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THE CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY SOCIETY MAGAZINE

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EDITORIAL

The first detail to which I must refer is one which the astute among you will already have noticed. Our title has changed. Since our last issue the Congregational History Circle has quietly metamorphosed into the Congregational History Society. You may recall that Christopher Damp, our treasurer, raised the question of our name in a recent article in our magazine. He took his concern to the council of the United Reformed Historical Society which began its life with the coming together of the former Congregational and Presbyterian Historical Societies. Some sensitivity was called for in this matter but the URCHS council members raised no objection to his proposal that we should change from being a circle into a society. In truth, we have grown in size so that the term circle no longer adequately describes our fellowship. Our magazine naturally follows its predecessor and has adopted the numbering which befits that fact. The officers retain their posts as before.

Our magazine contains an intriguing paper from John Thompson on those Nonconformists who have been among the very few to become Companions of Honour. Richard Cleaves concludes his account of his father's life and ministry and, in addition, to commemorate the bi-centenary of the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, we have a paper on Congregational links to the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire. Adrian Stanley has provided us with a review article on the newly published history of his alma mater, Mill Hill School.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Listening to the radio programme, Desert Island Discs, recently I learned that the well known novelist and critic, Brian Aldiss (born 1925), grew up in a devout Congregational family. His parents ran a local shop in Norfolk and were keen members of the nearby Congregational church. Aldiss attributed their dislike of the cinema and of 'fun' in general to their serious Christianity and to the narrow, severe faith of the Congregationalists, as he understood it, although he stated that, through the many contacts she made each day, in managing the village post office, his mother recovered from her former depressive condition. The young Aldiss was sent to boarding school and then joined the army.

The union of England and Scotland in 1707, three hundred years ago this year, is not an anniversary which should pass unnoticed by our society, although it has many critics. In truth the histories of the Congregational churches in both countries reveal significant differences but this should not detract from the many

points of contact. Among the heroes of Congregationalism, English, Scottish, Welsh or of any nationality, must be numbered David Livingstone and his father-in-law, Robert Moffat, who were both proud Scots. Indeed the founders of the London Missionary Society include David Bogue, often recalled as of Gosport but a good Scot too. In the twentieth century the athlete and missionary, Eric Liddell, was also a Scot. As is obvious, the Scottish Congregational churches have contributed considerably to the missionary movement through these and other brave men and women, but have in addition made a noted witness in other walks of life. Whatever may be the future of this union of nations, Congregationalists on both sides of the border may rejoice over the mutual enrichment of their Christian understanding.

D Z Phillips (1934–2006)

The death of Dewi Zephaniah Phillips, the notable philosopher of religion and Wittgenstein scholar, in July 2006 is a loss to Congregationalism as well as to the academic world. Born in Morriston, near Swansea, to a Welsh speaking family who were devout Congregationalists, the young Phillips determined to become a minister. At the University of Wales, Swansea, he was very influenced by the Swansea school of philosophers—J R Jones and Rush Rees among them—and he gained a first class degree. In 1959 he was inducted as minister of Fabian's Bay Congregational Church, Swansea but not ordained. He became a lecturer in philosophy at Queen's College, Dundee in 1961 and returned to Swansea four years later. He taught there for the rest of his life, although from 1992 he also was professor of the philosophy of religion at Claremont Graduate University, in California. D Z Phillips helped to make Swansea an international centre of Wittgenstein studies and his book *Faith After Foundationalism* (1988) proved very influential, although he also wrote on the poetry of R S Thomas. Phillips was not properly speaking a theologian, but he was a Christian scholar, and his strong Christian faith was clear, as was his love of Wales and Welsh culture.

This year I must also bring to your notice the deaths of two of our keenest members, that is my wife, Yvonne A Evans, who died in May 2006, and John Wilcox, one of the founders of the Congregational Federation and its first secretary, who died later that year. Both of these have contributed notably to our magazine and to our fellowship over the years and we thank God for their witness and their encouragement.

A note from **Colin Price**, the secretary of the Congregational History Society

As Rev Dr Stephen Orchard of Westminster College, Cambridge comes to the end of his term of office as principal and passes on to higher things, namely becoming the moderator of the general assembly of the United Reformed Church, we in the Congregational History Society should thank him for his

friendly reception of and hospitality to Congregationalists at the college. As both a former Congregationalist and a historian, the combination naturally was a winning one; added to which Stephen's genial personality and good humour made for some happy occasions. He has also written some interesting articles and reviews in the *Journal of the URCHS*.

I should be happy to offer to a website the 1901 *Congregational Year Book*'s list of 19th century serving ministers and missionaries. A copy can also be obtained from bob.franklin@congregational.org.

CHAPEL TOUR

Our small band of travellers met at Ebenezer Congregational Chapel, Bretherton (1819), and were welcomed with a cup of tea. We explored the premises—main hall, associated rooms and chapel—"a preaching box" with choir pews facing the congregation and a rear gallery. To one side is a moderately-sized burial ground still in use. A subsequent study of the *Congregational Year Book* (1940) reveals this to be the most westerly outpost of the Blackburn district of the former Lancashire Congregational Union, separating the Liverpool and Preston districts. William Roby, who preached at the opening of the chapel, had previously preached and briefly been a schoolmaster in the village. The church was gathered, however, by William Bowen who remained minister there until 1851.

We moved on to Leyland (1846), now URC, the church where our guide for the day, Chris Damp, was brought up, which also owed its origins to Bowen who began preaching in the town in 1834. Chris pointed out to us the location of the original chapel. The present building was the only one visited by us that day both situated in a town centre—all the others being set alongside fields—and having the more "churchy" style (as opposed to box-shaped) building which dated from 1877. The graveyard in front of the chapel is full of memorials, some quite ornate. We were entertained to lunch in the large hall at the rear and were encouraged to take away the surplus sandwiches for our supper. Under the chapel we were shown a charity operation which takes donated second-hand domestic hand-tools and sewing machines and refurbishes them for use in the third world.

A short hop up the M6, followed by a drive along winding country lanes, took us to Providence Chapel, Chipping, built in 1838 to a rectangular ground-plan with the pews parallel to the longer walls and a door below each of the two windows in one of the longer sides. In the 1950s the original box pews were dismantled and re-used in a partition separating the building into a Sunday school hall and chapel, each entered through one of the outside doors, with a

connecting door through the partition. The church closed in 1882 and was re-gathered at the turn of the century after some young Congregationalists from Preston discovered the chapel building on a whit-week ramble.

We then drove over Longridge Fell to Knowle Green. The church here was founded in 1831, moving to its present site in 1867 when it acquired an unfinished pub and two cottages from a builder who had run out of money. The pub was stripped and turned into the chapel and side galleries were added later in 1871. One of the cottages is still in use as the manse. The chapel is maintained in good condition and the church has plans to rebuild the adjacent wooden hall.

Our final visit was to Inglewhite, founded in 1819 and worshipping in a cottage until 1826 when by means of a "sharp manoeuvre" the church bought the present site from a Roman Catholic who owned Inglewhite Lodge. Moves were set in train to make a tabernacle just outside the lodge gates whereupon the offer was made of a field which was the intended target all along. The chapel is small and simple with modern halls adjacent where we were served tea and held our annual meeting.

Peter Young

NONCONFORMIST COMPANIONS OF HONOUR[1]

Which nonconformist ministers have received the Companion of Honour, and why? That is my main subject, but the nature and purpose of the CH has to be the starting point. In very short order, the CH is the highest honour which the prime minister of the day is able to recommend to the sovereign. It ranks higher than most knighthoods. The number is limited at any time to 65. Importantly, it carries no title.

Towards the end of The Great War, which was the first in our history to impinge on almost every family in the land, and to involve India, the Dominions and the colonies as well, the inadequacy of the existing honours system to recognise such wide-spread service and sacrifice became increasingly apparent. King George V caused the now familiar Order of the British Empire to be created to meet that need. The name, which some today find embarrassing, was in 1917, when the Order was promulgated, the point, as subjects throughout the empire could be put forward. This continued until much later when Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa introduced their own honours systems, as did former colonies on independence.

The new Order of the British Empire, however, did not fill the bill in one important respect. To make it available for all levels of service, and provide awards in greater numbers than had hitherto been customary, it had a category of medallists, the BEM, now abolished, and five levels of awards, from MBE to GBE. The two highest awards, KBE and GBE, involved taking a title. In the plainer, not to say potentially revolutionary, world which was emerging as the war progressed, it was thought appropriate to be able to recognise the highest service without requiring people to take a title. The answer reached, eventually, was to promulgate a second much smaller, but very senior, and select, new order, the CH, which carried no title.

It too began in 1917 and the CHs up to 1920 went to those whose war service was held to merit such distinction. General Smuts is about the only name one would recognise today in this first batch, but importantly it included three women. From 1921, however, those admitted were not connected with war service and from this very early point included nonconformist ministers.

To illustrate the standing of the CH, as a result of limiting the number of holders, now to 65, originally to 50, only 302 CHs had been admitted in total by the millennium. For comparison, every year nowadays the half-yearly honours

1 This paper was first given as a talk to the 1662 Society in London in March 2007.

lists carry 700 or so names each, and in the millennium 2000 were honoured to match the year.

Exclusive, then and special, but what is the CH for? The statutes of the order say, simply, "for conspicuous service of national importance", but in the honours world every word is carefully weighed and has meaning. In the case of new honours in particular, the best way to demonstrate the standard expected is to name some of those appointed in different fields. Early CHs among Anglicans, for example, were Wilson Carlile, founder of the Church Army, Dick Sheppard and Tubby Clayton, founder of Toc H; in the arts, E M Forster, Frederick Delius, Benjamin Britten, John Piper; in public life Nancy Astor, J A Spender, long-time editor of *The Observer*, and among lay nonconformists, the conductor Adrian Boult and Churchill's war-time minister of health, Ernest Brown, the leader of the Brotherhood movement. I have deliberately chosen examples from the first fifty years, which is the period when most nonconformist ministers were selected. More recent CHs include Chad Varah, founder of the Samaritans, Archbishop Derek Worlock, David Hockney and David Attenborough. The motto of the Order of CH, for the record, is a line from Alexander Pope, misquoted as it happens, "Faithful in action, in honour clear".

Now: which nonconformist ministers were chosen? This is the full list to date.

1921	John Clifford, Baptist
	Sir William Robertson Nicoll, Free Church of Scotland
1922	J H Jowett, Congregationalist
1927	J D Jones, Congregationalist
1929	J C Carlile, Baptist
	W Bramwell Booth, Salvation Army
1930	A Maude Royden
1933	J Scott Lidgett, Methodist
1937	M E Aubrey, Baptist
1948	H Elfed Lewis, Congregationalist
1955	H Martin, Baptist
1961	C H Dodd, Congregationalist
1968	E A Payne, Baptist
1974	N Micklem, URC[2]

The first three, Clifford, Robertson Nicoll and Jowett were all put forward by Lloyd George when prime minister and all had personal links to him, which is not to say the honour was less deserved. Clifford by any register was a

2 All those mentioned in this article are by definition distinguished and are all to be found in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* with the curious exception of J C Carlile, for whom see J C Carlile *My Life's Little Day* (1935).

remarkable man. A boy worker in a lace factory in Nottingham, converted at 14, trained locally for the New Connexion Baptist ministry, and called to Praed Street, London, he accepted, provided he could continue his education. He took a succession of degrees at University College London, including one in geology which remained his chief academic interest and led to his election as an FRGS. His 47 year ministry at his rebuilt church, whose extensive social and educational outreach gained it the nick-name, "the Westbourne Park University", included twice serving as president of the Baptist Union. He became known to Lloyd George as a fellow "pro-Boer" and as a passive resister to church school rates. Through the European and World Baptist Congresses, he became committed to the avoidance of war with Germany and was actually caught at an international peace conference in Germany by the outbreak of war in 1914. After a difficult journey home for a man of nearly eighty, and appalled by what he witnessed of German militarism on the way, and much affected by the invasion of Belgium and the reported atrocities there, he became a reluctant—but given his prominence among nonconformists, hugely significant—supporter of the war. That was politically important to the Liberal government as helping to bring nonconformists on side. With Lloyd George, Clifford spoke at a mass City Temple rally in November 1914, chaired by Robertson Nicoll, which finally committed nonconformity to the war. Clifford opposed conscription in 1916, however, and became increasingly disillusioned with Lloyd George, voting (it was said) against the Lloyd George coalition government at the coupon election of 1918.

Robertson Nicoll's political services to Lloyd George during the war were, if anything, even more important. Leaving Scotland and the ministry on health grounds, Robertson Nicoll moved to England and was appointed in 1886 editor of the newly founded *British Weekly*. He made it the widest read and most influential weekly journal taken by nonconformists, who of course in those days were a big constituency. *The British Weekly* supported those who refused to pay church rates and the social reforms associated with Lloyd George's chancellorship. It was opposed to increasingly jingoistic talk of war with Germany up to the very outbreak of war in 1914, but it too was converted overnight by the invasion of Belgium. Unlike Clifford, however, Robertson Nicoll became an uncritical supporter of the war, using in *The British Weekly* the emotive, bellicose language of the popular press. He conducted a campaign to encourage young nonconformists to volunteer and in due course supported conscription. A confidant of Riddell, Lloyd George's go-between with the press, Robertson Nicoll was also among those invited to Lloyd George's political breakfasts. At a time when the war was dividing the Liberal party and nonconformity—for the pacifist elements in both were not silent—*The British Weekly*'s support for Lloyd George was incalculable. Not all CHs receive

citations, but Robertson Nicoll's was "as editor of the British Weekly since 1886".

Lloyd George's third nomination, John Henry Jowett, was of a totally different order. Jowett trained for the ministry at Airedale College, Bradford, graduating as was customary at that college at Edinburgh University, which was to award him an honorary DD in 1910. After two terms at Mansfield, he was called to St James's, Newcastle-on-Tyne, in 1889, then to Carr's Lane, Birmingham in 1895 on R W Dale's death. With a rich musical voice, and strong intellect, he preached and wrote to great effect. He was elected chairman of the Congregational Union in 1910. In 1911, he accepted an invitation to be minister of the wealthiest church in the United States, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian, New York, but met criticism in the press by insisting that his stipend should be no higher than at Birmingham. In 1914, on the outbreak of war, he thought he should return to Britain but was persuaded to stay. He preached and spoke on the justice of the allied cause at a time when the isolationist United States was reluctant to enter the war. In 1917, he received a call from Westminster Chapel. Somewhat remarkably, President Woodrow Wilson sought to dissuade him from accepting, while Prime Minister Lloyd George urged him to return. He did so the following year, Lloyd George and his wife attending his induction. There was an outcry in 1920 when he accepted an invitation to preach in Durham Cathedral, the first nonconformist to do so, but this was another mark of his stature. Illness ended his ministry in 1923, the year he died. There is no citation.

J D Jones is either hero or villain, according to one's view of continuing Independency in Congregational church polity. Like Jowett he had the gift of a mellifluous voice, strong intellect and commanding presence. He also had the skills of the born diplomat. He used these gifts as preacher, writer, calmer of denominational tensions and cajoler of hesitant donors to denominational funds. Educated at Manchester and St Andrews universities, and trained at Lancashire College which wanted him as principal, J D Jones was first called to the chair of the Congregational Union in 1909, in his forties, when he launched the Central Fund to lift the stipends of rural ministers above poverty level. Later, he was influential in securing the acceptance of moderators, and launched in 1921 the Forward Movement Fund to pay for them and for improvement of stipends and pensions to counter post-war inflation. He was called a second time to the chair of the Union in 1925, and this double call is the gist of his citation for CH. His other great service to the union was to volunteer to serve as its honorary secretary from 1919 until his death. All this was combined with a pastoral and preaching ministry of great renown at Richmond Hill, Bournemouth lasting nearly forty years and the furtherance of international Congregationalism through overseas visits. He was born in north Wales, and retired there. He involved Stanley Baldwin in a fund-raising lunch in connection with the second

of his great appeals, and it would be Baldwin as prime minister who put him forward for CH in 1927.

