches in the County* (Manchester: John Heywood, 1890), I, p. 43. Martyn later conformed to the Church of England.

103 Raeper, *George MacDonald*, p.91.

104 Elizabeth Saintsbury, *George MacDonald: A Short Life* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987), p. 59.

105 David Holmes, *An Inglorious Affair: A Decade of Dissent Among Suffolk Nonconformists* (Halesworth: Salters Lane Press, 2002), p. 28.

106 Christmas Evans (tr. Joseph Cross), "The Smitten Rock", in Joseph Cross (ed.), *Sermons of Christmas Evans: A New Translation from the Welsh* (Philadelphia, PA: W. A. Leary, 1859), p. 101.

dissentients feared the conditions which might be set as to their return.[107] The return of the separating party at Halesworth was delayed for a decade because the majority initially set conditions viewed by those who had withdrawn as tantamount to surrender, before the two sections of the Independent church re-united on equal terms, something that took less than six months at Thetford.

The Thetford case stands also as a reminder that not every division in a Nonconformist church was permanent. Indeed, the records of Nonconformity abound with accounts of short-lived secession movements, meeting in hired rooms or the surplus chapels of other denominations. At Great Yarmouth, a split in the New Meeting Congregational Church towards the close of the eighteenth century was healed when the seceding congregation dismissed their minister and petitioned to re-join the parent church.[108] In Halesworth, the Congregational Church split owed its origins to disagreements over worship, and the role played by a strong Baptist element in the church, the dissentients calling a minister of their own.[109] The eventual reunion of the churches in Halesworth was due to the determination of members of both churches to maintain channels of communication, even if these were at times sorely tested.[110] Although representatives of the relevant county union were involved, it was only the removal of the more intransigent members of the churches, and the resignation of the ministers of both churches which finally healed the breach.[111] As at Thetford, time, a determination among separated brethren to maintain channels of communication, and ministerial resignation played a part in healing the divisions which had occasioned the split.

The near-collapse of Thetford Congregational Church following Ashby's departure demonstrates that even splits which failed to produce a second viable cause might imperil the very existence of the original church. The division created marred the witness of the church, causing those who might otherwise have attended to worship elsewhere. Rancorous words could turn churches in on themselves, the publicity given to the division and harsh words exchanged blunting their evangelistic zeal. In the village of Bramley, West Yorkshire, an acrimonious split between minister and deacons created two insular, weak churches from a single strong and evangelistic cause.[112] However slight the loss of members, the atmosphere created in the church deterred hearers and potential

107 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of church meeting, 20 January 1848.

108 Walford, *Autobiography of William Walford*, pp. 142-3. The New Meeting was so-called from its origins in a division among the Independents of the town in the 1730s on doctrinal grounds, The Old Meeting embraced Unitarian theology soon afterwards.

109 James W. Newby (ed.), *A History of Independency in Halesworth and District* (Halesworth: Halesworth Congregational Church, 1936), pp. 93-4.

110 Ibid., pp. 97-9.

111 Holmes, *An Inglorious Affair*, pp. 72-3.

112 Roger J. Owen, "The Baptist Breach at Bramley", *Publications of the Thoresby Society,* vol. 54 (1976), pp. 234-5.

members.[113] Even after the healing of the breach, churches were rarely as healthy as they had been before the crisis; it was after the reunion of the Thetford church that closure was discussed. A stark instance of the effects of separation on the fortunes of the church is to be found at Pulham St Mary, where the Baptists lost half their membership in the course of a split which lasted five years, the reunited church being significantly weaker than the church before the division.[114] At Thetford, the division left the church confused, seemingly ready to close, or at least to revert to the status of a mission station, undoing Ashby's eleven years' work. Significantly, although the Baptists and Salvation Army established thriving causes in Thetford in the years after 1848, the Congregationalists remained in their 1817 chapel.[115]

That Congregational Independency is not synonymous with isolation is highlighted by the role played in the split at Thetford by other churches in the county. The same zeal which led to the establishment of new Congregational churches in this period also bound those churches together in concern for their mutual well-being. Not only was John Alexander of Norwich, a leading minister, appealed to as a possible arbitrator, but it was the intervention of a group of local ministers and lay preachers (some of whom later entered the ministry) which prevented the dissolution of Thetford Congregational Church.[116] In contrast to the reconciliation of longer-divided parties, such as those in Halesworth Congregational Church and Pulham St Mary Baptist, however, the dispute at Thetford did not see the relevant association appealed to for arbitration, even the suggestion of outside arbitration proved unnecessary. It appears that the dissentients realized that their meeting was unlikely to become a viable church, leading Prentice, in a proposal remarkable for its tacit recognition of his role in disrupting the church, to propose re-union on the same terms as had prevailed "at the time when he first came to the town".[117] After the

113 This process may be observed in the Baptist Church at Pontypridd; the withdrawal of twenty-seven members from a church of about three hundred had a chilling effect on the church's witness in the town. See B. Davies, *The Rise and Progress of Nonconformity in Pontypridd* (Pontypridd: The author, n.d.), pp. 10-11.

114 Tim Grass, *"There My Friends and Kindred Dwell": The Strict Baptist Chapels of Norfolk and Suffolk* (Ramsey: Thornhill, 2012), p. 39.

115 The formation of a Baptist church at Thetford in 1859 is particularly significant. Given the Baptist connections of a number of the members at Thetford, including Henry Brown, it appears that Thetford Congregational Church included a Baptist element in its early years. In the smaller country towns of the area, unless the Baptist church was strict communion, Baptists and Congregationalists typically worshipped together, either a Baptist or Congregational cause doing duty for both types of Dissenter. In some cases, such as Halesworth, there was a substantial Baptist presence in the Congregational church, despite the existence of a Strict Baptist church due to theological differences between strict and open communion Baptists.

116 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of church meeting 2 March 1848; FC120/116: note in the church book, January 1849; minutes of church meeting, 2 February 1849.

117 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: minutes of church meeting 9 March 1848.

re-union, the church was forced to seek help from the county union to keep the doors open, almost returning to the status of a mission station, as had occurred after the departure of its first minister.[118]

The dissension which almost closed the doors of Thetford Congregational Church in 1848 illuminates the sort of non-doctrinal controversy which affected dissenting chapels throughout the nineteenth century. Ministerial effectiveness, concerns about the growth of the church, and the changing demographics of communities and congregations could produce controversies just as destructive of church order, ministerial careers and evangelism as closely-fought doctrinal battles. For the minister involved, there was a way of escape; John Ashby was able to move to Stony Stratford, where he enjoyed sixteen years of successful ministry. The affected church, however, had to live with the consequences of the division. Too weak to divide successfully, the Thetford Church faced (at least temporary) extinction, and only the efforts of sister churches kept the doors open. The conflict between John Ashby and T. L. Prentice was largely destructive, driving Ashby, who had previously enjoyed a measure of success, out of the town and forcing the church to turn to the county union for aid. It is to the credit of Brown and Dulley that, after having found themselves at the head of opposing parties, they were afterwards able to work together in harmony, and set aside enmity for the good of the church, healing the breach created by an ill-advised attempt at reformation. T. L. Prentice, a "young man in a hurry", new to the town and possessed of a good education and substantial means, which he aimed to add to, rather than the old-established draper-deacon beloved of fiction,[119] was the man seeking the minister's removal, and his grounds were that the still-young Ashby's preaching was unlikely to appeal to the taste of newcomers, rather than the minister's sentiments offended established members. It is also a stark reminder that, although riches and position did not automatically give the wealthy members of a Congregational church the ability to ride roughshod over a majority comprising those of more modest means, they might still enjoy a measure of success in the long-run if able to exercise a sufficiently disruptive influence.

GERARD CHARMLEY

118 Norfolk Record Office: FC120/115: historical account in Church Book.

119 Indeed Dulley, the draper-deacon was to be found on the side of the embattled minister, with most of the older members!

THE GIFTS AND GRACES OF THE MODERATORS

When I first visited the Northern Congregational College, housed in its vast and imposing building in Whalley Range, Manchester, I had no idea that one day I would become an ordinand there, and later one of its Tutors (1988-93) and then Principal (1993-2003), albeit after it had undergone two changes of identity and moved to more affordable premises.[1] The occasion was a church outing to support the College's Appeal for £40,000 to renovate its premises.[2] I was part of the history Elaine Kaye has outlined:

> The Appeal helped to maintain the strong links between local churches and the College. In October 1964 the College held its first Open Week, when 700 people from 60 churches in the area came to see something of its work, and over 1,000 attended the four performances of the students' concert.[3]

We went over the Pennines to Manchester to do our bit for "our" College, from which our present minister had recently graduated,[4] and at which one of our Church members was then studying.[5] The vast support of local churches all over the North of England ensured that the Appeal target was surpassed.[6] And I was one of the thousand or so who attended "The Concert With 40,000 Laughs".

My memory of the visit is all about Moderators. I did not know much about

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1 The Lancashire Independent College and the Yorkshire United Independent College united in the former's premises in College Road, Whalley Range, in 1958 under the name of the "Northern Congregational College". After a Commission of the Congregational Union of England and Wales recommended a reduction in the number of the denomination's theological colleges, Paton College, Nottingham, and Western College, Bristol, amalgamated with the Northern Congregational College in 1968, although the Commission's proposals had suggested that Western should unite with Mansfield College, Oxford, and Paton with New College, London. In recognition of the Bristol-based and Nottingham-based colleges moving to a fresh life in Manchester, the "new" College was called "The Congregational College, Manchester". Following the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972 it took several years before a name could be found for the College which reflected a new era. Eventually, the name "Northern College (United Reformed and Congregational)" was adopted in 1983, just before the College left its College Road premises for a new life at Luther King House in Rusholme. See Elaine Kaye, *For The Work Of Ministry: Northern College and its Predecessors* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999).

2 Converted to 2012 prices using the Bank of England inflation calculator the appeal was for £686,452.

3 Kaye, *For the Work of Ministry,* p. 225.

4 Clifford J. Kenworthy, minister of Devonshire Street Congregational Church, Keighley (1958-65), who left Lancashire Independent College in 1958.

5 Brian A. Chadwick left Northern College in 1966 to be ordained as a Congregational minister at Grindon, Sunderland.

6 Elaine Kaye tells us that the Appeal was launched "at the Annual Meeting on 20 June 1963", that the target sum of £40,000 "was almost reached by 1967", and that "by 1969 the total raised had reached £45,147, well exceeding the original target". See Kaye, *For the Work of Ministry*, p. 225.

them as a fifteen year old, except that they were important people.[7] Observation had already suggested that they received the kind of deference which would have appalled the Jesus whom I was discovering through reading the gospels. After the concert I was introduced to a Mr Figures (who was Moderator of the North West Province) and re-acquainted with Mr Shepherd (who, as Moderator of the North East Province, we had entertained at home on his visits to Keighley). It was done in such a way that I was meant to realize I was in the company of individuals who had position and thus warranted respect.[8] Both men did make an impression: they seemed wise; but they were interested in those to whom they were talking (even youngsters like me who were far from sharing their wisdom). In the concert the Moderators were mercilessly lampooned. One sketch was set to a current pop song called "The March of the Mods". It provided evidence in a back-handed kind of way of the important position Moderators had acquired in Congregationalism, since it is usually "the great and the good" that are the targets for comedy script writers.[9]

Amidst the humour the concert had its more serious interludes. The only one which made a lasting impression upon me was a piano duet memorably delivered by twin brothers. I cannot remember the music they played, only what John Prentice, a Governor of the College and member of my church, claimed about those who played it: "They will be Moderators one day".[10] Presumably, he had met the young men as well as heard reports on their College progress at Governors' meetings. Quite clearly, he was not saying that an essential attribute for Moderators is that they should play the piano to a very high standard. But what was he saying? What had he seen in the twins which caused him to make his claim? Presumably he had in mind "the gifts and graces" required by Moderators and had perhaps seen them emerging in the two piano-playing ordinands. When I or my colleagues on the Northern College staff said similar things a quarter of a century later about ordinands in our charge, an important question might have been expected from those hearing us: is there such a thing as a Moderatorial type?

This paper will explore that question through a consideration of "the gifts and graces" of those who have held the office of Moderator up to 2010: 45 in the era of the Congregational Union of England and Wales (CUEW) and

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7 Almost fifty years on I have a better understanding of the role of Provincial/Synod Moderators and how it has changed over the years since the inauguration of the Scheme for Moderators in 1919. See my *The Story of the Moderators: The Origin, Development and Future of the Office of Moderator in Congregationalism (1919-1972) and The United Reformed Church (1972-2010)* (London: URC, 2012).

8 For a full list of those who have held the position of Moderator in Congregationalism and the United Reformed Church see Appendix C and Appendix D in Peel, *The Story of the Moderators*.

