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EDITORIAL

The first article to be published in this *Journal* which to some extent marks the centenary of the Great War is Keith Clements's intriguing account of imperialist ambition not only in European politics but among the European churches in the years before 1914. Looking to an age and its mind-set, especially when both have long since passed, requires acute historical sensitivity. Dr Clements succeeds in opening up the mind of the time to us. His analysis is sympathetic but critical, reaching fascinating conclusions about the churches' attitudes to Empire as a means towards Christian conversion as well as the improvement of whole civilizations. But he also disabuses us of the idea that imperialist ambition (alone) can be cited as the War's cause. Dr Clements is a Baptist minister who served as General Secretary to the European Conference of Churches, 1997-2005. His paper was delivered as the Society's Annual Lecture at Westminster College, Cambridge, on 1 July 2015.

Also delivered to the Society's conference, appropriately enough, was Fleur Houston's paper on Frank Buchman's association with Westminster College. Buchman's evangelicalism comes to the fore. His approach was characterised by personal "quiet time", personal confession, personal evangelism all undergirded by a sense of immediate divine guidance. Nevertheless, as the article demonstrates, this did not always enamour him to colleagues who, generally, found Buchman to be possessed of a winsome and affable personality.

I am grateful to both authors for their willingness to submit such erudite and absorbing articles for publication in the *Journal*.

We begin, however, with a tribute to Alan P. F. Sell who died in February. The tribute continues in the Reviews section where a number of Professor Sell's recent publications are discussed.

We welcome Nathan Parker, Gethin Rhys and Colin Thompson as reviewers.

ALAN PHILIP FREDERICK SELL (15 NOVEMBER 1935 – 7 FEBRUARY 2016)

With the passing of Alan Sell, the English Reformed and Dissenting traditions has lost one of its premier scholars, foremost interpreters and most enthusiastic advocates. Born in Surrey and baptized among the Godalming Congregationalists, he later, in his own words, "fell among the Methodists".[1] A call to ministry, met with incredulity by his schoolteachers, caused some soul-searching and a return to his roots when he became a member of Worplesdon Congregational Church. In Congregationalism he found "consistent" rather than "itinerant" ministry, as well as the "Church Meeting", which he would later affirm as a fulfilment of the Reformation's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, of course "corporately conceived".[2] A convinced rather than accidental Congregationalist, his exposition of "the Congregational Way", at once a defence and a promotion, is erudite, informed and passionate in its claim that, when true to their principles, Congregational churchpeople are not sectarian but the guardians of an authentic Catholicity.[3]

Alan studied at Manchester University and what was then the Lancashire Independent College. In later years he explained that he chose to "go north" because the curriculum in the ancient Universities ended in the fifth century and he wanted to learn about subsequent, indeed more recent, theological developments. He spoke (and wrote) appreciatively of his tutors, *Christian* scholars *par excellence* such as T. W. Manson, Owen E. Evans, W. Gordon Robinson and J. H. Eric Hull. His appreciation of the Presbyterian Manson in particular reveals something of a seminal influence and kindred spirit. Alan recalled Manson's assertion that "Historical Christianity is first and foremost a Gospel, the proclamation to the world of Jesus Christ and Him crucified".[4] Such a statement pithily summarizes Alan's own theology, informed if not guided, by P. T. Forsyth's emphasis on the cross as central to the Christian *good* news. Perhaps more provocatively, he further recalled Manson's dismissal of apostolic succession: "There is only one 'essential ministry' in the Church, the perpetual ministry of the Risen and Ever-Present Lord

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1 The biographical details in this article were gleaned partly from a CV supplied to me by Alan and partly from his "From Union to Church: Autobiographical Recollections of Congregational Ecclesiology in the 1960s", in *Testimony and Tradition: Studies in Reformed and Dissenting Thought* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 285-316 (p. 286). I am grateful to David Peel, Anna Robbins and especially to Karen Sell for helpful conversations as I prepared this tribute.

2 "From Union to Church: Autobiographical Recollections of Congregational Ecclesiology in the 1960s", p. 287.

3 See especially *Saints: Visible, Orderly and Catholic: The Congregational Idea of the Church* (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1986).

4 *The Theological Education of the Ministry: Soundings in the British Reformed and Dissenting Traditions* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), p. 275.

Himself".[5] Though a committed ecumenist, Alan was unwilling to deny the insights of his tradition, despite the pressure to "conform" to what often appear to be dominant ecclesial forces. There could be no compromise. Unity is found in Christ and no earthly authority – be it council, bishop, Magisterium or Pope – could add to that essential truth.[6] Christ's cross as central to God's justice and mercy in redeeming humankind and the Church's essential unity in Christ would become common themes in Alan's writings.

After graduating BA and BD, Alan was ordained in 1959, having been called to minister at Sedbergh and Dent Congregational Churches, where he served on the Rural District Council and conducted adult education classes for the West Riding Local Education Authority. Ever busy, he also completed his Manchester MA thesis (1961) entitled "Christian Ethics in the light of British Moral Philosophy since G. E. Moore". Ethics would remain one of Alan's interests throughout his life. He published and reviewed work by other scholars on the subject. What proved to be his final project was to be a discussion of method in ethical theory, provisionally entitled *Christian Ethical Theory: A Conversational Approach*.[7]

In 1964 he was called to Angel Street, Worcester, Hallow and Ombersley Congregational Churches. While there he served the County Union and was active in leading the Worcester and District Free Church Council and the Worcester Council of Churches. He also completed his Nottingham doctoral thesis (1967), entitled "Christianity and Philosophy in Twentieth-Century Britain: An examination of relationships and prospects, with special reference to the role of the philosopher of the Christian religion", subsequently published as *The Philosophy of Religion 1875-1980*.[8] It is worth noting that his advanced academic training was in the field of philosophy, especially the history of philosophical development in Britain. The history of thought would always take priority in Alan's writings.

From 1968 he served as lecturer, senior lecturer and principal lecturer at the West Midlands College of Higher Education in Walsall where he introduced courses in philosophy of religion, ethics and the history of Christian thought. He also inaugurated a counselling service for students and staff and served in various roles in the West Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church, as well as on the denomination's Doctrine Prayer and Worship and Ministerial Training Committees. From 1983 to 1987 he was Executive Secretary for Theology for the World Alliance of Reformed Churches based in Geneva. Alongside encouraging the sharing of theological resources between member

5 Ibid., p. 276.

6 *Enlightenment, Ecumenism and Evangel: Theological Themes and Thinkers, 1550-2000* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), p. xiv.

7 Sadly the project was not completed, around one-third having been written when Alan died.

8 London: Croom Helm and New York: Routledge, 1988; reprinted, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996.

churches and undertaking research into the Reformed tradition, he helped to organise, and contributed to, bilateral dialogues between the Alliance and the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Lutheran World Federation, the Baptist World Alliance, the Mennonite World Conference, the Methodist World Council and the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council. He also represented the Alliance on the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

In 1988, he relocated to the University of Calgary in Canada to occupy the Chair of Christian Thought, also becoming a Canadian citizen, before taking up his final position as Professor of Christian Doctrine and Philosophy of Religion at the United Theological College, Aberystwyth, in 1992. While there, he was obliged to transfer to the Presbyterian Church of Wales's Roll of Ministers, and his later account of one of that denomination's primary contemporary thinkers, Huw Parri Owen (1926-1996), demonstrates not only Alan's grasp of philosophy of religion, but the roots of that denomination, grounded in Calvinistic *Methodism*, where the experience of evangelical conversion was, at least historically, fundamental to any subsequent understanding and defence of the faith.[9] At the College, he was Director of Postgraduate Studies and established the Centre for the Study of British Christian Thought. This Centre became a focus for doctoral research as well as a means to pursue his own work. At that point he concentrated primarily on the history of the philosophy of religion since the Enlightenment, written with a view to contributing to Christian apologetics.[10] Alan stepped into an active retirement in 2001. Continuing to act as a theological consultant for the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and to publish extensively, he was elected Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Wales Trinity St David (2012) and Honorary Visiting Professor at the University of Chester (2013).

There can be little doubt that Alan led a most productive life. For sheer volume of output, as well as breadth of interest (theological, historical and philosophical) there can be few Nonconformist scholars of the modern period who can rival his contribution. As he recorded in several places, he was, from a young age, an "inveterate scribbler". His bibliography extends to 35 typed A4 pages, beginning with an article to the *Christian World* in 1960 and with some pieces still waiting to appear (including those which will be published in this *Journal* in the near future). The quality of his published work was recognized by the award of Doctorates in Divinity (Manchester University, 1998) and in Letters

9 *Convinced, Concise, and Christian: The Thought of Huw Parri Owen* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012).

10 Particularly what became a trilogy: *Philosophical Idealism and Christian Belief* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press and New York: St Martin's Press, 1995); *John Locke and the Eighteenth Century Divines* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997); *Confessing and Commending the Faith: Historic Witness and Apologetic Method* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002). The volumes were subsequently reprinted and published in paperback (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006).

(University of Nottingham, 2006), both bestowed *operis causa*, while his wider contribution was recognized by a number of honorary awards,[11] as well as fellowships of the Royal Historical Society (1980) and the Society of Antiquaries of London (1981).

Two concerns permeate Alan's scholarly project. First, he worked under the conviction that relentless specialisation has resulted in the divorce of partners which should always be held together: theology and philosophy, the one helping the other in the task of explaining the gospel in a disbelieving, even hostile, intellectual climate; doctrine and spirituality, ensuring that rootedness in the gospel is not sterile but encompasses the whole of life and the whole person; doctrine and ethics, where he would quote the eighteenth century Strict Baptist John Gill "where there is not the doctrine of faith, the obedience of faith cannot be expected … And on the other hand, doctrine without practice … is of no avail …"[12]

Secondly, it could be said that Alan's primary contribution was one of retrieval, resurrecting the work of those whose names are familiar but the details of whose contribution has been neglected, while also drawing attention to those who, even in their own day, might have been peripheral and whose work has been long forgotten. He did this because he was convinced that English Nonconformity is possessed of a noble tradition, worthy of study for its own sake, but also because he believed it to be the guardian of essential New Testament theological truths. As a result, his writing is undergirded by the conviction that there is much in this tradition which is important for the mission and witness of the church today. For purists, Alan was not a historian precisely for this reason. Perhaps it is more accurate to say he was a theologian drawing on historical sources in his constructive endeavour. For example, his account of the "Calvinist-Arminian" controversy of the eighteenth century is surely the clearest exposition available of what was certainly a perplexing debate,[13] but he confessed that he wrote this book in order to clarify matters in his own mind. Though the debate had long since faded, he used it in order to work out and better understand his own theological views. Something similar could be said of his analysis of the "Conservative-Liberal" debate, where he discussed the foundations of liberalism within the European philosophical and theological tradition as well as in the rise of biblical criticism, alongside the subsequent reaction against these intellectual movements.[14] This could be seen as his methodology; he drew on the work of historical figures and movements in order

11 These include HonDD (Ursinus College, USA; Acadia University, Canada); HonDTh (Debrecen, Hungary; Cluj/Kolozsvár, Romania).

12 "A Renewed Plea for 'Impractical Divinity'", in *Testimony and Tradition*, pp. 211-237 (p. 211).

13 See *The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation* (Worthing: H. E. Walter, 1982; reprinted Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998).

14 *Theology in Turmoil: The Roots, Course and Significance of the Conservative-Liberal Debate in Modern Theology* (Grand Rapids, MN: Baker Book House, 1987; reprinted Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998).

to address contemporary issues. At times this could be challenging, even provocative, such as when he investigated the logic of contemporary slogans such as "The Church must take its agenda from the world", "All theology must be contextual" and "inclusivity is good and exclusivity is bad".[15] Not all will agree with his conclusions, but none can deny that he raised important points. His short essays on the history of "toleration" are illuminating,[16] while his three-volume prolegomena to apologetics[17] clearly sets an important agenda, though others will now have to take up the mantle. He contributed numerous articles and reviews to this *Journal*, and for many years provided the section on "Some Contemporaries" which referenced the analyses of the Dissenting and Nonconforming traditions published in other denominational journals. And it should be remembered that he also published on those who represented the Establishment, whether that of Scotland[18] or of England.[19] Alan's scholarship was immense, but his work was always infused with a gentle and playful wit. It is likely that he inwardly chuckled as he recorded some stories, or as he quoted W. H. Auden to the effect that "A professor is one who talks in someone else's sleep",[20] or when he recorded that his first published paper "occasioned such a resounding silence".[21]

Alongside his writing, he lectured extensively in the UK and throughout the world; he was an active member of many scholarly societies, and he was a committed supporter of Dr Williams's Library (Vice-President of the Friends, 1983) and the Congregational Library (Chairman of the Committee of the Friends, 2006-12; President of the Friends, 2013). It is likely that he took especial delight in proving his good friend Geoffrey Nuttall wrong; his proposal to bring together denominational historical societies and libraries being met with Dr Nuttall's "it will never work".[22] Of course it did, and the Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries, which he founded

15 *Enlightenment, Ecumenism and Evangel*, pp. 299-376.

16 "Separatists and Dissenters amidst the Arguments For and Against Toleration: Some Soundings, 1550-1689" and "Christianity, Secularism, and Toleration: Liberal Values and Illiberal Attitudes", in *Confessing the Faith Yesterday and Today: Essays Reformed, Dissenting and Catholic* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications and Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2013), pp. 51-79 and 80-104.

17 These are: *Philosophical Idealism and Christian Faith*; *John Locke and the Eighteenth Century Divines*; *Confessing and Commending the Faith*.

18 E.g., "Clarity of Precision, and on towards Comprehension: The Intellectual Legacy of N. H. G. Robinson (1912-1978)", in *The Theological Education of the Ministry*, pp. 154-176.

19 E.g., *Four Philosophical Anglicans: W. G. DeBurgh, W. R. Matthews, O. C. Quick, H. A. Hodges* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010).

20 *Testimony and Tradition*, p. 1.

21 Ibid., p. 211.

22 This is recounted in "Geoffrey Nuttall in Conversation", in *The Theological Education of the Ministry*, pp. 177-210 (p. 205). The article was first published in this *Journal*, VIII/5 (November 2009), pp. 266-290.

and initially convened, has promoted and undertaken research leading to several valuable publications. Perhaps the most enduring of these will be the four-volume set of Nonconformist texts. While each volume had its dedicated editor and assistant editors, that the project saw light of day owes much to Alan's vision, tenacity and commitment.[23]

Although his scholarly output demonstrates a profound insight and understanding of the Separatists of the sixteenth century through to Nonconformists and other writers of the twentieth century, it seems that he was most at home in the eighteenth, which is perhaps why he chose to edit the volume of Nonconformist texts on that "long" century. There, in the history of Dissent, he found the major themes of systematic theology (Trinitarianism v. Unitarianism; Christology; Augustinianism v. Pelagianism; Calvinism v. Arminianism; Enthusiasm v. Rationalism; paedo-baptism v. believer's baptism; church order; millenarianism and eternal punishment).[24] Indeed, in his study at home in Milton Keynes he kept close to him the collected works of Isaac Watts (8 volumes), the nonjuror William Law (10 volumes), the Presbyterian Henry Grove (6 volumes, for which he wrote an illuminating introduction) and, supremely, the writings of dissenter and scientist, Joseph Priestley (26 volumes). The inclusion of the latter perhaps demonstrates that Alan's Trinitarianism did not close his mind to the insights presented by those who held fundamental theological views that were far removed from his own.

Thus it can be said that Alan's was a "generous orthodoxy", where he maintained the ancient doctrine of the church, but was also willing to see that even those with whom he might disagree might have something worthwhile to say. In private, he could be remarkably candid and reveal frustration and even irritation. On occasion this spilt into his written work. But publicly he was generally measured, calm and irenic – essential graces for those involved in ecumenical dialogue, especially at international level; essential too for engagement in theological debate when history is often considered moot and, in some contexts at least, the Reformed and Dissenting traditions are deliberately ignored.

There are, of course, lacunae (some might even say "blind spots") in his work. Some discerned a lack of contextualization in his historical writing, the result of his goal of speaking to the contemporary church. Some criticized his lack of

23 R. Tudur Jones, with Arthur Long and Rosemary Moore (eds), *Protestant Nonconformist Texts Volume 1: 1550-1700* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: 2007); Alan P. F. Sell with David J. Hall and Ian Sellers (eds), *Protestant Nonconformist Texts Volume 2: The Eighteenth Century* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: 2006); David Bebbington with Kenneth Dix and Alan Ruston (eds), *Protestant Nonconformist Texts Volume 3: The Nineteenth Century* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: 2006); David M. Thompson with J. H. Y. Briggs and John Munsey Turner (eds), *Protestant Nonconformist Texts Volume 4: The Twentieth Century* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: 2007). The volumes were subsequently reprinted and published in paperback (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015).