Maude Royden was an Anglican, out of favour with her own, who scandalised her church further by becoming pulpit assistant at The City Temple from 1917 to 1920. Here she discovered and developed her skill as a preacher, although denied the opportunity to exercise it in her own church. She was already a university extension lecturer and had spoken at public meetings as a non-violent suffragist. But in regular preaching, it could be said, she discovered her vocation. A pacifist, she had joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation, whose clerical membership was largely Congregational, when it was founded in 1914. Her religious work after The City Temple does not concern us here but her citation for CH in 1930 speaks of her as "Eminent in the religious life of the Nation".

John Scott Lidgett is the only Methodist in the list. His CH in 1933 fell in the year after Methodist reunion, when Wesleyan, Primitive and United Methodists came together. He was the architect of this reunion and was chosen president of the first united Conference. That perhaps prompted his recognition, but the unusually long citation will serve to summarise his extraordinarily varied career: "President of the Methodist Church, Honorary Secretary of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches in England and Wales since 1914, Vice-Chancellor of London University 1930–31 and 1931–32, Warden of the Bermondsey Settlement, since 1891". A Wesleyan, he was spared itinerancy after his early years in the ministry by founding and running the Bermondsey Settlement, a pioneer in the settlement movement. A London base enabled him to serve on the London School Board, on the London County Council, where he became leader of the Progressive party, and on the senate of London University. He was also editor of *The Methodist Times*. An active ecumenicist, and trusted friend of Archbishop Randall Davidson, he was involved on behalf of the Free Churches in the Lambeth Conference talks on reunion in 1922–25 and 1932–38. He did not retire from Bermondsey until 1949, when he was 94, wearing his CH to the retirement party. He died in 1953, in his hundredth year, knowing that some at least thought him the greatest Methodist since Wesley.

Three Baptists in the list were general secretaries of the Baptist Union. Against the background of a 54 year pastoral ministry, however, J C Carlile was probably better known for working with Cardinal Henry Manning to settle the very bitter London dock strike of 1889, for his war chaplaincy work, which won him a Belgian honour and the CBE, and as editor of *The Baptist Times*. The last appears on his citation. He was president of the Baptist Union from 1921 to 1923 and almost immediately afterwards took over temporarily as general secretary on the sudden illness of J H Shakespeare. M E Aubrey was Shakespeare's permanent successor and remained until 1951, a difficult period for Baptists, who had been divided by Shakespeare's proposals for church reunion, and then faced the inter-

war reunion conversations initiated by the Church of England. Aubrey kept his denomination together, while giving his own ecumenical enthusiasm full play by holding office in the post-war British and World Councils of Churches. His CH was in the Coronation honours list for 1937, when he was Free Church moderator. His successor as general secretary of the Baptist Union was E A Payne, whose background was with the Baptist Missionary Society and as senior tutor at Regents Park College, Oxford. Despite continuing reservations in the denomination, Payne became a leading figure in post-war ecumenical initiatives, serving as joint president of the World Council of Churches, vice president of the British Council of Churches—the gist of his citation for CH in 1968—as Free Church moderator and vice president of the Baptist World Alliance. He was also a respected historian of nonconformity.

Howell Elfed Lewis's citation in 1948 speaks of his "services to Welsh religious and social life and letters", the last a recognition of his early fame as a poet in Welsh. He had won the crown at the national eisteddfod in 1881 and 1891 and the chair in 1894. From 1923 to 1927 he was archdruid of Wales. He also composed hymns in Welsh and wrote authoritatively on the Welsh sermon. He trained for the ministry at the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, serving a number of English-speaking churches, before starting his long ministry of the Welsh Congregational Church at Kings Cross in 1904. Here he gathered a big congregation of Welsh expatriates and retired in 1940, when he was blind and eighty, but only (he insisted) because of the blitz. He had been chairman of the Union of Welsh Independents in 1925 and of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1933.

Hugh Martin, though trained for the Baptist ministry, is chiefly remembered for his work with the Student Christian Movement and the World Student Christian Federation between the wars, which led in 1929 to the foundation of the SCM Press. Under his editorship the Press became a religious publisher of reputation and influence, involving authors from a wide variety of traditions. After his retirement from the Press in 1950, Martin was elected vice president of the British Council of Churches and Free Church moderator, and these are mentioned in his citation for CH in 1968.

C H Dodd is too well remembered to need much space here. The citation makes it clear that his CH in 1961 was occasioned by his work as director of the translation of the New English Bible. He trained for the Congregational ministry at Mansfield after reading Greats at University College, Oxford, but held only a short pastorate before returning to Mansfield to teach New Testament. He moved to a chair in theology at Manchester in 1930 as the successor of A S Peake and in 1935 became the first nonconformist to hold a chair of divinity at either ancient university when he was appointed Norris-Hulse professor at Cambridge. His writing made him known to a wider audience than the academic.

The last nonconformist to have received the CH so far was Nathaniel Micklem in 1974. The son of a QC and Liberal MP, educated at Rugby and New College, Oxford, and president of the Oxford Union, all set him apart in a worldly way from the other nonconformist recipients. Much influenced by his father's friend, R F Horton of Lyndhurst Road, he trained for the ministry at Mansfield, going to Marburg in the middle of the course for a taste of German liberal theology. He was ordained in 1914, had to leave his first sole pastorate during the Great War because of his pacifism, and served with the YMCA in France. After the war, he became chaplain of Mansfield, before teaching Old Testament at the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham and then New Testament in Ontario. He returned to Mansfield as professor of dogmatic theology in 1931 and succeeded Selbie as principal the following year. His early taste for liberal theology had disappeared and he aroused controversy, not least in the college, by standing out against it there and more widely in the denomination, in part through a weekly column in *The British Weekly*. Under his leadership, successive generations of ordinands drew Congregationalism back to its orthodox roots and introduced a more catholic range of liturgical use in public worship. His visits to the persecuted Confessing Church in Germany in the 'thirties destroyed his pacifism and during the war he broadcast weekly talks to Christians in Europe. He was elected chairman of the Congregational Union in 1944, and played a leading free church role in response to Archbishop Fisher's post-war appeal for unity. He was a consistent advocate of Presbyterian-Congregational union. After retirement, he was elected president of the Liberal party in 1956/57. Harold Wilson, who had come to know Micklem as an undergraduate member of Congsoc, and at whose wedding in Mansfield College chapel Micklem had officiated in 1940, used the single vacant CH place to nominate him in 1974 "for services to theology". Mary Wilson was among the Great and the Good of Church and State at his memorial service in the Regent Square church in February 1977.

If I have dwelt overlong on Micklem it is because I sense that he may be the end of the line. We nonconformists are no longer a constituency to court or to honour and our importance to prime ministers is slight. But I hope I have shown that it was not always so, and that we once produced those who merited the accolade, Companion of Honour, and that those who received it did honour to their Lord as well as the Sovereign. To illustrate this, I end with a story of Elfed Lewis at his private investiture at Buckingham Palace. After presenting the CH, King George VI, who had met Elfed before at eisteddfods, asked him about the stick he was carrying. It had come, Elfed said, from Nazareth. The King placed his hand on the stick and Elfed "asked a blessing of the man of Nazareth on him".

John Handby Thompson

CONGREGATIONALISTS AND THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE

Introduction

On January 15, 1788 Granville Sharp, chairman of the London 'Committee of the Society instituted for the purpose of effecting the Abolition of the Slave-Trade', boldly declared that the "Clergy of the Established Church, and the Ministers amongst the Dissenters" as well as members of both universities, and friends in Manchester, Birmingham and other towns, give grounds for hope that "a species of oppression, so disgraceful to the nation, will at length be abolished by general consent". The *Bristol Gazette* one week later gave its support to a public meeting against the trade and noted that the "Dignitaries of the Church" and "the clergy of every denomination" are among those "eager to testify their abhorrence of this iniquitous business". The Bristol committee against the slave trade was led by "Quakers and Dissenting ministers and their friends and followers" but was opposed by those who had a financial interest in the trade's continuance. In May 1788 the Baptist Western Association sent a letter and five guineas to Granville Sharp and the London committee, resolving to recommend to all the members of their churches that they should unite against the slave trade and work for its abolition.[1]

Clearly this broad coalition of parties opposed to the slave trade included many dissenters, both ministers and lay folk, and, although evidence suggests that most of these were Quakers and Baptists, some may have been Congregationalists. Yet no Congregationalists were specifically identified in the Bristol petition or by Sharp and, therefore we may ask, how important were they to the cause? The inference is that any Congregationalists involved were relatively insignificant supporters of the main movers against the slave traffic, especially that traffic in the British empire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Slavery and Congregationalists in the late Seventeenth Century

If some Congregationalists were among those who came to oppose the trade, we must be wary of concluding that all Congregationalists belonged in that camp. The widespread acceptance of the propriety of slavery and slave trading

1 T Whelan "Robert Hall and the Bristol Slave-Trade Debate of 1787–1788" *The Baptist Quarterly* vol XXXVIII, no 5, Jan 2000, 212–224.

throughout society, before the mid-eighteenth century, certainly did not exclude Congregationalists. That more were not involved in owning and trading in slaves may be explained by the fact that dissenters, almost by definition, after the Restoration of 1660, found themselves disbarred from prominence and, on their part, rather deliberately sought to be inconspicuous.

The notable Congregational benefactor, William Coward (1647/8–1738), derived his considerable wealth from his plantations in Jamaica where he had secured estates in the 1670s, soon after it became a British colony, although by 1684 Coward had probably ceased to live on the island. He made his home in a mansion in Walthamstow, a village to the north of London, then popular among wealthy City dissenters, where he paid for the building of an Independent meeting house in Marsh Street, although he also bought extensive property in the parish of Lurgashall, four miles from Petworth, in Sussex. Largely absentee landowners like Coward commonly left their West Indian plantations in the care of factors. To an even greater degree than in the American southern colonies, economic life in the West Indies at that time depended upon negro slavery.

Although no direct proof of his ownership of slaves has been discovered, Coward's largest ship was chartered to others, including the Royal African Company, who were engaged in the slave trade. It seems that Coward may have been partly ignorant of the uses his ship was put to. Yet, as John Thompson has written, "Neither as a merchant of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, nor as a religiously active Dissenter, would he be troubled by profiting from the growing slave economy of Jamaica" and "he must be expected to have used slaves on his plantation".[2] Without question, Congregationalists have derived considerable financial benefit from Coward's income, from his Jamaican estates, not only during his lifetime but also as a result of the generous provision made for Congregationalists in his will.

As Coward grew older, he became more high Calvinist in theology and more testy in his moods, causing some dissenters in 1737 to fear that his fortune would be bestowed on those not known for their theological moderation, thus removing men like Isaac Watts who, only a few years earlier, had been described as having "the greatest influence on Mr Coward of any Body". However, he maintained good terms with Watts, whom he made one of the trustees of his will, and with Philip Doddridge, although the latter declined to become the principal of the theological academy which Coward wished to set up in Walthamstow after his death. In 1738, after Coward's death, Doddridge regretted the loss of "one of my most generous & faithfull Friends" but still noted "I hope his will was wiser than we imagined; for I am told he has left his real Estate to be

2 J H Thompson *A History of the Coward Trust* (1998) 1–3, "A Note on William Coward" in *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society* vol 7, no 7, October 2005, 421–6, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*).

turn'd into money". In fact his Jamaican lands went to a cousin but Coward's generosity has enabled financial support to be given to generations of those training for ministry among "Protestant Dissenters".[3] If later Congregationalists found satisfaction in the knowledge that their forebears lent support to the abolitionist cause, they should also remember that some of the most noteworthy Congregationalists, like Watts and Doddridge, by accepting the profits, which almost certainly derived from slavery, acquiesced in the means by which those profits were obtained, that is in negro slavery and the slave trade.

Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century

The movement against slavery in the eighteenth century was firstly taken up by Quakers, after William Penn declared against it in Pennsylvania. Notable among them were the educational reformer, Anthony Benezet (1713–84), the son of Huguenot parents, refugees from France who had finally migrated from London to Philadelphia in 1731, and John Woolman (1720–72) who was born in New Jersey and who, in early manhood, became convinced that slave owning was "inconsistent with the Christian religion". In 1750 Benezet had begun teaching black people, both men and women, and he began to question notions of innate negro inferiority. He came to believe that slavery was against both Christianity and common justice, publishing his views in several works, and including among his correspondents Benjamin Franklin, John Wesley, and Granville Sharp. Benezet helped to secure emancipation in Pennsylvania.[4] Yet he was not alone in believing slavery to be immoral. In 1758 the London Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends issued an epistle, warning all Quakers to forego the slave trade and its "unrighteous Profits". The epistle denounced this "iniquitous practice" and this "unrighteous Gain of Oppression" unreservedly.[5]

Woolman acted against slavery, by pricking the consciences of his fellow Friends and by reaching out to others. His published writings, especially *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* (1754), influenced not only Benezet but also John Wesley, Granville Sharp, and Thomas Clarkson. He consistently refused to use slave grown products, like molasses and sugar, in his personal activities nor did he use any articles which resulted from slave labour in his tailoring business.[6]

Benezet befriended George Whitefield who, when in Philadelphia, often stayed with him. The itinerant evangelist had attained an eminence in England

3 *Ibid*, G F Nuttall *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge DD (1702–1751)* (1979) 72, 85, 95.

4 For Benezet see *ODNB*.

5 *Observations On the Inslaving, Importing and purchasing of Negroes* (Germantown, Pennsylvania 1759) 8–11.

6 P Moulton "John Woolman's Approach to Social Action—as Exemplified in relation to Slavery" *Church History* vol 35, no 4, December 1966, 399–410, *ODNB*.

and America and, on his second visit to America, Whitefield wrote an open letter to the inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina concerning their negroes. This was published in pamphlet form by Benjamin Franklin in 1740 and aroused great antagonism, at a time when slavery was deeply entrenched, from Canada to the West Indies, but was rarely questioned. In this letter he castigated the slaveholders for the abuses heaped upon their slaves.

"I must inform you … that God has a quarrel with you for your cruelty to the poor negroes. Whether it be lawful for Christians to buy slaves, I shall not … determine, but sure I am that it is sinful, when bought, to use them worse than brutes. …Your dogs are caress'd and fondled at your Tables", he observed, "But your Slaves, who are frequently stiled Dogs or Beasts, have not an equal Privilege. … some … have been, upon the most trifling provocation, cut with knives, and have been given up to the inhuman usage of cruel task-masters, who by their unrelenting scourges, have ploughed upon their backs, and made long furrows, and at length brought them even to death itself." Death was preferable for these slaves, Whitefield maintained, rather than their enduring misery, deprivation and hunger. "The Blood of them … will ascend up to Heaven against you", he prophesied. In spite of this vehement denunciation, Whitefield did not campaign to free the slaves but rather urged the owners to provide for the religious needs of their negroes.[7]

However Whitefield's attitude was ambivalent, at best, for in Georgia which had been the only American colony to forbid slavery, he was persuaded that slavery was necessary for the colony to thrive. His letter did not directly attack slavery itself but merely its abuses and in 1750 he lent his support to the legalising of slavery in Georgia. He even used slaves on his plantation at the orphanage he had set up and named Bethesda. This failing on his part was grievous.[8]

At his death in 1770 Whitefield left his Georgia estates to his patroness, Selina, the Countess of Huntingdon, who increased the number of slaves at Bethesda from about 50 to 125. Benezet tried to convince the countess that slave owning was immoral and sent her copies of Wesley's *Thoughts on Slavery* and Woolman's *Journal*. Her attitude to slavery was that of many contemporaries, that is "since the future life was more important than the present one, it was better to keep slaves in a comfortable and Christian setting than to release them into a harsh and pagan world".[9] She believed that if slaves had Christian owners they

7 S J Stein "George Whitefield on Slavery: Some New Evidence" in *Church History* (1973) vol 42, 243–5.

8 *ODNB*, A Dallimore *George Whitefield* (1970) vol I, 108, 482–3, 494–9, vol II 368–9, 520–1.