9 In an era of "Mods" and "Rockers" there was ample scope for Provincial Moderators becoming the focus of ordinands' humour.

10 The twins in question are David Jenkins (ordained 1967) and Glyn Jenkins (ordained 1966). John Prentice's prediction was half correct. Only one of the two sons of a Congregational minister became a Moderator: David (Northern, 1987-98).

Congregational Church in England and Wales (CCEW), and 57 in the era of the United Reformed Church (URC).[11] The evidence I have drawn on falls into two categories. First, I have considered what has been written about the careers of those who have been Moderators. In particular I have made use of the obituaries found in the church Year Books. Appendix One contains a list of these in date order. Secondly, I have drawn upon my personal knowledge of those who have held the office of Moderator. Among the list in Appendix One are several mentors, colleagues and friends. My involvement in theological education brought me into a close working relationship with several Moderators who served during that part of my career in Christian ministry. So, as Clyde Binfield has noted, I have encountered more Moderators than most in the URC.[12]

I: The Training Ground of Pastoral Ministry

Central to everything that being a Moderator entails are the skills involved in fulfilling what the original 1919 "Scheme for Provinces and Moderators" called acting "as friends and counsellors of ministers and churches".[13] These are essentially the same skills one associates with pastoral ministry. It was said of John Daniel Jones (Western, 1943-7), that "he only accepted the duties of Moderator because he believed that he could continue among the ministers and churches of his province the pastoral work so dear to his heart, and which had endeared him to so many" at Skinner Street, Poole (1925-34) and Emmanuel, Dulwich (1934-43).[14] The early Moderators were all chosen from those who had proven themselves to be pastoral ministers of the highest quality.

It is unthinkable that anyone who has proved to be an abject failure in pastoral ministry could become a Moderator. I am not aware of it happening, though as time moves on, with Christian leadership tending towards a more managerial than pastoral emphasis – often due to secular influences and statutory legislation – the possibilities increase. Nevertheless, those called to be Moderators have had proven ministries in local churches. One of the first was A. J. Viner (North West, 1919-22) whose administrative gifts had already contributed a great deal to Congregationalism prior to his becoming a Moderator. He had little time to taste his new role before he died suddenly "after a long day of preaching and travelling" while carrying out his duties

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11 Nine Moderators (D. G. Steward, J. N. Beard, J. White, R. W. H. Jones, R. E. Taylor, C. A. Haig, D. A. Smith, R. J. Hall and W. J. Samuel) served in both eras.

12 Clyde Binfield, "Preface", in David R. Peel, *The Story of the Moderators*.

13 *Congregational Year Book* (hereafter CYB) (1920).

14 Unless otherwise stated all quotations about Moderators in this essay come from their obituaries listed in Appendix One. On the occasion of each first being mentioned in the text their location and period of service is indicated but not thereafter. There are entries for A. G. Burnham, F. H. Kaan, J. E. Sowerbutts, H. S. Stanley and A. J. Viner in Clyde Binfield and John Taylor (eds), *Who They Were In The Reformed Churches of England and Wales 1901-2000* (Donnington: URC History Society/Shaun Tyas, 2007).

as Chairman of the CUEW.[15] What had caused Lancashire Congregationalists to put their trust in Viner's leadership was his ministry at Hope Chapel, Oldham. He was Somerset born and had ministered at Rectory Place Church, Woolwich. These were hardly the best credentials for a pastorate in a Lancashire mill-town: "It was a sphere in which failure would have been easy, but his success was great and far reaching. The church was built up, and all its institutions put on the firmest basis and supplied with the finest equipment for service".

Of David Walters (Wales and Monmouth, 1919-30), one of Viner's colleagues in the first Moderators' Meeting, it was said that "he won his ascendency not only by his preaching gifts, which were considerable, and by his powers of hard work, but by his generous and affectionate nature, his forceful and magnetic personality". Typical of the many tributes to the Moderators of the period are the references to their ability in previous pastoral charges to attract and motivate young people. Hence we read that "the younger people were especially drawn to [Walters], he enlisted them in many branches of service and to this day they cherish his ministry with loving gratitude".[16] It was an era when ministerial success was still measured by church growth, even though the seeds of subsequent decline had long since been sown.

Subsequent Moderators arrived with similar credentials. A. A. Lee (Eastern, 1940-41), who shared with Viner the fate of an early, sudden death which reduced his tenure of the Moderatorial office, built St James's, Newcastle into "a vigorous organisation, especially attracting vast crowds of young people to the services". It is said that "in the ten years that he remained there he made countless friends and came to wield a great influence over the religious life of the north-east". Meanwhile in London, F. Chalmers Rogers (Western, 1947-49) at East Hill, Wandsworth, was undertaking a twenty-seven year ministry following the Great War which ranked with "the great London ministries", when "under his leadership the church took a leading place in the life of the community and indeed the whole metropolis". As secularization started to bite and church decline set in, stories of ministries like this became ever rarer, though they were to be found and provided the ministers at their centre with undoubted credentials to serve as Moderators. Douglas Stewart (North West, 1970-72; and North Western, 1972-81) served seventeen years at St Anne's Congregational Church (1953-70): "with his gifts of leadership, enthusiasm and, above all, pastoral care, the church almost doubled in size". Meanwhile at Goring Congregational Church, Sussex, Cyril Franks (Southern, 1976-87) found himself

15 Given the politics involved – the Lancashire Congregational Union were essentially hostile to the "Scheme for Provinces and Moderators" and only agreed to it provided they could appoint as Moderator the person they wanted to be the Secretary of their Union – it is a moot point whether or not Viner, already the County Union Secretary in Lancashire, would have faced a high degree of change when he became Moderator. See Peel, *The Story of the Moderators,* pp. 14-16.

16 It was said of E. J. Powell that "in each charge he won the enduring attachment of his people, and notably the reverence and affection of the young", while E. J. Saxton saw both his churches (Regent Street, Barnsley, and Bridge End, Brighouse) flourish "under his able and assiduous ministry". Both Powell and Saxton were among the first group of Moderators.

in "a new church and one ripe for expansion, a church full of opportunity" (1954-63). The existing building could not cope with the influx of new members so a new church building had to be constructed. And what was the secret of Franks's success? We can speculate. Perhaps it had something to do with being in the right place at the right time? But the fact it was said that Cyril Franks's "sound preaching and assiduous pastoral care are still remembered by many people" warrants attention.

We ought not too readily equate successful ministries with the numerical growth of congregations, though even in the bleakest times the connection can sometimes be made. If few of those most recently called to be Moderators have church growth success stories on their CVs, all of them have in different ways and diverse places exercised ministry which presumably was perceived to be of the highest quality by those who appointed them.[17] Whether the ministers they serve and work with in their Synod continue to perceive their trans-local ministries in that way will determine to a large measure whether their leadership as Moderators is accepted and flourishes. As in every walk of life respect has to be earned. But, supportive of the conclusions of my research, a recent review of the role of the Synod Moderator concluded that "there is overwhelming support for the moderators as an essential part of the United Reformed Church".[18]

II: Essentials: the Gifts and Graces of Pastoral Ministry

I turn now to what I perceive is the essential skill-set of the Moderator in the United Reformed Church. It covers seven overlapping areas.

Pastoral Care

Like the letters running through a stick of seaside rock, excellence in the pastoral care of ministers and churches runs through the testimonials to the Moderators. Some may have had to work at it. It was said of A. J. Viner that "to those who really knew him" he was "a most loyal and affectionate friend". But, we might ask, what of those who did not *really* know him? He may have been, however, a tremendous help to those who were fighting difficult battles because he was "a warm and tireless friend of poor ministers and struggling churches". We may begin to wonder, though, whether the leading skill set of Moderators centres around administrative or pastoral ability. A Synod needs both, but they need not be located necessarily in one person. The North West certainly had a proven administrator in Viner, but was one once described as "particularly brilliant – but also slightly aggressive" a proven pastor?[19]

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17 For a critique of the way Moderators are appointed, see Peel, *The Story of the Moderators,* pp. 78-87.

18 As reported to the URC's Mission Council, October 2010, in a paper entitled "The Role of the Synod Moderator".

19 J. D. Jones, *Three Score Years and Ten* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940), p. 110. John Daniel Jones, the brother of Moderator Daniel Lincoln Jones, should not be confused with Moderator John David Jones.

We can have few doubts about H. H. Carlisle (East Midland, 1919-34) who appears to have been born a pastor. Fellow Moderator F. H. Wheeler (Southern, 1919-45) said this about him:

> He was deservedly loved and honoured in the churches he served, a true shepherd of souls, and servant of the public good: Throughout his wide province he was a Father in God, held in high esteem and affection. He was equally welcome in manse and pulpit; no minister looked to him in vain for counsel and help.

Indeed, pastoral acumen has been widely distributed around the Moderators' Meetings. Of W. J. McAdam (North East, 1930-44) it was said: "Always approachable and easy to confide in, his personal charm, genial spirit, kindly humour, generous disposition and broad sympathies endeared him to his friends and made him a welcome visitor wherever he went". It has been through their pastoral approach to ministers and churches, of course, that Moderators have built up the knowledge which helps them guide and shape regional church policy. A few Moderators have been criticized for adopting top-down models of leadership and displaying approaches which give personal *episcope* a bad name, but the vast majority have achieved their goals collaboratively and through consensus. Their leadership has been exercised through a love of the ministers and churches that set them apart to exercise it. To be sure, a small few were so pastoral in approach that indecision crept in through genuine fear of upsetting people, but most have been able to offer the leadership the church has needed and in a manner appropriate to its conciliar ecclesiology. F. Chalmers Rogers was only given time for two years' service as Moderator of the Western Province, but he sounds to have been the kind of person who makes an excellent regional trans-local minister: "He was one of the best loved of ministers just because he himself cared for people so deeply … churches and ministers alike came to value his clear and sane judgment, and to find comfort and strength in his sympathy and understanding".

Having "inside" knowledge of ministers and churches is a tremendous aid when it comes to offering leadership to the regional church. Such knowledge is the fruit of pastoral endeavour. And the London Moderator during the Second World War knew this well:

> Alan Green was above all things a shepherd of souls. There must be many ministers who thank God for him as one who was a true friend to them in their need. He was a good listener, wise in counsel and of compassionate heart. He had a rich vein of humour and a stock of good stories.

As the time for pastoral work gets squeezed out of the current Moderator's timetable, through extensive responsibilities to attend to ecumenical relationships or the never ending "compliance" requirements imposed upon local churches, it is easy to forget that former Moderators found that the best way to address ministerial deployment issues, for example, is rooted in a pastoral

relationship between Moderators, ministers and congregations which has established mutual trust. I know firsthand that Douglas Stewart was "a good pastor" and that "ministers in his care loved and respected him". His pastoral encounters became the soil in which he sowed seeds of fresh thinking and renewed vision. The strategy is not rocket science; it has been employed by the most effective Moderators. It is a form of leadership which believes people matter, because people matter to God.

Worship and Preaching

The Moderators arrived on the scene when the "princes of the pulpit" were on the wane and a tradition of Nonconformist culture centred upon preaching was receding. A growing sacramentalism, often hastened through ecumenical encounter, and a greater appreciation of liturgical structure, led to the sermon being set in a wider context. As society became more influenced by radio and then television, and people's entertainment outlets grew, an era of public oratory was eclipsed. And, rather interestingly, the Moderators have had within their number representatives who track this development.

Among the early Moderators are found some of Congregationalism's best preachers. Reflecting his era very well is A. J. Viner who was "a brilliant open-air speaker". E. P. Powell (Western, 1919-24), another of the first Moderatorial appointments, was a born preacher, "forceful and persuasive, his discourse being marked by an extraordinary lucidity both of thought and phrase". Having been selected from the premier pastoral ministers of the time it is hardly surprising that worship-leading and preaching were central to the skill-set of the early Moderators. While the place of preaching in our churches has altered over the years the expectation and requirement that Moderators are able liturgical practitioners and preachers remains, with the result that many Moderators are best remembered for the exemplary way in which they have led worship and preached the Gospel. The "inspiring pulpit ministry" of W. J. McAdam during his fourteen years as Moderator of the North East "was greatly valued in churches large and small". Meanwhile, in the Wales and Monmouth Province, one Moderator was "one of Wales' greatest preachers". Gwilym Rees (Wales and Monmouth, 1931-45) was "in constant demand at the County Union Preaching Festivals". Such occasions would soon vanish, but not the tradition of Moderators being good preachers. For many of them the very centre-piece of their ministry has been leading worship in the churches of their Province or Synod. It was said of Howard Stanley (North West, 1945-56) that he had a "love for and ability in 'preaching the word'", but that also applied to many of his fellow Moderators.