24 This list can be found in the Preface to *Enlightenment, Ecumenism and Evangel*, p. xiv.

real engagement with contemporary theological movements such as feminist and liberation theology, while others wanted to know why, given our apparent "postmodern" context, he did not engage with the philosophy of deconstruction. It might well be a disappointment that he did not scrutinize these movements in his published work, but that cannot in itself negate the insights he emphasized. Still others thought that his approach to ministerial education was "old fashioned" because it emphasized the importance of immersing candidates for ministry in the theological disciplines in order to nurture a genuinely *theological* mindset which, he believed, would cope with those situations in ministry which can never be predicted and for which no amount of practice- and skills-based training can equip ordinands. He saw his academic work as the fulfilment of his calling to Christian ministry. Indeed, he once wrote, "in the unlikely event of my one day having a grave stone, I should like it to be inscribed thus: 'Minister of the Gospel'" and then in typical Alan fashion, he noted that this should be "followed by a footnote numeral; and at the bottom: footnote one, 'of the Dissenting sort'".[25]

While clothed in the analysis of historical characters and debates, and mediated through the witness of Dissent and the Reformed tradition, Alan's goal in his writing and lecturing was to give account of the Gospel, which he understood in decidedly Forsythian terms. As he wrote: "At the Cross, God in Christ did not merely *show* us something about his love, or our need, or both, but *acted* once-for-all for the salvation of the world by vanquishing sin and death and all that could keep us from him".[26] For the cross was not a matter of human nature offering its very best to God. Instead, it was God offering the very best to human beings.[27] The cross does not persuade God to be gracious, it is in itself the gracious act of God. In the cross we see the God of love taking pity upon the sin-stricken world, and in Jesus Christ he visits and redeems his people.[28] It is the "once-for-all, dramatic act of moral rescue by the holy, triune God of sovereign grace".[29] This gave rise to his conviction that it is God's grace shown to humankind before any could move in a Godward direction that makes the Christian message *good* news. "The ground of the Christian's confidence, the source of solace in time of trial, is that grace is sovereign; it comes before our thought and action; when we can do nothing, God does everything".[30] P. T.

25 Quoted in "The Dissenting Witness, Yesterday and Today", in *Testimony and Tradition*, pp. 253-284 (p. 253).

26 *Enlightenment, Ecumenism and Evangel*, p. 385.

27 Alan discussed this in "May We Still Glory in the Cross?", in *Enlightenment, Ecumenism, Evangel*, pp. 377-399. This part of the discussion takes place on p. 384, where Alan quotes H. F. Lovell Cocks, *The Wondrous Cross* (London: Independent Press, 1957), p. 59 and P. T. Forsyth, *The Work of Christ* (London: Independent Press, 1958 [1910]), p. 24.

28 "May We Still Glory in the Cross?", p. 381; Lovell Cocks, *The Wondrous Cross*, p. 7.

29 "May We Still Glory in the Cross?", p. 394.

30 *Enlightenment, Ecumenism and Evangel*, p. 337.

Forsyth, then, was clearly a mentor, his name and thought resounding throughout Alan's work, an edited volume proclaiming that Forsyth was "theologian for a new millennium".[31] And yet Alan avoided labels and refused to be associated with any particular "school of thought" or "school of theology". He doubtless would have balked at being called a Forsythian, but he might have allowed a degree of pride when a fellow Reformed theologian affirmed that "P. T. Forsyth lives again in the witness of Alan Sell".[32]

Alan's legacy is significant. Those who work in the field of Dissenting and Nonconformist history and theology, now and in the future, will have cause to be grateful, while those whose Christian home remains within the Reformed tradition, if they consult his works, will find their witness renewed and strengthened. Those who knew him give thanks too for his friendship, encouragement and support. He was undoubtedly a phenomenon. We are unlikely to see his like again.

ROBERT POPE

31 *P. T. Forsyth: Theologian for a New Millennium* (London: United Reformed Church, 2000).
32 The words are those of the UCC theologian, Gabriel Fackre, and included on the rear cover commendation for *Enlightenment, Ecumenism and Evangel.*

PROPHETS OF THE KINGDOM OR APOLOGISTS FOR EMPIRE? CHURCHES AND THEOLOGIANS ON THE WAY TO 1914

Charles Sylvester Horne (1865-1914), readers of this *Journal* will not need reminding, was one of the most eminent Free Church ministers of his day, and was Chairman of the Congregational Union in 1909. Among his many gifts was that of hymn-writer, and in that same year there was published one of his best-known hymns, "Sing we the King who is coming to reign". Well-known in its day, that is, but no longer included in United Reformed Church hymnody though it is still to be found in *Baptist Praise and Worship*. In case a reminder is needed it opens:

> Sing we the king who is coming to reign,
> Glory to Jesus the Lamb that was slain.
> Life and salvation his empire shall bring,
> Joy to the nations when Jesus is king.

Set to a rousing revivalist tune, it is a paean of praise to the peace, justice and freedom to be enjoyed in the coming kingdom of Christ on earth: "foe shall be friend when his triumph we sing,/ sword shall be sickle when Jesus is King". Horne wrote this hymn to counter the words originally set by the American evangelist Charles H. Gabriel to "The Glory Song" tune with the refrain "Oh that will be glory for me", which Horne considered too self-centredly individualistic and otherworldly. Horne's language is decidedly this-worldly in origin: "Life and salvation his *empire* shall bring…" But might he not conceivably also have had in mind some other words about empire, published a few years earlier, in 1902? They were by the poet A. C. Benson, and still resound around the Royal Albert Hall once a year:

> Land of hope and glory, mother of the free,
> How shall we extol thee, who are born of thee?
> Wider still and wider, shall thy bounds be set.
> God, who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet!

Horne and others like him were anxious to reject pietistic notions of salvation. But what of the prevalent self-glorification of the individual nation assuming the right to unfettered imperial expansion? How did the use of "empire" as a concept of the saving purpose of God in Christ relate to the picture of the British Empire on which the sun never set, or to other worldly empires? Were they one and the same, or two forms of the same reign of God, or running in parallel, or were they in fact in competition or even antithetically opposed? Such questions present themselves as we look back to the conflict of 1914-18 and the international context out of which it burst. Among the grand narratives

customarily rehearsed as causes of the war "imperial rivalry" is often cited, and along with that the apparent blessing which the churches of Europe, including Britain, gave to the colonial and imperial enterprises of their respective nations.[1] However much they may have imagined themselves to have been harbingers of the kingdom of God on earth, were they in the same breath apologists for empire – or at any rate confused as to which empire they were really promoting? To what extent was there Christian complicity in the imperial rivalries?

In this paper I shall look at how, from the turn of the century to 1914, Christian opinion, particularly but not exclusively British and Free Church, viewed "empire", and will do so by examining three events or clusters of events which engaged that opinion: (1) the South African or Boer War 1899-1902 and closely subsequent European actions in Africa; (2) the peace exchange visits of the British and German churches 1908-09; (3) the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910.

I: The Boer War 1899-1902

The Boer War, resulting in the annexation of the Transvaal and Orange Free State to British rule, is generally seen as marking the apogee of British imperialism. It was supported by the great majority of British opinion including, to varying degrees, church opinion. Hugh Price Hughes, Wesleyan Methodist leader, founder of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches and during the 1890s foremost protagonist of the "Nonconformist Conscience", was a staunch imperialist and strongly supported the British cause in South Africa. In his view British rule was hugely preferable to the Boer regime which had not adopted liberal principles of government, was far too lenient towards the drink trade and oppressive of native rights to the point of virtual slavery.[2] Not that he sought to advocate these views in official church circles – he was opposed to divisive political matters of any kind being brought into the Free Church Council debates. But in private he wrote to Henry Lunn, who was evidently anti-war:

> So far as the war is concerned, I wish you and all who agree with you could see the blissful results of British rule in Egypt and could realise the effect abroad of the incessant nagging at your own great country, and the even more pestiferous whitewashing of one of the most cruel and mendacious military oligarchies that ever enslaved black men and outraged white men.[3]

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1 See e.g. Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos/Inter-Varsity Press, 1990).

2 See "Hugh Price Hughes and the Boer War", in D. M. Thompson, J. H. Y. Briggs and J. M. Turner (eds), *Protestant Nonconformist Texts, Vol. 4: The Twentieth Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 270.

3 Ibid.

There was also however strong opposition in Free Church quarters, notably led by John Clifford the Baptist campaigner on so many public issues, whose Westbourne Park Chapel for a time had to be protected by the police when it came under threat from local mobs objecting to what they called his "pro-Boer" stance. In 1900, with the campaigning journalist W. T. Stead, Clifford founded the "Stop the War Committee", the forerunner of many such committees down to the present, and drew up a manifesto signed by over 5,000 ministers, albeit couched in rather vague language.[4] The particular issue which aroused Clifford and his supporters was the cruelty of the concentration camps created by the British to imprison Boer civilians, and in which thousands, including women and children, were reported starving and dying amid the disease-ridden conditions. It was a genuine scandal which made many in Britain deeply uneasy regardless of their attitude to the war itself. Clifford declared:

> I am boiling over with indignation against the iniquity of the Concentration Camps … But I wish to aid in the emancipation of my people from the tyranny of those blinding delusions which have played so large a part in this horrible war, and one of them, perhaps the most fatal of all the delusions, is the notion that we can really abate the mass of evil whilst the declared and operative policy of the Government is supremacy over, and not the blending of the British race with the Boers.[5]

Quite what Clifford meant by the "blending of the British race with the Boers" is not clear, and there was in fact an ambiguity in Clifford's stance. He was not evidently against annexation of the Boer territories into British South Africa, but rather against the military means to this end. To that extent he differed from Stead, who wanted to mount an international campaign to establish the principle that "no State which has offered arbitration shall be annexed until the justice of the annexation has been established by an international tribunal".[6] At least one Baptist, Thomas Spurgeon, now occupying his father's pulpit at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, was also reportedly opposed to annexation. Indeed, for his part Clifford from the 1890s had been advocating what was effectively the principle of "wider still and wider", or at least the consolidation of "our great Empire" into five British federations, autonomous but united on a basis of equality: the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland; Canada; Australia; South Africa and Hindustan – "all joined together and forming the Federation of Greater Britain".[7] According to one commentator the majority stances taken over the Boer War reflected "the growing

4 Alan Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform? War, Peace and the English Churches 1900-1945* (London: SCM, 1986), p. 18.
5 J. Marchant, *Dr John Clifford* (London: Cassell, 1924), p. 150f. Cited also in Thompson et al (eds), *Protestant Nonconformist Texts, Vol. 4*, p. 271.
6 Marchant, *Dr John Clifford*, p. 149.
7 Ibid., p. 150.

identification of an important section of Nonconformity with the moral argument for imperialism" and that in contrast to the 1870s when Free Churchmen were among the most severe critics of Empire, by the Edwardian period "the majority had become moral imperialists".[8] That moral imperialism is certainly seen in the eulogies of Hugh Price Hughes to the Pax Britannica and its blessings in India, not to mention Egypt where, as he arrived at Alexandria, the "fairest and most wonderful" sight of all was "a grinning Thomas Atkins" on the dockside.[9] But it is seen equally in Clifford's moral denunciations of British *mis*deeds in South Africa. In the same vein, during the early 1900s the moral failings of any empire, anywhere, were to be exposed and condemned: Turkish atrocities in the Balkans and Armenia, the use of Chinese indentured labour in the Transvaal, and above all the Belgian mistreatment of Africans in the Congo during 1908-09. For the moral imperialists empire as such was not wrong, but it was susceptible to violations of human dignity and freedom. By the same token, instances of moral culpability did not invalidate empire's rightful place in the grand scheme of things.

II: The Anglo-German Churches' Peace Exchanges

As far as Britain and Germany were concerned, in the early 1900s their imperial and colonialist rivalries hardly need restating, especially in Africa, together with the concerns of each country not to be outweighed by the other in the balance of power in Europe. In British eyes Germany, especially as embodied in the person of Kaiser Wilhelm II, was arrogantly strutting beyond its status as an imperial power. For many Germans, any such assertiveness was more than justified as a reaction to the centuries-old British assumption of the right to rule the waves, and they were demanding parity as of right. By 1906 the naval competition had become a serious diplomatic issue between the two countries.

In May 1908 some 130 representatives of the German churches – Protestant, Free Church and Roman Catholic – came to Britain for a 10-day visit aimed at promoting greater understanding and friendship between the peoples of Britain and Germany, and a like visit from Britain to Germany took place in the summer of the following year.[10] The prime movers in these enterprises were the English

8 Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?*, p. 19.

9 Cited in Thompson et al (eds), *Protestant Nonconformist Texts, Vol. 4*, p. 270.

10 The primary source material for this section comprises material in the WCC archives, Geneva, Boxes 212.020 and 212.021 (World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches) and the two souvenir volumes of the visits, *Der Friede und die Kirche. Peace and the Churches. Souvenir Volume of the visit to England of representatives of the German Christian Churches May 26th to June 3rd, 1908. Including the visit to Scotland June 3rd to 7th, 1908* (London: Cassell, 1908); and *Friendly Relations between Great Britain and Germany. Souvenir Volume of the visit to Germany by representatives of the British Christian Churches June 7th – 20th 1909*. Edited on behalf of the Kirchliches Komitee zur Freundschaftlicher Beziehungen zwischen Grossbritannien und Deutschland by F. Siegmund-Schultze. (Berlin: H.S. Hermann, nd., 1909/10?).

Quaker and Liberal MP John Allen Baker and the German layman Baron Eduard de Neufville, both of whom attended the Hague Peace Conference of 1907 and in the course of conversation determined to seek a greater involvement of the churches of their respective countries. The German visit to England and Scotland in 1908 was largely of Baker's inspiration and organisation, having secured the interest and support of all the main Anglican, Free Church and Catholic leaders, leading politicians of both Liberal and Conservative parties, and the blessing of King Edward VII. The German party comprised bishops, pastors and laypeople, including notables such as Court Chaplain Ernst Dryander, and academics including Paul Althaus, Martin Rade and Hans von Soden and the missiologist Julius Richter. They were all hosted in English homes, worshipped and in many cases preached in London churches, as well as attending many meetings, public gatherings and banquets in London, and a memorable day in Cambridge, the hundredth anniversary of which was commemorated in the university there in 2008. The British visit to Germany in 1909 followed a similar pattern, centred on Berlin and Potsdam but also including Bremen, Hamburg, Bielefeld and historic Eisenach. The organising genius on the German side was now the young pastor and social researcher Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze.

The immediate fruit of these exchanges was the formation in each country of a council to further the vision behind these visits, and the formation moreover of a joint Anglo-German body, "The Associated Councils of Churches of the British and German Empires [*sic*.] for Fostering Friendly Relations between the Two Peoples". The inaugural meeting of the British Council took place in London in February 1911, presided over by the archbishop of Canterbury Randall Davidson, with special guest speakers from Germany, F. A. Spiecker (President of the German Council) and Adolf von Harnack, doyen of Liberal Protestant scholarship. An "Anglo-German Understanding Conference" was also held in London in November 1912. No less important were the journals which each Council launched: in Britain *The Peacemaker* edited by the Baptist J. H. Rushbrooke, and in Germany *Die Eiche* edited by Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze. The Anglo-German initiative proved seminal for a still wider international peace movement as churches in other European countries, and above all in the USA, quickly showed interest. This wider cooperation brought about the church peace conference in Konstanz, on the very eve of the outbreak of war in August 1914, at which was founded the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, a significant player in the ecumenical story thereafter.[11] (For that reason this writer maintains the "heretical" view that the Anglo-German church exchanges of 1908-09 have at least as much claim as Edinburgh 1910 to be the birth of the modern ecumenical movement).