9 E Welch *Spiritual Pilgrim* (Cardiff 1995) 144–5, B Schlenther *Queen of the Methodists* (Durham 1997) 90–1, *ODNB*.

would be enabled to hear the gospel. She later modified this view, once Wilberforce and others had begun their campaign against slavery, but her attitude towards slavery was also ambivalent.[10]

English Evangelicals and the Slave Trade

Yet some Christians came to hold advanced views against slavery. Wesley had been appalled by the horrors of slavery in America but his opposition to it followed his reading a book in 1772, probably Benezet's *A Historical Account of Guinea*. In 1774 he published his *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, estimating that, in capturing the slaves, some 30,000 were "murdered" each year. He described how "several hundred were stowed together in as little room as … possible … It is easy to suppose what condition they must soon be in, between heat, thirst, and stench of various kinds. .. it is no wonder that so many should die in the passage; but rather, that any survive it". Aged almost 85, in 1788, he preached in Bristol, which had gained much prosperity from the slave trade, and defiantly condemned slavery. Wesley's last letter, written a week before his death in 1791, was to encourage Wilberforce in his campaign.

Slave-owners routinely inflicted slow and systematic tortures upon slaves with whom they were displeased. Negroes might be hung in cages and left to be eaten alive by birds and insects. They might be whipped raw, with salt and pepper rubbed into their wounds, and hot sealing wax dropped onto their skin. They might be pinned to the ground and slowly roasted, by burning sticks applied to their bodies. Anticipating such harsh treatment, many new slaves were driven to drown themselves before they could be led to the plantations.[11]

The struggle against the slave trade in Britain began a little before the founding of the notable Christian missionary societies, at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. The Baptist Missionary Society was founded in 1792 and the Missionary Society (later called the London Missionary Society) in 1795. The personnel of these enterprises, that is the evangelical crusades and the missionary bodies, often overlapped and, as Michael Watts has written, "It was one of the paradoxes of the Evangelical movement that the men who had their eyes fixed most firmly on eternity did far more than their contemporaries to improve the temporal existence of their fellow men here on earth".[12]

William Wilberforce (1759–1833), Granville Sharp (1735–1813), Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846), Zachary Macaulay (1768–1838) and Joseph Hardcastle

10 F Cook *Selina, Countess of Huntingdon* (Edinburgh 2001) 316–7.

11 C E Vulliamy *John Wesley* (1954) 327–8, R Waller *John Wesley A Personal Portrait* (New York 2003) 116–118.

12 M Watts *The Dissenters Volume II The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (Oxford 1995) 20.

(1752–1819) were outstanding in their championing of the cause of the negroes and in securing the abolition of the slave trade in Britain and the British Empire which finally occurred in 1807. Clarkson published 23 works, all concerned with the immorality of slavery. His *Essay of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African* (1786) led to the recruitment of Wilberforce and other MPs to the cause. In 1787 Sharp founded the society for the abolition of the slave trade, the original members of which were all Quakers, except Sharp and two others. Macaulay was governor of Sierra Leone 1793–99, a colony of freed slaves in Africa, and then secretary of the Sierra Leone company until 1808, when the colony was transferred to the crown. He was editor of the *Christian Observer*, the Clapham Sect's journal, 1802–16, which was devoted to the abolition of the slave trade. Hardcastle, a City merchant trading with the Baltic, was a founder member of, and the first treasurer of, the (London) Missionary Society 1795–1817 and also a founder of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1803 and of the Religious Tract Society. He had advocated the abolition of the slave trade since his youth. The emancipation of the slaves was to occur some twenty-five years after the abolition of the slave trade, being eventually passed by parliament in 1833, and effected on 1 August 1834, and, in this, the experiences of the Congregationalist, John Smith of Demerara, in what is now Guyana, and of the Baptist missionary, William Knibb, and his companions in Jamaica, were vital in the mobilizing of British public opinion.[13]

The pioneer Baptist missionary, William Carey (1761–1834), was profoundly interested in the slaves and abhorred the harsh conditions which they endured. When conducting public worship, he consistently prayed for the alleviation of their sufferings and for their liberty. In his youth he had forsworn taking sugar in his tea because of "the iniquitous manner in which it is obtained", he explained, an attitude, like Woolman's, reminiscent of modern demonstrations of the individual's conscience. In this stand against slavery, Carey was not exceptional but representative of those who supported the missionary societies. Three important LMS missionaries to south Africa, Johannes Vanderkemp, John Philip and Robert Moffat, would later influence the British government's attitudes towards African natives, while Moffat's son-in-law, David Livingstone, would bring the attention of the western world to the "open sore" of the Arab slave trade which in the mid and late nineteenth century still operated in east Africa. In Livingstone's day the missionaries took the lead in condemning slavery and the slave trade, and also of human sacrifice, cannibalism, infanticide, and other

13 For Wilberforce, Clarkson, Macaulay and Sharp see *ODNB*, for Hardcastle see R Lovett *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795–1895* (1899) vol 1, 38–9, 49, 89–90, E M Howse *Saints in Politics* (1971) 109–110, C Silvester Horne *A Popular History of the Free Churches* (1903) 337.

evils. Yet this is to digress for the main concern of this paper is the abolition of the slave trade in 1807.

The Slave Trade

By the early nineteenth century the West Indies had been a centre of the slave traffic for 250 years. Slave ships from England, principally from Liverpool but also from Bristol, sailed to west Africa to fill their holds with captive negroes who were shipped across the Atlantic, and sold in the West Indies to work in the mines or sugar plantations. The human cargo of the slave vessels was regarded as a commodity to be bought and sold, like any other property. Therefore, as has been stated, slaves were treated with savage cruelty, both by the traders and by their eventual owners. Such treatment drastically reduced their numbers but replacements were plentiful and the slave traders gained rich rewards. Lucrative financial incentives thus fuelled this trade and moral arguments weighed for little in a world where Christians had found few reasons to abandon slavery over 1750 years.

In the debate on the abolition of the slave trade in the House of Commons in April 1791, Wilberforce described how African slaves were obtained. The Europeans tempted the kings and chiefs with brandy, gunpowder, and other such goods, and the chiefs, in consequence, allowed "distrust and insecurity" to prevail in their territories. Wilberforce charged the slave traders with "acts of fraud, oppression, rapine, and murder". He reported that the slave ships' crews sent out armed parties to scour the neighbourhood and bring in their prey at night. The "wretched victims were seen in the morning bound back to back in the huts on the shore, whence they were conveyed, tied hand and foot, on board the slave-ships".

The kings and chiefs were motivated not only to capture the subjects of their opponents but also even their own people. Individuals were seized in their homes which fomented a "universal feeling of distrust and apprehension". Several witnesses pointed out that, south of the Senegal river, on the Windward Coast, villages were burnt while "the fields of corn were still standing beside them", suggesting that the people were not criminal nor deserving of being sold into slavery. An agent was explicitly told by his captain "to encourage the chieftains by brandy and gunpowder to go to war and make slaves". The neighbouring villages were "ransacked, being surrounded and set on fire in the night; their inhabitants were seized when making their escape, and being brought into the agent, were by him forwarded, men, women, and children, to his principal on the coast". Wilberforce argued that the whole trade on the African coast furnished "one dull, dry, uniform detail of similar instances of barbarity".

The reformer also stated that the usual proportion of children on board the slave ships was one third of the whole cargo, and scarcely ever less than a quarter. Children tended to be captured only when whole families were taken, often on the pretence that the fathers or mothers were guilty of witchcraft. The smallest crimes were punished by heavy fines which, if unpaid, resulted in the defaulters being taken into slavery. Crimes were, therefore, fabricated and false accusations made. Thus the slave trade involved the corruption of the moral principles of all those who carried it out. Indeed a slave owner in the West Indies opposed to abolition agreed with Wilberforce that the assertion, that those slaves who arrived in the islands were all "criminals and convicts", was both "mockery and insult". The slave buyers also declared that they never asked the brokers how they had come by the person offered for sale, thus attempting to absolve themselves of blame for misdeeds that happened before they entered into their transaction.

The ships were often packed with their human cargo. A vessel of 120 tons held 290 slaves, with space for some 43 more. In a vessel of 108 tons, 450 slaves were carried and in a third, from 130 to 150 tons, 600 slaves were packed. No thought was given to the slaves' comfort. One account, recorded by Wilberforce, was of the captain of such a vessel holding hot coals to a slave's mouth to compel him to eat. That slave was afterwards sold for £40 in Grenada. Amid the barbarities meted out, Wilberforce cited, the cutting of the mouth of a child of six almost from ear to ear. Still those opposed to the abolition of the trade alleged that it would be "ruinous" to the economy of the West Indies.

He concluded that the slave trade was "a nest of serpents which would never have endured for so long, but for the darkness in which they lay hid". He declared, "Never, never will we desist till we have wiped away this scandal from the Christian name, released ourselves from the load of guilt under which we present labour, and have extinguished every trace of this bloody traffick, of which our posterity, looking back to the history of these enlightened times, will scarce believe that it has suffered to exist for so long, a disgrace and a dishonour to this Country"[14] Wilberforce was supported by James Martin who noted that the universities of Oxford and Cambridge opposed the slave trade and also that "Dissenters, of various denominations (particularly the Quakers, who, upon this occasion, to their immortal honour, had taken a leading part) vied with some of the most respectable of the established Church, in standing forth in this excellent cause".[15]

Although both Fox and Pitt supported Wilberforce's motion in 1791 it still failed to gain sufficient backing in parliament, with 163 votes against the abolition and 88 in favour.[16] Yet, as the parliamentary evidence made clear,

14 *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade* (1792) 1–19, 43–5.
15 *Ibid* 52–5.

dissenters of various hues supported the ending of the slave trade, including the pottery manufacturer, Josiah Wedgwood who had been brought up as a Unitarian, and, like Martin, joined the Committee against the Slave Trade. Wedgwood's implacable opposition to the trade resulted in his producing a jasper cameo with a kneeling negro slave in chains.[17]

William Jay and the Principal Opponents of the Trade

As we have seen, therefore, Congregationalists did not occupy the leading places in the campaign against the slave trade. Rather they lent support, moral and prayerful, to the cause which was fought out in parliament, the press and the political arena. The fact that dissenters in general were not well represented in political institutions at that time meant that they necessarily took a back seat. However, this should not be understood as implying that they were indifferent to the cause.

The well known Independent preacher, William Jay (1769–1853), who at the age of 19 years had preached to the largest Nonconformist congregation in London, at Surrey Chapel, numbered among his friends some of the leading advocates of the abolition of the slave trade. In 1791 Jay, then 22 years old, became the minister of Argyle Chapel, Bath, where he remained for 62 years. In time he became very popular in that fashionable resort, and his hearers often included leading lay Anglican evangelicals, like Hannah More (1745–1833), who was criticised for once taking communion there.[18] Jay devoted one chapter in his autobiography to his friendship with Wilberforce, whom he came to know soon after Jay's settlement in Bath and with whom he shared "an intimacy which continued for his [Wilberforce's] life".

Wilberforce himself had long been accustomed to attending Surrey Chapel on occasions so that in 1786 he had "constantly" heard there the evangelical Anglican, Henry Venn (1724–97), who preached in the chapel every Sunday in May and June that year. Jay came to know Wilberforce when he was lodging in Bath with his close friend, Henry Thornton (1760–1815), the MP for Southwark, who also played a leading part in the Clapham Sect's opposition to slavery and who was, from 1791, the chairman of the directors of the Sierra Leone Company which rendered support for that colony of freed slaves.[19] Wilberforce sent Jay a copy of his letter to the French minister, Talleyrand, on *Slavery*, as soon as it was published in 1814. This produced an evasive reply from Talleyrand but by November that year the French government had prohibited the slave trade north

16 *Ibid* 133.

17 E G Wilson *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* (1989) 39, *ODNB*.

18 For Jay see *ODNB*, M A Hopkins *Hannah More and her Circle* (New York 1947) 194.

19 For Thornton see *ODNB*, G Redford and J A James (eds) *The Autobiography of William Jay* (1854) 297, H Venn (ed) *The Life and Letters of Henry Venn* (1836) 434–5.

of Cape Formosa, on the west African coast. On return from Elba, Napoleon in 1815 declared a general prohibition which was upheld by the restored French monarchy after the battle of Waterloo.[20]

Jay was also friendly with Wilberforce's spiritual mentor, the reformed slave trader, John Newton (1725–1807), the author of 'Amazing Grace' and 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds', who had been baptized in the Independent chapel in Old Gravel Lane, Wapping, where his mother worshipped and where the minister was the notable David Jennings (1691–1762). From his mother, Newton had learned the hymns and catechisms of Watts and "was nurtured in the piety of old dissent", but she died when he was only six years old. At the age of eleven he went to sea with his father, a master mariner, but was press-ganged into the Royal Navy in 1744. His ship having docked at Madeira, Newton transferred to a merchant vessel engaged in the African slave trade. During a storm in 1748 he prayed for the first time for many years and, once the storm had abated, he began to read the Bible and from that dated his conversion. For some years, however, he continued as a slave trader. Influenced by Whitefield, Newton's thoughts turned to the ministry and he considered becoming a Congregationalist, serving as pastor for three months to the Independent church in Warwick in 1760, and had opportunities to become a Methodist and a Presbyterian minister. In 1764 Newton was ordained and appointed the curate-in-charge of Olney in Buckinghamshire where he remained for 16 years.

In 1780 Newton became the rector of St Mary Woolnoth, in the City of London. Newton had heard the young Jay preach one summer in Surrey Chapel and a friendship ensued. Jay commented in his *Autobiography* that Newton "always seemed to have a present and lively feeling of his obligation to Divine grace … and often adverted to it in his conversation". Newton expressed considerable "guilt" that he had "so sinned away the advantages of a good education, and resisted and stifled all his convictions, that for a time he had no more conscience than a brute". When his conscience was stirred by Christ, "at his first awakening", as Jay put it, when Newton was still engaged in slave trafficking in March 1748, "he was not struck with the evil of the accursed slave-trade" yet, when led to reflect upon his life, "no-one could think worse of its enormity, or bewail himself more for the share he had had in it". In 1792 the University of New Jersey awarded Newton a DD, but he refused to accept the honorary degree and said, according to Jay, "I always resolved I would accept of no diploma, unless it came from the poor blacks".[21]

If Jay's sympathy with Wilberforce and Newton is clear, so also is his friendship for another who shared their distaste for the slave trade. John Ryland

20 For Wilberforce see *ODNB.*

21 Redford and James *op cit* 268, 278–9, *ODNB.*

the elder (1723–92) was a Baptist minister and schoolmaster at Northampton who in 1786 moved with his school to Enfield where he died in 1792. During his time at Enfield he visited his son who lived in the Blackfriars Road and, while there, he attended Surrey Chapel when Jay was fulfilling his regular six weeks summer preaching commitment. From the beginning of the campaign against the slave trade, Ryland threw "all his impassioned energies into the condemnation of the accursed traffic", as Jay called it.

Jay remembered an episode when one morning he had been reading to Ryland about "some of the reported miseries and cruelties" of the passage from Africa, "among others, of a captain who had a fine female slave in his cabin, but, when her infant cried, he snatched him up, and flung him out into the sea; still requiring the wretched creature to remain as the gratifier of his vile passions". Once Ryland had heard this, he was driven "frantic" and lost "his usual self-control". Jay recalled that he was "agitated, and paced up and down the room", calling out, "O God, preserve me! O God, preserve me!" and then he "burst forth into a dreadful imprecation, which I dare not repeat". Jay confessed to being "shocked" but felt that, had his readers witnessed the scene, they too "would hardly have been severe in condemning" Ryland. Jay appealed to justice, rather than mercy, to set matters right.[22]

Jay was not then one of the prominent campaigners against the slave trade. Rather he belonged to that large group of sympathisers among evangelical Christians, drawn from all denominations, who, like Ryland, followed and supported Newton, Wilberforce and their fellows. In this he was typical of the majority of dissenters who had no financial interest in the slave trade and were convinced of the immorality of this traffic.