Through their liturgical and homiletic craft, Moderators became mentors. Who could not fail to learn from the worship-leading skills of Donald Hilton (Yorkshire, 1987-97), who, as John Sutcliffe reminds us, "led worship with dignity and reverence and was a subtle and thoughtful preacher"? The Yorkshire Synod were enthralled by the addresses and sermons he delivered at their meetings, while an Advent sermon he preached at Luther King House in the mid-1990s was among the best sermons I have ever heard. When one takes into account the worship and

preaching skills of many recent Moderators, it is not easy to go along with the idea that preaching is a dead art. If it ever was in danger of becoming so in my hands, I owe it to Moderators very often for renewing my faith in it.[20] I had the privilege of ministering in Stockton on Tees to families whose Christian lives had been guided and often shaped by the ministry of J. Howard Williams (Northern, 1972-87). It is said that "his deep and thorough scholarship . . . raised the understanding and knowledge of all to whom he preached". Indeed, his model of being a local church minister became his way of being Moderator in the Northern Synod and at its heart was the conduct of worship around the churches and pastoral contact with ministers and congregations.

In R. W. Hugh Jones (West Midland, 1970-72; and West Midlands, 1972-78) we find a Moderator who spanned changing times. Looking back, we can see how he reflects the preaching genre of the Victorian and Edwardian pulpit princes:

> He was a preacher of some considerable note, always fearless in his speech, wide in his sympathies, and clear in his interpretation of current events and tendencies, therefore his judgments and pronouncements demanded respect. He was a Welshman though this was not to be detected in his speech for he had a great command of the English language and a use of words that made the language live. His Welshness was clear in his preaching, for he preached with *hwyl*.

But, scanning forward, we find him on radio and television, bringing the pulpit into the recording studio. He "also worked with Lord Rank in producing and participating in religious films". Several Moderators, including Howard Stanley and Anthony G. (Tony) Burnham (North Western, 1981-92), became welcomed and perceptive contributors to radio's "People's Service", "The Morning Service" or "Thought for the Day". But the best-known media Moderator, arguably, was Colin Evans (Eastern, 1978-85): "His ministry grew to include radio and television – he had his own breakfast show – and the written word, through which he became a newspaper columnist and wrote for *Reform*". The Moderators end up doing all kinds of things but only Colin Evans could claim to have been Honorary Chaplain to Equity, the actors' union. There is some truth in the speculation that his formative preparation for ministry was in the Army Entertainment Corps during National Service. However, some in the Synod he served would have preferred to see more of him in person than on television.[21] Donald Hilton also grasped the opportunities which television

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20 Allow me to name some of them by way of thanks: J. N. Beard, A. G. Burnham, C. K. Forecast, D. H. Hilton, J. F. Slow, G. J. Cook and D. Jenkins.

21 It was a great surprise to Colin Evans and his many admirers around the URC when he was not offered an extension to his ministry as Moderator of the Eastern Province. As far as I am aware this fate has only befallen two other Moderators up to and until 2010: John Smith (North East, 1947-52) and Michael Hubbard (South West, 1977-94).

brought him. It was the new "open air" preaching and, although he would have considered what he was doing in a rather more sophisticated way, Donald not only "frequently wrote and presented the evening epilogue on Anglia TV" but also "led courses for other aspiring broadcasters".

When their love of words combined with their love of the Word, many of the Moderators have been seen at their best. Usually that has been when they have been crafting and leading worship. It is gratifying that some current Moderators are members of, and contribute to, "The College of Preachers". Styles may change, and emphases differ, but good Moderators will always remain practitioners of the Word.

Church Management

The first Moderators were additional to the existing structures of regional Congregationalism. No one – not even J. D. Jones their creator and advocate – considered them to be essential (*esse*) to the Church. The day to day life of Congregationalism was centred in local churches which belonged to County Unions. It had gone on without Moderators, and would have continued to do so had the 1919 Scheme for Provinces and Moderators been abandoned, rather than significantly revised in 1924 after the initial trial period. And many Congregationalists went to their graves without becoming convinced that Moderators promote the Church's well-being (*bene esse*). For many years the most powerful figures in regional Congregationalism were the County Union Secretaries and some of them were able and gifted senior ministers.

This state of affairs only changed slowly due to regional re-organisation when the County Unions made way for Provinces covering areas which hitherto had been made up of several County Unions.[22] The first Moderators served embryonic Provinces. Part of their task was to facilitate the creation of a new provincial structure across Congregationalism, something which was easier to achieve where the County Unions involved were small or struggling, than in areas where a large and strong Union was being asked to amalgamate with smaller and much weaker Unions. So from the beginning the Moderators were involved in certain aspects of church management, even if the majority of the regional managerial responsibilities fell upon the desks of the County Union secretaries. Since they were also charged by the 1919 Scheme "to act as superintendents of Church Aid and Central Committee Administration" it was hardly surprising that proven administrative ability was part of the required skill-set for the office of Moderator.

Some of the early Moderators "graduated" from being County Union Secretaries. A concession was granted to the North West Province to ensure its Moderator would always be the person selected by the Lancashire Congregational Union to serve as its Secretary, so A. J. Viner, who had become the Lancashire Union Secretary in 1909, became the first Moderator in the North West. He was followed by a succession of very able administrators and managers of church

22 For further information about the changes see Peel, *The Story of the Moderators*, pp. 22-6.

affairs. Provided one interprets the word "succession" widely, thus viewing the advent of the URC in 1972 in terms of continuity rather than of discontinuity, two of them would become General Secretaries of the denomination.[23] T. T. James (North West, 1956-70) followed Viner in carrying out the twin roles:

> He had a clear and orderly mind, he knew what to say and how to say it cogently, he was wise in counsel, gifted in rousing others to the tasks he envisaged for the churches, imperturbable and unruffled, swiftly lighting the occasion with wit and humour, and all the while deeply concerned for the life of the whole Christian Church and believing in and practising an understanding friendship with all. He was a great committee-man, and much more than that.

It is difficult to see anyone surviving long as a Moderator who did not feel at home in committees, however much Moderators focus their ministries in worship leading and pastoral care. After James, the tradition of "strong leadership" was taken up by H. S. Stanley, who with "boyish enthusiasm" and "humour" made his particular mark. He could be "direct and outspoken", standing in the "prophetic" traditions of Christian ministry, but he cloaked his work in "humbleness". Stanley's leadership gifts had been noticed while he ministered at St George's Road, Bolton, a charge involving a group of fourteen churches. When Stanley was appointed General Secretary of the CUEW and went to work at its then headquarters in Memorial Hall, London, he was replaced by J. A. Figures (North West, 1956-70) who had been Secretary of the Yorkshire Congregational Union (1949-56). Joe Figures was a man born to lead. He possessed a "keen mind", had "a wide grasp of policy" and an "ability to express himself in clear forceful English". Like his three predecessors as North West Moderator, his leadership was grounded in his gifts as worship leader, preacher and pastor.

Over the Pennines, it was the Secretary of Yorkshire Congregational Union who became the first Moderator of the North East. Eli Saxton (North East, 1919-29) combined the Secretarial role he took up in 1908 with his new, wider responsibilities until 1925, when, presumably the resulting burden proved too much to bear. We are told that he "revealed much business acumen, as well as spiritual gifts". His replacement as County Union Secretary was W. J. McAdam, who then went on to follow him as Moderator in 1930. While Secretary, it is said, that "Mac" found plenty of scope for "his business and organizing ability", serving the Union "with distinction". The "exchanges" between North West and North East were to continue: as the Yorkshire County Union had supplied the North West with a Moderator in the shape of Joe Figures, the Lancashire County Union "gave" Yorkshire J. N. Beard (North East, 1970-2; and Yorkshire, 1972-5). Norman Beard was first Yorkshire Union Secretary (1957-70), and, then, the

23 The two were H. S. Stanley (Moderator of the North West Province, 1945-56 and General Secretary of the CUEW 1956-64) and A. G. Burnham (Moderator of the North Western Synod, 1981-92 and General Secretary of the URC, 1992-2001).

Moderator of North East and later Yorkshire. Although extremely gifted in the management of church affairs, I discovered him coming really alive when doing the "ordinary" work of pastoral ministry. He was a powerhouse in the pulpit.

The practice of appointing Moderators with a proven track record in administration was not restricted to the more northerly outposts of English Congregationalism, nor did it cease with the birth of the URC. W. Andrew James (Southern, 1960-72; and 1972-79) was Secretary of the Essex County Union prior to becoming minister of the influential Purley Congregational Church and then Synod Moderator. He is remembered for being "a vigorous Chairman" of the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee. This links him with a contemporary in the Moderators' Meeting. John White (East Midland, 1960-72; and East Midlands, 1972-79) had two short pastorates in Lancashire after leaving Lancashire Independent College: Moss Side (1940-2) and Little Lever (1942-6). Then, when "his administrative gifts very quickly came to the fore", he became Assistant Secretary to Howard Stanley at the Lancashire County Union. After six years he moved to the CUEW headquarters in London to be Secretary to the Home Churches Fund. A tall and rather austere man, who was not so outward going that he ever could have been everyone's friend, John White ought to have been the darling of every Congregational minister because "he strove doggedly and successfully to raise the level of ministerial stipends". The money James coaxed out of the churches White wanted to spend on their ministers. Connecting White with D. A. Smith (Southern, 1966-72; and Wessex, 1972-76) is the fact that Smith also served the regional church in a secretarial capacity[24] and spent part of his career at his denomination's headquarters.[25] The clear trend we are illustrating, however, continues beyond Congregationalism.

In the URC era several Synod Moderators "emerged" from administrative roles. A. J. G. Walker (Yorkshire, 1975-87) had been Clerk to Presbytery twice and thereby became an obvious choice for Synod Clerk of the Yorkshire Synod following the Union in 1972.[26] Other URC Synod Clerks who went on to become Moderators include P. J. Poulter (Northern, 1997-2006), A. G. Burnham, A. Harrison (Yorkshire, 1977-2008), N. W. Bainbridge (Wessex, 1985-95) and A. J. Bulley (Wessex, 2002-10). Then, continuing the trail blazed by White and James, a major factor in some Moderatorial candidates becoming "noticed" most probably has been a period of service spent in an Assembly appointed post. One thinks of C. K. Forecast (North Western, 1992-2000), P. J. Brain (North Western, 2000-7), G. J. Cook (Mersey, 1994-2004) and D. H. Hilton in this respect.[27] But

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24 He was Secretary of the Bedfordshire Baptist and Congregational Union for 19 years and then Secretary of the East Midlands Province for 12 years, both roles running concurrently with his 21 year ministry at John Howard Church, Bedford.

25 He was Executive Secretary of CUEW (1959-66) with responsibility for Lay Preaching and for Maintenance of the Ministry.

26 He was Clerk of Newcastle Presbytery (1963-65) and Yorkshire Presbytery (1967-71).

27 C. K. Forecast: Secretary for Christian Education (1976-81); P. J. Brain: Secretary, Church and Society (1990-2000); G. J. Cook: Director, URC Training Centre, Windermere (1985-94); and D. H. Hilton: CCEW Training and Mission Department (1966-71).

equally likely these days, with so many ministers entering ordained service after having a previous career, is the likelihood that previous experience of, and competence gained in, administration and management will be put to good use by them in their ministries.[28] It is particularly important that we manage competently the church's precious resources. As the Synod offices grew over the first thirty years of the URC's life, it became crucial for Moderators to get the best out of the teams which worked in and from them. Coming from the ranks of pastoral ministry with its isolated and individualistic *modus operandi* some have found this easier than others. The Moderators have not universally modelled individually the collaborative styles of ministry that so often they have advanced collectively.

The managerial function of the office of the Moderator has increased during the life-time of the URC.[29] This might suggest that contemporary Moderators will need greater competence in administration and management than did their predecessors. Or it could be the case that today's overburdened Moderators need some of their managerial tasks removed from their Job Description and allocated to proven managers, thereby reflecting the distribution of tasks which typified the work of Moderators and County Union Secretaries in Congregational days? Whatever the merit of this suggestion, research of the skill-set of the early Moderators reveals that most of them were very able managers – often intuitively so in an era when management training had hardly been invented. They belonged to an age when tidy offices and transparent balance sheets were next to Godliness. It was said of Lincoln Jones (West Midland, 1919-39) that "it was undoubtedly . . . administrative ability coupled with his tact and very deep concerns for churches and men which led . . . to his appointment as the first moderator of the West Midland Province". Moderators need administrative and management gifts. Even one of Wales's finest preachers had them: Gwilym Rees "was possessed of considerable administrative skills and the churches of Wales have reason to be very grateful for the fund he raised single-handed to wipe off church debts during the years of economic depression". But surely every Moderator does not have to be a proven fundraiser?