As mentioned earlier, in Britain the exchange visits and the subsequent joint council had the blessing of the archbishop of Canterbury and the cardinal

11 See K. Clements, "The Anglo-German Churches' Exchange visits of 1908-09", *Ecumenical Review,* Vol. 59, No. 2-3 (April-July 2007), pp. 257-83.

archbishop of Westminster, and a good number of Anglican bishops and academics, although the most effective leading Anglican role was taken by H. Russell Wakefield, dean of Worcester. But it was Free Church figures who injected the most energy. Allen Baker had been the initiator, while in organisation and promotion he was ably joined by the Baptists William Thomas, J. H. Rushbrooke and Newton Marshall, and the Congregationalist Charles Sylvester Horne. As would be expected, too, John Clifford lent his platform oratory to the cause at full volume. During the exchange visits of 1908-09, both German and British oratory was fulsome in praise of the already existing close relationships between the two peoples: in their history, by the blood of the two royal houses, by a common Christianity and by cultural affinity. Germans waxed eloquent on their indebtedness to Shakespeare, the British on their admiration for Kant and Goethe. War between such closely tied nations was unthinkable. The "scares" that had arisen in recent times were not only dangerous but unnecessary, "mere phantoms" in the words of Ernst Dryander. The unquestioned assumption was that bellicose opinion on both sides could and should be countered by declarations of undying affection bolstered by the personal encounters and exchanges such as were now taking place, whereby "misunderstandings" could readily be removed.

What of "empire" in all this desire for amity? Note again that the official title of the joint Anglo-German body set up after the exchange visits referred to the Associated Councils of the Churches "in the British and German Empires". On the British side, while the membership was overwhelmingly from the British Isles there was certainly some attempt to recruit from the wider empire. By 1912 membership of the British Council totalled 9,683 which included 888 in Canada and a small number in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.[12] What is more interesting is the question of imperial consciousness on the part of the leaders of the movement at home in Britain and Germany. It is also a difficult question to answer because there are relatively few direct references to empire, still less imperial rivalry, in the actual records and literature of the movement.[13] In fact a major feature alike of the exchange visits and the subsequent meetings of the Councils was the reluctance to address directly any of the specific incidents or points of potential conflict, as distinct from discounting the "fears" and "scares" of which they were but symptoms. Indeed at the inaugural meeting of the British Council in 1911, Archbishop Randall Davidson stated that the gathering was not "to discuss international questions of either commercial or political practical action, with all that that involves, or questions of politics or diplomacy at the Hague and elsewhere; still less are we here to discuss Naval and Military

12 Figures on the German side not available.

13 E.g. a paper given at the Anglo-German Understanding Conference in 1912, on "Colonial Development and Removal of Conflicting Interests". The Associated Councils – British Council: Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the British Council for the Year 1912, p. 10.

questions or the ideas of defensive armaments and what they mean".[14] Rather, they were concerned with inoculating society "with something that keeps us safe in deeper, stronger, truer health – the spirit of brotherhood and love which we as members of the Christian Churches can propagate and create among ourselves, something that will make the body corporate in the long run safe". Just how or if that spirit could engage with the concrete problems was left unasked, as all too often it still is.

There are however some statements from within the movement which are laden with assumptions about the imperial developments of the time. At a public meeting in the Albert Hall during the German visit of 1908 John Clifford declared: "We are predestined…we German and British folk, to march step by step through the practical union of these two peoples, in the interests of peace, in the interests of righteousness and holiness and goodness, in the interests of all humanity".[15] Equally revealing for its bearing on the imperial issue is the speech made by Sylvester Horne during the British visit to Germany in 1909. Horne it should be said, was the senior Free Church figure among the British visitors and in fact acted as shepherd for the whole delegation in its passage to and from Germany. During the great welcome meeting in the Philharmonie Hall in Berlin, he declared:

> May I not say that there are three great and mighty nations, proud of their common origin, with so much in common, in language, literature and religion – Germany, England and America. Between these the growth of friendship and brotherhood is inevitable because it is ordained of God. To think otherwise is to sin against the declared word of Providence written large in the pages of history. Strife is always hateful; but here it would be unnatural and criminal. Now, Sir, I propose that we here sign and seal a new Treaty of Berlin of international peace and good-will between our peoples, that we will stand true to one another for the promotion of good fellowship and Christian peace between Germany and Great Britain.[16]

The growth of friendship between Britain, Germany and America is thus according to Horne "ordained of God", a gift to the world and the outcome of a Providence obvious from the way history is visibly going. The implication is clear: the spread of a Christian civilising culture emanating from these three nations throughout the world. Conflict between them would be against the grain of history and a denial of their own true natures. Underlying this belief is the view that the imperial enterprises of Britain and Germany, and America too, far

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14 The Associated Councils – *Speeches Delivered at the Inaugural Meeting of the British Council* 1911, p. 8f.

15 *Der Friede und die Kirche*, p. 202.

16 *Peace and the Churches*, pp. 55f.

from being innately conflictual, are a positive manifestation of their commonality: a shared destiny of bringing Christianity, civilisation and peace to the whole world. Such imperialism is essentially benign, a project that binds these nations together rather than opposing them to one another. There is evidently room in the world for all these empires. In that sense, Horne the author of "Sing we the king who is coming to reign", and at almost the same time the deliverer of this speech in Berlin, was both a prophet of the kingdom and an apologist for empire – not just the British Raj but also the German *Reich* even the American dream too. Consistent with this, almost on the eve of war in 1914 J. H. Rushbrooke was writing as virtual apologist for the German aspirations for naval parity with Britain: "She regards it as essential to the safety of her maritime trade. In some measure it expresses the pride of a great people, refusing to carry on a world-business at the mercy of other Powers … To look upon it as merely directed against ourselves is to forget the existence of French and Russian fleets".[17]

III: The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910

Edinburgh 1910 does have a claim (it can be admitted, if half-grudgingly) to be the starting point of the modern ecumenical movement, insofar as it was a conference comprising official representatives of churches and mission agencies which aimed at greater cooperation in mission at world level, and set up a continuation committee to implement its decisions and further its work. This eventuated in the formation of the International Missionary Council in 1921. Quite apart from its outcomes, however, Edinburgh 1910 was a remarkable gathering of 1,215 delegates, overwhelmingly western, Protestant and Anglican but certainly with a worldwide concern.[18] In terms of personal driving force the predominant figure was the American lay evangelist and student leader John R. Mott, who chaired the meeting, and its executive genius was the Scottish layman J. H. Oldham who served as secretary and thereafter likewise held the reins of the continuation committee (and for the next thirty years much else in the ecumenical movement). To gather so many international delegates, to have set up eight commissions, to have a report prepared from each commission beforehand, and then to steer the sessions through and have the records of the plenary discussions and decisions produced all within the ten days of the conference, was a formidable feat of organisation and leadership. It is the work of Commission VII, "Missions and Governments" that most directly concerns us here.[19] As in the reports from all the commissions, here the focus was on practical matters and facts on the ground in the

17 See K. Clements, "Baptists and the Outbreak of the First World War", *Baptist Quarterly*, XXVI/2 (April 1975), p. 82.

18 See B. Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans, 2009).

19 World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Report of Commission VII. Missions and Governments* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier).

various mission fields rather than grand issues of theology and principles of church-state relations. Inevitably, however, underlying presuppositions and perspectives for evaluating empire and colonial policy in relation to the specific tasks of Christian mission, and the relation of each to the kingdom of God, were evident.

A casual or cynical observer might well conclude that Edinburgh 1910 was effectively western imperialism at prayer. Not only was it in appearance almost entirely white, European and North American (and male), but as well as missionaries and church officials a number of the lay participants were actual agents of western governments with present or past experience of colonial or imperial administration, or otherwise closely identified with government. Thus the president of the conference, albeit in a largely decorative role, and chairman of Commission VII was the Scottish Tory grandee Lord Balfour of Burleigh who could hardly be expected to be unsympathetic to (the British) empire. Sir Andrew Fraser, formerly governor of the Punjab and now of Bengal, was a vice-president of the conference. He was moreover the father-in-law of J. H. Oldham who was himself, incidentally, born in the British Raj, his father being a captain in the Indian army.[20] Oldham is but one example of how from late Victorian times onwards for many educated people it was difficult not to be personally related in some way to the overseas empire. It was simply a fact of life. But at Edinburgh others had been recruited precisely because of the input they could provide and not least on the subject of Commission VII. Sir Andrew Wingate of the Indian Civil Service was a member of the Commission, as was Sir Robert Hart, formerly inspector-general of the Chinese imperial customs service.[21] Its Vice-Chairman was an American Episcopalian, Seth Low, a merchant who had made his fortune in the Far Eastern Silk trade. Another Episcopalian layman, and a very powerful voice on the commission, was Admiral A. T. Mahan, architect of the strategy of American sea-power through his influential writings. He saw East Asia and the Pacific rim as the key to global security. Conflict could be averted, he argued, only by the extension there of American power and therewith Christian civilisation. Mahan believed that the English race, like Israel of old, had been authorised by God to "redeem" land from the Native Americans and was set apart for a special mission of universal salvation. Brian Stanley states: "Mahan was a fervent believer in the providential destiny of nations and consistently defended the use of force in international relations" and "was, quite simply, an unashamed Anglo-American Christian imperialist".[22] Other political figures on the Commission were R. L. Border, later to become Canadian prime minister, and John W. Foster who had served as American secretary of state in 1892-93 and played a significant role in the American annexation of Hawaii.

Alike in the report of Commission VII and its discussion in plenary, it is not

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20 See K. Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J. H. Oldham* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark; Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999).

21 Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference*, *Edinburgh 1910*, p. 251.

22 Ibid., p. 252.

surprising that at Edinburgh there was no criticism of empire as such, and in fact a general assumption that imperial government and Christian mission may not only co-exist but can be, and in most instances are, mutually beneficial.[23] Several factors were at play here. First, missionaries and missiologists were naturally already shaped in their thinking by their understanding of the relations between church and state in their respective home countries, and in most cases at Edinburgh this tended to one shade or other of Protestant understanding. While this may have varied significantly as between say, Germany, Scandinavia, Britain and the USA, there were certain commonalities. Even when there was maintained a sharp separation between church and state, the state was never seen in anything but a positive light, whether in the minimalist quasi-Augustinian sense of government being simply a bulwark against the forces of evil and chaos, or as in America where it was envisaged as a positive, reformative instrument for righteousness on earth. Positive appreciations of the role of government were naturally transferred to overseas territories under imperial or colonial rule, even though the conditions in these territories were often vastly different from at home. So we find for example Oberverwaltungsgerichtsrat Berner of the Berlin Missionary Society stating in good Lutheran fashion:

> The paramount duty of civil government is to maintain order; its authority must be upheld. Doubtless in all colonies the authority of Government and the political supremacy of the white are closely connected. Christians recognise civil authority for there is no power but of God; and even if its conduct in a particular instance seems perverse, Christians will be subject not only to the good but also to the froward.[24]

The Commission report on the situation in India reflected the views of the almost entirely British correspondents who answered the commission's questionnaire:

> Missionaries in India …recognise the present need of the strong arm and impartial policy of the British Government. While differences may exist among them as to the proper *rate* of change, they are on the whole agreed that a transfer of power to the natives of the soil should proceed *pari passu* with their advance in enlightenment and moral stability. Their task lies outside politics, as the term is usually understood.[25]

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23 Cf. Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*; "The General Acts of the Berlin Conference of 1884-5 and the Brussels Conference of 1890 had committed the European powers, albeit in vague terms, to the support of missions as part of a wider programme for the civilization of Africa."

24 *Report of Commission VII*, p. 162.

25 Ibid., p. 34. Apropos of the requirements of "advance in enlightenment and moral stability", at that time in Britain itself more than half the adult population still did not have the vote.

Indeed, the obligation of missionaries not to engage in politics, still less "agitation", is an almost universal refrain throughout the report of Commission VII and its plenary discussion.

Second, emanating particularly from Germany, there was a specifically missiological evaluation of secular agencies, including government, as promoters of Christian culture. Here the seminal thinker was the Lutheran Gustav Warneck (1834-1910), widely regarded as the founder of missiology as a serious academic discipline, whose writings had been translated into English and were widely influential. He saw missions on a grand scale – "the whole operations of Christendom directed towards the planting and organisation of the Christian Church among non-Christians, that is, their Christianisation ..."[26] Such a process in his view took place in several stages and at different levels, from individual conversions to "Christianisation of the masses". He was one of the first to see the importance of what is now called "inculturation" of the gospel in the life of a particular people. More problematic were some of his statements such as: "the facts of history are also an exegesis of the Bible" and have the final word when theological interpretation remains a matter of dispute. Warneck held to a view of foreign missions as being parallel to the progress of secular society: they were different but both were "a divine process of mission as education".[27] Behind this view of a divine will being worked out equally through the church and through society can be seen a version of the Lutheran doctrine of the two realms, or two swords, which led Warneck to see in trade and colonial expansion the same "divine mission of education" at work. Warneck himself was not present at Edinburgh (he died that same year) but his son Johannes was. The Warneck influence was very pervasive and there were many resonances at Edinburgh.

Third, a powerful factor in Commission VII was the undoubted influence of its American members, several of whom as we have seen had either been strong advocates, or actual agents, of annexations in East Asia and the Pacific. It was in fact the arch-imperialist A. T. Mahan, Brian Stanley has discovered, who largely wrote section II of the Commission's report, "Principles and Findings". It is with superb confidence that this section can state:

> Believing as we do that in the Providence of God the strong and enlightened Christian nations of Europe and America have acquired dominion over so many other races, not that they may enrich themselves, but that these races may, under their tutelage, learn to appreciate and appropriate the blessings of Christian civilisation …[28]

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26 G. Warneck, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time*, tr. George Robson (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1901), p. xi.

27 See K. Müller et al, *Mission Theology: An Introduction* (Nettertal: Steyler, 1987), p. 14.

28 *Report of Commission VII*, p. 115.

Such sentiments, as far as one can observe, were not challenged in plenary debate. In fact they were implicitly if not actually endorsed. It was the American missionary bishop Charles Brent, soon to be known as a prime initiator of the Faith and Order stream of the ecumenical movement, who stated in respect of colonial governments: "Christian government is a part of the Kingdom of God, at least it is an instrument through which the Kingdom of God works".[29]

Fourth, prominent in the Commission's report, and not essentially challenged anywhere at Edinburgh, is the notion of a hierarchy of civilisation. Thus:

> ...we may divide mission lands roughly into five groups: (a) those of low civilisation, but independent; (b) those of higher civilisation, and independent; (c) those of low civilisation, under Christian rule or influence; (d) those of higher civilisation, under Christian rule or influence; (e) those of the highest international rank.[30]

Such a categorisation was thought to be helpful in determining the appropriate attitudes of missions and their personnel to government, whether indigenous or colonial. In our time, of course, the very notion of a hierarchy of civilisations betokens the worst presumption of imperialism with strong racist overtones. In fairness to Edinburgh however, there is an equal presumption throughout the report and its discussion that such a hierarchy is only provisional. The "lower" is not to be low for ever, and it is the moral duty of the "higher", under the leading inspiration of the Christian mission, to aid the rise of the lower to the higher. There is not here the kind of theology which was to undergird the Afrikaner ideology of apartheid as a permanent state of affairs. I quote from a later statement in section II of the report:

> The Commission cannot pass from the hindrances put in the way of Missions by the policy or action of Governments, without expressing the opinion that nothing is a greater hindrance than the feebleness of the sense of responsibility for the welfare of the more backward races which is felt by the more advanced. It is true that this is seen more in the selfish, arrogant, and callous conduct of individuals than in the declared policy of modern Governments. Yet even men in high public positions do not hesitate to speak of all "coloured" races as if they were doomed to perpetual national servitude, and had no higher destiny than to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the "white man." Dependencies and colonies peopled by millions of the darker races are sometimes professedly, as well as actually, administered, not in the first instance for the benefit of their own people, but for the aggrandisement of the nation which has annexed them. And even where humanity and integrity temper

29 Ibid., p. 164.
30 Ibid., p. 88.

> the mastership of the stronger race, and measures are taken for the amelioration of the lot of the people, there is too often an absence of persistent and extensive effort to elevate them in character and attainments and to preserve them from the evils of the baser influences of the dominant civilisation. [31]

Scarcely anyone in Christian circles today would talk about "races" and "civilisations", "backward" or otherwise, in this way. At best it will be judged paternalistic. (We should bear in mind, though, that paternalism is always what one generation calls the altruism of the preceding one). But neither can the element of moral obligation, which ran throughout the proceedings at Edinburgh, be denied.