Newton's Friends among Congregationalists

John Newton himself in many ways personified the close relation between the evangelical revival and Independency. When Newton was at Olney he had encouraged the Independent minister, William Bull (1738–1814), whom he came to know in 1770, to found the academy at Newport Pagnell which opened in 1783. Newton even drew up a plan for the new institution, designed to "unite respectable dissenters and Methodists". Bull was for many years on the rota of those who preached at Surrey Chapel and at the Tabernacle, Tottenham Court Road, London, and his services were attended by Christians from several denominations. Newton and Bull became firm friends and engaged in frequent correspondence, and Bull occasionally preached at the great house at Olney where Newton's prayer meetings were held. Through Newton and Mrs Wilberforce, William's aunt, Bull became acquainted with Zachary Macaulay,

22 *Ibid* 286, 290–1, *ODNB*.

Thomas Babington, Henry Venn and other members of the Clapham Sect. Bull was regarded as "very acceptable" to these evangelicals, like Newton, William Cowper the poet and John Thornton of Clapham, who numbered among "his most intimate friends and most generous supporters". From 1786 Thornton took upon himself the entire charge of maintaining the academy and Samuel Greatheed, a former student and also an Independent, became Bull's assistant there. In 1813 Thomas Palmer Bull succeeded his father as theological tutor.[23]

Greatheed was among the thirty-four ministers and laymen who signed the declaration in February 1795 which led to the founding of the (London) Missionary Society and he was to preach the funeral sermon for Cowper in Olney. He also was the principal mover behind the founding of the Bedfordshire Union of Churches in 1796, bringing together both Baptists and paedo-baptists, and he preached at its first meetings.[24]

One of the most prominent dissenters in London, John Clayton (1754–1843), the minister of the King's Weigh House Church 1778–1826, resolutely held the view that he would "never introduce politicks, into the Pulpit". Like Jay, Clayton often had Anglican clergy and layfolk among his hearers and he too was friendly with Wilberforce and especially with John Thornton who regularly visited both the Weigh House and Clayton's home. Soon after his settlement in London he became a member of the Eclectic Society, an inter-denominational society of evangelical Christians which met at 'The Castle and Falcon' in Aldersgate to discuss issues of mutual interest.[25]

John Campbell (1766–1840), a philanthropist, traveller and, from 1802 until his death, the Independent minister of Kingsland Chapel, in London, was anxious about the condition of slaves and was keenly opposed to slavery. With his friend, the Scotsman Robert Haldane, and in co-operation with Zachary Macaulay, he arranged for some African children to visit this country in order to educate them in Christian principles, before returning them to their homeland. Campbell's plan gained the support of Newton, Charles Grant, Wilberforce, Macaulay, John Thornton and other members of the Clapham Sect. In London he also often enjoyed Newton's hospitality and he dubbed the Eclectic Society the "Newtonian tea party". As has been stated, the abolition of slavery and overseas mission were closely associated and Campbell became a director of the LMS in 1805.[26]

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23 For Bull see *ODNB*, H McLachlan *English Education under the Test Acts* (Manchester 1931) 241–5.

24 J Brown and D Prothero *The History of the Bedfordshire Union of Christians* (1946) 15–22.

25 E Kaye *The King's Weigh House* (1968) 47–60, *ODNB.*

26 A Haldane *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane* (1853) 120, 206–7, *ODNB.*

Also in Newton's circle was the "saintly" John Edwards (1714–85) who disagreed with Wesley's Arminianism and was, in Tudur Jones's words, "one of the greatest gifts of Wesleyan Methodism to Congregationalism". In 1753 he left the Wesleyans with some others and formed a church which built the White or Whitehall Chapel (later Queen Street) in Leeds. Newton agreed to preach at Edwards' church on his first visit to Yorkshire.[27] Samuel Brewer (1723–96), the minister of Stepney Meeting from 1746 to his death, encouraged Newton in the Christian faith and, on visiting Olney, he preached at the parish church and also for the Independents and the Baptists. All four pastors shared a meal together afterwards. Newton and his wife often stayed with Brewer when in London.[28]

John Goode (1754–1831) was educated by William Bull at Newport Pagnell and became the assistant pastor and then the pastor of the Independent church at Potterspury, in Northamptonshire where he served 1778–94. In the latter year he became the minister of the Independent church meeting in White Row Chapel, Spitalfields, London , where he remained for thirty years. He was the brother of William Goode (1762–1816), the evangelical rector of St Ann's Blackfriars, who also studied under Bull at Newport Pagnell, and the brothers were both members of the Eclectic Society. John Goode and John Clayton were described by the chronicler of that society as "excellent Independent ministers, men of piety and judgment", who were "More like Watts and Doddridge" than like the dissenters of the Victorian age.[29]

Another touched by the changing mood of the day was James Moody (1756–1806), the minister of Cow Lane, later Brook Street chapel, Warwick from 1781 until his death. Moody was a friend of John Ryland who had close family ties to Warwick and had been pastor of Castle Hill Baptist Church there for thirteen years. Moody's custom was to visit London for six weeks each year to preach at the Tabernacle in Moorfields and Spa Fields Chapel in Tottenham Court Road. The Warwickshire association of ministers for the spread of the gospel at home and abroad arose from a meeting in Moody's home in June 1793. Moody and George Burder of Coventry were untiring in their evangelism in Warwickshire. The former was known as "amiable and ardent" and, at his death, was remembered for his unceasing labours "in the sacred cause of religious truth, as it appeared to his own honest conviction".[30]

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27 *ODNB*, R T Jones *Congregationalism in England 1662–1962* (1962) 152, M Rouse (ed) R Cecil *The Life of John Newton* (Fearn, Ross-shire 2000) 95.

28 *Ibid* 264.

29 J H Pratt (ed) *The Thought of the Evangelical Leaders. Notes of the Discussions of the Eclectic Society 1798–1814* (1856) 3, T Coleman *The Independent Churches of Northamptonshire* (1853) 284–5, for William Goode see *ODNB.*

30 A P F Sell (ed) *Protestant Nonconformists and the West Midlands of England* (Keele 1996) 16–18, 20–1, 23, Rouse *op cit* 171–2.

Newton's many friends and acquaintances among Congregational ministers included not only the Bulls, Greatheed, Campbell, Clayton, Brewer, Goode, Moody and Edwards but also David Bradberry, Thomas Bradbury, John Drake, Samuel Palmer, and Caleb Warhurst.[31] Newton was, therefore, acutely conscious of his debt to dissenters—Bunyan, Watts, Doddridge, Jennings, Brewer, Bull and others—and "he mingled with them on terms of perfect equality", even though in his day dissenters were often "despised and persecuted" by the establishment.[32] It is inconceivable that a man, so riddled with guilt at his conduct towards the negroes as Newton, would not have communicated to these and other friends his abhorrence of slavery and the slave trade. It is equally inconceivable that their attitudes to the issue of the slave trade and its abolition would not have been coloured by the strong views of Newton and his and their significant friends.

Thomas Wilson

If one leading Congregational layman, in the early eighteenth century, seemed indifferent to the condition of the slaves, and to slavery itself, then another, at the end of that century, felt very differently. Joshua Wilson, in his memoir of his father, the Congregational benefactor, Thomas Wilson, wrote of Thomas's patriotism but also of his hatred of war, referring in 1794 to "this dreadful war" with the French. In like fashion, he stated that "He whose hatred of war was so intense could not but detest slavery". Joshua continued, "In my father's note-books I find several passages relating to the odious and horrible traffic in human flesh and blood, and the cruel treatment of captured negroes reduced to a state of slavery, by the cupidity of men whose tender mercies are cruelty,—a trade which to the disgrace of Britain was long sanctioned by the government of the nation".

Thomas noted in April 1792 that the House of Commons debated a resolution that "the trade carried on by British subjects in the exportation of slaves from Africa to the West Indies ought to be immediately abolished" and "Secondly, That the Chairman be instructed to move for leave to bring in a Bill for the gradual abolition of the slave trade". In 1796 Wilson had entered in his note-book that "The slave trade destroys more in a year than the Inquisition does in an hundred, or perhaps hath done since its foundation" and then "100,000 lives a-year sacrificed to the slave trade!". The younger Wilson added this comment, "Alas! That such a destructive and murderous trade should have been suffered for many following years to continue in all its unmitigated horrors".

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31 Rouse *op cit* 263–336.

32 B Martin *John Newton a biography* (1950) 300.

Thomas Wilson credited Charles James Fox (1749–1806) with the "distinguished honour" of abolishing the slave trade, "during the short interval between his accession to political power … and his own lamented decease". Pitt had resigned as prime minister in February 1801 and was succeeded in office by Addington. Grenville and Fox's "ministry of all the talents" came to power only in January 1806 and, although Fox as foreign secretary failed to secure a lasting peace with France, his government did secure the abolition of the slave trade. Fox moved the motion to end the trade in June 1806.

"So fully am I impressed with the vast importance and necessity of attaining what will be the object of my motion this night, that if, during the almost forty years that I have had the honour of a seat in parliament, I had been so fortunate as to accomplish that, and that only, I should think I had done enough, and could retire from public life with comfort, and the conscious satisfaction, that I had done my duty".

In the Commons debate of 1791, earlier referred to, Fox had declared that the trade "could not bear to be discussed". He "would not believe that there could be found in the House of Commons, men of hard hearts enough, and of such inaccessible understandings, as to vote an assent to the continuance of the Trade; and then go home to their houses, their friends, and their families, satisfied with their vote, after being made fully aware of what they were doing". Indeed "the Abolition of it must be carried", he had asserted.[33]

Wilberforce added his praise for Fox in achieving an end to this trade, although in general Wilberforce found Fox's lack of religion, but genuine interest in reform, hard to understand. Yet Wilson was right to acknowledge Fox for his consistent opposition to the slave trade and slavery.[34] Wilson's admiration of Fox suggests also the stance, taken by dissenters in general, and by Congregationalists in particular, that active politicians, even if unsympathetic to dissent, might well serve the right purpose and should be supported when doing so.

An instance might be found in the case of the brewer and landowner, Samuel Whitbread (1720–96), who was brought up a Bedfordshire dissenter and amassed a fortune and large landed estates. He was a devout Christian but gave up his family's dissent for the Church of England. In 1768 he became MP for Bedford and usually supported the Tories. He spoke in parliament only on subjects close to his interests, such as the brewing industry, but he made an exception with regards to the abolition of the slave trade which he consistently advocated. His son, also Samuel (1764–1815), succeeded his father as MP for Bedford and, although a Whig unlike his father, he too favoured the abolition of the slave trade.[35]

33 *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade* (1792) 64.

34 J Wilson *Memoir of the Life and Character of Thomas Wilson* (1849) 103–5, *ODNB.*

35 For both Whitbreads see *ODNB.*

Local Responses to the Slave Trade— 1 Norfolk and Suffolk

In September 1783 the Association of Congregational Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk met at Wrentham and there requested Rev Thomas Bocking to prepare a letter to the Rev Mr Towle, in which it was stated that "the state and condition of the Slave Trade" had engaged the attention of the ministers present, and that they were impressed with the conviction that it was very "desirable that the same should come under some regulation, and be even abolished". Towle was also asked to "make application to the Dissenting ministers in London, to know their sentiments upon this head;" and was further instructed to inform them that the associated ministers of Suffolk "would very readily join with their brethren at London, and in the kingdom in general, in such a petition to parliament".[36]

Thomas Towle (1724–1806) was the minister of the Independent church which first met in Rope-makers' Alley, Moorfields, London, from 1747 until his death. In 1765 he moved with his church to a building in Aldermanbury Postern. He lived to be "the father of the Dissenting ministers in London", having been minister of his own church for some 59 years. As Walter Wilson stated, Towle found that "his advice was eagerly sought for in cases of difficulty, he being, as it were, the chamber-counsellor of Dissenters".[37] That the ministers of Norfolk and Suffolk should write to Towle in particular on a subject which concerned them greatly is, therefore, not surprising. Did others, similarly troubled, consult him on this subject? That they were moved to write, some 24 years before the slave trade was abolished, suggests that some Congregationalists, perhaps many more than we know, were long concerned that this evil traffic should be brought to an end.

The names of these ministers of Norfolk and Suffolk are known. They are Thomas Harmer of Wattisfield, John Hurrion of Southwold, Robert Shufflebottom of Bungay, Thomas Bocking of Denton, William Meyler of Wymondham, Richard Wearing of Rendham, William Swetland of Wrentham, Joseph Heptinstall of Beccles, Jacob Brettell of Harleston, and Samuel Say Toms of Framlingham. Three years later a meeting at Bungay decided that a separate Norfolk association should be set up so that from 1786 the two counties acted independently.[38]

Thomas Harmer (1714–88) was a local historian and was deeply suspicious of the Methodists, of their custom of "irregular" preaching and their occasionally gathering "societies out of formed churches".[39] He was not, therefore, so

36 J Browne *History of Congregationalism in Norfolk and Suffolk* (1877) 201.
37 W Wilson *The Dissenting Churches in London* (1808) II 547–554.
38 Browne *op cit* 201.
39 R T Jones *Congregationalism in England 1662–1962* (1962) 160.

uncritically accepting of the evangelical developments of his day that he was drawn into condemnation of the slave trade because some leading contemporaries were against it. He remained at Wattisfield for 54 years, having been appointed minister there at the age of 19.[40]

Bocking himself was minister at Long Melford, Suffolk 1753–56 and at Denton, Norfolk 1756–1805. He died in 1805, aged 72. Hurrion, Shufflebottom, Meyler, Heptinstall, Swetland and Wearing all had long ministries in their respective churches.[41] Yet most of these ministers of Norfolk and Suffolk, although relatively long lived, were not well known outside these counties. We may wonder, therefore, how representative were their attitudes towards the slave trade. Did other Congregational ministers up and down the country, two decades and more before 1807, share their righteous indignation and similarly condemn the slave trade? Although these men were not to play leading roles in the campaign their support for abolition was not in question.

Local Responses 2—London and Yorkshire

If Towle's response on behalf of the London ministers is not known, we should note the dissenting deputies in London, a formal body which enjoyed the right to represent the views of dissenters to the crown. The deputies consisted of two members chosen annually from each congregation of the three denominations, Presbyterian, Baptist and Independent, within twelve miles of London, whose duty was to protect the civil rights of dissenters. By tradition the deputies were very cautious in expressing themselves on public questions, although most shared Whig sympathies. They were especially reluctant to speak out on slavery, accepting that the evangelical leaders had made this issue their own preserve.

However in 1807, when the bill for the abolition of the slave trade was before parliament, the deputies, dispensing with their accustomed caution, resolved that if the bill was passed "it will be desirable that the Protestant Dissenters should publicly express their Gratitude to Almighty God for the deliverance of our Country from that National Sin". A sub-committee was set up for that purpose but, one month later, it was decided that under the circumstances it was not "necessary to proceed any further".[42] However, by then they had forcefully expressed their view against the trade, even if only in private, and little reason exists to believe that this view was not common among dissenters in London and the country.

In January 1805 William Smith (1756–1835) was unanimously elected the chairman of the dissenting deputies, a mark of his distinction as the recognised political leader of the dissenters. He had been born into a family of

40 *ODNB*, Browne *op cit* 471–3.
41 *Ibid* 293, 339–340, 436, 440, 465, 485, 512, 516, 531, 538.
42 B L Manning *The Protestant Dissenting Deputies* (Cambridge 1952) 471.

Independents but later became a Unitarian. In 1784 he became MP for Sudbury in Suffolk but later represented Camelford, in Cornwall, and later still Norwich. In 1787 he declared his support for the abolition of the slave trade and he spoke out with Wilberforce in the debates on the subject. Smith gave more time to the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade than any MP, save Wilberforce. He retired as chairman of the deputies in 1832.[43] Without doubt Smith's views lay behind the deputies' outburst in 1807 and it is certain that he enjoyed the confidence of his fellows.