Theological Competence

If we want to trace the theological scholars of the church we will tend to look to theological colleges and university departments rather than the Moderators' Meeting. This is no slight on the Moderators, more an out of context application of some equestrian advice: "horses for courses". However, caveats are in order lest we fail to recognize the theological acumen displayed by many Moderators.

Without a doubt there have been Moderators who, if they had wanted, could have been theological teachers; or, to put the matter in a way that those concerned might have much preferred: if they had felt called to do so they could

28 A striking example of someone who has done this is Michael J. Davies, ACIS. After serving as Moderator of Thames North Synod (1978-90) he became an Assistant General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (1990-97).

29 See Peel, *The Story of the Moderators*.

have exercised their ministry in academia. In some cases, circumstances might have prevented some of those people from reading for the higher degrees which are the pre-requisite for such a career.

Rees Griffiths (Wales and Monmouth, 1945-46) worked for eight years in the Post Office at Manchester before preparing for his ministry at New College, London. He was an outstanding student and had "a distinguished career" as an undergraduate. He was a Jubilee Medallist, graduating in Arts and Divinity. One might have expected him today to have been ear-marked for a teaching ministry and, as preparation for it, awarded a bursary to read for the doctorate for which he was clearly capable – as he proved when, in the midst of a busy ministry at Augustine Church, Edinburgh (1927-34), he successfully completed a PhD thesis on "God in Idea and Experience". But there was to be no academic career. We might also consider the achievements of J. W. P. Williamson (Mersey, 1972-87), who studied at Trinity College, Dublin where he received a First Class Honours degree in Mental and Moral Sciences and was a Gold Medallist in both Hebrew and Aramaic. After two undergraduate degrees (1941-5) he studied for ministry at Westminster College, Cambridge, where he collected the MA Cantab. (1945-8). The icing on the cake for him might have been the research fellowship he received for study at Union Theological Seminary, New York, at the time when the presence of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich had made it world famous (1948-9).[30] He received a Master of Sacred Theology degree from Union, but infinitely more important for him was falling in love with May, H. H. Farmer's daughter. A final year at Assembly's College, Belfast, qualified him for ordination in the Irish Presbyterian Church. It is difficult to believe that the man who was to do such sterling ecumenical work in Liverpool, with Bishop David Sheppard and Archbishop Derek Worlock when Moderator of the Mersey Synod, could not have had a teaching ministry. The fact that, like Rees Griffiths, it never materialized must have helped lift the theological level of the Moderators' Meetings.

A second caveat involves the inescapable fact that at least four Moderators had previously taught in theological colleges, three full-time and one part-time.[31] Each taught in areas most commonly associated with "practical" theology rather than the more ancient disciplines of philosophical and systematic theology, church history or biblical studies. They made a significant contribution to those ordinands whom they helped prepare for ministry. But, unlike the House of Bishops of the Church of England, which has assigned to it at any one time men of considerable academic standing, (D. E. Jenkins and N. T. Wright, for example, were recent choices for Bishop

30 J. W. P. Williamson's obituary contains two inaccuracies concerning his time at Union. His place of study was Union Theological *Seminary* not Union Theological College and the degree he received made him Master of *Sacred* Theology. At a time of degree inflation during the 1970s, the American STM degrees became Doctor of Ministry degrees.

31 The three who taught full-time were: R. J. Hall (Tutor, Cheshunt College, Cambridge, 1952-57); A. G. Burnham (Lecturer, Congregational College, Manchester, 1969-77); and J. L. Sowerbutts (Cheshunt Chair in Pastoral Studies, Westminster College, Cambridge, 1985-90). David Jenkins was a part-time tutor at the Congregational College, Manchester (1968-70).

of Durham), who provide theological expertise beyond that associated with "normal" bishops, the Moderators' Meeting in the CUEW, CCEW and URC has never had such an organized presence. The way of appointing Moderators makes such a strategy impossible. Perhaps the appointment of Fred Kaan (West Midlands 1978-85) has been the closest the URC came to making such an appointment? Fred's extensive knowledge of ecumenical theology would have been an attraction and it must have been a great help to a Moderators' Meeting which, given URC commitments, inevitably had ecumenical issues near the top of its agenda.[32]

Thirdly, due recognition ought to be made of the Moderators' published theological contributions. The aforementioned Fred Kaan was one of the greatest hymn-writers of the twentieth century,[33] while both A. A. Lee (Eastern, 1940-1) and C. L. Atkins (North East 1944-6) delivered the renowned, and arduous, Heckmondwike sermon-lectures.[34] T. T. James (North West, 1925-45) wrote *The Work and Administration of a Congregational Church*[35] as well as a history of Cavendish Chapel, Manchester.[36] Gwilym Rees contributed a biography of Dr Thomas Johns of Llanelly,[37] and, with others, John Phillips (West Midland, 1940-55) compiled *A Manual for Ministers*.[38] R. J. Hall (London, 1965-72; and Thames North, 1972-78) wrote a popular devotional book entitled *For Everything a Season*,[39] as well as collaborating with Connie Parker in producing *The Church is a Family*.[40] From Douglas Smith came a manual for Lay Preachers[41] and a book of children's addresses.[42] W. J. Coggan (West Midland, 1954-61) contributed a fine essay on pastoral ministry to an excellent collection of articles by alumni of the Yorkshire United Independent College, Bradford.[43] Colin Evans, like

32 Fred Kaan was Minister-Secretary of the International Congregational Council (1968-70) and Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (1968-78). His fluency in at least six European languages meant that the Moderators' Meeting possessed a resident interpreter.

33 Fred Kaan's hymns have been published in the following books: *Pilgrim Praise* (first privately published by Pilgrim Congregational Church in 1968 and then later by Galliard: Great Yarmouth, 1972); *Break not the Circle* (London: Stainer and Bell, 1975); *Hymns and Songs from Sweden* (London: Stainer and Bell, 1976); *The Hymn Texts of Fred Kaan* (London: Stainer and Bell, 1977); *Planting Trees and Sowing Seeds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and *The Only Earth We Know* (London: Stainer and Bell, 1999).

34 The last one took place in 1977, Leslie Green being the preacher.

35 T. T. James, *The Work and Administration of a Congregational Church* (London: CUEW, 1925).

36 T. T. James, *Cavendish Street Chapel, Manchester: Centenary Commemoration, 1848-1948* (Manchester: Hind, Hoyle & Light Ltd., printers, 1948).

37 Gwilym Rees, *Cofiant y Parch. Thomas Johns, D.D. (Taborfryn), Capel Als, Llanelli* (Llanelli: James Davies a'i Gwmni, 1929).

38 John Phillips et al., *A Manual for Ministers* (London: Independent Press, 1936).

39 R. J. Hall, *For Everything a Season* (London: URC, 1986).

40 Connie Parker and R. J. Hall, *The Church is a Family* (London: Independent Press, 1950).

41 Douglas A. Smith, *Lay Preachers and Pastors: A Pastoral Handbook* (London: Independent Press, 1966).

42 Douglas A. Smith, *Castles in the Air: Talks to Young People* (London: Independent Press, n.d. [1950s]).

43 W. J. Coggan, "The Minister as Pastor", in H. Cuncliffe-Jones (ed.), *The Congregational Ministry in the Modern World* (London: Independent Press, 1955), pp. 105-116.

several other Moderators, wrote short pieces for religious magazines and newspapers. *A Knock at the Door* is a collection of his meditations and stories from his ministry,[44] while *Glamour isn't a Church Word* is a memoir centred upon his media ministry.[45] Biographical books have been written by John Morgans (Wales, 1977-89)[46] and Keith Forecast.[47] David Jenkins (Northern, 1987-98) combined his imagination and musical gifts to produce *The Rejoice and Sing Tour Book* which introduced people to a new hymn book,[48] and along with Tony Burnham and Graham Cook he has been involved in "John Paul the Preacher's Press", producing theological and liturgical books as well as weekly sermons for preachers, many of which are written by Congregational and URC ministers.[49] Perhaps the biggest output came from the pen of Donald Hilton, whose many anthologies and collections of prayers have been widely used. *Table Talk* is an interesting and imaginative reflection on the Lord's Supper,[50] while Donald's contribution to resourcing the church with educational material for all ages was immense.[51]

The Moderators' Meeting has always contained members who have been among the most thoughtful and perceptive of God's gathered saints. From the unique overview of the church gained as a result of their trans-local ministries and their ecumenical contacts they gain an important perspective on the life of the church. Their annual "Report to Assembly" is evidence of the quality of their thinking. No one should doubt the importance to the church of the think-tank which is a Moderators' Meeting; nor ought they be surprised when a church gives some of its Moderators the ultimate honour: Chairman of the CUEW or President of the CCEW or Moderator of the General Assembly of the URC (see Appendix Two below). They may not have been the theological scholars of their

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44 Colin Evans, *A Knock at the Door* (London: URC, 2005).

45 Colin Evans, *Glamour isn't a Church Word* (London: Granary, 2007).

46 John I. Morgans, *Penrhys: The Story of Llanfair* (Glenside Printing, published by author, 1994) and with Norah Morgans, *Journey of a Lifetime: From the Diaries of John Morgans, comment by John and Norah Morgans* (Llanidloes: published by the authors, 2008). Aspects of John Morgans's work as a research student at Oxford University in the 1960s has been published under the title *The Honest Heretique: The Life and Work of William Erbery (1604-54)* (Tal-y-bont: Y Lolfa, 2012).

47 Keith Forecast, *Pastor's Pilgrimage: The Story of a Twentieth-Century Christian Minister* (Leicester: Matador, 2008).

48 David Jenkins, *The Rejoice and Sing Tour Book*, (London: URC, 1995).

49 Tony Burnham wrote *In the Quietness: Prayers before Worship* (Leeds: John Paul The Preacher's Press, 1981) and with Graham Cook (eds), *Say One For Me: Prayer Handbook* (London: URC, 1990).

50 Donald Hilton, *Table Talk: Looking at the Communion Table from the Outside and the Inside* (London: URC, 1998). As well as the prolific number of anthologies of prayers, poems and worship material Donald Hilton also wrote *Questions Jesus Wouldn't Answer ...?* (Redhill: Denholm House Press, 1977) and with his wife Ann two books for young adolescents on growing up: *Boy into Man: Sex Knowledge for the Growing Boy* (Redhill: Denholm House Press, 1972) and *Girl into Woman: Sex Knowledge for the Growing Girl* (Redhill: Denholm House Press, 1972).

51 I apologise if I have failed to acknowledge any Moderator's academic contribution.

age, but most of the Moderators have had the down-to-earth theological nous essential to their calling. As advocates and representatives, their Reformed church has usually been in safe hands.

Spirituality

I have twice served on groups charged with the task of nominating to General Assembly a person to serve as a Synod Moderator. Both experiences were good ones. Skilled chairing and a willingness by all to listen patiently to one another led to the name of a person emerging. It was possible at the end to "feel" that we had witnessed being led in our work by the Holy Spirit. There was a significant moment in each process when a member of the group pressed the need to nominate a person of sound "spirituality". "I want a Moderator who will pray with me", said one minister – perhaps reflecting the possibility that once he had experienced a Moderator who had not done that? A member of the other group urged the nomination of someone who would place before God the lives of ministers and churches – not so much praying *with* us as praying *for* us. To put it very crudely: both ministers were reminding us that we need Moderators who are in touch with God. That means, to use modern parlance, recruiting men and women of proven "spirituality" – although most Moderators held office prior to the term "spirituality" entering the popular theological vocabulary.

Some within the church are sceptical about the emphasis the churches have placed recently upon "spirituality", perhaps fearing the reductionism which can occur in religion when an "experiential" rather than a "doctrinal" basis for believing is advanced. Such fears are legitimate, but so are those belonging to Christians who worry about the opposite tendency – the one which produces an arid intellectual way of believing that lacks real heart. However, properly understood, the term "spirituality" does not fit easily within a mind-heart dichotomy. It is far too holistic a concept to warrant such a fate. Nor does the concept of "spirituality" sit easily with those who argue for the priority of orthopraxis over orthodoxy or *vice versa*. Spirituality concerns mind and will, as well as heart; and the best Moderators have demonstrated a holistic spiritual approach to their work.

"Spirituality", accordingly to Philip Sheldrake, "concerns the whole of human life, viewed in terms of a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and within a community of believers".[52] An ability to enable ministers and churches to view their ministry and mission within "a conscious relationship with God" is an essential part of the Moderators' skill-set. Many of the Moderators have modelled a prayer-life which is necessarily *other*-worldly, since it is addressed to God, but inescapably *this*-worldly, because its subject matter is *real* people, in *real* churches, struggling to live *Christian* lives in a complex world. They have offered prayer within firm commitments often to clearly identifiable worldly causes. When appointed Moderator of the

52 Philip Sheldrake, "Preface to the Series", in David Cornick, *Letting God be God: The Reformed Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008), p. 7.