Finally, there should be noted the background study written for the Edinburgh conference, but not actually in print until just after it, by J. R. Mott, *The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions*.[32] The frontispiece of the book is rather telling: a photograph of a steam train penetrating the ancient city wall of Peking. Mott's survey deals graphically with the ever widening reach of western civilisation, commerce and culture into the lands of Asia and Africa, and the ambivalence of the situation that this has created for missions: a thirst for modernisation – especially education – and equally the stirrings of nationalism and resentment at western Christian intrusion. But while Mott was well aware of the dubious effects of western policies on mission, he writes with a commanding confidence that transcends both the positive and negative possibilities offered by any kind of human empire:

> It is God who overrules occasions and events, human movements and powers, for the furtherance of the Gospel. Diplomacy has often been unfortunate; commerce has selfishly opposed the spread of Christianity; the prejudice of the officials and the people has resisted the introduction of the Gospel. But all these together, with persecutions, wars, and national calamities, have been turned to the furtherance of the Gospel.[33]

IV: Perspectives in 1914

How then may we view the relationship between the kingdom of God and the imperial enterprise of the hour, as seen by our forebears a century and more ago? First and most obviously there was a wide spectrum of views: the ardent, narrowly pro-British imperialism of Hugh Price Hughes; the acceptance of empire as a given fact but conditional on humane behaviour as seen by John Clifford and probably a majority of Free Church clergy; the recognition of western expansion

31 Ibid., p. 115.
32 London: Church Missionary Society, 1910.
33 Ibid., p. 230.

and influence in the world as a good, indeed of divine ordering, as characteristic of many in the Anglo-German church peace movement, in Sylvester Horne's case even including the USA in this ordaining; empire as the field for close and fruitful cooperation between missions and governments which was widely recognised at Edinburgh 1910. Did this amount to churches and theologians being apologists for empire? Certainly it did in many cases, but not necessarily at the expense of a prime loyalty to the kingdom of God as made known in the gospel of Christ. A. T. Mahan was one who evidently saw the kingdom at work in American expansionism as much as in the specific missionary work of the church, but his is an extreme case. By and large the necessity for worldly empire to be held to account in light of the kingdom of God was recognised, and where blatant inhumanity was manifest the criticism was real, as with the British during the Boer War and later in the Transvaal, and with Belgian atrocities in the Congo.[34]

There remains the question of whether any theological critique was mounted, or could realistically have been mounted in pre-1914 Britain and the west generally, against the very concept of empire, intrinsic to which is the dominance and subjugation of one people by another, even if for avowedly beneficent motives. One must raise the question of realism because, to so many at the time, the growth of western empires, the British one particularly, was such a massive and irrefutable development of recent history that even if one did not believe it to be of divine providence, to query its basis or desirability would have seemed like a call to reverse the daily turning of the earth, and about as rational. Moreover, it can be argued that for Christians the susceptibility to empire lay not just in their national and cultural contexts, but in the very heart of the contemporary expression of their faith – in their theology, more particularly their Christology. This is a huge topic of course and, being nearly at the end of this paper, the direction of enquiry can only be indicated. But we cannot ignore studies such as Joerg Rieger's *Christ and Empire*. Rieger argues that no less than in the early church, the post-Constantinian era, the middle ages and the Reformation periods, European post-Enlightenment Christianity saw an intimate symbiosis between biblical Christology and contemporary understandings of secular power. The Liberal Protestant enterprise, in his view, inherited from Schleiermacher a picture of Christ with deeply colonialist elements. Christ is pictured as the fulfilment of human being, but that picture of human being is a construct of very specific Enlightenment values claiming universal significance and therefore sanctioning the impulse to reach, possess and subjugate other peoples and their cultures. This Christ works not directly by sheer power or violence, but through the "attraction" of his person, and attraction is the power of those of higher status and it works by means of a differential of power. Rieger summarises: "The differential between Christ and the Christian gets translated into the differential between colonized and colonizers".[35]

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34 Cf. the concluding discussion in Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, pp. 175-84.

35 Joerg Rieger, *Christ and Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), p. 206.

Given both the sheer weight of the imperial reality at that time, and the co-optation into it of the prevailing theology, it would indeed be cause for wonder if there had been any notable, fundamental critique by theologians of the whole imperial ethos, which was itself a current in the western tide of optimistic progress. That optimistic, self-confident mood of western society was certainly not without its theological critics prior to 1914. P. T. Forsyth castigated the "egoism" which he saw as the root evil infecting the whole of society, especially that of industry and international finance, needing far more drastic surgery than the current pulpit could supply, and dismissed the typical responses of the churches as "the cheap ethic of indignation".[36] The most sceptical voice of all was that of the Anglo-Catholic J. N. Figgis, who in 1913 declared "There is death in the pot of modern civilisation, and it is not likely to heal itself";[37] and "The forces of civilisation are imposing; but apart from Christ they are visibly dissolving. Its tall towers are shaking, and the splendid spires of the edifice of the western world are crumbling. Catastrophe is threatening. We can almost hear the thunders of the avalanche of war – war on a scale unknown".[38] But neither Forsyth nor Figgis specifically had empire in their sights. Forsyth did in fact refer to empire in his lectures *Missions in State and Church* published in 1908,[39] where he placed himself firmly in the moral imperialist camp: "Nations will be great by their power to redeem the less forward nations, not by their power to crush them and domineer".[40] Forsyth's understanding of "morality" however, was as always not content with conventional notions of devotion to good causes, be they ever so idealistic, including that of patriotism. Only transformation by Christ counted in the final analysis: "This is the source, for men or nations, of true conquest and final dominion of the world. For empire goes at last not with ardour but with insight. Empire follows the cross".[41] Empire was thus to be redeemed, not abolished, through the righteousness of the cross.

The seeds of more radical prophecy, however, were also being sown. For an example of one who had begun to question the compatibility of empire, even at its most apparently benign, with the proclamation of the gospel I go to the young Scotsman who in 1897 went to Lahore and served for three years as YMCA secretary there, who has already featured in this paper and who was to be foremost in the ecumenical movement from Edinburgh 1910 onwards: J. H. Oldham. His missionary contemporaries in the Punjab were prone to diagnose the problems of work among educated Indians as lying in the Indians themselves, their traditions, prejudices and vain ambitions. Oldham responded, in reports to his supporters in

36 P. T. Forsyth, "A Holy Church the Moral Guide of Society" (1905) published (with "The Grace of the Gospel as the Moral Authority in the Church") as *The Church, The Gospel and Society* (London: Independent Press, 1962), p. 48.

37 J. N. Figgis, *Christianity at the Cross-Roads* (3rd ed., London: Longman, Green & Co., 1913).

38 J. N. Figgis, *Anti-Christ and Other Sermons* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1913), pp. 30f.

39 New York: Armstrong and Sons.

40 Forsyth, *The Church, The Gospel and Society*, p. 182.

41 Ibid., p. 324.

Scotland: "If the missionary finds it difficult to make contact and gain a hearing, then he must look to himself to find the reasons. The missionary is a foreigner, separated from Indians by barriers of custom, modes of thought and language, by racial prejudice, *and by belonging to a conquering race*" [emphases mine].[42] Oldham continually emphasized the well-nigh insuperable barrier between "the conquering and governing race" and Indians. He did not call for an end to empire, but for a radical re-thinking of how to build relationships with Indians. The issue was to emerge on the side-lines at Edinburgh 1910 as an issue even between missionaries and Indian Christians, thanks to a speech made by the Indian Anglican Samuel Azariah.[43] Seeds of quite fundamental doubt were being sown, therefore, about the very compatibility of empire and Christian mission. Fourteen years later, Oldham was to tackle the racial issue at its heart in his pioneering work *Christianity and the Race Problem*.[44] Note should also be taken of the career of the most radical missionary critic of British rule in India, the Anglican C. F. Andrews (1871-1940) who prior to 1914 was already sympathising with Indian political aspirations, and was to become the close friend of, and collaborator with, Gandhi in the movement for independence.

What conclusions can be drawn about the role that churches and theologians, especially in Britain, played in the imperial consciousness that was part of the scenario of the build-up to war in 1914? In fact an important question is begged here: just how important a factor was imperialism in the turn that Europe took in August 1914? We may be assuming too much about imperialism as a causal factor in the First World War alongside the immediate triggers like the murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the German violation of Belgian neutrality. It is always tempting to resort to deterministic grand narratives making for an inevitable catastrophe. On the causes of the war A. J. P. Taylor still helps us keep a sense of perspective:

> Some point to the conflict between Teuton and Slav in Eastern Europe; others call it "the war of the Turkish succession". Some blame Imperialist rivalry outside Europe; others the breakdown of the Balance of Power on the European continent. More precise topics of dispute have been stressed: the German challenge to British naval superiority; the French desire to recover Alsace-Lorraine; Russia's ambition to control Constantinople and the Straits. This very opulence of explanations suggests that none alone is the right one. The first world war was fought for all these reasons – and for none of them.[45]

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42 See Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J. H. Oldham*, p. 50.

43 On the whole episode see Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, pp. 123-30.

44 London: SCM Press, 1924.

45 A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (London: Penguin Books 1964), p. 42.

Indeed as Taylor remarks elsewhere the basic reason why Europe went to war in August 1914 was that the leaders of the nations involved decided to do so. What was actually in their minds in making their decisions is a complex matter. Bellicose popular feeling, such as was often rife between Britain and Germany in the early 1900s, does not itself necessarily provoke war. Moreover, while the war between Britain and Germany certainly came to be fought on a worldwide imperial scale, the immediate issues were about who should be dominant in Europe. On the other hand, a sense that the security of their respective empires, whether across or beyond Europe, were at stake, were under threat or were being offered further opportunities for expansion, may doubtless be allowed; as also the sense of command and status that imperial leadership gave the decision-makers, bolstered by popular opinion. Rather than saying simply that imperialism led to war, it might be truer to say that once war was launched the imperialist ethos, especially in its moral form, fortified the will to pursue it as a great crusade against evil. To an extent, undoubtedly, the churches did play a role in inculcating that ethos.

In the war itself, however, did the British churches simply identify the kingdom of Christ and the empire of the land of hope and glory? Some leading Christians did. But many did not, and not only in the pacifist movement which sprang up and formed the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Cambridge in 1914. Even among those who did support the war as a tragic necessity, like P. T. Forsyth, J. H. Oldham and William Temple, a critical distance was kept from any view of the conflict as a holy war. Of course one would love to know what Sylvester Horne himself would have thought and said, had he not died, sadly before his time, earlier in 1914. What can be said, is that the more percipient minds very quickly saw that the war was demolishing much of the assumed moral basis of the western imperialist enterprise and its claim to justification as a form of Christian mission, and the claims of the western churches to be prime agents of that mission. This emerged clearly in J. H. Oldham's book *The World and the Gospel* published in 1916.[46] Not only had the war, Oldham argued, revealed the godless, acquisitive and materialist basis of western societies as a whole, but by engaging in conflict on such a vast scale the western nations had unintentionally exposed the vacuity of the claim of a "Christian world" whose churches were capable of evangelising a "non-Christian" world. This laid the axe to the root of the tree on which much of the pre-1914 western Christian consensus had rested, even and especially that of the Edinburgh 1910 Conference. What would emerge after 1918 was a greater consciousness of the international fellowship of churches as having a prior claim to identity and loyalty transcending that of nation and empire. There was indeed prophecy for the kingdom of God, and the need for such prophecy has not abated a century later.

KEITH CLEMENTS

46 London: United Council for Missionary Education.

FRANK BUCHMAN AND WESTMINSTER COLLEGE

In the students' roll for Westminster College we find in 1921 the neat precise signature of a visiting scholar named Frank Buchman. The entry indicates that he spent the Lent and Easter terms of that year at the college, and further evidence suggests that he also spent at least part of the previous Michaelmas term in Cambridge.[1] A Pickwickian figure, with thick, round, rimless spectacles and soft two-toned American leather shoes, he appears among the students in the college photograph for 1920-1921. And he was to return to Westminster again in April 1922.[2]

He writes that he "had a very happy time there".[3] He was "appreciative of the courtesy and hospitality" of Principal and Mrs Skinner[4] and in a letter to "Doctor Omen" (the mis-spelling is a deliberate reference to a student in-joke) he sends "remembrances to Mrs Omen, you and yours".[5] He was clearly popular. In a warm letter written on behalf of Principal Skinner, in February 1922, the signatory thanks Buchman for the "lovely bunch of flowers you left for Mrs Skinner and for all the Calendars you so kindly sent to the Staff. They were all very pleased with them. We shall all be very glad to have you back again in April. There is plenty of room! Dr Skinner asked me to let you know … I am so glad to hear that your good work is getting on so well. It's all needed these days … Dr and Mrs Skinner send warmest greetings and very best thanks for your generous and kind remembrance".[6]

When he first came to Westminster College in 1920, Buchman was at a turning-point in his career. Although ordained a Lutheran, his approach to ministry was non-denominational: he had achieved some prominence through his work with the YMCA at State College, Pennsylvania, where a series of well co-ordinated campaigns and a focus on individuals had led to a resurgence of Christian commitment. In 1916, he had accepted a part-time lectureship in personal evangelism at Hartford Theological Seminary where President MacKenzie was looking for someone to give the students training in "personal work" as a prelude to "sustained evangelism". Even though initially, as Garth Lean records, "his highly evangelistic approach upset students and staff alike",[7] before long, reports were emerging of "a genuine revival in personal work at

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1 Letter from Buchman to D. S. Cairns, 6 December, 1920. Library of Congress, Container 18. MRA Papers.
2 Letter signed A. H. Niven to Buchman, 14 February 1922. Hartford College Archive 8447.
3 Letter from Buchman to D. S. Cairns, 6 December, 1920. Library of Congress, Container 18. MRA papers.
4 Letter from Buchman to Skinner 7 April, 1921. Library of Congress, Westminster College Container 155.
5 Letter from Buchman to "Doctor Omen", 7 April 1921. Library of Congress, Westminster College Container 155.
6 Letter signed A. H. Niven to Buchman, 14 February 1922. Hartford College Archive. 8447.
7 Garth Lean, *Frank Buchman: A Life* (London: Constable 1985), p. 49.

Hartford".[8] However, it quickly became clear that Buchman's own calling to "peripatetic evangelism" did not sit easily with Hartford's assumption that his primary obligation was to them. In the light of increasing friction with his employers following visits to China, Korea and Japan, Buchman's contract was renewed in 1920 with the specification that he was free to travel for nine months in the year so long as he gave a series of lectures on personal evangelism at times agreed by President MacKenzie and Dean Jacobus.[9]

And so, with a proven track record as a college evangelist, and some uncertainty as to his future career at Hartford, Buchman came to Cambridge. President MacKenzie had recommended him to John Oman, a fellow graduate of the class of 1882 at Edinburgh University, and Professor of Theology and Apologetics at Westminster College. In the college records it is stated that Buchman attended Oman's lectures. The extent to which he actually did so is uncertain, but the letter already referred to from Buchman to "Doctor Omen", dated 7 April 1921, suggests that he would "be interested to know what work you give in the Spring term". Buchman also had a research project of his own. A student records: "On joining the coffee party one day after a sermon crit with Professor Carnegie Simpson, he was asked what he was doing. In response, he said 'he was trying to follow Henry Drummond and especially his lecture on Spiritual Diagnosis' … Carnegie asked him what he knew of Henry Drummond; Frank replied that he had seen his grave. Carnegie: 'I was with him when he died'".[10]

Buchman's interest in Drummond situates him firmly within the evangelical tradition. In at least three respects, his outlook had been affected by people and writers from within that tradition. First, the importance of personal evangelism had been impressed upon him by his visit in 1901 to the Northfield Student Conference in Massachusetts, initiated by Dwight L. Moody and then run by John R. Mott, Assistant General Secretary of the YMCA. This, Buchman records, "completely changed" his life.[11] Then, in 1908, at a meeting of the Keswick Convention, he was infused with some sort of powerful spiritual energy on attending worship in a local Primitive Methodist chapel. A sermon on the Cross in the holiness tradition by Jessie Penn-Lewis caused the doctrine of the Atonement to become a personal reality. And thirdly, under the influence of the Baptist evangelist, F. B. Meyer, Buchman had come to adopt the practice of "spiritual guidance", setting aside an hour each morning to listen to what God might be saying to him.[12] These three elements, personal evangelism, the

8 Letter from Buchman to Jacobus, 24 March 1917. Hartford College Archive 8417.

9 With his lengthening absences in the UK, it became increasingly difficult for MacKenzie and Jacobus to maintain support for Buchman in Hartford, and on 1 February 1922 he resigned his post. Lean, *Frank Buchman: A Life*, p. 96.