A notable parliamentary colleague of Smith's was Henry Hanbury Beaufoy (1750–95) who came from a Quaker family and retained dissenting sympathies all his life. He was educated at Hoxton academy 1765–7 where one of his tutors was the celebrated minister Andrew Kippis who had been educated by Doddridge at Northampton, and whose views tended towards Unitarianism but who had pastored both Independent and Presbyterian churches. Later Beaufoy was a student at Warrington academy 1767–70 and later still at Edinburgh University. In 1786 he joined the committee to erect a new dissenting academy at Hackney. His wife was an Anglican and he conformed to the Church of England in order to marry. In 1783 he was returned as MP for Minehead, in Somerset. He consistently spoke out for the civil liberties of dissenters and accepted an invitation from the dissenting deputies to move for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Beaufoy also voted for the abolition of the slave trade in 1791 and advocated its gradual abolition in 1792.[44]

Congregationalists in Yorkshire had long taken a "marked and definite" interest in the issue of "colonial slavery" and supported the agitation for its abolition. According to the historian of Yorkshire Congregationalism, no body of Christians, except the Society of Friends, "had felt a greater interest in the abolition of the slave trade in 1807", after a campaign of twenty years. What form that interest took is left unstated but the movement to abolish slavery itself gained their support. Indeed the county's Congregationalists were uniquely "energetic" in continuing to uphold Wilberforce in the measures which resulted in the bill of 1833 and their earliest political "exertions" were spent in the cause of "negro emancipation". One of the "foremost" ministers in the movement against slavery was Thomas Scales (1786–1860) who moved from a pastorate in Wolverhampton to White Chapel, Leeds, in 1819. He felt "utter detestation" for slavery and threw himself with passion into the movement for its abolition, protesting before the Liberal leaders of York, which protest resulted in Henry Brougham (1778–1868), who had sympathised with Wilberforce since at least 1804, and had been outraged by the treatment of John Smith in Demerara, being

43 E G Wilson *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* (1989) 41, *ODNB.*

44 For Beaufoy and Kippis see *ODNB.*

returned to parliament in 1830 as member for Yorkshire and in Brougham's part in the emancipation of 1833.[45]

Local Responses 3—Other Responses to Slavery

In 1787 the Northamptonshire Baptist Association, learning that the abolition of the slave trade was to be brought before the Commons, through the work of Wilberforce, Sharp and Clarkson, passed a motion to "use all lawful means for the promotion of so just and humane a design". In 1791 five guineas was sent from the association to the treasurer of the society for procuring the abolition of the slave trade in order that "we may shew our hearty abhorrence of that wicked and detestable merchandize". Sharp replied to assure the Baptists of the association that his committee members were "more animated, if possible, than ever, against the iniquitous and disgraceful practices of Slave-dealers and Slave-holders; and are firmly determined (as by an indispensable duty to God and man) to persevere in their endeavours, by all legal means, to effect the abolition of such enormities".[46]

In November 1800 Charles Dewhirst, a student at Hoxton Academy, first visited the Congregational Church in Bury St Edmund's. In May 1801 he became co-pastor there and, one year later, sole pastor. Thus began a 43 years' ministry. He was an "attractive and eloquent preacher" who filled the meeting house and was "aflame for the evangelisation of society". The number of seats was increased twice during his ministry there. His sermons frequently tackled social problems and "The National sins of our country" were discussed at church meetings. When the bill for the abolition of the slave trade was before the House of Commons, the church followed the debates keenly and the church records state "That joy was mingled with lamentations", on receipt of a letter which reported that the bill had become law.[47]

The Evangelical Magazine published a letter to the editor, headed "On the slave trade" in 1805. Its writer named himself merely as "A Dissenter". The subject of the letter, he described, as involving "the happiness of many of the human race", but he chose not to refer to "the lawfulness or expediency of trafficking in the persons of our fellow creatures", because those with any religion or morality would agree "that robbery and murder cannot be made lawful". He went on to propose that a day of prayer should be held as "a public testimony against this iniquitous trade" and "this national crime". He urged that Protestant Christians should promote petitions to parliament from all parts of the

45 J G Miall *Congregationalism in Yorkshire* (1868) 197–8, 305, *Congregational Year Book (hereafter CYB)* (1861) 235–238.

46 T S H Elwyn *The Northamptonshire Baptist Association* (1964) 20.

47 A J Grieve and W Marshall Jones *These Three Hundred Years* (1946) 61, 63, 67–8, Browne *op cit* 417–8.

kingdom "for the immediate abolition of the Slave Trade" and also that they should resolve "not to use any commodity which is the price of blood". The correspondent stated that he believed that if the resolution was generally adopted it would prove "the most certain means of annihilating the condition of the slaves; and, probably, of eventually procuring their emancipation".[48]

Henry Atley, the Independent minister of Hornchurch Lane Chapel, Romford 1797–1822, was among the founders of the London Missionary Society and was described also as one of Wilberforce's "co-adjutors" (or assistants) in the abolition of the slave trade and emancipation, implying no more than that, like Dewhirst, he spoke out against slavery in his public discourses. He had lived in Stepney where he had presided over a boarding school. He trained at Trevecca before moving to Romford. His son, also Henry (1799–1882), entered the Congregational ministry.[49] Such outspoken denunciations of the slave trade from dissenters were becoming more frequent.

Nonconformists and Political Involvement

In the eighteenth century dissenters were for the most part, by long custom, politically quiescent. Some Unitarians, however, displayed sympathy with the Radicals and with the revolutionaries in France and were critical toward the government of their day. Quakers too, encouraged by Benezet, Woolman and others in America, became passionate about social and moral issues like slavery and the slave trade. Yet the dissenters were not then the political force they would become in the nineteenth century when, concerned to redress the disadvantages from which they themselves directly suffered, they protested with increasing power. The evangelical revival did not immediately alter dissenting attitudes in this respect. Rather it tended to stress the religious and spiritual rather than more immediate concerns. In 1800 the Staffordshire ministers expressed exactly this view. "In worldly politics we have no concern, for our desire is to advance that kingdom which is not of this world, and therefore not dependant upon it."[50]

Yet protests against the slave trade and slavery, above all other concerns, taught dissenters that they could affect the course of political decision making. They provided points of contact between politics and the evangelicalism and missionary zeal of all the churches, including the dissenting churches. The death of John Smith of the London Missionary Society, in 1824 after having been wrongfully imprisoned in Demerara, raised the passions of the Congregationalists and others, more socially and politically influential, to fever

48 *The Evangelical Magazine* (1805) 212–3.

49 *CYB* (1883) 260, W H Summers *The History of the Berkshire Congregational Churches* (Newbury 1905) 233, W Urwick *Nonconformity in Hertfordshire* (1884) 230.

50 A G Matthews *The Congregational Churches of Staffordshire* (1924) 197–8.

pitch. Parliamentary candidates, like Brougham, were lobbied on their attitudes to slavery and this strategy secured the return of many in favour of abolition which led directly to the passage of the bill for slavery emancipation in 1833. As we have seen, although Congregationalists were not prominent in the campaign against the slave trade, many took a keen and honourable interest in its progress. The movement against the slave trade and the anti-slavery campaign were vital in exciting an interest in politics among dissenters in general, Congregationalists among them, in England, Wales and in Scotland, and in radicalising many of their younger ministers.[51]

The lessons of these religious and moral crusades, therefore, were not lost on Congregationalists. The days of their political quiescence were drawing to a close. Greater numbers of members, increased affluence, better education, and a widespread recognition, on their own part, that they should call for further civil and political freedoms, reinforced by their sense of godly righteousness and natural justice, would result in Congregationalists and their churches seeking to be involved in political issues in Victoria's reign. The success of the campaign against the slave trade directly contributed to the development of this political consciousness.

Alan Argent

51 R T Jones *Congregationalism in Wales* (Cardiff 2004) 160–1.

THE LIFE OF R W CLEAVES

BY HIS SON

> "Most of our preaching is expository—we expound the meaning of the scriptures and apply it to ourselves."

It was little over a year since the Cleaves family had moved to Leicester and my father had taken up the pastorate of Clarendon Park Congregational Church. As was his custom, he had already announced the text of that November morning's sermon. It was the text he had used in his very first sermon, one he treasured and which, following Martin Luther, meant a great deal to him, John 3.16, "For God so loved the world: that he gave His only begotten Son".

The congregation had come to expect powerful preaching that was expository, drawn from the scriptures, yet related to their own lives. They settled down to listen, little knowing what was to come next.

The Story so far: Theological Preparation for Ministry

Born and brought up in Abersychan, a South Wales mining village, the son of a miner, my father grew up in the Congregational church under the inspirational ministry of Ben Davies. Accepting a call to the ministry, he left West Mon School and with the support of Memorial College, Brecon, a Congregational theological college, he took his first degree at University College, Cardiff. The disciplines of philosophy and Hebrew were to stand him in good stead throughout his ministry, not least in the last twenty-five years in Leicester. He went on to take the University of Wales bachelor of divinity in Brecon. His expository preaching drew on a study of the scriptures in the original languages, reflected an understanding of theological issues and was shaped, with the careful reasoning of one trained in logic and philosophy.

He was ordained in 1940 and served as minister of the Congregational Churches of Theale and Bucklebury for five years before moving in 1945 to West Street, Maidenhead. Married to Dilys in 1942, I was born in 1953. In all those years my father kept up his theological reading. He subscribed to *The Expository Times* and, at the end of each year, would sew the twelve monthly issues together into a bound volume. He described the theological books he collected as 'the tools of his trade'.

He was excited to discover that the first minister of Clarendon Park Congregational Church had been Peter Taylor Forsyth, arguably the foremost British theologian of the first part of the twentieth century. Already knowing of Forsyth's work, he began in earnest to collect and read his writings,

accumulating twenty of his books and a further five about Forsyth's theology. My father took seriously Forsyth's injunction: "To maintain such a Church and message as we cherish we must use our Bible much more than we do … If we are not going to use our Bible, it is of no use building our Churches."[1]

Preaching and Pastoral Care

In that first fifteen months of his ministry in Clarendon Park my father had been engaged in building up the church primarily through preaching and pastoral care. That was the key to ministry. "The more you preach, the more you must visit," he urged colleagues in the ministry. "The more you visit the better will you preach. The more you do both the better will you fulfil your high calling."[2]

At the same time he had been proactive in initiating new things in the life of the church. Not for him a slow start to a new ministry! The rate of change must have been breathtaking! Church membership was to be taken seriously and church meetings became a major focus of the church's life. They were to occur on the third Wednesday of each month. Within three months of his arrival, he had introduced four new meetings that would become a key part of the church's activities—a Young Wives' club on the second and fourth Tuesdays, a Young Congregationalists' Club each Friday, a Church Fellowship on Wednesday evenings and a Congregational Students Society, serving primarily what would soon become Leicester University. It was at the first, while still in a push chair, that I was introduced to Felicity, it was at a descendant of the second that I started going out with her, and it was at the fourth that I was introduced to my first baby-sitters, among them Graham Adams and Andrea!

The formation of these particular meetings was part of his strategy for the life of the church as he expressed the hope "that it would become known as a Family Church and Missionary Church and a Church that looks after people and makes strangers feel welcome".[3] A year into his ministry he set out the aims for the future: that "the Communion service should be the centre of all worship, that the mid-week service should be a prayer centre, that the Church should become a gathering of more members."[4] In that first year, membership had grown from 150 to 185. Given a shortage of hymn books on Easter Sunday, 150 more copies of the newly published *Congregational Praise* were ordered. He was beginning to make his presence felt.

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1 P T Forsyth *The Church and the Sacraments* (1917, 2nd edn 1947), 9.

2 R W Cleaves "An Address to the Fraternal of the Knighton Council of Churches" 21st February 1978 a typescript held by the author.

3 N Waddington *Clarendon Park, the First 90 Years* (Leicester no date)36–37.

4 *Ibid*. 38.

Sunday, 4th November 1956

So it was that a large Sunday morning congregation, in a growing church, settled down to listen to their new Minister.

> "Most of our preaching is expository—we expound the meaning of the scriptures and apply it to ourselves. There are times, however, when we are called to speak a direct word to a specific situation. This is such a time."

This was the Sunday after the Suez crisis when the Conservative government of Sir Anthony Eden, in alliance with the French and the Israelis, had invaded Egypt which, led by Colonel Nasser, had nationalised the Suez Canal. It was a Sunday which demanded something out of the ordinary from the pulpit. As the sermon developed, a small but significant number of people began to leave. The sermon deserves extensive quotation.

> "For many years the Christian Church has debated the question of Peace and War, and whilst she has been divided upon the one issue of the possibility of using armed force to defend the innocent or resist aggression, the Christian Church has always been united in denouncing the use of armed force (a) for its own sake (b) in actual aggression and (c) in self-appointed ends.
>
> During the last four days in the Middle East there has been resort to such use of armed force, and if, now, today, the Christian Church remains silent, then let her voice never be heard. She speaks *not* in political party conflict (never let the pulpit be used thus). She speaks the word of God to her generation.
>
> Alas, for this part of the Christian Church that is in Great Britain—for by the grace of God we must condemn the aggressive activities of our own country against Egypt—that with France we have taken the law into our own hands—and that we who have been such advocates of a United Nations Organisation, have so blatantly ignored its existence.
>
> We are filled with shame. We are called to repentance. We grieve that our nation has taken the initiative of armed conflict, and uses human life (for the most part young men) to inflict grievous harm upon human life. We mourn their loss.
>
> The Archbishop of Canterbury has already spoken in the House of Lords, with words of quiet but strong statesmanship, and in what he has said on this occasion *we* are not nonconformist. He has in fact spoken in the spirit of the Nonconformist Conscience.
>
> "Our action," he said, "has left a legacy all over the world"—a legacy which will take a long time to obliterate, a legacy which will make Britain be regarded as in fact what our worst enemies have been saying about us. We can only hope and pray that the inevitable evil reactions to evil deeds will not be with prolonged suffering to many peoples—and that we shall yet redeem the time by some good expression of right action.
>
> Again, we must endorse the suggested policy of the Archbishop, let each belligerent withdraw to her own territory—Israel, France, Britain—and Egypt remain in hers. Then let the world's statesmen assert justice for all.

II *One thing this occasion may yet have taught us as a nation*

We cannot suffer moral decline and at the same time exercise moral leadership

We cannot ignore our God and at the same time do His will

We have striven in our strength and failed. Let us repent and on our knees in prayer receive the grace of forgiveness—and strength to rise empowered by the Spirit of God.

III *We preach the word of God to our Generation*.

It is still in words that remain traditional and orthodox and eternally relevant. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him …

I cannot understand that clause "believeth in Him" unless it be a constant reaffirmation of His teaching, a perpetual casting of oneself upon Him in Trust, knowing that with Him all things are possible—loving with His love, praying with His faith, hoping with the Hope of his Resurrection in things that are beyond the destruction of man, so that we should say in a rising peroration of St Paul—"what can separate us from the Love of God—can persecution"…

"Whoever believeth in Him"—let us measure our own and our nation's behaviour and action by our faith.

And I find so much in myself and in my contemporaries—in my nation and in the nations of the world—that I would come back to it again and again and preach.

IV Prayer

Unfortunately events of recent days have still further divided our nation by parties, so that there may be some listening to me now who will feel disturbed by what I have said.

I am going to lead our prayers and I do not want us to be divided there, and so let us pray with prompted petitions:

1. Let us pray for our Queen and the Royal Family that they may be preserved to represent us in the world as a family where love prevails.

2. let us pray for our Parliament—PM, MPs, Lords, that they may have wise judgment and courage to act by the dictates of their conscience.

3. Let us pray for patience and good will in our land that we may seek not our desire but God's will.

4. Let us pray for Egypt, Israel and France, for Hungary, Poland and Russia—and in our prayers let us remember young men and women who suffer and homes that are destroyed.

5. Let us pray for the United Nations that in councils where peace is being deliberated, ways to peace may be found.

6. Let us pray for the Church, that in all lands where believers meet, they may know the Divine Presence, and be inspired with the Divine Word and Leadership.

7. Let us pray for ourselves that above all else we be redeemed by the spirit of Christ

and that when we gather around the Lord's Table we remember none else than Christ and His sacrifice for us.[5]

Preaching with Principle and Conviction

That day a number of church members walked out never to return to Clarendon Park Congregational Church. My father did not regret speaking as he did, although he did not live to see the publication of cabinet papers and other documents that would vindicate the view he had taken. He was not alone in his stance for many Christians throughout the country took a similar view upon this matter.