Southern Province in 1919, Frank Wheeler was the youngest of the pioneer group of nine Moderators. W. L. Lee (London, 1919-34), one of his colleagues in that first Moderators' Meeting, described him as a "warm, gracious, pervasive, consecrated personality". And lest we should be mistaken in thinking that the term "consecrated" fits the caricature of an otherworldly cleric we need to remember that Wheeler served as an Army Chaplain during the First World War and received the DSO. And note what this prayerful man did in office:

> Throughout the war years the province had a full share of suffering and disaster. When towns were blitzed he was one of the first to get in touch with our people and to bring them all the help and cheer he could in their distress – often driving long distances in the black-out. To ministers, not a few, who had been through very shattering experiences, his presence and friendship, meant much in their darkest hours.

Like most who have served as Moderators, he had his feet firmly on the ground.

J. D. Jones was "one of those choice spirits who live from great depths of being; no matter what the outward conditions of life, he was possessed of a serenity and poise which were a strength not only to himself but to many others". The phrase "live from great depths of being" is indicative of what a mature spirituality involves. Here was a man able to bring into a busy and committed life a Godly dimension which resulted in his life being one of "serenity and poise". What has been particularly impressive about many of the Moderators has not just been the way they have prayed for and with ministers and churches, but also the fact that their lives have been anchored in a shared world of hopes and fears, problems and possibilities. We find some of the early Moderators at the vanguard of the Temperance Movement which found a clear correlation between alcohol addiction and the social deprivation in which addicts find themselves.[53] Many Moderators have been at the forefront of the quest for the improvement in the social conditions of the disadvantaged. J. Penry Thomas (Wales and Monmouth, 1947-51), for example, was "a fearless advocate of social righteousness, and…an inveterate and pungent writer in the national press on social questions, notably temperance"; while W. L. Lee, "always interested in politics…became a popular and influential speaker at working men's clubs and similar institutions, addressing them on religious, social and trades union topics". Such Moderators have had their modern counterparts: Tony Burnham with his clear socialist commitments; Graham Cook with his passion for community development; Peter Brain whose grasp of contemporary social and political issues was (and at the time of writing remains) phenomenal. However, one only needs a quick acquaintance with URC congregations to be able to recognize the truth in Kenneth Slack's observation that the URC is made up of readers of *The Daily Telegraph* led by readers of *The Times*

53 For example, J. Penry Thomas (Wales and Monmouth, 1947-51) and W. H. Watson (North East, 1952-60).

and *The Guardian*. By and large Moderators have been politically left of centre.[54]

Although a commitment to make society more just and equal has been widely shared across the Moderators' Meeting there has never been total unanimity on every issue. The Christian attitude to war and peace is a rather obvious example. Some Moderators once served in uniform, either among the rank and file or as Chaplains; but others were committed pacifists.[55] On some issues Christians seem destined to remain divided. That said, the Moderators form a representative sample of Reformed church leadership whose social and political commitments illustrate rather well David Cornick's view that "Reformed spirituality . . . is world-focussed, and therefore social and political".[56]

Mission and Ecumenism

Whether in the narrow sense of Church extension or the much wider understanding of Kingdom-building, Moderators have had mission near the top of their agenda. Some have been devotedly evangelical. It was said of Hugh Jenkins (Western, 1925-43) that "he loved and understood people, holding himself responsible for the churchless around his own doors". When minister of Hanover Street, Batley, he would visit the local public houses whose patrons we are told "cordially welcomed his cheerful presence". In more recent times, Moderators who have visited their local hostelries on a Sunday evening will more likely have entered as customers than evangelists. But that probability should not detract from the fact that church extension has been a common motivation among the Moderators. Peter Chesney (Wessex, 1976-84) was by no means the only Moderator for whom it could be said that they had "a passion for the extension of the church".

In many instances the "passion" concerned the advancement of the Christian church overseas. A repeated item in many a Moderatorial CV is significant involvement in the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Congregational

54 Kenneth Slack's observation did not foresee the role *The Independent* would come to play in some of our lives; nor could he have known what would happen to *The Times* under the ownership of Rupert Murdoch; and he clearly based his evidence upon URC congregations different to those I have known, where the paper most likely read is *The Daily Mail* or *The Daily Express*!

55 So, by way of example, F. H. Wheeler had been an Army Chaplain (1914-19) and J. A. Figures had served as Chaplain to the Forces (1940-46) both at home and in the Middle East. W. Griffith-Jones (Wales and Monmouth, 1952-61) saw active service with "a unit of theological students in the RAMC in Silonica". P. S. Chesney served in the Navy, C. G. Evans was in the Army Entertainment Corps and A. J. G. Walker served in the Royal Artillery during their respective periods of National Service. J. H. Williams had been a conscientious objector during the Second World War, working on the Forestry around Cardiff. W. C. E. Simpson (London, 1956-65) was a convinced pacifist who "was moved by the suffering people of London during the blitz and …led groups from Potters Bar into stricken areas to bring help and comfort". He served Potters Bar Congregational Church from his ordination in 1935 to 1943. Fred Kaan, however, had "witnessed first-hand the occupation of his country [Holland] during the Second World War, his parents harbouring German [i.e. Jewish] refugees in their home". It was an experience which led him to a pacifist position.

56 Cornick, *Letting God be God,* p. 106.

Council for World Mission (CCWM) or the Council for World Mission (CWM). A. J. Viner, W. J. McAdam, F. H. Wheeler, W. Griffith-Jones, W. J. Coggan and C. A. Haig (Western, 1960-72; and South West, 1972-77) all served as Directors of LMS. Maxwell Janes (Southern, 1945-49) is said to have delighted in the "wide-ranging pastoral office" of Moderator, but he left it somewhat early to become Secretary of LMS, where he facilitated the creation of CCWM.[57] He clearly had a commitment to the world church shared by many of his colleagues.[58] R. J. Hall was Chairman of CCWM and F. H. Kaan was Chair of CWM.

Two men came to the office of Moderator after extensive overseas experience. Martin Shepherd (North East, 1960-70) had worked with the China Inland Mission (1925-34). It is said that "something of its faith and single-mindedness was to remain with him all his life". After taking the Congregational Union Examinations he was ordained and served Totton and Hythe (1934-36) and Winchester Road, Southampton (1936-38) Congregational Churches before returning to China in 1939 with the LMS. After the Japanese military occupation of China he was interned in Shanghai (1942-45), returning to England when the Second World War was over. He became Moderator after serving two further pastorates: Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road, London (1947-56) and Chingford (1956-60) Congregational Churches. He remained throughout deeply committed to the LMS of which he was to become Chairman. Fred Kaan, born in the Netherlands, trained for ministry at the Western College in Bristol. He served two pastorates upon ordination: Windsor Road, Barry (1955-63) and Pilgrim, Plymouth (1963-68) Congregational Churches, before becoming Minister-Secretary of the International Congregational Council (1968-70) and then Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (1970-78) based in Geneva. Aided by his multi-lingual prowess he had developed a great understanding of the world church before he became a Moderator. It is said that during his ministry he visited faith communities in eighty-three countries across the world. But a very significant marker of the historical changes affecting the churches during the twentieth century is the difference between Martin Shepherd and Fred Kaan. Shepherd grew up in an era of world mission generated by various missionary agencies in the West, but Kaan belonged to a later, post-Empire era in which migration was more East to West and South to North, one-time colonies of Western countries were gaining independence and Congregationalism's one-time mission body (LMS) had morphed into a global fellowship of churches (CWM). The twentieth century saw the passage from a

57 Maxwell Janes apparently was not discontented with the work of Moderator: he was called to a greater responsibility. This could not be said of C. L. Atkins who, we are told, "served in the office [of Moderator] very acceptably and with characteristic thoroughness but he never felt at home in it, and it was not surprising therefore when he accepted the call of Victoria Avenue Church, Harrogate, in 1946".

58 For example, R. J. Hall: "One of his chief concerns was for the World Church", and R. E. Taylor (Eastern, 1972-78): "A gifted mimic with a fine sense of humour, gracious pastoral skills, concern for the world mission of the church, and ecumenical vision".

focus on mission to world Christianity.[59] The outlook and commitments of the Moderators largely reflected this seismic change.

Only a brief overview of the changes which have taken place in the office of Moderator is required to realize that the growing significance of ecumenism started to shape their work in quite fundamental ways. The birth of the modern Ecumenical Movement is generally taken to be the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910.[60] The Moderators were a significant ecumenical driving force within Congregationalism. At first their commitments and convictions were mainly reserved for forging and enhancing relations among the Free Churches in the Provinces they served. Some, like W. J. McAdam, took on national responsibilities by serving as representatives on bodies like the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches. It was typical of the range of ecumenical initiatives taking place in the early years of the Moderators that an obituarist thought it noteworthy to mention that Lincoln Jones in retirement facilitated the union of Congregational and Baptist Churches in Colwyn Bay. And, of course, a major pre-occupation of Congregationalists and Presbyterians in the pre- and post-War period was finding a basis upon which a union of their churches could be achieved.

By the 1960s ecumenical sympathies became essential for Congregational Moderators. They were increasingly being called upon to work with colleagues in other denominations facilitating local ecumenical initiatives as congregations decided that sharing church buildings made missionary and economic sense, and began to see the benefits of collaborative rather than competitive ways of working. It would not take long before they were joining other regional church leaders – Bishops, Chairs of District and Superintendent Ministers – in regular meetings. As Moderators discovered they carried out functions similar to those of a Bishop it was hardly surprising that their collective opposition to episcopacy in practice started to wane. A requirement to work closely with colleagues standing in the so-called "apostolic succession", coupled with the satisfaction derived from successful collaborative endeavour, became so experientially significant for some Moderators that historic doctrinal objections to episcopacy become somewhat secondary.[61] A grass-roots need to liberate ecumenically driven local churches from the shackles of a redundant denominationalism drove Moderatorial sympathies during the early years of the URC. Of that era's Moderators, Peter Chesney was a typical example: he possessed a "vision of the church" which was "universal and made him sensitive to the ecumenical spirit [in] which" his obituarist claimed "it has to be expressed today". It is recorded that "he won the confidence of leaders of other denominations". When he died

59 See Kirsteen Kim, "Edinburgh 1910-2010: From Mission to World Christianity?", in *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 8/8 (May 2011), pp. 467-88.

60 For an account of that Conference and a reflection upon its significance for subsequent church history see Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference: Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdman, 2009).

61 See Peel, *The Story of the Moderators*, pp. 88-93.

prematurely in 1984 he was Chairman of the Consultative Committee for Local Ecumenical Projects in England (CCLEPE).

While all the Moderators became involved in bottom-up ecumenical initiatives which made the work of CCLEPE so necessary, some were actively involved in more top-down initiatives. Howard Stanley would become an ecumenical statesman when General Secretary of the CUEW, attending the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) at New Delhi (1961) and participating in the work of the ICC, but while a Provincial Moderator he led the opposition to the 1947 proposals for a Congregational/Presbyterian union. No amount of ecumenical zeal was ever going to encourage Howard Stanley to give up his ecclesiastical principles lightly. But along with Joe Figures, his successor as Moderator, he became an active and influential member of the Joint Negotiating Group which laid the foundations for the URC. That is a reminder of how it is possible and often a mark of integrity to say that we are wholly in favour of a proposal in principle, but given the terms within which it is set, to be opposed to it in practice at one stage and advocate it at another. Howard Stanley's change of heart about Congregational/Presbyterian union was, according to Alan Sell, "surely one of the most significant reconsiderations in the history of twentieth-century Congregationalism".[62] There would be no change of heart for Donald Hilton, though, who prior to accepting a call to become Moderator in Yorkshire had led the opposition to the ill-fated *Proposals for a Covenant* from the Churches' Council for Covenanting.[63] So extensive were his gifts and graces, however, that even the most starry-eyed Yorkshire ecumenist came to welcome his ministry as Moderator.

We can safely say that ecumenical vision, understanding and commitment are essential attributes for the contemporary Moderator: no longer perhaps do Moderators need a growing expectation that the URC's aim of achieving "visible unity" will be achieved in our life-time, but certainly they must know the value of "receptive ecumenism".[64] Looking back, two cities stand out when considering ecumenical

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62 A. P. F. Sell, "Howard Spencer Stanley", in Binfield and Taylor (eds), *Who They Were In The Reformed Churches of England and Wales, 1901-2000,* p. 215.

63 See *Towards Visible Unity: Proposals for a Covenant* (London: Church House, 1980). In opposition Donald Hilton believed that "the Holy Spirit worked through the people of the Church and that bishops disenfranchised people; he did not want moderators assuming the authority of bishops". For a different, somewhat more nuanced view, see my *The Story of the Moderators,* pp. 88-93.