10 "Fifty Years ago: Reminiscences by A. Montgomery Mann", in *Bulletin, Friends of Westminster College* (April 1969).

11 Buchman to parents, November 1901. Cited in Lean, *Frank Buchman: A Life*, p. 17.

12 Ian M. Randall, "'Arresting people for Christ': Baptists and the Oxford Group in the 1930s", *The Baptist Quarterly*, 38/1 (1999).

knowledge of personal redemption, the practice of the "quiet time", all standard evangelical fare, were established routines by the time he came to Westminster.

Each of these, however, took distinctive forms. First, the quiet time gave rise to intuitive "hunches" which dictated Buchman's programme for each day. A. Montgomery Mann, a student who occupied neighbouring rooms to his on the top floor of Westminster College, writes: "What an exciting life he led! Little blue notebooks filled between 5 and 6 a.m.; telepathic hunches to whom to see during the day. Everyone grateful to him by the evening. Never a hunch about a Westminster student!"[13]

Second, those who attended his fellowship groups and house parties were encouraged to confess their sins and give public testimony of personal redemption. Small fellowship groups had always been a regular feature of Buchman's work among students but in August 1921, at Trinity Hall Cambridge, he hosted the first of the House Parties which were to become a central feature of the Movement's activities. Modelled on a social house party, these had at least initially something of the air of a religious retreat. Over a period of five days, around thirty invited guests, most in their early or mid twenties,[14] spoke about their spiritual lives in a relaxed atmosphere. Buchman comments to MacKenzie:

> It would be impossible to give you even a faint conception of all that has happened and all that is going to issue from the meeting of this rather remarkable group of men. It has already touched leading dons...The don who is taking the place of the Master at Trinity came to my rooms at midnight last night waiting his turn to ask whether he might go to a later House Party, as he had not been able to attend the meetings. Canon Cunningham, the Head of Westcott House, sent all his men, and it is marvellous to see the miracles there. The personnel of our conference was interesting. Mr Leslie-Samuel, a Member of Parliament …gripped everyone when he confessed his own failings, and how at one time he ought to have gone into the ministry but failed to obey God's will …The son of H. G. Wells told me that this house party was his first touch with intelligent Christianity.[15]

Patrick Carnegie Simpson, at the time Professor of Church History at Westminster College, urged caution. He interrogated Buchman about the advisability of having young men talking repeatedly in public about their sins and victory over them. Buchman's response was characteristically breezy: "Fresh fish every morning, Dr Simpson; fresh fish every morning".[16] Carnegie Simpson

13 "Fifty Years ago: Reminiscences by A. Montgomery Mann".

14 Loudon Hamilton, *MRA: How it all Began* (1968). Available at: http://www.iofc.org/ accessed 8 July 2015.

15 Letter from Buchman to MacKenzie, 10 August 1921. Hartford College Archives 8427.

16 Letter from Principal Alan MacLeod to Dr Elston J. Hill, 15 May 1970. Westminster College Archives.

had some cause to feel sensitive about Buchman's fishing methods. Buchman wrote to President MacKenzie: "Carnegie Simpson is much bucked over Hamilton, the Master at Eton, who is going into the ministry. He has just been down to London to interview him as a prospective student for Westminster College, but finds that Hamilton is determined to come to America with me for a year for preparation along these individual lines".[17] Although Buchman encouraged Hamilton's vocation to ministry, we can see from a previous letter to MacKenzie, that the visit to America was already a done deal. Buchman writes:

> There's an interesting Scotchman, Hamilton of Melrose – an Oxonian – now a master at Eton – coming to America with me. He decided to go into the ministry last year as the result of the Cambridge house-party. He has the stature of a Phillips Brooks and a fearlessness that challenges, and a message that is uncompromising. He is easily the finest development thus far.[18]

Loudon Hamilton never did go on to study at Westminster College. As D. S Cairns put it, "the Spirit swept him up like Philip and took him to South Africa"[19] where he was to remain Buchman's right hand man.

Buchman's approach to personal evangelism, especially among students, had an anti-intellectual edge; he maintained that intellectual activity could shut out the work of the Spirit. There is evidence of this in the short visits Buchman paid to Oxford and to New College, Edinburgh, while based at Westminster. The first visit to Oxford was to be of particular significance. Montgomery Mann takes up the story:

> It was our turn to play Mansfield College, Oxford, at Lawn Tennis at the end of May 1921. One of our six fell out the day before. I thought of Frank as the next best. His play was not too good but his formidable American shoes might put off his opponents! When I asked him, he said "I can't tell you now. Come to my room at 7.30 am." When I then knocked on his door, he said "I guess I go to Oxford". This was his first visit to Oxford and that weekend he met two men who have been leaders in the Oxford group and M.R.A. ever since! The movement has so far not acknowledged that his reason for first visiting Oxford was to play tennis![20]

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17 Letter from Buchman to MacKenzie, 31 May 1922. Hartford College Archives 8489.

18 Phillips Brooks (1835-93), rector of Trinity Episcopal Church, Boston (1869-1891), then Bishop of Massachusetts (1891-1893), was a legendary preacher, allegedly 6'4" tall and 300 lbs in weight.

19 Letter 18 from Buchman to Miss Talbot, 11 November 1929. Aberdeen University Special Collections MS 3384/1/3 (1914-44). After eight months, Hamilton was back in Oxford to continue Buchman's work there. See Lean, *Frank Buchman: A Life*, p. 106.

20 "Fifty Years ago: Reminiscences by A. Montgomery Mann".

This chance visit to Oxford led to the setting up of a network of students dedicated to work with him. These became known as the First Century Christian Fellowship, the fore-runner of the Oxford Group.

Not all Oxford students were entirely convinced by the exclusiveness of Buchman's focus on personal evangelism. David Cairns, for instance, son of D. S. Cairns, maintained close contact with Buchman, for whom he clearly had a kind of detached sympathy. In a letter, he argues: "I do agree with you that the Christian ought not to hold back from his friends the truth about what God has done for him. I don't think that means that every man's duty is to go in for personal evangelism as the one way of service to God".[21] Intellectual gifts, he maintains, can also be used in God's service; a view which was maintained to the end of his life by B. H. Streeter, who staked his considerable academic and ecclesiastical reputation on his support of Buchman.[22]

The same anti-intellectual edginess is evident in the visits Buchman paid to Edinburgh where he enjoyed the hospitality of the Principal of New College, Revd Alexander Martin. He writes to President MacKenzie in May 1922:

> The days in Edinburgh have resulted in a movement of life among the students of New College. There have been conversions, and the leaders of the students say they are fed up with conventional Christianity and the lack of victory in their own lives …There is an entire absence of a message of Personal Evangelism among the students and Faculty; and the spiritual life among the students is dormant. It is scholarship at the expense of life. These seemingly shy, reserved Scotchmen when their needs are met have a holy dare, and they say they can hardly credit such a complete change. Still it is so evident, and they have banded themselves to maintain it …These men still have the memory of Drummond's work.

And after some social gossip, Buchman concludes: "the God-promised movement of Revival in theological halls is now a reality. These men are fired to go all the way".[23]

Buchman was nineteen when Henry Drummond died and he may have had a sense that he was following in his footsteps. Twenty-five years after his death, the great evangelist still exercised a remarkable influence particularly in Scotland and America, where the winsomeness of his personality, his integrity and his huge conviction had made a lasting impression.[24] His essay on 1

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21 Letter from David Cairns to Frank Buchman, 5 November 1928. Library of Congress, Container 18, MRA papers.

22 Philip Boobyer, "B. H. Streeter and the Oxford Group", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 61/3 (July 2010), pp. 541-67.

23 Letter from Buchman to MacKenzie, May Day (1922?). Hartford College Archive 8485.

24 Thomas E. Corts (ed.) *Henry Drummond: A Perpetual Benediction* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1999), p. xix.

Corinthians 13, *The Greatest Thing in the World*, had become a devotional classic, translated into nineteen different languages.[25] In what he said and what he wrote, he was a superb communicator. From his early days with Moody and Sankey he felt equally at ease with mass meetings and the personal encounters of the enquiry room. He addressed people who were perplexed by the apparently different claims of science and religion, or whose faith was challenged by the Higher Criticism of the Bible. Among students in particular, he was "a kind of bird of Paradise".[26] His lifelong friend, John Watson, himself no stranger to Westminster College, recalls that, "sitting among divinity students in a dingy class-room … he suggested golden embroidery upon hodden gray".[27]

Frank Buchman was not Henry Drummond – there are obvious differences both in personality and method and I do not propose to go into these here. But among those who had seen first-hand the benefits of Drummond's work, there would have been a receptiveness to what Buchman had to offer. Buchman perceived the need for spiritual revival in the church and concerns had been expressed in Westminster College as elsewhere about the widening gap between the church and everyday life. For John Oman in particular, this had been thrown into prominence by the First World War. His discussions with soldiers in the YMCA camps had convinced him of the urgency of the situation,[28] and the recently published report, *The Army and Religion*, in which he had collaborated with D. S. Cairns, highlighted the need to win "the youth of the nation to faith in God through Jesus Christ and conscious dedication to His Kingdom".[29]

This concern may be illustrated by the following anecdote. On 30 May 1922, Buchman attended two sessions at Westminster College addressed by Mrs Booth Clibborn, otherwise known as the Maréchale, the eldest daughter of General William Booth. This is how Buchman describes the event to President MacKenzie:[30]

> The staff and members of the University came. There were Dr. Oman and Carnegie Simpson; the latter especially asked me to be present. Mrs Clibborn, who goes to Keswick every year and has just returned from a six months' visit to America, gave a very remarkable talk on the spiritual

25 Ibid., p. xxxi.

26 David Cairns, *David Cairns: An Autobiography* (London: SCM, 1950), p. 116.

27 Henry Drummond, *The Ideal Life and Other Unpublished Addresses, with Memorial Sketches by Ian MacLaren (pseud.) and W. Robertson Nicoll* (3rd ed., London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899), p. 27.

28 Fleur Houston, "'In the Open Country of Action and Enquiry': John Oman and the Great War", *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 9/1 (November 2012), pp. 22-41.

29 D. S. Cairns (ed.), *The Army and Religion: An Enquiry And Its Bearing Upon the Religious Life of the Nation* (New York: Association Press, 1920), p. 397.

30 Letter from Buchman to President MacKenzie, 31 May 1922. Hartford College Archives, 8489.

> condition of the Church and the way out. She talked for an hour and twenty minutes – Oman, Carnegie Simpson, everyone, absorbed in all she had to say. The impression she made was so marked that she was asked to return at nine o'clock for questions. I wanted to sense the attitude of the staff at Westminster thoroughly, so said to Carnegie Simpson rather nonchalantly, "why did you ask Mrs. Clibborn to come?" "Oh," said he, "I want that sort of impression made on theological students. We need it"…

Buchman continued: "I thought her talk was top-hole. She spoke about the tame attitude of the Church today, how passionless it was, how loveless, and how little it knew about dealing with individual souls". A. Montgomery Mann, the student who organized the event, records that "John Oman was particularly impressed and said he believed in her God".[31]

Buchman's calling to international missionary work may also be dated to the Westminster years. He had already experienced missionary work in India and China and the story of his conviction as he was returning to college late one night is well known. This is what his biographer has to say: "One moonlight night, as he was bicycling down Petty Cury, a sudden thought struck him: 'You will be used to remake the world.' This thought so staggered him that, as he used to recall, he almost fell off his bicycle. It seemed so preposterous that he was reluctant to acknowledge it".[32] While his followers were not slow subsequently to present this as a quasi-Pauline conversion,[33] "remaking the world" was not an unusual aspiration for evangelicals. Moody and Sankey had two successful evangelistic campaigns in Britain; Drummond took America by storm three times, and in addition to his travels for scientific purposes to the African Lakes, he also made evangelistic visits to various countries in Europe and the Far East. The sense of evangelical world mission was further enhanced by the work of J. R. Mott, who as college secretary of the YMCA, had visited Westminster College in the early days of the war, and inspired students there as elsewhere, to undertake missionary work.

In his appraisal of the church and in the internationalism of his missionary vision, Buchman would have been at home in Westminster. But factors that were increasingly to give rise to criticism of the Oxford group were also already in evidence.

First of all, as Carnegie Simpson perceived, the confessional spirituality had its down-side. Buchman stressed the importance of "personal work" with individuals and he referred frequently in those early days to stories of personal change. Life-changing took place where individuals were convicted of their sins

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31 "Fifty Years ago: Reminiscences by A. Montgomery Mann".

32 Lean, *Frank Buchman: A Life*, p. 93.

33 H. W. "Bunny" Austin, *Frank Buchman as I Knew Him* (London: Grosvenor Books, 1975), pp. 28-29.

and shared them with others. Sin might be anything from "over-eating or vain boasting" to "wasting money on the race-course … or refusing to trust God at all times. It might be high-hatting someone poorly dressed, lying about the time you left the office … It might be unwillingness to play the Good Samaritan to a broken-down motorist, or being ashamed to offer your seat to a weary charwoman on the Underground. It might be pride in the pulpit".[34] But where such confessions were of an explicitly sexual nature, there was undoubtedly what D. S. Cairns describes as a "risky not altogether wholesome element".[35] There was, as Cairns points out, "a risk that the 'circles' he leaves need guidance of an experienced kind and without it may blunder badly".

Secondly, as the ministry of the Group developed on the international stage, its theology was to prove insufficient to the task of saving the souls of nations as well as individuals. Its earlier understanding of itself as a non-denominational movement for personal evangelism was to give way to the construction and service of an ideology to combat communism, leaving the Group open to accusations of political naiveté: a horror of communism led it all too easily to turn a blind eye to the dangers of fascism.

And finally, the Cambridge correspondence between Buchman and President MacKenzie already betrays a certain élitism. A Cambridge student noted at the time that "he tended to specialize in converting the intellectual and the rich – the 'up-and-outs' as he called them".[36] The criticism of "hob-nobbing with the well-favoured classes of society"[37] was to dog Buchman for the rest of his life. Yet it was consistent with his view that if powerful and wealthy people changed their lives, that would create a radical and lasting impact on society at large. So he mingled with kings, queens and presidents, with lords and viceroys, with professors, bankers and businessmen, travelled first-class and when in London he stayed at Brown's hotel, Mayfair. That was where you met such people. It was all too easy in these circumstances for the Group to lose the last vestiges of social gospel. And when in 1935 Buchman's perspective was promulgated by Abram Vereide, founder of the national prayer breakfast in America, tycoons responded well to a form of biblical capitalism which was to sit well with German fascism.[38]

However, for very many people Buchman's promotion of the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit made personal religion a reality. There are numerous testimonies to the fact that this was a life-changing experience. D. S. Cairns describes his first encounter with Buchman in 1913 as "a spring of help and

34 A. J. Russell, *For Sinners Only* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), p. 61.
35 Letter from D. S. Cairns to Miss Talbot, 4 July 1931. University of Aberdeen Special Collections. MS 3384/1/3.
36 Lean, *Frank Buchman: A Life*, p. 92.
37 Letter from Shoemaker to Buchman, 16 March 1922.
38 Jeff Sharlet, *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power* (Glasgow: Harper Collins e-Books, 2008).

inspiration", a memory to which he returns again and again. Cairns wrote to Miss Talbot in 1929: "Buchman I believe to be a sincere and good man … I think that to many people he is bringing what to them is a quite new idea, that God is a living father, who is willing not only to hear what they have to say, but to communicate his will through them which is a much unsensational idea and brings new colour and wonder and awe into human life … I am thankful that Buchman is saying this particular thing".[39]

And for many students at Westminster College, the impact was long-lasting. Percy Hawkridge, who was ordained in 1920, had this to say:

> There is nothing new in the group. To say this has become a platitude with every church-going Christian who meets it. The only difference is that it is charged with power, whereas we in the churches commonly are not; that it is changing the most spectacularly evil people and the most dingily dreary people, whereas we commonly are not…we all long for a baptism of apostolic power...The group has this great gift, received from the Church, to give back to the Church, repaired, polished and used … Our attitude should not be hostility, or merely criticism, but primarily co-operation for that which is greater than all.[40]

FLEUR HOUSTON

39 Letter from Buchman to Miss Talbot, 11 November 1929. University of Aberdeen Special Collections. MS 3384/1/3.

40 P. B. Hawkridge, "The Book of the Oxford Groups", *The Presbyterian Messenger* (September 1932), p. 127.

REVIEWS

***The Neo-Orthodox Theology of W. W. Bryden*. By John A. Vissers. Cambridge: James Clarke, 2011. Pp. xii + 297. £20.75. ISBN 978-0-22717-370-1.**

This book tells a significant part of the story of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Walter Bryden (1883-1952) taught ordinands at Knox College, Toronto, for the last twenty-five years of his life, and infused his own theological insights into a generation of new ministers. So after most Presbyterians had cast their lot into the new United Church in 1925, Bryden had a big influence on the life, doctrine and direction of the Presbyterian Church continuing. His biographer here, John Vissers, is Principal of the Presbyterian College in Montreal, and in a more secular and more ecumenical age, remains a grateful heir of much for which Bryden stood.