During the course of a series of lectures on practical Christianity, delivered at Clarendon Park in 1970, he was to reflect on the place of politics in the church. Given that the word 'politics' derives from the Greek word 'polis' meaning 'city' and that it indicates the affairs of the city, he was convinced that Christianity had to be political without being party political. "It will be a sad day when Christians surrender the responsibility for considering 'the affairs of the city' to ungodly companies, a sad day when they relegate politics to the universities for its intellectual examination, or to secular halls for its controversies, a sad day when Christian conscience abdicates the throne of civic and national life as of personal life."[6]

He was very conscious of three dangers—(a) total involvement in current political issues, (b) complete silence on all political matters and (c) contentment with a sweet inoffensive compromise.[7] In his lifetime he had been confronted with essentially two different forms of politics: the totalitarian and the democratic. In a democratic society it is the responsibility and privilege of a Christian to be "political", recognizing that "Christianity is neither totalitarian nor democratic. It is theocratic—which means 'by the rule of God'. It claims that

5 R W Cleaves' unpublished sermon preached on Sunday, 4th November 1956, catalogued in a full collection of all his sermons as sermon A 84. It was his custom to write out a sermon in full by Friday lunchtime. He used what he described as 'sermon notepaper', the imperial equivalent of A4 landscape, folded in half and written pages 1 and 2 on the first sheet, pages 3 and 4 on the second and into page 5 and sometimes page 6 on the third. He writes two lines of small handwriting to each spaced line. He would spend an hour in his study prior to a particular service in part in prayer and in part going over the sermon, often pacing the room and preaching it under his voice. By the time he reached the pulpit he had taken it down verbatim on the Friday, and had 'preached' it three or four times to himself. That meant that by sliding the sheets down the lectern he could preach without appearing to read his notes. It would last between 20 and 25 minutes. Part of the power of his preaching lay in his thorough preparation and consequent command of his material.

6 R W Cleaves "Politics and Christianity" (Lecture 5 in the series Applied Christianity, Clarendon Park, 1970) 1a.

7 *Ibid* 1a—4a.

rule to be operative by revelation, which may be to a peasant individual (such as Joan of Arc) or to a group of highly intellectual but none the less devout influential leaders."[8]

Thirty-seven years on from that lecture, it is interesting to see what my father characterized as the essential contribution of Christianity to the world of politics. He declared that Christianity "claims the method of suffering sacrifice to achieve the highest ends, and not the human instinct for self-preservation that feeds the desire for self gain. It claims a faith in the ultimate victory of good over evil, though the results may be long deferred".[9]

His preaching was 'expository'. It involved expounding the meaning of the scriptures and applying it to everyday life. As implied earlier, he was careful to avoid party political comment and was sure that 'Christianity must *not* identify itself with any particular party'. In accordance with this view, he never divulged the party he supported in an election, although he was conscious of a problem.

'The practical difficulty of course, is that if such principles as are clearly Christian are being advocated by a particular party, a Christian who voices them will be accused of party-propaganda. What is he to do? Keep quiet because a party machine is operating in the way he approves, or speak what he believes to be Christian, regardless of any charges that may be levelled against him?'[10] He then went on to comment upon his own Suez related experience of 1956, describing himself simply as 'a Christian':

"An example 15 years ago was Britain's and France's connivance in a military attack on Suez, against the overwhelming judgment of the United Nations. At that time a Christian who dared to voice a critical judgment could be and was accused of attacking the Conservative party then in power. That the Socialist party happened to oppose the Government's policy, strengthened the charge against the Christian who spoke what he believed to be the word of God but was interpreted as being political party support."[11]

He also cited two other occasions when he had spoken in similar vein.

"An example 5 years ago was when Britain and America (both nominally Christian countries) sold arms to Israel and Jordan on the feeble excuse that if they didn't someone else would (that someone else being supposedly Russia). A Christian who dared to voice a critical judgment could be and was accused of attacking the Socialist Party then in power.'[12]

Growing up in a manse, where such things were taken seriously, meant that theology and politics were discussed at length. Dinner table discussions went on

8 *Ibid* 4a–6b.
9 *Ibid* 4a.
10 *Ibid* 7a.
11 *Ibid* 7a-b.
12 *Ibid* 7b.

far longer than it took to eat the meal. Walks were as often as not accompanied by heated discussion and debate. No chance was missed to take me to hear a political speaker in the days when prime ministers and would-be prime ministers held speaking tours. It was moving to join my father at a memorial service to Martin Luther King, with a predominantly black congregation, in one of the city centre churches in Leicester.

The third example he gave in 1970 was current at the time. I well remember accompanying my father on the march through the city to 'Stop the Seventy Cricket Tour'. This campaign, led by Peter Hain, succeeded in its object which was to stop a proposed tour of Britain by an all-white South African cricket team. It followed the disruption of a tour of this country by the Springboks rugby team in the winter of 1969–70. However it wasn't only on the streets that my father brought his political judgment to bear.

"A current example", he told his audience in that lecture, "is when Britain proposes selling arms to South Africa contrary to the overwhelming policy of the United Nations. A Christian who dares to voice a critical judgment will be accused of attacking the Conservative Party now in power. That the Socialist Party happens to oppose the proposal, places the Christian spokesman in the invidious position of appearing to support Socialism at all costs."[13]

Christianity and Politics: Some General Principles

Holding light to party political allegiance my father suggested that 'there must be guiding principles for Christians to adopt which are over and above any or all parties. They are to be deduced from honest and objective examination of the New Testament:

1. That all men are brothers, and equal in the sight of God.[14]
2. The needs of each are the concerns of all.
3. When a man is in need, another shall go to his aid, regardless of differences of race or creed.
4. The wealth of the world is for the benefit of all humanity, and not the preferential right of any section or class.
5. Varying talents are given to men to *use* according to their ability, and not to accrue personal gains for reward.
6. Obedience to God by revelation through conscience, has priority over obedience to men by reason of their social status.
7. Whilst 'good' is absolute, and 'right' is relative, what is morally wrong can never be politically right.

13 *Ibid* 7b.

14 The non-inclusive language used by my father is a reminder that issues of inclusive language have really come to the fore in the twenty-seven years since his death.

8. A man who through prayerful devotion hears the Word of God, to him and to his contemporary world, must speak it with the authority of 'Thus saith the Lord'.
9. A poor man is not honourable because he is poor, nor a rich man honourable because he is rich, but each alike by his reverence for God, for his neighbour and for life.
10. Just as a car is a lethal weapon on the road, so money is a lethal weapon to society. Since 'the love of money' is the root of all evil, Christianity supplants it with 'the root of all good'. Only when the new plant grows and is nurtured, will a new motive for work be found, that is not the amount in the pay-packet but the joy of honourable work. At the same time 'the labourer is worthy of his hire' and so society must find an expression of that 'worth'.[15]

My father was convinced that "Christianity cannot contract out of society and out of its politics: and society and its politics cannot ignore the Christian Gospel and its eternal values".[16]

Preaching, Pastoral Care and the Life of the Church

Week in, week out for the forty years of his ministry, with the exceptions only of holiday Sundays and occasional Sundays preaching in another church, my father would write out in full two sermons and preach one on Sunday morning and the other on Sunday evening. What was remarkable about that sermon on 4th November, 1956 was that it was exceptional in both its subject matter and in the occasion for its composition.

As stated, my father's preaching was invariably 'expository'. He would take a text and explain its meaning, relating it to his own life and to the lives of those to whom he was preaching. He took seriously the Biblical scholarship he had studied as a student and continued to read. He was a keen member of the Leicester Theological Society, rarely missing a meeting, occasionally contributing a lecture himself. He did not find scholarly study of the Bible threatening. Indeed it strengthened his faith and he preached diligently in a way that strengthened the faith of many who heard him.

"The Bible is indeed 'everybody's book'. We owe a debt greater than we can repay to those who have devoted their life's work and ability to studying it as it were from a technical point of view. Their intention is *not* to destroy the Bible, nor to cut it up, nor most certainly to undermine the faith of those who have regarded it as God's word. It is still God's word—and, we trust, still more communicable to non-technical readers, as a result of the research done by experts." Quoting Pastor John Robinson's farewell sermon to the departing

15 *Ibid* 8a–b.
16 *Ibid* 8b.

pilgrims on the *Speedwell*, as they left Leiden in July 1620, later to transfer to the *Mayflower* before crossing the Atlantic, my father could say, "Our continuing faith is that 'God has yet more light and truth to break forth out of His Holy Word'."[17]

Though holding light to the Christian year, and rarely making use of a lectionary, my father held great store by the festivals of harvest, Christmas and Easter. The harvest celebrations of the goodness of creation would also include a 'promotion Sunday' when children, in what came to be known first as children's church and then as junior church, would receive a book and move into the next class.

Rarely did a Christmas at Clarendon Park pass without my father writing a nativity play to be performed by the children of the church. Palm Sunday and Holy Week were also special. My father would keep to the 'timetable' of the week. Palm Sunday morning would be a reflection on the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. In the evening the choir would sing one of the choral settings of the passion. As through the rest of the year, my father would work closely with Jack Griffin, the organist and choir master who had built up a fine choir to accompany the singing. On Sundays through the year my father would choose the hymns, but was content to leave the rest of the music in the hands of the organist and choir master who would choose an introit, often one written by himself, and an anthem. Throughout my father's ministry the order of service from one Sunday to the next remained virtually unchanged. Clarendon Park used printed orders of service, going back almost to Forsyth's time. These included a chanted psalm, morning and evening, and sung responses during the morning service.

My father was at home in this liturgically framed service but added to it extempore prayers of his own. He invariably read from the Authorised Version, having a command of its language, not uncommon at the time, that was able to bring it alive. He delighted in referring to the modern translations that began to appear in his time at Clarendon Park. He made great use of the New English Bible, more use of the Jerusalem Bible, but constantly returned to the Authorised Version.

The Wednesday of Holy Week would often include a reflective dramatic reading of the Passion story, drawing on readers from the Young Wives club and in the main other women from the church. Outstanding among those passion play readings were John Masefield's 'Good Friday' and Henri Gheon's 'The Way of the Cross'. My father initiated an 8–00 Good Friday communion service. Keenly involved in the local council of churches, Good Friday evening during

17 R W Cleaves "The Bible for Non-Technical Readers" number 6 in the series. Applied Christianity', Clarendon Park, 1970, 8b.

the 1960s would see a procession of witness from the Victoria Park Gates, along the London Road, to the Town Hall for a united service marking Good Friday.

Easter Day came to an end with an evening service, devoted to Luke 24 and the story of Christ's resurrection appearances to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Indeed, my father's sermon records show that in all forty years of his ministry he preached on the Emmaus story on Easter evening. This is a custom I have continued to this day in my own ministry. That means that between us my Father and I have preached on the road to Emmaus each Easter evening for the last sixty-seven years!

Careful scrutiny of this programme for Holy Week and Easter will reveal that it leaves little time to preach on the cross. My father was delighted, therefore, in 1956 when the Roman Catholic Church designated the Sunday before Palm Sunday 'the first Sunday of the Passion'. It gave him the opportunity he needed to build a sermon on 'the cross' into his Passiontide preaching. On one such Sunday he commented, "If I didn't preach now on 'the cross' this season would pass without such preaching, and I cannot let it pass. The cross and the resurrection are central to the Christian gospel and, in true apostolic succession, "we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God". (1 Corinthians 1:23f)[18]

One highlight of his Sunday morning's service was the children's address. Along with the text of his sermons, his note books record the topic of the children's addresses. He loved to tell a story. While occasionally writing brief notes, he would not use notes in telling the story to children. That way he was able to bring it alive. Sometimes an object lesson, often a Bible story, he also delighted in telling stories about both great Christians and ordinary people of faith.

Children and Church

My father loved children and working with children and they were very much part of the church family. The first ten years of his ministry in Clarendon Park saw a sea change in the provision of education for children at church. My father's inclusion of a children's address and his 'child-friendly' conduct of worship drew more families to the morning service. The minute books record that within a year or so numbers had risen to twenty children and there was a need to have more than one group meeting, during the second part of the morning service. Those groups on a Sunday morning, however, were not the main form of children's education provided by the church.

18 R W Cleaves' sermon B 646, preached 30th March 1980, one of my father's last sermons on the text, Mark 15:34, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

That took place half a mile away from the church building itself in the Queen's Road School rooms. Under the watchful eye of the seemingly resident caretaker, Mr Skirth, a large Sunday school met in the heart of the Clarendon Park area of the city each Sunday afternoon. With a number of different departments, its days were numbered. In part this is explained by declining numbers. In large measure, however, my father was drawn to the thinking of the time. Although in some measure critical, my father agreed in general with the thinking of H A Hamilton[19] and others in the Congregational Union, regarding the value of shifting the emphasis from a Sunday afternoon Sunday School, largely for the children of non-church families, towards a Sunday morning 'children's church', to which parents would be able to accompany their children. It was believed that that was far better than separating off children's work. As *The Times* obituary writer stated, when CUEW youth secretary, Hamilton "stressed the importance of the community of the whole church in Christian education and helped revolutionize the pattern of worship and teaching in many churches".[20]

This philosophy was developed by Eric Burton, the children's officer of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in the early 1960s in a book he published in 1966, just as he moved to take up the pastorate of Highbury Congregational Church, Cheltenham. Eric was to succeed my father as minister of Clarendon Park in 1980. Burton's book, *No Walls Within,* explored the notion of family church where all generations were included together. This principle was pursued vigorously by my father. In September 1960 the decision was taken that 'family church' would take the place of the Sunday School and children's church. It was estimated that possibly 52 children between the ages of 3 and 13 would be attending.

It would be interesting to make a study of the registers of the Sunday School in its last couple of years and of 'Family Church' in its first years. I suspect they would show that this was the point at which the church began to lose contact with the children of 'non-church' families. It would make an interesting subject for research, if not already done, to explore the extent to which the loss of contact between churches and the children of 'non-church' families in the second half of the twentieth century was due not only to a drift of families away from church but to the deliberate policy decision of many churches to shift their primary focus for work with children into a 'family church' setting on a Sunday morning.

19 Herbert Alfred Hamilton (1897–1977) was secretary of the youth and education dept of CUEW 1933–45, principal of Westhill Training College 1945–54, assistant general secretary of the World Council of Christian Education 1963–65 and assistant administrative secretary of the World Council of Churches 1963–65.

20 *The Times* 19 November 1977, *Congregational Year Book* (1979) 259.

My father's ministry in Clarendon Park was only five years old and massive changes were taking place in the life of the church and in its fabric too. The church building on London Road could not accommodate the children who came on Sunday mornings. At this time the house next to the church came onto the market. With the enthusiastic support of my father it was purchased by the church. There were not only five extra rooms available for children's groups on a Sunday but also meeting rooms available for mid-week work. It wasn't long before Friday evenings became a mix of quasi-evening classes, discussion groups, a short-lived pilots company and other activities.

At my father's instigation the rooms were named after key Congregationalists who had done much to shape the nature of the church. Barrow, Greenwood and Penry were three who went to their deaths in 1593 at the height of the Elizabethan suppression of our then developing Congregational way of being the church. John Bunyan endured the persecution following the restoration of Charles II. David Livingstone was the great pioneering missionary of the nineteenth century.

By now the large Sunday school rooms in Queen's Road were too big for the church's use. Church meeting had turned down my father's suggestion of moving the evening service to Queen's Road. The decision was taken to sell most of the premises and retain just one hall for continued church use. So it was that church activities were switched to Brice Hall. In eight years an enormous amount of change had taken place. My father's vision that the church should become 'a Family Church and Missionary Church and a Church that looks after people and makes strangers feel welcome' was being realized.

Free to think … though not free-thinkers!

A great deal of my father's time in ministry was spent in supporting young people as they grew in their Christian faith. With the purchase of Church House the young Congregationalists' meetings switched to the Livingstone room and came to be known as 'Our Club'. Teenagers would meet on a Saturday evening for fun and games in Brice Hall and for the evening service and an hour's meeting afterwards in the Livingstone Room. This was a meeting my contemporaries and I looked forward to joining. True to the spirit of the sixties we were given a free rein to run the meetings ourselves. My father didn't think twice about trusting the young people who belonged to the church with their own activities. Leadership skills were honed not only in 'Our Club' but also in the Cong Soc which flourished from the start of my father's ministry right through the sixties. Tea time meetings and evening services were a place where new ideas could be thrashed out and a Christian response made to a rapidly changing society.