64 "Receptive ecumenism" is a new ecumenical approach which has been developed in Roman Catholic circles following *Ut Unum Sint,* largely inspired by Cardinal Walter Kasper. It has become a focus of research in the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University. Its website states that: "The essential principle behind Receptive Ecumenism is that the primary ecumenical responsibility is to ask not 'What do the other traditions first need to learn from us?' but 'What do we need to learn from them?' The assumption is that if all were asking this question seriously and acting upon it then all would be moving in ways that would both deepen our authentic respective identities and draw us into more intimate relationship" (www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/CCS/projects/receptiveecumenism). See also Paul D. Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

achievements: Coventry and Liverpool. In both places Moderators were at the forefront of ecumenical adventures of faith. When he was minister of Warwick Road, Coventry, Hugh Jones had been actively involved in the work of the Chapel of Unity of Coventry Cathedral. It shaped an ecumenical commitment that still impacted upon the West Midlands inter-church scene during his time as Moderator. Far more high-profile was the role of John Williamson in Liverpool during a period when bitter ecclesial divisions were slowly broken down and issues of social deprivation addressed, much to the disquiet of the Thatcher government. Along with his Methodist and Baptist counterparts, John Williamson worked ecumenically with Bishop David Sheppard and Archbishop Derek Worlock to make a considerable mark on the post-industrial development of a great city. In his autobiography, David Sheppard notes the benefits of continuity: "Trevor Hubbard, the Baptist superintendent and John Williamson, the United Reformed Church moderator both stayed in office for the first ten years after the year in which Norwyn Denny, the Chairman of the Methodist District, Derek Worlock and I arrived – a gift of continuity we could not have organized".[65] With Sheppard, John Williamson established COMPASS, an ecumenical resource for "training and counselling that included help for marital problems".[66] It was only the tip of the iceberg of ecumenical co-operation which Liverpool's Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops achieved in collaboration with Free Church colleagues, who appointed one of their number to be their representative – the Free Church Moderator, an office held for a period by John Williamson.

III: Conclusion

This paper has attempted to answer the question: is there such a thing as a Moderatorial type? The answer pressed upon me is nuanced. On the one hand we can point to a set of attributes that are required by Moderators if they are to do their work adequately, so I have outlined what I regard as the six most central ones: experience of and competence in the practice of pastoral ministry; an ability to conduct worship and preach to a high standard; a proven ability in administration and the management of people; theological competence; a holistic spirituality; and a missionary and ecumenical outlook. I could not concur with the appointment of a Moderator who did not possess each of these six attributes, although I readily grant that the measure of each any Moderator possesses inevitably will differ. But, after allowing for that, I am not convinced that the common skill-set required for Moderatorial service proves that there is "a Moderatorial type". In fact, given the range of personality types which have graced the Moderatorial office, I feel confident that the reverse is the case. There is no "Moderatorial type" since the common skill-set possessed by the Moderators has been put into service through vastly different personalities.

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65 David Sheppard, *Steps Along Hope Street: My Life in Cricket, the Church and the Inner City* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2002), p. 166.

66 Ibid., p.205.

Prior to the appointment of Janet Sowerbutts (Thames North, 1990-98) all the Moderators were men. From 1990 onwards the presence of very capable women has guaranteed there is not a Moderatorial male hegemony. Moderators now are not necessarily male, even though women remain under-represented in the Moderators' Meeting. One senses that most of the Moderators grew up in relatively comfortable surroundings. Few if any enjoyed great riches, though some, like Douglas Stewart, knew poverty and hardship. His mother was a widow and he left school aged fourteen. The vast majority of Moderators have been educated in the State sector, and of those that were not, the majority attended Congregational schools which offered generous bursaries to the children of Congregational ministers and missionaries. Interestingly, at least nine Moderators were children of the manse: T. T. James, A. A. Lee, F. C. Rogers, J. P. Thomas, J. W. P. Williamson, A. G. Burnham, D. Jenkins, E. A. Welch (West Midlands, 1996-2008) and R. E. Francis (Northern, 2006-13). Most of the Moderators grew up in the church and few were "born again" converts. Of the exceptions, Alan Green (London, 1942-56) had been antithetical towards religion and a newspaper reporter of left-wing political persuasion who possessed a sceptical streak. He was one of many who had a "life" before becoming a minister. The Moderators' Meeting has held erstwhile engineers (A. J. Viner and D. H. Hilton); accountants (W. H. Watson [North East, 1952-60] and D. G. Stewart); office workers (R. Griffiths and H. Jenkins [Western, 1925-45]); a boot and shoe apprentice (C. J. Buckingham [Eastern, 1952-72]); a solicitor (C. A. Haig); a midwife (R. E. Francis) and, of course, several Moderators served in the armed forces. With such a range of backgrounds it is not surprising that there is no such thing as a "Moderatorial type".

The Moderators, however, have not just been shaped by their background. They are also differentiated by their hinterlands and interests. A love of music is a recurring theme when studying their CV. The Moderators' Meeting has seldom been short of a competent organist – E. M. Drew (East Midland, 1935-45) "took a First Class Honours in organ playing at the London Organ School"; P. S. Chesney especially loved organ music; while W. R. Adams (South West, 1996-2002) and N. P. Uden (Southern, 2001-10) are excellent organists. Mention was made earlier of the piano skills of D. Jenkins, and R. C. S. Rominger (Thames North, 1998-2008) is a fine instrumentalist. Quite often the Moderators' Meeting has also been graced by excellent singers. But lest the impression is given that the Moderatorial taste is universally classical we need to factor in the appreciation of other musical tastes: jazz (A. G. Burnham and F. H. Kaan) and pop (P. C. Noble [Wales, 2001-12]).

Also central to the Moderatorial hinterland is sport. Erstwhile excellent sportsmen have become Moderators: E. P. Powell was a Cambridge Blue at Lawn Tennis; H. R. Williamson (Eastern, 1919-39), we are told, possessed a "big, strong body" which "brought him into all kinds of sport, and few dared challenge him on the football field"; and there have been quite a few Moderators who have been good cricketers, e.g. J. White and D. Jenkins. Some have been partisan supporters of their chosen football clubs, such as Bolton Wanderers (H. S. Stanley), Ipswich Town (R. E. Taylor [Eastern, 1972-78]), Southampton (C. C. Franks), Manchester City (A. G. Burnham) and Manchester United (D. Jenkins). Other Moderators have maintained the well-known cleric-cricket

connection. H. S. Stanley was a leading light in the annual cricket matches organized between the ministers of Lancashire and Yorkshire and when his playing days were over he could sometimes be found at Old Trafford. Alan Green, a man after my own heart, found time to write articles in *The Christian World* on the game of cricket which were "a great pleasure to fellow-enthusiasts". In the interest of even-handedness and to underline my conclusion, though, I end by noting that several Moderators have been devoid of the sporting gene – not least one of my mentors, Donald Hilton.[67] All of which simply proves that "it takes all sorts to make a world" – and a Moderators' Meeting!

DAVID R. PEEL

67 In what inevitably is a small range of examples I have not noted any evidence of sportswomen among the Moderators.

APPENDIX ONE

Source	Year	Name	Province/Synod	Moderatorial years
CYB	1923	A. J. Viner	North West	1919-22
CYB	1932	D. Walters	Wales and Monmouth	1919-30
CYB	1934	E. P. Powell	Western	1912-24
CYB	1942	A. A. Lee	Eastern	1940-41
CYB	1944	E. J. Saxton	North East	1919-29
CYB	1945	H. R. Williamson	Eastern	1919-39
CYB	1946	H. H. Carlisle	East Midland	1919-34
CYB	1947	R. Griffiths	Wales and Monmouth	1945-46
		W. J. McAdam	North East	1930-44
CYB	1948	J. D. Jones	Western	1943-47
CYB	1950	F. C. Rogers	Western	1947-49
CYB	1952	H. Jenkins	Western	1925-43
CYB	1955	T. T. James	North West	1925-45
CYB	1957	F. H. Wheeler	Southern	1919-45
CYB	1958	G. Rees	Wales and Monmouth	1931-45
		J. P. Thomas	Wales and Monmouth	1947-51
CYB	1962	A. Green	London	1942-56
		W. Griffith-Jones	Wales and Monmouth	1952-61
CYB	1963-64	D. L. Jones	West Midland	1919-39
CYB	1965-66	W. L. Lee	London	1919-34
CYB	1967-68	R. J. Evans	London	1934-51
CYB	1969-70	C. L. Atkins	North East	1944-46
		W. H. Watson	North East	1952-60
URCYB	1972	J. F. S. Solomon	East Midland	1945-60
URCYB	1973-74	J. A. Figures	North West	1956-70
		M. T. Shepherd	North East	1960-70
URCYB	1975	E. M. Drew	East Midland	1935-45
URCYB	1976	W. A. James	Southern	1950-66
URCYB	1977	H. S. Stanley	North West	1945-56
URCYB	1978	W. E. Pearson	Eastern	1941-52
URCYB	1982	M. O. James	Southern	1945-49
URCYB	1983	J. Phillips	West Midland	1940-55
URCYB	1985-86	P. S. Chesney	Wessex	1976-84
URCYB	1986-87	H. Bickley	Western	1950-60
		C. A. Haig	Western	1960-72
			South West	1972-77
URCYB	1990-91	W. J. Coggan	West Midland	1954-69
URCYB	1991-92	R. J. Hall	London	1965-72
			Thames North	1972-78
URCYB	1993	V. N. J. Lowis	Southern	1972-76

		R. E. Taylor	Eastern	1972-78
URCYB	1995	R. W. H. Jones	West Midland	1970-72
			West Midlands	1972-78
URCYB	1996	C. J. Buckingham	Eastern	1972-78
		J. White	East Midland	1960-72
			East Midlands	1972-79
URCYB	1997	J. N. Beard	North East	1970-72
			Yorkshire	1972-75
URCYB	2000	D. A. Smith	Southern	1966-72
			Wessex	1972-76
URCYB	2004	M. R. Hubbard	South West	1977-94
		J. H. Williams	Northern	1972-87
URCYB	2007	W. C. E. Simpson	London	1956-65
URCYB	2007	D. G. Stewart	North West	1970-72
			North Western	1972-87
		J. W. P. Williamson	Mersey	1972-87
LOGS	2010	F. H. Kaan	West Midlands	1978-85
TOL	2011	C. G. Evans	Eastern	1978-85
CL	2012	A. J. G. Walker	Yorkshire	1975-87
CL	2013	D. H. Hilton	Yorkshire	1987-97

KEY

CYB	Congregational Year Book
URCYB	United Reformed Church Year Book
LOGS	Stuart Dew and Martin Hazell (eds), *Leaning On God's Strength: Obituaries 2008-2009* (London: URC, 2010)
TOL	Stuart Dew (ed.), *Testimonies to Love: United Reformed Church Remembered Lives 2011* (London: URC, 2011)
CL	Stuart Dew (ed.), *Celebrated Lives* (London: URC, 2012) *Celebrated Lives* was published within the URCYB in 2013.

NOTES

1. There is no CYB obituary for John Smith (North East 1947-52). His name disappears from the CYB in 1961 after being convicted of a criminal offence at Leeds Assizes (14 March 1960). At the time of his death he was not on the Roll of Ministers of the CUEW.
2. There is no URCYB obituary for William J. Samuel (Wales and Monmouth 1962-72 and Wales 1972-77). His name disappears from the URCYB in 1990-91. He was convicted of a criminal offence and at the time of his death was not on the Roll of Ministers of the URC.

APPENDIX TWO

Provincial Moderators who became Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales

1921-2	A. J. Viner+	North West
1934-5	T. T. James	North West
1946-7	F. C. Rogers	Western
1951-2	H. S. Stanley	North West
1958-9	W. Griffith-Jones	Wales and Monmouth
1964-5	J. A. Figures	North West

Provincial Moderators who became President of the Congregational Church in England and Wales

1966-7	M. O. Janes	Southern
1968-9	C. A. Haig	Western
1969-70	R. W. H. Jones	West Midland
1972	C. J. Buckingham	Eastern

Provincial/Synod Moderators who became Moderators of General Assembly in the United Reformed Church

1976-7	R. J. Hall	Thames North
1983-4	A. J. G. Walker	Yorkshire
1987-8	C. C. Franks	Southern
1989-90	C. K. Forecast*	North Western
1990-1	G. J. Cook*	Mersey
1991-2	M. G. Hanson	East Midland
1993-4	D. H. Hilton	Yorkshire
1997-8	D. Jenkins	Northern
2001-2	E. A. Welch	West Midlands
2002-3	J. D. Waller	West Midlands
2006-7	E. J. Caswell	Eastern
2014-6	D. Grosch-Miller	South West
2016-8	K. Watson	Yorkshire

+ died during his year of office (19 February 1922) “after a long day of preaching and travelling”.
* became Moderator of General Assembly prior to becoming a Synod Moderator

REVIEWS

***Reformation Unbound: Protestant Visions of Reform in England, 1525-1590*. By Karl Gunther. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. 284. £65.00. ISBN 978-1-10707-448-4.**

Karl Gunther's first monograph makes an important contribution to current understanding of the development of Elizabethan puritanism and its place within the broader trajectory of the English Reformation. His primary contention is that, when situated within the long chronology of Protestant reform, "even some of the most radical elements of the presbyterian platform begin to look far less like new directions in the intellectual history of English Protestantism" (p. 256).