A major theme of the book is that Bryden's views had some parallel in the work of Karl Barth – and that he worked these out, initially, independently of Barth's writing. His first book, *The Spirit of Jesus in St Paul* (1925), was drafted in small-town parishes and embodied "four distinctive and important positions which diverged sharply from … the basic principles which governed modern religious thought". Again, "The Spirit of Jesus was not a way of life to be imitated, but a power of Jesus to be experienced" (p. 90). Preaching was utterly dependent on God for its effect. The gospel is inherently paradoxical – it does not run along the tramlines of the world and of nature. And, fourth, the church was called to embrace a bold and humble theology of the cross.

When Bryden did come to Barth, he found much that he could learn from and endorse. His own developing theology focused on Jesus as the Word of God, within and alongside an openness to biblical criticism. So he thought of scripture as witness to God's Word, and steered between a conservative take on the texts and a liberal handling of doctrinal issues. Yet this middle course was not intended as a compromise, rather as an emphatic affirmation of a clear and personal centre – "the Judging-Saving Word of God … the Christ of God" (p. 165, from Bryden, *The Christian's Knowledge of God*).

There are significant debts to this island and to our URC traditions. James Denney, with whom Bryden studied in Glasgow for a year of his ministerial training, taught him about the centrality of the cross and the radical nature of human sin. He read John Oman on the Spirit as shaper and constituent power of the church and its life. P. T. Forsyth helped him to emphasise the grace and revelation of God. And as a major theme of his ministry, Bryden called the church back to the Westminster Confession – not for the text and detail alone, but to nurture serious attention to doctrine, to the tradition of the church catholic, and to the need for personal Christian faith and experience. "The traditional confessions of Protestant theology, so much disparaged today, are far more skillful in suggesting the deeper and richer aspects of the Christian experience and its objective source, than are many of the modern religio-philosophic

disquisitions on the meaning of Christian faith and grace" (p. 232, from an unpublished work by Bryden).

T. F. Torrance apparently said that Bryden was "more like John Calvin than anyone I've ever known" (p. 249). And Vissers has told his story well, in a book that you need not be a specialist in doctrine to use, learn from and enjoy. By force of intellect and conviction, and by faithful service through difficult times, Bryden "created a kind of theological nerve" (p. 233) in a denomination that has much in common with our own.

James Clarke and Co has also reissued Bryden's most characteristic theological work, *The Christian's Knowledge of God* (1940; reprint 2011; ISBN 978-0-22717-382-4). A twelve-page introduction by Vissers orientates the reader lucidly and quickly. Bryden's own writing is still energetic and readable.

JOHN PROCTOR

***Convinced, Concise, and Christian: The Thought of Huw Parri Owen.* By Alan P. F. Sell. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012. Pp. 118. £13.00. ISBN 978-1-61097-208-6.**

Huw Parri Owen (1926-1996) is probably not the best-known twentieth century theologian, although for a time his books *Christian Theism* (1984), *Concepts of Deity* (1971) and *The Christian Knowledge of God* (1969) were recommended reading for theological students. Born in Cardiff (and educated at Cardiff High School at the same time as this reviewer's father!), he was ordained in the Presbyterian Church of Wales, taught in its Theological College and in Bangor. However, for most of his career he taught at King's College, London, commuting from his home in Cardiff.

He is remembered in Wales as a quiet, introverted character, kind but far from the fiery Methodist roots of his own church tradition. It may be surprising, therefore, that the Christian experience of God (the title of his Davies Lecture to the PCW's General Assembly in 1986) was at the heart of his theological understanding. Like other Welsh theologians such as D. Miall Edwards (1873-1941) before him, he based his philosophical understanding of God on experiential grounds, and it is this which makes his theology distinctive, although not unique.

Alan Sell is clearly an admirer of Owen – as well as having succeeded him at the United Theological College in Aberystwyth. Sell says that Owen deserves to be read today as a counterweight to the "creeping anti-intellectualism" he discerns in Western Christendom. Owen provides a better antidote to that trend than many, precisely because he gives such a large place to experiential theology, but then uses all his intellectual powers to understand and develop it. Owen believed in divine revelation – "not a special way in which we know; it is a special way in which God makes himself known", but "in interpreting revelation we are bound to use images and concepts drawn from our ordinary experience" (p. 33).

Owen's application of all his immense intellectual skills to understanding this divine revelation is what attracts Sell's particular admiration. Owen was no fundamentalist with regard to the Bible – it could be revelatory without being literally true in all aspects, and at the time he stood within the mainstream of his own denomination in that respect. Although a minister of a Calvinist denomination, he had little truck with its more extreme manifestations – the idea of all people sharing in the guilt of Adam "is metaphysically and morally absurd" (p. 28).

Owen was very interested in apologetics – explaining the faith to those who did not share it – although his writings tend to have the flavour of the Theology faculty about them, assuming at least some shared understanding. His advice to those in conversation with atheists and agnostics, however, was "we do not have to persuade them to believe in a distant God who exists wholly outside their experience. Rather we must persuade them to recognize the God with whom they are continually in contact" (p. 24).

Owen engaged especially with the thought of John Hick from our own tradition, to whom he devotes a whole appendix in *Christian Theism,* and Sell summarises Owen's sympathetic but critical evaluation of Hick's thought. In fact, so much of Owen's writing is engagement with his contemporaries that it is perhaps not surprising that he is now much less read, as he appears to be writing for Sell's generation rather than the next. Sell describes with general approbation Owen's analysis of Kierkegaard, Barth and Bultmann. Sell clearly agrees with most of Owen's judgements, although he is critical of the way Owen sits light to theories of atonement, preferring to return to the classical Christological debates. The nature of God appears more important to Owen than the means of redemption, and Sell feels that Owen might usefully have learned more from P.T. Forsyth than he did.

Just as Sell finds this surprising lacuna in Owen's theology, so this reviewer finds a lacuna in Sell's excellent monograph. It is the relegation to just one footnote in the Conclusion (p. 106) of any discussion of the influence of Owen's Welsh denominational background on his thought. It is true that Owen's work stands square in the middle of a tradition of English language theology for which King's College is renowned. Yet his distinctive emphasis on experience must surely derive from his Calvinistic Methodist roots, and this deserves more than a footnote, especially for readers outside this Welsh milieu.

To a Welsh reader, similarly, the emphasis on experience is reminiscent of the theology of D. Miall Edwards, whose great dogmatic theology *Bannau'r Ffydd* (The Pinnacles of Faith) begins with a majestic chapter on "The Christian experience in the New Testament", which is echoed again and again in Owen's work. Like Owen, Sell fails to mention Edwards or any other Welsh language theologians of the period. I have been unable to discover how fluent Parri was in the Welsh language, although his family was certainly Welsh-speaking (his half-sister, who sadly died before Owen was born, was the renowned singer and composer Morfydd Llwyn Owen), Owen was an accomplished linguist, and continued to live in Wales even while working in England.

Sell has done a great service to us by expounding Owen's thought so lucidly and persuasively so that a new generation of thinking theologians might read about it. Owen now needs someone, who can expound more fully than Sell is willing to do, the cultural and linguistic roots of his thought not just in the European theology of the time but in the theology of his native land of Wales. Whichever author takes on that task will be indebted to Sell for having done so much of the groundwork, and all readers who turn to Owen's own writings as a result will have been well served.

GETHIN RHYS

***Jonathan Edwards and Justification by Faith*. By Michael McClenahan. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012. Pp. 218. £55.00. ISBN 978-1-40944-178-6.**
***The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards: Text, Context, and Application*. By Steven M. Studebaker and Robert W. Caldwell III. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012. Pp. vii + 246. £55.00. ISBN 978-1-40940-572-6.**

The publication in 2008, of the final twenty-sixth volume of the Yale edition of the complete works of the eighteenth-century New England philosopher, theologian and revivalist Jonathan Edwards, has ensured that interest and scholarly work on him has continued unabated. The two volumes here reviewed, are both evidence of this abiding academic fascination. Although different, the McClenahan volume, a revised doctoral thesis, while the Studebaker and Caldwell III volume is more of a work of synthesis, both books have the virtue of engaging in considerable detail with much of the Edwards scholarship produced in the last half century or so, ever since Perry Miller first begun the mammoth task of transcribing and editing Edwards's sermons, writings and personal notebooks during the late 1950s.

Anyone familiar with recent Edwards scholarship will be aware of some of the more unusual Edwardses that have emerged; Gerald McDermott's proto-Universalist Edwards being merely the latest and in many ways most controversial. McClenahan's volume has one of these reinventions of Edwards in its sights, Perry Miller's influential depiction of an Edwards who twisted many aspects of Reformed theology to serve his own philosophical ends. Nowhere, Miller has argued, was this twisting more in evidence than in Edwards's writings on justification by faith, which were a mishmash of Lockean idealism and Newtonian naturalism and became a "scandal" throughout New England (p. 2). While Edwards himself claimed to be defending nothing other than the "old Protestant doctrine" (p. 1) of justification, scholars have tended to ignore his claim.

At the heart of McClenahan's work is a close reading of the lectures on justification that Edwards delivered in 1734, on the eve of the Northampton revival, and that were heavily revised for publication in 1738. He argues that Edwards's writings on justification have to be read within the context of the rise

of Arminianism in New England in the 1720s and 1730s. In a detailed chapter on this theme and another on Anglican Arminianism, McClenahan locates the source of New England Arminian theology not among those heirs of the New England Puritans determined to soften some of the more deterministic implications of Calvin's theology, but among New England Anglicans, who imbibing the work of the Cambridge Platonists, had begun to challenge the hegemony of Reformed theology in America. No figure was more influential in this than the Anglican Archbishop John Tillotson, whose writings had become extremely popular by the eve of the Great Awakening. Edwards's work, McClenahan contends, was written to counteract the views of Tillotson.

Tillotson's recasting of justification by faith, especially his redefinition of faith as an "easy and reasonable condition" (p. 80) of justification, was a significant departure from the traditional Anglican and Reformed understanding. Works were, for him, an "absolute necessity ... justification" (p. 87). This was the Arminianism that alarmed Edwards. In his response, far from being innovative, Edwards championed the traditional Reformed understanding of the basis of justification, the imputed merits of Christ, rather than "any manner of virtue or goodness of our own" (p. 17), including our faith. The bulk of the volume, chapters three, four and five deal in detail with the meat of Edwards's arguments. The Edwards that emerges from McClenahan's pages, is surely an Edwards that Edwards himself would have recognised – a staunch defender and champion of the traditional Reformed faith.

Although less overtly polemical than McClenahan, Studebaker and Caldwell III's study of Edwards's Trinitarian thought also presents Edwards in a more traditional context than some recent studies have tended to do. Reflecting renewed interest in Trinitarian theology more widely, Edwards's reflections on the Trinity have become a popular subject for historical theologians in the last twenty years. Of particular significance has been Amy Plantinga Pauw's, *"The Supreme Harmony of All": The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (2002), but her controversial conclusion, that Edwards's Trinitarianism fluctuated between the discordant social and psychological models of the Trinity, is in a way the point of departure for this study.

Following an introductory chapter which traces how Edwards's views on the Trinity have been dealt with by both his followers and heirs as well as academic theologians, this co-authored volume, and there is no way of telling who wrote which chapter or whether each is a composite work, explores Edwards's views on the Trinity under three thematic headings. The first section explores Edwards's actual writings, paying particular attention to his much discussed *Discourse on the Trinity*, a work which Edwards compiled from his various notebook reflections on the subject in the early 1730s, but that was not published until 1903. This reviewer found the second section, in which Edwards's Trinitarianism was explored in historical context to be the richest section of the book. It was here that the authors' determination to present Edwards as a champion of the orthodox and Reformed understanding of the Trinity was most evident. In a chapter on Edwards and the historic Trinitarian tradition,

Studebaker and Caldwell III argue that his Trinitarian model was the mutual love theory, and that that was drawn directly from Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

The final section of the volume is in many ways the most idiosyncratic and attuned to present day theological interests, especially perhaps within the American evangelical constituency. Two chapters deal with how Edwards's Trinitarian theology affected his preaching and his approach to what is now called discipleship or spiritual formation, but which Edwards would no doubt have termed sanctification. Both chapters explore Edwards's central contention that grace and the Holy Spirit are synonymous, a view that allowed him to argue in classic evangelical fashion that a personal relationship with God and continuous personal transformation were at the heart of Christian faith. Further chapters on how Edwards's Trinitarianism impacted his doctrine of creation and his views on heaven round off this final and highly stimulating section of the volume.

If historians and theologians, ever since Edwards's death, have tended to explore those aspects of his thought in which he was supposed to have departed from traditional understandings of various Christian doctrines, these two volumes attempt to understand Edwards on his own terms, within his own context. The Edwards that emerges from the pages of these two volumes is, in this reviewer's opinion, a much more convincing one, one deeply embedded within the Reformed tradition.

DAVID CERI JONES

***Perpetually Reforming: A Theology of Church Reform and Renewal*. By John Bradbury. London and New York: Bloomsbury/T & T Clark, 2013 (pb 2014). Pp. xiv + 232. £70.00 (pb £19.99). ISBN 978-0-56764-409-1 (pb 978-0-56765-689-6).**

The World – rapidly changing technologically, driven by its finances, yet the basics of life remain the same. God, in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). The Church – the people of God, changing for change's sake, jumping on every bandwagon that comes their way, or singing for joy in the maintenance of decline?

Based on the Reformation principle that *ecclesia Reformata semper Reformanda est* – that the mark of a Reformed church is that it is continually being re-formed – John Bradbury's book offers the reader an informed and thoughtful basis from which to explore how the church should and can renew its present practice in the light of the past and with hope for the future, maintaining the two basic characteristics of its existence, namely that it stands in eternal covenant with the God revealed in Christ and it continues Christ's mission in the world.

The introductory chapter sets out the parameters of the study and is followed, in chapter two, by a discussion of classic ecclesiological topics such as "the

visible and invisible church", claiming that the doctrine of double predestination inevitably leads to the exaltation of the *invisible* church. The author seeks instead to "open up a more effective account of the historical reality of the visible church" based primarily on an account of Barth's argument of the election of humankind in Christ. As such this chapter lays the basis for relocating the emphasis in Reformed ecclesiology to the historical and visible ecclesial community rather than in doctrinal speculation. While this is an admirable claim and approach, the question should be asked whether this is possible when the discussion centres on what are *doctrinal* and *theological* statements (though that is possibly a rather easy criticism to make).

Chapter three focuses on the confessional nature of the Reformed tradition, though perhaps it ought to acknowledge that this is not particularly characteristic of the tradition as it evolved in England and Wales. The author argues that it is in their confessions that the Reformed have reflected on the continual renewal of the church and, of particular interest to readers of this *Journal*, the author acknowledges that this was made explicit in the United Reformed Church's Basis of Union (which, perhaps, is not *confessional* in the same way as, say, the Westminster Confession or the Second Helvetic Confession). Re-reading the scriptures and the mediatory position of the church in relation to both God *and* the world are highlighted, quite correctly, as significant.

Given the focus on election and covenant, it is appropriate that chapter four discusses the rather vexed topic of the relationship between the church and Israel. The author offers a particularly insightful analysis here, highlighting that the difference in attitude towards Israel which has developed since the Reformation (and which, to a great extent, is the inevitable result of the Holocaust) is (again, appropriately) both a re-reading of scripture and a renewing of the church, at least in its self-understanding.

Chapter five explores the topic of covenant, especially as found in the Old Testament, noting that it too is re-formed over time, a significant point simply because the narrative of the Old Testament, he argues, highlights the *re-formation* of the one covenant rather than the instigation of a new one which replaces the previous one. Such renewal, it is suggested, relies on a re-reading of scripture and the formation of, and deference to, a collective memory.