My father's work as Congregational chaplain to students both in the university and in the other colleges of the town was much valued by all who came through Cong Soc in those years. As my contemporaries and I came to leave the church we had grown up in and moved on to university, college or work, my Father expressed his hopes for us in the church newsletter.

"Wherever they work they will find someone who 'goes to church', perhaps not many, but this is the minority witness they have learned about and now have an opportunity of making themselves. Wherever they go they will find a church: it may not be exactly like the one at home, but it is a company of believers in Christ who will be encouraged to have another join them. They will meet those who claim to be 'free thinkers': fine, as long as they are free *thinkers* (for that way they will find truth), and so long as they allow others to think freely. To our young people I would say, "Hold fast that which is good" until you can find a better."

A Missionary Church United in Christ

The chaplaincy, in what was by then a university city, led to wonderfully enriching contacts with those studying in Leicester from churches that had been formed by what was at the beginning of the 60s the London Missionary Society, by the late sixties had become the Congregational Council for World Mission, and has now become, The Council for World Mission. Toro Mozimoko was a teacher in Bechuanaland and was studying in Leicester University so that he could return home and take up a headship. It was thrilling to welcome him to the manse and get to know him, not least because this was when Bechuanaland was gaining its independence and becoming Botswana.

One of the young people who had grown up in the Maidenhead church during my father's ministry had been fired up with enthusiasm to become a missionary. My first visit to London was to her valediction service in Kingston-upon-Thames, a service my parents would not miss. Pat Hollamby was going out in 1963 as a nurse to what would become Botswana and she has made that country her home ever since, having completed her service for CWM in 1976. Her dedicated work, and that of her predecessors, to the Maun maternity centre, the local church and the community at Maun were recognised when the centre was transferred to the Botswana government in 1975.[21] Towards the end of the sixties we were joined by Titus Madisa and later by his wife Pet. Titus returned to the newly independent Botswana, having completed his studies in economics at Leicester University, to take up a post in the finance ministry. His wife Pet stayed to finish her training as a nurse.

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21 B Thorogood (ed) *Gales Of Change. Responding to a Shifting Missionary Context* (Geneva 1994) 36, 277.

In his earlier work with the London Missionary Society, my father had known one distinguished missionary who had spent his life in the south Pacific and had compiled a Rarotongan-English dictionary and translated the Bible into Gilbertese. It was because of his contact with George Herbert Eastman,[22] who served 1913–49 in the South Seas, principally in the Gilbert Islands, that Nakibae T Merang turned up with Wasli, a friend from Malaysia, in church one Sunday morning.

My parents held open house for any visiting students and so it was that a wonderful friendship began with Nak and through Nak with others from what were then the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. By the time Nak re-visited us a number of years later the Gilbert Islands had become the independent nation of Kiribati and the Ellice Islands had become Tuvalu. In my father's ministry the world church always played an important part and the support of the church's mission was of paramount importance.

At the same time my father worked closely with Christians of other denominations. Local free churches would work well together, often holding a day's conference at Clarendon Park. My father was a keen member of the Knighton Council of Churches and placed fellowship with the ministers of its fraternal high on his priorities. He continued to play his part in the denomination through the local county union and would not miss the May meetings, the Congregational Union's annual meetings in London.

Called 'to be the Church' … but in what way?

In the 1960s a movement in the Church that had been gathering momentum since the war took a new turn which was to absorb more and more of my father's time. After the second world war, thinking about the need for Christian unity, that had taken shape in the first part of the twentieth century, became more focused. In August 1948 the World Council of Churches came into being in Amsterdam. It is telling that in one of the 'cuttings' books my father kept, as a resource for preaching and teaching, the page headed unity contains four cuttings: three are from *The Times* and one is unattributed.

In the unattributed comment my father clearly spotted something that for him summed up the essence of that Christian unity, needed in the post-war world.

> "Don't squeeze us down to one pattern or one way of life or thinking—that's not the way out. The only way to real unity is to know and honour and respect every man's quality: so let us all supplement each other in service … The source of all real unity is that everyone should honour everyone, and serve everyone."[23]

22 N Goodall *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895–1945* (Oxford 1954) 388, 403, 602.

23 R W Cleaves "Jottings" under letter U, page headed 'unity'.

In the remainder of his ministry my father did not waver from his commitment to Christian unity understood in that way.

Another article on the same page is not so much about Church unity as the unity needed in Europe. Under the headline, "Christian Movement for European Unity", *The Times* reported that "at a meeting arranged by Christian Action it was decided unanimously to create a Christian Movement for European Unity. Members of the Free Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as of the Anglican Church, took part in the discussion."[24]

The other two articles on that page indicate two contrasting approaches to Christian unity. On the one hand, *The Times* reported "a further series of conversations between representatives nominated by the Archbishop of Canterbury and delegates appointed by the Free Churches" under the headline, "Anglican and Free Church Unity—Talks of 'Deepening Intimacy'". The report goes on to say "*the conference … reaffirmed its conviction that the method of approach to the problem of unity suggested by the Archbishop of Canterbury in his sermon at Cambridge in 1946 (as contrasted with schemes for immediate constitutional reunion) was the right one to pursue in this country*".[25]

On the other hand, *The Times* reported that "The London Council of the Congregational Union of England and Wales welcomed the proposal to continue discussions towards the union of the Congregational churches with the Presbyterian Church of England".[26] The headline sums up that alternative route towards Christian unity: "Church Union Talks". In the Congregational Union the drive towards that kind of organizational union gained a momentum in the 1960s that was to absorb much of my father's energy as he stood by his conviction, in the words of that first cutting, that for the church "*the source of all real unity is that everyone should honour everyone, and serve everyone*".

From Congregational Union to Congregational Church

As the 1960s approached the Congregational Union set up a series of commissions to look at its life. Commission I looked at the nature of Christian unity and its implications for church order, commission II produced a statement of faith, commission III looked at the needs of churches in rural and urban areas, commission IV looked at the local church, commission V looked at the Church's missionary obligation, commission VI at the ministry, and commission VII on the moral influence of local churches and the Union. Much to my father's continual frustration, discussion of those reports focused increasingly on the need to

24 *The Times* 8th September 1949.

25 *The Times* 30th December 1948 He much later treasured a copy of a letter from Archbishop Fisher to Margaret Stansgate supporting the stand she had taken for continuing Congregationalism and unity in diversity.

26 *The Times* 8th September 1949.

change the organization of the national denomination so that it could function as 'a Church', and not simply as a union of churches. That would then pave the way for an organizational union of two 'Churches'—the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church in England and Wales.

It was this understanding of 'Church' that my father took issue with. He took the view that the word church should be used in two senses only: first, of the one, world-wide Church that is the Body of Christ and second, of the local church. No grouping of churches together could claim to be a church for the Church is one and indivisible. It is manifest in each local place in the local church. It was quite wrong, therefore, to call a denomination a church. That could never be.

In one of the first letters he wrote to *The Christian World*, a weekly newspaper that principally served the Congregational churches, my father urged that the various reports be taken separately on their merits. That on mission, for example, had a great deal to say, while the first on church order and Christian unity was misconceived. He spoke positively of the World Council of Churches, "Does not the World Council of Churches function as a vast 'union of churches'? And is it not in this context that we as a Union of Congregational Churches in England and Wales have a real contribution to make to the ecumenical movement?" He went on to quote from Karl Barth a view that has become axiomatic in church life to this day. "Barth has said, 'There is rather too much than too little said about the Church; there is something better: let us be the Church'."

My father wanted to affirm the contribution Congregationalists had made to the life of the whole church through the centuries. He stated, "Surely throughout the centuries of our glorious history our Fathers were 'being the Church', and surely by the grace of God, we too may commit ourselves to 'being the Church' through the union of the churches that is so rich in heritage and experience. We who think so are still able to confirm without contradiction in thought that "the Church is the Mission". He concluded by advocating a focus on mission, rather than church order in the words of commission V, suggesting that "Partners with other Churches" is the very phrase which expresses our 'faith and order'."[27]

That course of action, however, was not the order of the day. In October 1961 Howard Stanley, the secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales 1956–64, wrote to local church secretaries indicating that a resolution of this kind would be put to the assembly in 1962. "That a serious attempt be made to establish under God a Congregational churchly body based, as described in the Report of Commission One, on a covenanted relationship, with

27 R W Cleaves' letter to *The Christian World* September 1961.

responsibility for the church's missionary obligation at home and abroad and therefore a committee be appointed to prepare a draft constitution for such a body".[28]

Opposition to the change from a Congregational Union of independent churches to a 'Congregational Church' quickly focused on two groups. An article in *The Christian World* of November 2nd 1961 was headed, "Evangelicals and Commission I". It was signed by Gordon Booth, Stan Guest and eight others. In time that group led to the forming of an Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches that now numbers well over 100 churches.

Another group of 27 ministers, including my father, Maurice Charles, Ransom Dow and George Curry, wrote a letter, with a headline which stuck in the memory of many, in spite of the fact that it was based on a misunderstanding of the use of the word 'anxious'! The headline read, "Anxious Congregationalists Advise Delay". Though not an organized group, a number of those signatories later went on to form the Congregational Federation which now consists of more than 300 churches.

They counselled further consideration of the issues raised especially by commissions I and V. "We believe that the division of opinion among us is far too serious to allow a vote to be taken at this stage … While we are not an organized group, nor have we met to deliberate on these matters, yet we are anxious that it should be known that we envisage that an alternative procedure to the suggested immediate acceptance of the main findings of Commissions I and V should be considered and if possible accepted by the May Assembly of 1962."[29]

In 1964 my father joined several of those original signatories to form the Congregational Association for the continuance and extension of Congregationalism. Their later 'manifesto' of 1967 affirmed "the right of every Congregational Church to order the life of its own Christian Fellowship in accordance with the spiritual aims and ideals of its members, and the traditions of the denomination" and "declared that no organization has the right to impose on a believer in Christ, or on any gathered company of believers in Christ, doctrinal confessions as a condition of Church membership, and that to do so is to violate the sacred relationship between the believer and his Lord".[30]

The proposed constitution of the new 'churchly body' invited churches to 'covenant' together. My father valued the Biblical notion of covenant between God and his people and also the historical notion of covenant, whereby a group of believers, who knew each other and regularly worshipped together, would

28 Letter from Howard S .Stanley, October 1961.

29 R W Cleaves and 26 others in a letter to *The British Weekly* another paper serving free churches, dated 22/2/62. In the early 1960s *The British Weekly* and *The Christian World* joined forces with the latter's demise.

30 The Manifesto of the Congregational Association, 1967.

enter into a covenant together to form a local church. He rejected the notion, however, that the churches of a denomination could covenant together and form 'a church'.

When the motion was put to the annual assembly of the Congregational Union in 1965 "that the name of the National body should be the Congregational Church in England and Wales", my father declared in a short speech from the floor, "I am not now concerned with the 'name' as a mark of identification … but with the name in so far as it indicates the nature. Until now we have been, and I hope we still are, a fellowship of the churches. The name 'Congregational Union' indicated that nature. This was not accidental. It arose out of what was commonly believed among us to be the nature of the Church—universal and manifest in the local congregation. Nothing I have heard or read has undermined that basic belief in me". He argued that to use the word church of a denomination was to "surrender principle to expediency". To do that was to "surrender one of the essential things we have to contribute to the Ecumenical Movement. Far from contributing to Christian unity we shall have created yet another so-called church".[31]

When in 1966 the Congregational Church in England and Wales was formed and a new constitution agreed, my father's concern was that a new 'churchly body' had come into existence with a degree of centralized authority that would lead away from his understanding of the Congregational way of being the church. That churches were invited to sign a covenant that included a doctrinal statement drawn up by the central organization of the new CCEW seemed to him to prove the point.

Those churches which did not agree to that covenant with its doctrinal statement would within four years have their names withdrawn from the denomination. My father guided Clarendon Park and other churches simply not to sign it. In subsequent year books those churches appeared with an asterisk by their name saying that "they were deemed to have covenanted", a supposition my father took strong exception to.

In all these debates my father was particularly concerned about three things. First, he was convinced that the issues were not properly or adequately debated. Second, he was concerned that those who advocated the formation of the new churchly body from the first laid claim to the guidance of the Holy Spirit—such a claim implied that those who were opposed were opposing the Holy Spirit. My father was convinced that such a claim prevented proper debate, the purpose of which was to ascertain the mind of Christ and the leading of the Spirit. Third, he was concerned at the acrimony of the debate and the way it was conducted on the basis of personality rather than principle.

31 R W Cleaves, speech to the May assembly of the CUEW 19th May, 1965.

Life in the local church continues

Meanwhile in the first part of the 1960s life in Clarendon Park continued with an active programme in which my father was much involved. The purchase of Church House next to the church was completed, and the sale of the Sunday School rooms on Queen's Road completed. United services and other activities in the city, and locally with the Knighton Council of Churches, went on apace. Cong Soc went from strength to strength, as did the youth activities. My father was keen that children in junior church should continue to sit the scripture examination each Spring. He was keen to develop the role of the deacon in the church allocating church members for each deacon to visit. European links were developed, albeit briefly, with a church in Toulouse and issues of world poverty were discussed at church meeting. In 1965 the church celebrated my father's twenty-five years in the ministry. By now the church membership roll stood at 209 full members.

From Congregational Church to United Church

Now that the Congregational Union had become 'a churchly body' and the Congregational Church in England and Wales had come into being the way was clear to take the next step and amalgamate the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church of England. As chairman of the Congregational Association my father was diametrically opposed to such a step. Once again he was frustrated that too often the argument was turned into a matter of personalities: he wanted to focus on the principles. As stated, he was deeply perturbed that the advocates of union claimed an exclusive understanding of the Spirit's will, thus implying that their opponents opposed that Spirit. And he was again concerned at the procedures adopted for debate. In the assemblies of the CCEW the proposals for union were advocated in lengthy speeches from the platform. My father and others were only given the opportunity to speak under tight time constraint from the floor. He would describe the way he accepted invitations from other churches and county unions to explain his point of view and would have relished doing that in open debate, but those, in favour of the scheme of union, were not prepared to appear at the same meeting as him. Though *The Christian World* published letters of similar length both from my father and from John Huxtable, secretary of the CUEW 1964–66, and of CCEW 1966–72, for and against the proposed union, my father was frustrated at not having the opportunity to debate the issue on equal terms in any public meeting.

These frustrations he found borne out in 1967 in a book that all interested in the ecumenical movement 1945–72 should regard as compulsory reading. Ian Henderson (1910–69) was professor of systematic theology in Glasgow University from 1948 until his death and moderator of the presbytery of

Glasgow. His book, *Power Without Glory: a Study in Ecumenical Politics* (1967), was a devastating indictment of the power politics that drove the conversations between the Episcopal Church in Scotland and the Church of Scotland in the 1950s. He held that the promoters of ecumenism confused unity with uniformity in their desire to bring the various traditions into one great church, which he attributed to "Anglican imperialism". Henderson was also critical of the claim by proponents of union to have the guidance of the Holy Spirit and, allowing that Christians from differing denominations met on more friendly terms, he observed that it had led to enmity and division because the enthusiasts for ecumenism "denounced their opponents as enemies of the will of God, while themselves sinning against the divine law of love".[32] It was my father's view that his analysis of the Scottish situation in the 1950s and 1960s was applicable to the way in which the Congregational body south of the border conducted its conversations with the Presbyterian Church of England.

My father agreed with Henderson's contention that the ecumenical movement should be prompted by the conviction that God is love and that it should recognize "the fact that Christians differ honestly from one another on intellectual matters and in all probability will continue to do so … The imperative binding on all Christians is not to belong to one ecclesiastical organization but to love their fellow Christians (and indeed everyone else) no matter what ecclesiastical organisation they belong to."[33]

My father was convinced that the Congregational way, with its emphasis on the autonomy under God's guidance of the local church, was something that could contribute not only to the wider church but to the wider world. It spoke to the desire of many to participate in government, to decide freely what they themselves believed, in an age when emergent nations sought self-government. In the talks he gave he would speak of his belief in the gathered church with its independence, an independence that did not equate with isolationism. At the same time he would speak of belonging to the "family of Christians". He would speak of the way he valued statements of faith, but when it came to membership of a church he wanted to retain the simplest New Testament statement of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and allow individuals the right to work out how they would put their faith into words.