In the introduction to *Reformation Unbound*, Gunther declares his particular intention to demonstrate "that radical ideas and attitudes that typically have been viewed as later developments had been part of the English Reformation at its start" (p. 9). This argument is largely made in the first two chapters of the book. Chapter one presents a convincing case against the frequent association of radical calls for a thorough overhaul of ecclesiastical structures with later puritanism. Gunther outlines the proposals which prominent Henrician evangelicals such as William Tyndale and Robert Barnes made for "the creation of a fundamentally new sort of church in England" (p. 42). Opposition to clerical hierarchy and to the clergy's exercise of temporal authority are both addressed and Gunther includes a particularly interesting discussion of evangelical calls for every city to have its own bishop. The second chapter sheds light on the "highly agonistic visions of the reformation and godly life" (p. 67) held by a number of prominent Henrician and Edwardian evangelicals, who saw persecution and social conflict, rather than peace, as the inevitable outcome of the triumph of true religion. In the eyes of such individuals, faithful Christians must always offend their impious neighbours and the godly King could only ever be "a partisan figure who would rule over a divided kingdom" and not "the guarantor of religious peace or unity" (p. 73). Some even envisioned a campaign of apocalyptic warfare waged by the monarch against papists and other opponents of the gospel.

In chapters three and four, Gunther then seeks to demonstrate the continuing influence on Elizabethan Protestants of radical reformist ideas developed during the reign of Mary Tudor. The first half of chapter three covers familiar territory; Gunther outlines the heated controversy surrounding Nicodemism which was fuelled in large part by Calvin's very vocal opposition towards dissimulation. Fresh insights are subsequently offered in the form of a discussion of the continuing impact of this "anti-Nicodemite ethos" (p. 99) in Elizabethan England. Gunther observes the ongoing publication of anti-Nicodemite literature, primarily in the form of translations of foreign works and reprints of earlier Marian texts, throughout the course of Elizabeth's reign and persuasively contends that an enduring sense of the need to combat any temptation to

dissemble one's beliefs "underwrote the confrontational approach toward sin and sinners that defined 'puritans' in the eyes of Elizabethans" (p. 126). Building on the prior research of scholars such as Gerald Bowler, Patrick Collinson and Stephen Alford, chapter four argues that the political thought of Marian resistance theorists continued to prove influential amongst Elizabethan Protestants. More precisely, Gunther traces continuities between ideas advanced by Christopher Goodman and John Knox concerning the necessity of prioritising obedience to God over obedience to the monarch and the limitations which the Elizabethan prelate, James Pilkington, placed on the religious authority of the sovereign in his printed manifesto for further reform, *Aggeus the Prophete declared by a large commentarye* (1560).

Chapter five contains a valuable reassessment of the liturgical controversy at the heart of the 1554-5 "Troubles at Frankfurt". This case-study forms a chief component of Gunther's secondary thesis that early evangelical radicalism "continued to shape the thought and activism" of Elizabethan puritans "in ways that we have not previously appreciated" (p. 9). Gunther effectively challenges the traditional interpretation that the opposing arguments which emerged at Frankfurt concerning the use of the Prayer Book can be straightforwardly mapped onto later divisions between Elizabethan conformists and puritans over *adiaphora*. Indeed, "the views of ceremonies adopted by *both* sides in the controversy would later be used by puritans to argue *against* the use of vestments and other traditional ceremonies in the Elizabethan Church" (p. 160).

Chapter six seems to fit less smoothly with the rest of the volume. Prompted by his realisation that "Catholic voices are almost entirely absent from existing accounts of the vestments controversy" (p. 190-1), Gunther seeks to show how important Catholic responses were in shaping the puritan position and in bolstering "their claim that the vestments were harming the cause of the gospel" (p. 217). This section certainly sheds valuable light on the intellectual formation of Elizabethan puritanism. However, aside from a brief reflection on the resonances between puritan criticisms of vestments and Marian anti-Nicodemite anxieties surrounding popish remnants in the English Church, the bulk of this chapter contributes little to Gunther's principal thesis concerning early evangelical precedents for radical visions of reform. In addition, the final chapter of this monograph is not so much concerned with uncovering concrete continuities as with charting the "claims to continuity with the Protestant past" (p. 14), which proved so central to Elizabethan debates between puritans and conformists. Nonetheless, this section does provide an important addition to current understanding of puritan self-identity; Gunther demonstrates that, rather than merely seeking to legitimise their programme of further reform through claims that earlier reformers had received only a partial revelation of religious truth, many Elizabethan presbyterians and separatists also made enthusiastic but "fundamentally anachronistic" attempts at "assimilating early English Protestants to the puritan cause" (p. 246).

Overall, this volume offers an original and revealing account of the evolution of English puritanism. By adopting a broad panoramic view of the period

between 1525 and 1590, Gunther helps to contextualise the development of radical thought, as well as illuminating the diversity of competing visions of reform. With its clear and accessible writing style, this book will certainly be of great interest to both scholars and students alike.

LUCY BUSFIELD

***God's Ploughman: Hugh Latimer, a 'Preaching Life' (1485-1555)*. By Michael Pasquarello III. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2014. Pp. 238. £24.99. ISBN 978-1-84227-797-3.**

Books about early modern preaching were once the preserve of English Literature faculties. Several turgid tomes about the structure and style of pulpit oratory rolled off the presses in the mid-twentieth century. The advent of "revisionist" historians put an end to this. Revisionists appreciate the influential role which religion can play in individuals' decision-making. They also value the contribution which local studies can make to understanding the past. As a result, historians are much more alert to what sermons might reveal about patterns of political, theological and social history. This has been amply demonstrated through a recent string of studies on early modern preaching by (among others) Peter McCullough, Ian Green, and Mary Morrissey.

Michael Pasquarello III, a Professor of Preaching at Asbury Theological Seminary, takes this trend in sermon studies to a new level by combining his interest in church history and preaching into what he terms a "preaching life" of Hugh Latimer, one of the great first-generation English reformers. As a "homiletic history", *God's Ploughman* is not a biography in a traditional sense – it does not begin until Latimer matriculated in Cambridge in 1506 – but is an innovative historical snapshot centred on Latimer's preaching. Pasquarello unpacks Latimer's inspiration from Christ as the model preacher whose parable of the sower became the metaphor for the gospel ploughing which Latimer advanced and sought in Tudor England.

The chapters of *God's Ploughman* are loosely framed around one or more of Latimer's sermons. Chapter one captures the renaissance atmosphere of early sixteenth-century Cambridge in which Latimer was inspired by Erasmus's notion of Christ as *sermo* "divine wisdom and eloquence incarnate" (p. 18). Chapter two focuses on his Convocation Sermon and the prophetic challenge of condemning traditionalist, non-preaching, prelates. Chapter three explores Latimer's famous Sermon of the Plough as a programmatic statement of the reformers' intent, while chapter four considers his Lent sermons at the court of Edward VI. Latimer's versatility as a speaker is revealed in chapters five and six; these cover his Lincolnshire phase (1550-53) when he was sent to join the government's preaching campaign beyond the capital. Pasquarello's book effectively integrates the details of Latimer's texts with macro-events on the national stage. The book's diachronic lens is perhaps less successful; I would have appreciated greater clarity about how

Latimer's themes and techniques changed between the 1520s and 1550s. Reflection on the relationship between Latimer's published texts and his original oral delivery would also have been helpful.

The publisher's abstract on the back cover of *God's Ploughman* claims that Pasquarello has created a "new genre". This perhaps claims too much. Latimer is an ideal but niche candidate for a "preaching life". He was "arguably the most popular and persuasive preacher of the realm" (p. 78), and his preaching was in large part *about preaching* – the power of sermons to advance the cause of religious and moral reformation. Whether Pasquarello's format can be transferred to other historical figures remains an open question.

KENNETH PADLEY

***Christ and Controversy: The Person of Christ in Nonconformist Thought and Ecclesial Experience, 1600-2000*. By Alan P. F. Sell. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011. Pp. xii + 217. £16.00. ISBN 978-1-61097-669-5**.

It is seldom that a student is treated to such a breadth of scholarly research in so narrow a volume of historical theology as he or she will enjoy in Alan Sell's study of Nonconformist Christology during the past four hundred years. Aware of the central place of the person of Christ in the doctrinal debates that have shaped and divided Nonconformity, Sell outlines the Christological beliefs of a wide range of congregations and ministers across England and Wales that have determined the evolution of the movement. As an historical account his book offers a fascinating portrayal of the way in which the various Dissenting academies have influenced theological thought and so provides some sort of explanation of how it was that so many congregations gradually moved from a belief in the Westminster Confession or the Savoy Declaration in the seventeenth century to a thoroughgoing Unitarian humanism – and why so many did not.

Many of the theologians dealt with are unknown to me, but where Sell considers those that I have studied, such as John Owen, P. T. Forsyth and Colin Gunton, I found his analysis to be fair and balanced although of necessity somewhat brief. For instance I would have liked him to say something about Forsyth's unity of movements in the person of Christ that appeared to have influenced Karl Barth's doctrine of humiliation and exaltation, or on Gunton's emphasis on the Spirit in Jesus' life which played such an important role in shaping his Trinitarian thought. However, it is impossible to write comprehensively on so many theologians in a volume this size and Sell cannot be faulted for limiting his survey in the way he has.

What are the theological implications of the book? This might be an unfair question for it seems to me that Sell writes primarily as an historian seeking to marshal the facts of the case in as impartial a manner as possible. Nevertheless it is his "margin notes", the comments made in passing, as he summarises the various Christologies, that I found to be particularly interesting. For instance, he comments

at the outset (p. 11) that a number of those holding a subordinationist Christology found Arianism and Socinianism to be unstable positions as they progressed towards full blown Unitarianism. There is suggested here the highly significant idea that once the high Christology of Athanasius is eschewed, a wholesale denial of Jesus' divinity is the natural logical outcome. In short, there is no intellectually stable ground in between them.

The nature of his project means that Sell does not seek to show why any particular Christological position is wrong. However, his own "generous orthodoxy" becomes increasingly apparent in his margin notes and finds expression in his concluding comments: "I have always believed that the faithful preaching of the gospel of God's grace in Christ, rooted in clear, solid (but not stodgy), non-patronizing biblical exposition, is the right place to begin" (p. 180). This is not a position for which he has argued, but it is one which subtly informs this rich and balanced perspective on Nonconformist Christology.

ALAN SPENCE

***Mansfield: Portrait of an Oxford College*. Edited by Stephen Blundell and Michael Freeden. London: Third Millennium Publishing, 2012. Pp. 176. £45.00. ISBN 978-1-90650-749-7.**

The opening of Mansfield College in 1886 represented the apogee of Victorian Nonconformity. Protestant Dissenters, excluded from Oxford for more than two hundred years, were now back where they belonged. What could not be seen then was how Nonconformity would decline in the following century, or that a mere 123 years later ordination training, the college's initial *raison d'être,* would cease. Nor could they know that the college would reinvent itself as a fully-fledged college of the university.

The history of Mansfield has already been meticulously researched and documented by Elaine Kaye in *Mansfield College Oxford: Its Origin, History and Significance* (OUP, 1996). In the present volume Professors Stephen Blundell and Michael Freeden provide not so much a history as a celebration of this reinvention. They are appropriate editors representing two of the disciplines, Physics and Politics, which have emerged in the new Mansfield. Part 1 reviews the origins and development of the college from its earliest days as a non-residential theological college, to become a Permanent Private Hall in 1955, and in 1995 receiving full college status by Royal Charter. *En route* there is an interlude on the fortunes of the college during the Second World War when the buildings were requisitioned for government purposes, save for the Principal's Lodgings, the Chapel and the Library, the latter accessed by a staircase from the Principal's lavatory.

In Part 2 Michael Freeman, Fellow in Geography, discusses the legacy of the splendid buildings designed by Basil Champneys and widely regarded as the finest of his institutional designs. Champneys took his cue from the fifteenth century Hospital of St Cross, near Winchester, and the Library was inspired by a mediaeval tithe barn at Harmondsworth in Middlesex. The defect of the Champneys

buildings was that they offered little residential accommodation. This began to be rectified when the college became a Permanent Private Hall in 1955 and the new south range, designed by Thomas Rayson and opened in the 1960s, completed Champneys' grand quadrangle.