Chapter six continues the discussion of covenant but in relation to the new covenant in Christ. Concluding that this, too, is a renewal and reforming, the author argues that it is Jesus Christ, his life, ministry, death and resurrection, which constitute the focal point of the church's collective memory, but that the new covenant orientates the church towards the world whereas the *old* covenant, and the social identity associated with it, was inward looking towards the Jewish community and characterized by separation from the world. The positive implications of this are explored, namely the eschatological redemption of the whole of creation and not simply the elect community, but the chapter avoids the awkward questions of how the detail of this renewed covenant relates to the former covenant, or, more explicitly, how the church now relates to Israel.

Chapter seven seeks to draw the various strands of the argument together by

placing the church – the historical, visible church and its practices – in a relationship with the past (memory, or *anamensis*) and in anticipating the future (*prolepsis*) and being orientated to the world in the present, particularly in the church's worship. As a result, the chapter seeks to ground its conclusions in the *practical*, which is, of course, highly commendable. However, the nature of the *practical* is not entirely clear given that the discussion is based on a theological and highly *theoretical* understanding of the practice of the church.

The concluding chapter, based on the preceding argument, seeks to suggest means by which the church can be continually renewed and reformed in the present.

The book clearly seeks to engage constructively with a particular tradition and to move beyond systematics to a practical ecclesiology grounded in the practice of the church. There is a sense in which this practice is somewhat theoretical rather than grounded in the practice of *actual* churches, but the Reformed credentials are clear: this is a re-reading of the scriptures in each age as "the Lord has yet more truth and light to break forth from his holy word" (in the well-known phrase attributed to Pastor John Robertson as he bade farewell to the "Pilgrim Fathers"). The author enters into informed and critical dialogue with a range of scholars, including Colin Gunton from the URC, Michael Wyschogrod, David Novak and – appropriately enough in an exploration of Reformed teaching – he extensively references the work of Karl Barth and John Calvin.

Each section and each chapter carefully builds on what has been previously discussed and this helps the reader to follow the author's argument and to see how the main argument of the book holds together. The author has employed a "building block" structure with each distinct section clearly connected by links and references to the previous blocks on which the thesis is based. But while this gives the work a solid foundation with a coherent argument, there are times when this becomes a little repetitive and the work appears to have retained too much of the format of a doctoral dissertation. It is possible that the substantially revised version hinted at in the foreword would enable this important subject to be more widely accessible.

Nevertheless, the author is to be applauded for engaging with a subject which occupies all serious Christians in the twenty-first century, namely what is it that we must retain as essential to the life of the church and what must we now develop in order to make Christ's mission real and effective in the world? Those who persevere in reading this book will find considerable theological stimulation as they seek answers to these questions.

JASON ASKEW

***The Rise of Reformed System: The Intellectual Heritage of William Ames*. By Jan van Vliet. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013. Pp. xxi + 328. £24.99. ISBN 978-1-84227-394-4.**

This volume concerns William Ames's role in the emergence of the Reformed system of theology. When researchers search for new directions to expand the borders of knowledge, one sure way is to undertake a reappraisal of an already known figure and demonstrate how that person has been underappreciated. This is precisely what Jan van Vliet has done with respect to William Ames. Vliet sets himself the ambitious task of arguing that William Ames was a key figure in Reformed theology's shift from a silhouette into the mature system it became. He claims that Ames was a "central figure" (p. 26) in the maturation of seventeenth century Reformed theology and that Ames's expatiation of the concept of covenant served as the conceptual framework for the developing Reformed theology.

Chapter two opens the book with an overview of the life of Ames as well as the theological milieu into which he was born and lived. A brief historiographical résumé of Amesian studies is included. Chapter three is a discussion of the degree to which Ames impacted the emergence of the concept of "federal" or "covenant" theology. Also delineated are the ways John Calvin and William Perkins influenced Ames. In the fourth chapter Ames is posited as being perhaps the most balanced proponent of the concept of a gracious unilateral covenant which simultaneously requires sober obedience. Ames held that covenantal obedience was the remedy for avoiding the Scylla of Arminianism on the one hand and the Charybdis of cold intellectualistic orthodoxy on the other. Covenantal obedience is the answer to the question of how a pietistic voluntarist such as Ames could unambiguously affirm the decree of predestination. Vliet shows how Ames supplies an answer to the question of how God's unconditional election harmonizes with an unambiguous call to a life of Christian piety.

The next chapter tackles the charge that the nexus of Calvinistic predestination and the idea of covenant stilted the growth of Reformed theology through the rise of a "decretal" theology. Vliet persuasively argues that through the lens of Ames's concept of covenant there is no necessary incompatibility between these seemingly paradoxical ideas. In chapters six through eight Vliet contends that Ames had especial influence on Coccieus, the development of Reformed theology down to the Westminster Assembly, and in the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie*. Vliet asserts that Ames's impact on the Dutch Further Reformation was profound, even going so far as to suggest that the exiled Englishman was "squarely at the head of" the *Nadere Reformatie* (p. 184). The final two chapters deal with the extent of the ways in which Wilhelmus à Brakel, Petrus van Mastricht and Jonathan Edwards appropriated the insights of Ames. Ames's impact on the eighteenth century American pastor-theologian is extensive and contains beneficial insights. The unavoidable conclusion to which the reader is driven is that William Ames had a significant impact on the development of the

whole system of Reformed theology, an impact which has lasted to the present.

Incidentally, Vliet spends a good bit of time lending support to the case that there is not a radical distinction to be made between the theology of Calvin and his intellectual offspring, "the Calvinists". This debate may seem tired as many consider Richard Muller's four-volume *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* to be a "slam dunk" refutation of this idea. Nevertheless, Vliet notes that Ames's theology provides us with further material to debunk this idea promulgated by Perry Miller, *et al*.

A criticism I would make of this volume is that the author seems to scatter his energies rather widely instead of applying argumentative force to a few key points. So many topics are covered that the reader becomes numbed to the cumulative force of Ames's impact on each theme that is addressed. Thus, the volume risks sacrificing unity for the sake of an expansive diversity. Furthermore, while setting ideas within their proper historical context is integral to fair historical appraisals, this volume seems to go on to a point of tedium.

The final criticism is that the reader detects the undercurrent that the author of this volume is trying to free Ames from Perkins's long shadow, an exercise which in the end is too big a task. His overall case that Ames's contribution to the development of Reformed theology was "singular and overwhelming" might be a stretch, but he has nonetheless situated Ames on the map as a figure whose contribution to the development of Reformed theology is compelling.

This volume is a fine contribution to the field of Amesian studies. Those who appreciate this important figure and the enduring nature of his intellectual legacy have been well served by its appearance.

NATHAN PARKER

***The Theological Education of the Ministry: Soundings in the British Reformed and Dissenting Traditions*. By Alan P. F. Sell. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013. Pp. 313. £24.00. ISBN 976-1-62032-593-3.**

The title excites expectation of a critical analysis of the content and delivery of theological education in these traditions and some critique of its effectiveness in preparing ordinands for ministry. The subtitle qualifies the intention as providing "Soundings" by highlighting the contribution of a range of distinguished theological educators from the seventeenth century to modern times. Most of the chapters have been previously published in learned journals, and it is helpful to have them made available to a wider readership in this attractively produced volume.

A short review cannot cover the full range of scholars whose work is described. Published for the first time is an extended version of a lecture delivered by Professor Sell to the Friends of the Congregational Library on Caleb Ashworth of Daventry. Ashworth had studied at Doddridge's Academy in Northampton, initially as a Baptist but a later convert to Paedobaptism. The

Academy offered a broad curriculum, including Logic and Metaphysics, Algebra, Trigonometry, Jewish Antiquities, History and Divinity and, if that were not enough, Hebrew, Latin and Greek were taught in the evenings. Thus fortified, Ashworth became assistant minister and shortly co-pastor at Daventry. Following Doddridge's death, the academy migrated to Daventry with Ashworth in charge. A new academy was constructed adjoining the manse with Ashworth in the dual role of local pastor and head of the academy. As with Doddridge at Northampton, ministerial training was undertaken in the context of pastoral ministry – a pattern that would be later abandoned when theological seminaries emerged. However Daventry Academy, like its predecessor, was open-minded and offered a broad education not only to ministerial candidates but also to the sons of Dissenters who were not destined for ministry. Joseph Priestley, who later discovered oxygen, studied at Daventry and looked back on the Academy as "particularly favourable to the pursuit of truth". Ashworth himself was a strict disciplinarian who "did not aspire after being the life and soul of the party" but whose company, we are told, was pleasant and instructive to the mechanic, the manufacturer, the scholar and the divine. It would be intriguing to know what his students thought of this godly but rather serious man.

A lengthy chapter, "Living in the Half Lights", is devoted to John Oman. Here is the extraordinary story of a boy from remote Orkney, who as a fourteen year old had no higher aspiration than "to ride a horse bare-backed and steer a boat in a gale", yet rose to become Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, and then Principal, of Westminster College, Cambridge, a Fellow of the British Academy and the author of influential books including *Grace and Personality* (1917) and *Honest Religion* (1941). Although less widely read today, Professor Sell provides an indispensable introduction to Oman's thought for present-day students of his work.

Former students and acquaintances of Geoffrey Nuttall (1911-2007) will be intrigued by the chapters (previously published in this *Journal*) based on the author's recorded conversations with Nuttall and his reflections on Nuttall's status as a theologian. Leaving aside his sometimes acerbic comments on some of his former colleagues, Geoffrey Nuttall was indisputably the foremost Nonconformist historian of Dissent, and had he been appointed in 1947 to the Church History post at Mansfield he would have immensely influenced Oxford's Faculty of Theology, then heavily weighted towards Anglicanism. Whether he and Nathaniel Micklem would have been congenial colleagues has been widely debated in largely negative terms. Yet both were convinced Congregationalists, though with differing emphases, and believed fervently that the salvation of their churches lay in returning to their true roots. Mansfield's loss (though compensated by the brilliance of Erik Routley) was to the gain of New College, London, where for decades Nuttall did professorial work in the college and the University without being accorded professorial rank. We glean from these chapters that Nuttall was not the easiest of colleagues; he could, as Professor Sell comments, "go off" people. Yet he worked hard with his students when they were keen to learn and would spare no pain to help them.

Readers will inevitably ask themselves which, if any, of these theological educators they would have chosen as mentor. For this reviewer, as perhaps for the author also, the choice falls clearly on T. W. Manson (1893-1958), who is the subject of the final chapter, "A Valued Inheritance of New Testament Scholarship". Manson taught at Westminster College, where he had trained for the ministry, then after two pastorates, taught at Mansfield College (1932-36) before taking up the John Rylands Professorship at Manchester University. Two of his books, *The Teaching of Jesus* (1931), written while he was in pastoral charge, and *The Sayings of Jesus* (1937), influenced generations of preachers, a debt acknowledged by Professor Sell when he writes of Manson that "his lectures were orderly, he breathed life into exegesis, and his expositions provided food for many a sermon thereafter". Furthermore Manson not only practised ministry through scholarship but ventured into some of the ecclesiological debates of the twentieth century, arguing against the Anglo-Catholic Kenneth Kirk's *The Apostolic Ministry,* which made sweeping claims for the Apostolic Succession of bishops from their initial authorisation by the apostles, that "there is only one 'essential ministry' in the Church, the perpetual ministry of the Risen and Ever-Present Lord Himself", a claim that has never been refuted.

There is much to inform and delight in these pages. Professor Sell stimulates questions which it is not the purpose of his book to answer. What, for example, is the relation between theological education and ministerial formation? How effective have the Reformed and Dissenting traditions been in preparing ministerial candidates for the work of ministry? Were there significant omissions in even the most ambitious curricula? Meanwhile we are in Professor Sell's debt for his insights into the task of theological education which generations of teachers have selflessly undertaken.

ANTHONY TUCKER

The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689-1901. **Edited by Keith A. Francis and William Gibson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012 (hbk) 2014 (pbk). Pp. 688. £105.00 (hbk) £30.00 (pbk). ISBN 978-0-19958-359-1 (hbk) 978-0-19870-977-0 (pbk).**

In a secular age it is not always easy to remember the importance religion once had, or how recently Protestantism was the most important defining feature of British identity, or the fundamental importance of the sermon in our culture. It is good therefore to see the recent emergence of Sermon Studies, which is an interdisciplinary approach involving historians, theologians, literary and linguistic scholars. This handbook, which includes thirty seven essays, is the latest addition to this growing literature. It covers the period 1689-1901, from the Glorious Revolution to the death of Queen Victoria, which it sees as the golden age of preaching. Apart from two introductory essays and a concluding essay, the sections cover "Communities, Cultures and Communication";

"Occasional Sermons"; "Controversies, and the Development of Ideas"; "Missions and Ideas of Empire"; and "Sermons and Literature".

The sheer volume of sermons preached in this period is staggering. At a conservative estimate we have 80,000 printed sermons from the period, which is clearly only a tiny fraction of the number preached which William Gibson estimates as 250 million. In the eighteenth century about eight pages of sermons were printed for every page of fiction. Peak production seems to have been reached early in Queen Victoria's reign and it was not until the 1870s that the number began to decline.

Time and time again this book proves the value the sermon has as a vantage point on religious history. It was at one time, common to regard the eighteenth century Church of England very negatively, particularly from the perspective of Evangelicals, Tractarians, or Methodists wishing to stress the contrast with their own revered founder. More recently historians have tended to rehabilitate the Eighteenth Century Church. A fascinating article by Geoffrey Chamberlain looks at parish preaching in the long eighteenth century and concludes that though, at their worst preachers could be "repetitive and rudimentary", (when is this not true?), at their best "they could be rhapsodic and soaring, and undoubtedly moving and meaningful to congregations" (p. 60). Nigel Aston assessing the influence of Rationalism and the Enlightenment on faith highlights the sermons of Archbishop Tillotson which were regarded as a model for several generations and helped to give most eighteenth century clergy "a balance between rationality and mystery, what could be said and what could not be said about the Christian faith" (p. 402). On the one hand this saw off Deism, on the other it maintained the alliance between faith and the new science.

Sermons offer an interesting source in tracing the growth of secularization. The thesis that the Enlightenment caused a rapid secularization of public debate has been discredited for some decades. Here James Caudle's analysis of the anti-Jacobite sermons of 1715-1746 highlights the strong current of Providentialism in these sermons. The sermons on fast-days called to change God's mind if he seemed to be punishing Britain, or alternatively to keep his goodwill if he was prospering the country, together with those given on thanksgiving services for victory, were "remarkably similar to the fasts and thanksgivings of Elizabethan or Commonwealth times, and utterly unlike anything in modern Britain" (p. 246). In "The Sermon, Court, and Parliament 1689-1789" Pasi Ihalainen similarly questions an early date for secularization by challenging historians' neglect of the political sermon.

By the end of the period, however, sermons were beginning to evidence growing secularization. I hugely enjoyed both John Wolffe on "The Victorian Funeral Sermon" and Linda Gill on "The Sermon and the Victorian Novel". Wolffe demonstrates how during the Victorian period faced by tragedy preachers began to "show greater perplexity and less readiness unhesitatingly to discern the intentions of providence" (p. 347). Whereas in the past preachers had been concerned to expound texts, and often reminded people of their own mortality and the prospect of divine judgement, by 1901 preachers were moving towards

the twentieth century model of comforting the bereaved and paying tribute to the deceased. Linda Gill fascinatingly offers some customer response to preaching by seeing how it was viewed by Victorian novelists. Religion is certainly still seen as central to Victorian belief and culture but increasingly regarded as a dogmatic attempt to impose a view of truth, as with Mr Slope in *Barchester Towers*, or Joseph's tedious vindictive sermons in *Wuthering Heights,* or the "abominable nonsense" of Dickens's Revd Chadband. The Sea of Faith is on the turn.