The grandest edifice was Champneys' chapel – Oxford's "cathedral of nonconformity". Dr John Muddiman, recently retired Caird Professor of New Testament Theology, offers a comprehensive – and witty – guide which deserves separate publication for the benefit of visitors. With its statuary and stained-glass windows the chapel reveals the history of the Church, from biblical origins to the late nineteenth century. The chapel is a monument to *Protestant* ecumenicalism; Oxford's Anglo-Catholicism has no place here. But the attentive visitor will discover a little window in a distant corner depicting Amos, representing the prophetic championship of moral justice, and Plato, representing human rationality; these would be the twin foundations on which Mansfield would rest.

Across the quad from the Chapel is the Library with study bays like the side chapels of a mediaeval cathedral. Alma Jenner, for thirty years friend to undergraduates and researchers alike, reminds us of the succession of eminent librarians, among their number Alexander Souter, C. H. Dodd, C. J. Cadoux and Erik Routley, and we are introduced to some of its treasures, including among its 30,000 books a fifteenth century manuscript of an Italian missal and a first edition of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding.*

In Part 3, Tony Lemon, long-serving Fellow in Geography, reviews the lengthy and often fraught journey lasting four decades that took Mansfield to full college status in 1995. During this period governance passed from the College Council, with its strong ecclesiastical composition, to the Fellows of the Senior Common Room as the Governing Body. This sometimes depressing tale of battles, with procedural uncertainty and resistance from university authorities, is enlivened by a photograph of the author joyfully surveying the wine cellar for which the college was justly renowned. Not all was doom and gloom. But with hindsight it would have helped if the university had been more supportive of the college during its lonely journey towards the fulfilment of its dreams. Some of the earlier scepticism at the time of its foundation lingered on.

Later parts of the *Portrait* include reflections by former Principals – Donald Sykes, Dennis Trevelyan, and David Marquand – and thematic perspectives by Ros Ballaster (Fellow in English Language and Literature), John Sykes (Fellow in Materials Science), representing two of the fields into which Mansfield teaching had moved, and Joel and Tanya Rasmussen (respectively Fellow in Philosophical Theology and Modern Religious History, and Fellow Chaplain). Joel Rasmussen reflects on the significance of the decision by the university to change the name of the Theology Faculty to the Faculty of Theology and Religion, thus building on Oxford's strengths in the study of theology but now encompassing the study of the world's other major religions. Mansfield Chapel also encourages people of all religious traditions to engage in prayer, meditation and worship, and to explore the role of music and the arts in spiritual development.

Mansfield College initially provided access to Oxford for the excluded. As

a college now fully integrated into the Oxford system, would its Dissenting traditions be lost? Lucinda Rumsey, Senior Tutor, and Janet Dyson describe the college's commitment to widen participation to students from Sixth Forms, and in particular Further Education colleges, who might not immediately consider applying to Oxford. Under the Principalship of David Marquand, Mansfield launched the Access to Excellence Campaign to make an Oxford education available to all those who might benefit, regardless of educational background. Mansfield, though one of the smaller colleges, has the highest proportion of students from the state sector. This is an achievement which the founders would applaud. While it is not fanciful to imagine their sorrow at the cessation of ordination training, they would rejoice in what Mansfield has become.

This is a sumptuous book, beautifully printed and produced, and with stunning photography from Keiko Ikeuchi. It will delight all those who wish Mansfield well as it celebrates its 125th anniversary.

ANTHONY TUCKER

***John Calvin: Christian Humanist and Evangelical Reformer*. By John W. de Gruchy. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013. Pp. 240. £18.00. ISBN 978-1-62032-773-9.**

Some years ago, a friend of mine returned from a WCC meeting in Geneva bearing the gift of an "I Love Calvin" t-shirt. I wore it proudly, if to local misunderstanding: people thought I was either advertising posh underwear or publicising a personal relationship. But at a URC General Assembly, I thought, there, surely, it would be acclaimed. I was wrong. How can anyone love John Calvin, the dour French Reformer, purveyor of the dreaded doctrine of double predestination with its *decretum horribilis*, engineer of the execution of Michael Servetus for his "execrable blasphemies"? In this wonderful contribution to Calvin studies, John de Gruchy, the Emeritus Professor of Christian Studies at the University of Cape Town, tells us how.

A text without a context is a pretext: this venerable saying about sermons goes for intellectual biographies too – and for the writer as well as the subject. For de Gruchy, the context is the crossroads of post-apartheid South Africa; for Calvin, it is the crucible of medieval Europe, with its explosive politics and shifting cultural paradigms, as a sclerotic late scholasticism is transfused by the new humanism (epitomised by Erasmus), followed by the blood-rush of the early Reformation (led by Luther and Zwingli). We follow the complex young Calvin, Renaissance man turned evangelical convert, on the road to Strasbourg in 1536, seeking the secluded life of a scholar, only to be ambushed in Geneva and reluctantly persuaded to be the architect of the city's reformation. The magistrates, however, did not like his blueprints, so in 1538 Calvin belatedly resumed his journey to Strasbourg, where he spent a formative few years under Martin Bucer before returning to Geneva for good – and for some well-known ill too, the relationship between Consistory and Council often fraught until Calvin's final years.

Thus Part One. In Part Two, de Gruchy then sketches the "Key Themes of Calvin's Legacy", which, he suggests (citing John Whale) is both a book and a city – the

Institutes as explication, Geneva as application – a seamless garment of theology and ethics. The headings, as such, comprise the standard menu at *Chez Calvin*, but de Gruchy is a chef who is able to elicit some very suggestive flavours from the traditional fare. Here are five examples of de Gruchy's reconstructed Calvin:

- *Sola scriptura*, yes, but (citing William Bouwsma) de Gruchy avers that "for Calvin, 'the notion of verbal biblical inerrancy would have suggested wilful [hermeneutical] blindness'" (p. 144).
- *Tertius usus legis*, yes, but, de Gruchy contends, that makes Calvin not a legalist but (citing Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* as a "masterly exposition on Calvin's 'third use of the law'" [p. 157]) an opponent of "cheap grace". Gratitude, not rectitude, is the basis of Christian obedience.
- *Predestinatio gemina*, yes, but, de Gruchy argues, the Canons of Dordt reflect a deracinated reading of Calvin on election and replace his Christological and pastoral emphases with "an abstract principle and … an arbitrary God" (Hendrikus Berkhof; cf. Karl Barth, p. 171). Indeed consistently irenic and ecumenical, de Gruchy insists on a place for Arminius himself at the Reformed table (unsurprisingly, some might cynically say: the author's middle name is Wesley!).
- The centrality of preaching and an ecclesial iconoclasm, yes, but de Gruchy reminds us that Calvin relentlessly tried (but failed) to persuade the Genevan authorities to celebrate Holy Communion every Sunday, and that he cherished both natural beauty and artistic creativity as gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- The renewal of society, yes, but in the spirit not of capitalism (Max Weber) but of socialism (Ernst Troeltsch). De Gruchy also emphasises that Calvin's political theology anticipates liberation theology with its "preferential option for the poor" and its call for the church to "speak truth to power". And how is this for a fusion of temporal horizons: de Gruchy revisits sixteenth century Europe at a time when the (Turkish) Muslim threat was acute and when Protestant refugees were pouring into Geneva, and he discovers Calvin boldly preaching against xenophobia: "Let a Moor or a Barbarian come among us, and yet inasmuch as he is human, he brings with him a looking glass wherein we may see that he is our brother and our neighbour" (p. 205).

Inspired by the theology of Barth and Bonhoeffer, de Gruchy makes a convincing case for, yes, a loveable Calvin: Calvin the progenitor of a balanced Reformed theology that is evangelically informed and socially transforming, deeply rooted in the Irenaean insight that the glory of God, incarnate in Christ, is human flourishing, and prophetically speaking to a contemporary world characterised by human withering, by systemic self-interest, fear, and violence. *John Calvin: Christian Humanist and Evangelical* warrants a wide readership, and its accessible prose (and pretty pale blue cover!) invites it, not least in Elders' Meetings and church reading groups.

KIM FABRICIUS

***Daniel Hughes: The Sledgehammer Pastor*. By Ivor Thomas Rees. Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2015. Pp. 184. £9.95. ISBN 978-1-78461-077-7.**

Daniel Hughes was a brilliant preacher, always in demand, and a committed politician, who stood twice for Parliament. But his preaching and his politics did not always sit happily together. At a time when, for so many people, the church and politics were two sides of the same coin, politics were changing. Daniel was a young man when the broad Liberal hegemony that covered Wales was giving way to emerging Labour and Socialist thinking. Ivor Thomas Rees places him well in these seminal social and political times and shows how his life reflected the changes in political thinking that brought division to the chapels of Wales.

Politics played their part in the long and tortuous dispute that earned Daniel his sobriquet of Sledgehammer. After a series of stressful pastorates, he arrived at the handsome Crane Street Baptist Church with its fine pillared entrance (today's Crane Street URC/Baptist and Grade 2 listed) in Pontypool, where his eloquence drew large congregations. But Daniel was a radical at a time his Deacons were firmly old Liberal. Socially and politically active, he was a popular lecturer and often preached in other churches. Complaints soon began to surface. Then came a protest from the pews – a chapel contretemps that was reported in detail in the local press and even reached the lofty columns of the London papers.

It seems Daniel had spoken for some three-quarters of an hour, highlighting the weak points of Old Testament prophets. He was moving on to King David when, *The Westminster Gazette* reported with relish, "the interrupter" called out from his pew: "What was the good of all that mud-flinging?" The *Pall Mall Gazette*, "cheered to find there lives a man who can champion the worthies of the Old Testament", gleefully quoted the interrupter explaining: "Moses had had it, Esther was spoken of as if she was a bad woman, and poor old Job had been dragged through the mud". It remarked the touch about "poor old Job" sharpened the argument, then caustically commented "the interrupter's objection that David is no longer alive to reply …suggests a whole theory of historic criticism". But, back in Pontypool, it was not so funny.

There followed claims and counter-claims that escalated into competing Church Meetings held separately by the minister and the deacons. The deacons asked Daniel to resign. He refused. It went on to reach the High Court in London. Then came the famous sledgehammer incident.

The Deacons had locked the church against Daniel. There was a chain and padlock across the chapel door. With a good crowd of supporters watching and a police presence, Daniel took a sledgehammer, broke the lock, opened the door and led his joyful supporters in - all with a press photographer present to record it for posterity. Daniel lost the case and the pastorate but soon established a new church. Many members of Crane Street went with him. They admired his support for "the working man and his family". But the Crane Street Deacons were middle-class Liberals: the Church Secretary was a solicitor and Liberal County Councillor; and the Deacon who interrupted his sermon was a factory manager.

On the wider, national stage, Daniel's life reflected the passionate Nonconformist opposition to the 1902 Education Act, which provided funding

from the rates for Anglican and Catholic schools. When Congregational minister and Liberal MP Sylvester Horne led the campaign to call for widespread passive resistance, Daniel was one of the many "passive resisters" who went to prison rather than pay the education rate.

Daniel made his mark, too, on the famous 1904-5 Evan Roberts Revival and was a likely factor in the failure of the ill-fated Liverpool mission. Then ministering in Liverpool and originally a supporter, Daniel became disillusioned with the Revivalist. Accusing him of chicanery and hypnotism, he threatened to use his vaunted lecturing talent to follow the Revival around with a lecture entitled "Evan Roberts explained and exposed".

The Second World War provided yet another amazing episode in the life of this Welsh maverick when he reflected national passions and politics – this time in America. He was on a visit to his daughter in Canada when war was declared and passenger transport across the Atlantic was suspended for the duration. His fame as the silver-tongued preacher of Sledgehammer fame soon gained Daniel a pastorate in Detroit – where he stayed long after the war to minister for 14 years, and where, true to form, he preached against segregation and had a run-in with the McCarthy investigations. He built a friendship with singer and civil rights activist Paul Robeson, labelled a communist, and it was rumoured it was his closeness to Robeson that ensured his return to Wales for fear of having his passport taken from him. Robeson certainly visited him when he returned to Machen, the same pastorate he was serving before the war.

Daniel Hughes was a preacher who stood lightly to denominations and a politician who would speak on Labour platforms but claim to be a member of no party. He had no formal education but picked up four Eisteddfod chairs along the way. He was friends with the socialist intelligentsia, including Bertrand Russell, Hannen Swaffer and George Bernard Shaw. He died, aged 97, in 1972.

An important aspect of this book is that it continues to illuminate the social and political life of the twentieth century, which until recently has been somewhat overlooked. It is important to capture the life and times of these giants of Nonconformity while there are still people around who can talk about them.

JEAN SILVAN EVANS