Good as this book is, I have a couple of caveats. The long eighteenth century and the Victorian Age are very different periods and trying to cover both in one volume is over- ambitious. Even more worrying is what is not here. It is perhaps inevitable that women are largely invisible but Nonconformity is poorly represented and that there is no serious attempt to assess the role of the Nonconformist conscience is a major omission. Outside Wales, Congregationalism is largely invisible. There are only a handful of passing references to Congregationalists and not a mention of Fairbairn, Dale, Jowett, Rowland Hill, Horne, T. T Lynch or William Jay. Keith Francis defends this neglect on the grounds that "The overwhelming majority of the sermons extant for the period 1689-1901 were preached by clergy of the Church of England" (p. 616). No doubt this is true but it is not an adequate excuse. What of Joseph Parker crying "God damn the Sultan" at the City Temple, Thomas Binney attacking slavery, Eustace Condor among the Bainesocracy in Leeds, or R. W. Dale preaching the Civic Gospel at Carrs Lane and, in the opening sermon for Mansfield College, declaring: "we assert the duties and the rights of the intellect in religion . . . for us every fresh discovery of science is an addition to our knowledge of God's methods and God's ways"? If Sermon Studies is going to connect adequately with its subject, this voice must not be lost.

MARTIN CAMROUX

***One Ministry, Many Ministries: A Case Study from the Reformed Tradition*. By Alan P. F. Sell. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014. £15.00. ISBN 978-1-62564-892-1**

For almost as long as I can recall, Alan Sell has been the leading contemporary exponent of the ecclesiology of the United Reformed Church and the traditions which formed it. News of his death came as I was reading what must now be regarded as his swan-song: a thoughtful and occasionally provocative series of reflections on the nature of ministry, ordained and lay, within the Reformed tradition. In comparison with Tony Tucker's fine study *Reformed Ministry* (URC, 2003), objective in its stance and historical in its methodology, Alan Sell's book is more personal and discursive, illustrated with many telling anecdotes from our forebears. The exception is his account (pp. 80-96) of early Dissenting Academies and the growth of theological colleges

(not to mention the subsequent closure of so many of them). But I suspect that the real impact of the book will be felt as readers reflect both on the fundamental principles which inform Sell's understanding of ministry and on the ways in which he sees (or fails to see) these expressed in the life of the Church he served with such distinction.

Sell's starting-point, un-controversially for Reformed Christians, is that "the primary ministry is that of the risen and ascended Christ, the one Lord of the Church" (p. 1), exercised through both ordained ministers and the ministry of the "saints". Steeped in our Congregational and Presbyterian past, Sell prefers this Pauline term, much loved by Puritan writers but out of fashion now, to the blander "church members". In his second chapter he outlines the tensions inherent between the ministry of Christ and his many members, the ordained and the lay, and learned and godly ministry, (an issue which, incidentally, preoccupied St Teresa of Avila in the sixteenth century, when she found that well educated clergy failed to give her the guidance she needed in prayer, whereas those whose spiritual lives were more advanced understood her better). He then devotes chapters to the nature of ministry, to the work of ministry first in the worship of the Church and then in preaching and pastoral care, and finally to the education of ministers. Never losing sight of the fact that ministry is shared between the ordained and the saints, he has much to say about the responsibilities of both, even if he is sceptical about the modern tendency to regard baptism as the first "ordination" to the priesthood of all believers (p.7).

I found myself in agreement with almost everything he says about the conduct of worship, particularly when so much current practice seems ignorant of, or impatient with, a Reformed understanding of liturgy. The distinction he draws between person and office in terms of the ordained minister (p. 27) is little understood these days, and helps to explain why some of us are so dismayed when our clergy abandon ministerial dress (I would also favour some simple form of robe for qualified lay leaders of worship). His exposition and defence of the "full diet" of worship (pp. 27-8) is exemplary. He notes where in practice it is often deficient (as in the offering, when removed from its place as part of the response to the Word; pp. 37-38). He finds, as I do, the cheery "Good morning", with which so many begin the service these days, out of place (p. 29). The ministry of welcoming has an important place both before and after the service, but the first words which summon the congregation to worship should surely be scriptural, words of grace, since it is God's friendship with us which is the point, not how friendly the worship leader appears to be. "I was taught", he continues, "that the architecture of the church should be informed by the doctrine of the church, and that on entering the building one's eye should be drawn to the most significant objects: the open Bible, the pulpit, table, and font" (p.30). Screens, drums and music stands are not among them. We seem to have lost the sense that the physical elements of worship – the ordering and use of the liturgical space, the dress of the person leading the service, the way we start and finish – are significant, visible pointers to the divine, not purely functional matters. Do we give enough thought to engendering a sense of sacred space as soon as people enter the sanctuary, even

if a further tension arises here, as William Cowper well knew when he wrote "For thou, within no walls confined, / inhabitest the humble mind"?

When it comes to hymns, Sell recommends variety and has little time for banal songs (p.32; amen to that). The issue of free versus written prayer no longer generates the same passion among us as it once did, but he has wise words on the subject (pp. 33-6), as on the reading of Scripture during worship (p.37), which he believes should be properly rehearsed (he might have added that each act of reading is itself an interpretation). At the Lord's Supper he is unhappy about the admission of children, taking a "high" view of it as the sacrament for believers, and he argues, as he has elsewhere, that standards of membership should not be lowered in order to be more accommodating (p.40).

In the fourth chapter he turns from worship to preaching and pastoral care, which belong (of course) together. I doubt that any of us would disagree that preaching should be urgent, honest and expectant, though we may legitimately differ as to how to make it so: I am not quite so bothered about topical or autobiographical elements as he is, for example, if they prepare the way for exploring the deeper issues of faith (p. 55-6). He laments the loss of expository and doctrinal preaching (pp. 58-62), though I do think themes like adoption, regeneration and justification (p. 60) are very difficult to approach, and I would have welcomed more help on how to follow Forsyth's advice that "the burden of belief" must be reduced without "throwing over precious cargo" (p. 62). Equally, he laments the decline of pastoral visiting (p. 66), but does not explain how it is best done when patterns of society have changed so dramatically. Even when I was first ordained, just before the URC came into being, the pattern of afternoon visiting unannounced was becoming difficult to sustain, not least because it missed anyone who was at work.

Perhaps Sell's most important contribution, understandably given his own trajectory, comes in the realm of the education of ministers, lay and ordained, to which he devotes his final chapter. He accepts that we are faced with a significant crisis of faith, and that part of the reason is that people have not been helped to make the transition from a childish to a mature faith. He proposes six remedies, each of which could well provide an education programme for a local congregation. Church members need to read and understand the Bible intelligently; have the opportunity to discuss doctrines; be given help in their devotional life; understand the nature of the Reformed family; face the personal and social issues before us (he uses the example of drugs, including alcohol and nicotine, but there are many others); and be prepared for death (pp. 71-9). He takes a pot-shot at "the Bible designed to be read as literature" (p. 72), but I have found a literary approach to the Bible immensely enriching and liberating in preaching, compared with the dry form criticism I was taught in college. Equally, when it comes to devotional life, he doesn't mention the growth in retreats and spiritual direction, things once regarded as a catholic preserve but now very much present in URC life.

As far as education in our theological colleges is concerned, having reminded us about the breadth and openness of curricula in the Dissenting academies, he puts down a number of markers, which we ignore at our peril. As a now retired

university teacher of Spanish I warm to his criticism of the purely utilitarian arguments for learning it (p. 96; or anything else, come to that) which have become so fashionable among politicians, as if the whole point of higher education were to earn more money. Equally, I share his suspicions of the kind of modular courses which enable future ministers to avoid the most challenging theological disciplines and focus on narrower, more personal interests. The need for a truly learned ministry can never have been greater; that is, one which has mastered the essentials of Christian thought and is familiar with the major challenges to belief posed by science and philosophy, cultural relativism and a secular, pluralist culture which has increasingly lost touch with its historical roots. This whole section (pp. 96-105) ought to be considered very carefully and with an open mind by those responsible for the education of ordinands. One of the questions he asks is "whether we are doing enough with the candidates we have to draw out their scholarly gifts" (p. 101). The idea that scholarship and the practice of pastoral ministry are somehow incompatible seems to me another bit of unexamined modern nonsense. Among his more radical proposals are a searching final-year oral examination before a call to service and a two-year probationary period with further studies (p. 104) for the newly ordained. Against this, his plea for proper training in voice production may seem trivial, but, as he remarks, "the voice is the minister's instrument" (p. 104) and reliance on amplification systems is not by any means a substitute.

There are three short appendices. The first deals with the significance of the Trinitarian blessing and its personal rather than functional nature, grounded in an understanding that the language is analogical, not metaphorical, God being neither male nor female (Julian Templeton has argued the case at greater length in *Reforming Worship*, 2012). The second is a brief account of the conciliar nature of the United Reformed Church, and the third a sermon delivered as a charge to the minister and church, on Hebrews 12:6, "The Lord disciplines those whom he loves" – a thoroughly characteristic emphasis.

Alan Sell has left us a rich legacy, not least in these reflections, the fruit of a long and faithful ministerial life. We may not agree with every element of his analysis or every word of criticism, but his is a voice which speaks to us from sustained experience of the traditions which have informed our past. Whether or not his vision of a learned and pastoral ordained ministry can survive the huge changes which have taken place in church life over the last fifty years – not least, the mobility of populations, the loosening of denominational allegiance, and hard-pressed clergy looking after several small and ageing congregations – is a moot point. But when we consider its future in our part of the Reformed tradition, we cannot afford to turn our backs on how it has been shaped in the past, if it is to evolve in ways which are both faithful and visionary. Biblical remembering, after all, is never nostalgic, always dynamic, bringing the wisdom of the past into the present to invigorate it and prepare us for the future. We should honour Alan Sell's distinguished contribution to our life in that same spirit.

COLIN THOMPSON

***Clapham Dissenters: From Persecuted Group to Prestigious Congregation*. By Ivor Thomas Rees. Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2015. Pp. 172. £9.95. ISBN 978-1-78461- 076-0.**

This account of the Grafton Square Congregational Church, Clapham, its predecessors and successors, is of wider than local interest, and noteworthy for much more than the famous ministry of James Guinness Rogers in the late nineteenth century. In each period, from the Commonwealth onwards, the story of Puritans and Dissenters in Clapham has something of interest to reveal, whether it is how such an early first congregation came to be settled, how it was fed with a wide variety of theological preaching and differing attitudes to Establishment as it grew, how it was managed not always kindly by subscribers, and later by deacons, and how its extensive social and political influence was exercised through the congregation's outreach or particular ministries. The book is well researched and referenced, though it lacks an index and (typically today) the rigour of a copy editor. Ivor Rees was one of the last of the post-war ministers prior to closure, and so it is also a history written from the heart.

Tradition has it that an independent religious meeting began in Clapham in 1645, possibly formed by a new Puritan rector of Clapham alongside the parish church, a duality not uncommon in the Commonwealth and later in New England. But the first call to a minister came in 1673, still somewhat daring, and long before there was a meeting house. Quite a number of ejected ministers seem to have preached in Clapham and one local Indulgence was granted in 1678. All these ministers are named and it is Rees's helpful practice throughout to provide short biographies in the text.

Three ministers spanned the eighteenth century. Together with their assistants they demonstrate the usual range of theological belief in the period from Calvinist to Arian, which the growing congregation appears to have accommodated without secession. The names are a reminder of the intellectual quality denied the Establishment, but also the stretched meaning of "Dissent" when the list includes the administrator of the Regium Donum and the presenter of the Dissenters' loyal address to two Hanoverian kings. Perhaps the most illustrious of Clapham's ministers in this century was Philip Furneaux, who campaigned successfully to widen the tolerance granted Dissenting ministers under the 1689 Act. In the course of this, Furneaux took on the great Blackstone for questioning the legality of Dissent in his Commentaries on the Laws of England; and, Rees notes, one of Furneaux's letters in the Blackstone correspondence is assumed to have provided Jefferson with the wording he used on freedom of religion when drafting the Constitution of Virginia. Among Furneaux's admirers was the great Lord Mansfield, Lord Chief Justice of England, who contributed to the fund raised by the Clapham church to care for Furneaux when he lost his mind.

A bigger church building was opened in 1761 during Furneaux's ministry. Rees uses a minute book of 1773 to show that the growing church in Clapham was hardly the model of democracy sometimes claimed for Dissenting meetings.

The church was run by an oligarchy of nineteen subscribers who allocated pews, set differential rents and ruled on rights of families to inherit pews. The general body of subscribers rarely met other than to call ministers and appoint treasurers. Even then voting rights were confined to those whose annual subscriptions for pews were up-to-date and above a set amount. The minute book also reveals the social composition of subscribers and their servants and suggests that the church was already benefiting from Clapham's growing attraction to the prosperous and wealthy retired. It was association with such people in a Dissenting meeting that provided one route to respectability for the socially aspiring, despite continuing barriers to Dissenters in public life.

The orthodox Thomas Urquart followed Furneaux and took the Clapham Dissenters into the nineteenth century. Rees records no link between them and members of the Clapham Sect, though Urquart had good relations with their vicar and is buried in the St Thomas churchyard. The Grafton Square church was opened in 1852, a "cathedral" Rees calls it, with its oak pews downstairs, pitch pine in the gallery and one of Clapham's two commanding spires. It saw the thirty-five year ministry of a "prince of the pulpit", James Guinness Rogers, from 1865, and a growth in church membership under him from 300 to over 1000. His preaching was conservatively evangelical.

Early on, a Sunday School and two daughter churches in poorer parts were built and a Brotherhood meeting was formed for working men. What Rees calls an "institutional church" developed, which by the early twentieth century included cycling, rambling, and horticultural clubs, an employment bureau for the unemployed and savings groups to help the poor manage their affairs. Though Rogers started a book club and a debating society, there seems to have been less emphasis on self education than in other large central churches of the period.

Of his time, Rogers spoke against the granting of public money to Church of England schools and campaigned for the Disestablishment of the Church of England, two authentic Dissenting concerns. The movement for Irish Home Rule was launched by Mr Gladstone in the Clapham manse drawing room, though the issue divided Dissent. Rogers is supposed to have acted as a channel of Nonconformist opinion on political issues to Gladstone and Lord Rosebery looked to him as well.

Rogers would always have been hard to follow, but calling Edward Lewis, a disciple of the New Theology group, was risky and led to a loss of members, including Rogers. Though New Theology was given short shrift by the old men of the denomination, there was a more constrained shift to liberal theology among some younger Congregational ministers at the time and Clapham was to see an early reaction when George Stanley Russell was called in 1915. To use the term New Genevan for him would be out of time, but he is associated with the *The Free Church Book of Common Prayer* (1929) and later wrote a service book of his own. He brought order and dignity to the services, which became liturgical, with greater emphasis on music led by a gowned choir, and preaching that was both orthodox and appealing. This drew Anglicans who found their Low Church services dull. The congregation grew even though the Great War

and its aftermath challenged most forms of organised religion. Russell acted as chaplain to hospitals for wounded soldiers though he was a pacifist. Rees is silent on whether this created problems in the church, and indeed on the effect of the War on the Clapham congregation more generally. The celebration in 1925 of Russell's ten years as minister and the near-triple centenary of the Clapham church's foundation brought, according to the local paper, "Congratulations from Church, State and Stage". The State included Mr Asquith, an old friend of Russell's. The Church included W. E. Orchard and the Dean of Durham. The Stage, Phyllis Nielson-Terry.

The Clapham church never seems to have recovered from Russell's departure for Canada in 1929 where he had a long and influential ministry in Toronto. A V2 in February 1945 destroyed the entire Grafton Square building and its spire. A rebuilt church on a much reduced scale opened in 1958 and Rees was called as its third minister in 1967. He gives a modest account of familiar struggles to recreate church life in a socially very changed Clapham. Its high points became increasingly ecumenical, and this is just as authentic an expression of congregational life in the period as past denominational glories. The church closed in 2002.

Rees does not overlook laymen in the congregation over the years, often a weakness of chapel histories; or interesting detail. So one learns that the Colman who was treasurer in Edwardian days was indeed of the mustard family, just as Rogers's Guinness mother was indeed related to the brewers. Providing cases of claret for ministers and sherry for the Ladies' Circle ended with the temperance advocate Mrs Rogers, though the Ladies were drinking port again in Russell's day. It was the quality of the stained glass in the Grafton Square church alone which persuaded the War Damage Commission to provide enough grant to erect a decent post-war building.

Honouring the past, both struggle and glory, is a right thing to do and Clapham's story is especially valuable as indicating all the shades of meaning that Dissent has carried down the years and the social and political influences of a growing and thriving chapel culture. But Rees's book, like many chapel histories raises again the question, against the heights of the nineteenth century, what caused Nonconformity to be the first part of organised religion to fade in the later twentieth century? There are pointers here but no answers.

JOHN THOMPSON