He was convinced that this Congregational understanding of the church had something major to offer to Christian unity. Speaking of the Congregational body he wanted to see, he said, "In the strict sense it is not a denomination, but a fellowship of churches which has it in it to be a fellowship of all churches—Episcopal and non-Episcopal, Presbyterian and Independent. I believe in

32 *ODNB.*

33 I Henderson *Power Without Glory—a Study in Ecumenical Politics* (1967).

Christian Unity and believe that the Open Church with its Open Table is one of the finest known instruments to achieving Christian Unity."[34]

It was this commitment to Christian unity, understood in a phrase that has since come to gain much greater respect, unity in diversity, that prompted him so vigorously to oppose the proposed scheme of union with the Presbyterian Church of England. Supported by many in Clarendon Park, my father travelled to many parts of the country, arguing his case wherever he was invited. He prepared visual aids to accompany his talks. He represented the structure of the proposed United Reformed Church as a pyramid. The local churches were at the base of the pyramid, then came the district council, then the provincial synod and finally the general assembly. On matters of faith and order the assembly would have the final say, where churches differed with district council or provincial synod the general assembly would be the final court of appeal. Ministers would be paid from the centre. He contrasted this with another way of picturing the church that was circular. Christ, at the centre of the local church, and then local churches related in fellowship as equals with other local churches, and all within the widest circle of all, that is the world-wide church of Jesus Christ.

It is interesting that at the time, a writer I am not aware of my father reading, the Roman Catholic academic Hans Kung, was advocating unity in diversity in his book *The Church* (1968). In his later book, *Christianity*, Kung provided a sequence of pictures to illustrate the changing power base of the church in the first centuries. He depicted the way the church's structures move from a circular way of organizing the church, with Christ at the centre in the New Testament, to a later way of structuring the church in the shape of a pyramid.[35] Those illustrations are very similar to those my father used to accompany his talks.

"I believe in Christian unity', he would argue strongly, "and believe that the Open Church with its Open Communion Table is one of the finest known instruments to achieving Christian Unity. Therefore, I cannot subscribe to a scheme which will be retrogressive—which will go backwards to a closed structure with a multiplicity of rules which by their nature will exclude some, however sincere Christians they may be."[36]

In May 1971 both the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church in England and Wales debated the final proposals for the United Reformed Church. As he later reported to the church meeting in Clarendon Park, the approach to those debates differed greatly. The Presbyterian assembly had a mover and seconder 'for' and a mover and seconder 'against' in a debate that lasted the full three hours scheduled for it.

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34 Paper given by R W Cleaves to the Leicestershire and Rutland County Union of Congregational Churches at their autumn assembly, 4th October 1969.

35 H Kung *Christianity* (1995).

36 Paper given to Leicestershire County Union.

The CCEW debate was conducted differently. John Huxtable proposed the motion for 30 minutes from the platform. It was seconded by another substantial speech by Sir Harold Banwell, chairman of council of CUEW 1962–66 and of CCEW 1966–69. No speech from the platform was allowed in opposition. Speakers were called in groups of four, two 'for' and two 'against'. Between each group of four a few minutes were allowed for direct question and answer to the platform. After three groups of four had spoken, a motion to close the debate was proposed and seconded. Huxtable exercised a right of reply and the vote was taken, with 45 minutes of the allotted time for debate still left and among the speakers yet to be called John Wilcox, the secretary of the Congregational Association. The whole conduct of the debate frustrated my father and served to reinforce his belief that Henderson's analysis was correct in *Power Without Glory*. An 89% majority was recorded. It was then over to individual church meetings to vote and at each meeting a vote of 75% was required. When those votes had been taken into account a majority of the Congregational Church in England and Wales voted to unite with the Presbyterian Church of England.

An act of parliament was required. Tony Benn was among the critics of the proposed union, along with Ian Paisley. Benn's mother had joined the Congregational Association and strongly advocated unity in diversity. My father enlisted the help of a QC, Tom Williams, to ensure that the final act of parliament made adequate provision for the apportionment of the funds of the CCEW between those churches which joined the URC and those churches which continued to be Congregational. More importantly he sought assurances that, pending the apportionment, continuing Congregationalists would retain right of access to those historic funds. All too often this did not materialize. Once the United Reformed Church had come into being, my father expressed the hope that his respect for those who had said 'Yes' would be matched by their respect for those who, like him, had said 'No'. It is a sadness that the wounds of the debate and its aftermath ran deep, friendships were broken, and much healing was needed.

Life in the local church

By now a pattern of church life had established itself in Clarendon Park. The midweek fellowship meeting had ceased but the church meeting was extended to ensure that a programme of discussion topics and themes would be addressed at the meeting that lay at the heart of church life. A new manse was purchased and the work of pastoral ministry continued apace. He worked in close collaboration with Jack Griffin as choir master and organist and joined forces with him to write a cantata for choir and congregation called 'The Gathered Church'. The music was composed by Griffin and the texts of scripture chosen by my father.

That commitment to preaching and pastoral care continued. Living in the manse I was very aware of the unseen part of that ministry and in particular the support given by my father to people in times of illness and bereavement. A close friendship developed with Cecil Raynes, who had grown up in a workhouse, moved as a young man to what was then the workhouse in Leicester, and had become head chef. My father and my family gained encouragement from the members of Clarendon Park and new friendships were made with those who shared my father's convictions.

Foremost among those sharing his convictions was my mother. She continued to play an important part in church life, presiding over the women's fellowship meetings on Monday afternoons, supporting my father in his university chaplaincy work and in his national undertakings too. She had returned to teaching once I started school and taught well over half time in Mayflower Junior School, Leicester. Though named after the daughter of a local builder, May Flower, the school had adopted the Mayflower ship as her badge and had a school hymn celebrating the pilgrims and their quest for liberty. This was something that appealed very much to my parents in their understanding of church: I well remember the Airfix model of the *Mayflower* ship my father made for my mother to use in school.

It was a time of rapid change in the city of Leicester and Mayflower School was at the forefront of that change. My mother greeted in her class the school's first black pupil. Leicester has always prided itself in welcoming refugee families. My mother had helped lead the young wives group who themselves had sponsored a refugee family. When Idi Amin expelled Asians from Uganda, Leicester welcomed a great number, many of whom came to Mayflower School. My father supported my mother in her school work, giving aid especially to her and to the Grewcock family when one of her pupils died. It says much for my parents' commitment to what would now be called multi-culturalism that they made friends with Hindu and Muslim, Catholic and Protestant and non-religious neighbours too.

Family holidays were enjoyed in Criccieth in a flat at 11 Marine Terrace purchased by Nora Waddington and Elsie Griffith and in my mother's family home in Treherbert. As I was beginning to study classical Greek at school I well remember one summer holiday in Criccieth when together we worked on a modern translation of Paul's letter to Philemon—about a verse a day! I had been presented with a copy of the *New English Bible* on the day the New Testament had been published. My father had valued his own education as a Congregational minister and was thrilled that the chair of this first major translation of the Bible, supported by all the denominations in the UK, was a Welsh Congregational scholar of great renown, C H Dodd.

The Congregational Federation

A conference held in Leicester in 1971 and called by the Congregational Association made plans for the formation of a continuing Congregational body. The name chosen sought to capture the theology of a fellowship of churches bound together as equals around a faith shared in Christ. The name proposed was the Congregational Federation. Not only did this make a statement about the nature of the denomination as a federation of independent churches, it was also intended to map out a way forward for Christian unity, based on a federal plan. Advocated by Forsyth in his book, *The Church and the Sacraments*, it was a notion decried at the time in correspondence in *The British Weekly*. Ivor Morris and Austen Spearing published a booklet outlining the vision of a unity of the Christian church that would celebrate its diversity, *Christian Unity is Here*.[37]

A May assembly was organized by members of the Congregational Assocation in 1972 at which the devotions were led by the Rev Elsie Chamberlain who had recently joined those who would remain Congregational. The name the Congregational Federation and a very basic constitution was proposed and agreed. Another meeting was summoned in October to constitute the Congregational Federation. With a sense of history in the making my father, John Wilcox and key members of the Congregational Association joined in making a declaration of intent at the site of the Fleet Prison where many of their Congregational forebears had been imprisoned. After making that declaration they moved to Westminster Chapel to join a gathering of 800 Congregationalists to form the Congregational Federation.

From 1972 to 1978 my father chaired the Congregational Federation. He was keen to put on record his account of the debates that led to its formation and of its early years. He did that in his book *Congregationalism 1960–1976. The Story of the Federation* (Swansea 1977). These were years of intense work that steadily took their toll on my father's health, although he worked throughout in close partnership with John Wilcox. To begin with all was organized very much on a shoe string. John lived and worshipped in Loughborough but taught in what was then Nottingham Polytechnic. It was with great excitement that I accompanied my parents and John to inspect the back room in a house in Loughborough that John had found that might serve as an office for the newly formed federation. Soon the office moved to a shop, leased on Canal Street in Nottingham.

My father hoped that the new body would follow the best traditions of the treasured Congregational Union, without the centralizing features which had increasingly come to the fore during the 1960s. Area associations were formed to ensure the continuation of the work of the former county unions. May meetings

37 I Morris and A Spearing *Christian Unity is Here: the New Ecumenism* (Great Yarmouth 1971).

were organized on a Saturday to ensure the attendance of as many people as possible and a focal point of the assembly was to become inspiration from a keynote speaker. No decisions taken were to be imposed on the local churches.

A loose structure of committees was held together by a council. Churches, like the political parties of the day, had a vibrant youth wing which was keen that its voice should be heard and that it should contribute to the life of the federation. My father encouraged those who had played a part in the youth movements of the CCEW to be involved with the CF's young people. So it was that CF Youth was formed, not so much as a programme of youth work, but as a means of enabling young people to play their full part in the life of the churches.

The apportionment of the assets, of each county union and of the national denomination, had to be undertaken, with the brunt of the work carried by John Wilcox. It was a painstaking, time-consuming task to ensure the formulae of apportionment was right in each case; work in which my father supported John. Most mornings began with an 8–00 am telephone conversation between my father and John, during which they addressed some pressing issues. The apportionment of the funds had yet to be completed, at the time of my father's death eight years after the formation of the federation! Funds, not previously identified, continued to come to light into the 1990s!!

To look after trust deeds for churches, investments for areas, and the national Congregational Federation charity law demanded that, alongside the unincorporated Congregational Federation, there should also be a company limited by law. So it was that the Congregational Federation Ltd came into being. My father's training in logic and philosophy had helped in the debates of the 60s; it now came into its own with his skill at ensuring the legal documentation served its purpose. In all such decisions the model was found in the former Congregational Union. Just as the Federation was modelled on the Congregational Union at its best, the Federation Ltd was modelled even more closely on the old Congregational Union Incorporated. This ensured that the directors of the Congregational Federation Ltd were the council members of the Congregational Federation. In the period when my father chaired the CF council, council members met on the same day to oversee the affairs of the CF Ltd.

One major bone of contention was what would happen to the assets of the Congregational Memorial Hall Trust. The Congregational Union's offices in London had been demolished in the early 1960s and Caroone House built on the site on Farringdon Road. The new building housed the General Post Office and a small office, along with the Congregational Library, retained in a wing of the building. What would happen to those assets, as they had not been included in the URC Act of Parliament? Great debates followed and eventually the issue was taken to the High Court. A full apportionment of those funds, at the behest

of the court, was finally agreed and the Congregational Federation, the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches and the unaffiliated churches, were given a place on a newly formed Memorial Hall trustee body. That body, albeit in a much changed guise, continues to meet. Ironically, following the dissension which preceded its creation, it has become one of those forums where URC representatives and continuing Congregationalists have met and restored broken relationships.

My father was keen to ensure continuing Congregational involvement in the colleges that had for many years trained Congregationalists for the ministry. As a result representation was secured on the governing bodies of Mansfield College, Oxford and Northern College, Manchester. Again after much debate these became settings in which friendships were restored across divides that had left such hurts.

My father's passion for missionary work meant that he wanted the CF to be involved with the missionary agencies, that is the CCWM. However this also proved initially a struggle although it eventually bore great fruit. In 1966 one of the accompanying features of the birth of the Congregational Church in England and Wales was an end of the independence of the London Missionary Society. It was replaced by the Congregational Council for World Mission, enabling the CCEW to draw missionary work more securely within the new denominational structure. This led, with the inception of the URC, to that body's world church and mission department. The churches, associated with the old London Missionary Society and those linked to the former Presbyterian world church department had grown markedly and were in many cases stronger than churches in the UK. A new kind of missionary partnership was brought into being in which 'partnership of the churches' was to be the key. The Congregational Federation came to play its full part in the newly formed Council of World Mission which brought together the churches formerly served by the LMS and the Presbyterian world church department with the churches which had mostly been sending agencies. Once again this became a forum in which wounds were healed and relationships restored. Although in each of these areas common ground was eventually found, often a struggle was involved in gaining recognition for the CF. The burden of that struggle weighed heavily on my father's shoulders.

International Congregational Fellowship

Throughout the 60s my father had developed a friendship by correspondence with Harry Butman and others in the National Association of Congregational Churches of the United States of America. They had had similar but earlier experiences in the formation of a new united church in the USA. On 26th June 1970 my father joined with other members of the Congregational Association in

welcoming representatives from the National Association at County Hall in London. In an address that explored the quest for freedom of religious belief undertaken by the Pilgrims, my father invited those from both sides of the Atlantic present that night to "pledge themselves, whilst yet in a Congregational Family of Churches, to remain in the Congregational Family of Churches and extend it, to pledge themselves, in the name of God, to work with all Christians (by whatever name they are called among men) for the relief of human suffering, to pledge themselves to talk less about the Church and its administration and to be more thoroughly the Church, to serve God and our fellow men in the shortness of time on earth permitted to us."[38]

Conversations continued until in May 1975 a meeting was held at Chislehurst, Kent which resulted in a determination to form an International Congregational Fellowship. The inaugural assembly of the ICF was held in London in July 1977 and it has since drawn continuing Congregationalists from a number of different countries. This world dimension of Congregationalism was also dear to my father's heart.

An Educated and Trained Ministry

In 1978 the first ministers spring school of the CF was held at St Mary's College, Cheltenham. Among the speakers were Dr R Tudur Jones, principal of Coleg Bala-Bangor and a noted Congregational historian, and Edwin Robertson, a Baptist scholar and the biographer of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. My father delivered a paper on the universal priesthood of all believers, offering a telling analysis of a central tenet of Congregationalism which he was conscious could easily be understood. He summarized his convictions on ministry.

> "1. I believe it to be a scriptural principle but, like John Whale, I fear its abuse in becoming an egalitarian cliché whereby *no* difference is drawn between ministry and laity.
>
> 2. I believe in a highly trained ministry and that aim should not be lost because of economic stringency in the churches.
>
> 3. I believe that we owe a great debt to laymen, who lead our churches in the absence of a minister, but this should not lead to the assumption that the ministry is not necessary.
>
> 4. I believe that whilst normally the minister should preside at communion, in the absence of the minister a layman should preside, providing the gathered church invites him so to do.
>
> 5. I believe that some are called to teach, some to heal, some to manufacture, and some to 'minister' in the church. It is not everyone who can teach and those who can must be trained for the work. That does not make them of higher

38 R W Cleaves address at the County Hall, London, 26th June 1970.

> standing in the sight of God, but it does mean that God sets them apart for the task and that they will equip themselves for it through training. Similarly, healing, manufacturing and economic administration, and, no less, ministry."[39]

It was shortly after that conference that a number of us including Alan Argent, Janet Wootton, Colin Price, Bill Ashley-Smith and myself, met together with my father at the Clarendon Park manse to set about forming the CF's ministerial training board. It was one of the last things my father helped to put in place before his retirement and untimely death. Since its beginnings in 1979 the CF training board has endeavoured to rise to the challenge set that day by my father.

Towards retirement

By 1978 my father's health was deteriorating considerably and that year he resigned his role as chairman of the CF council. He had hoped the chairmanship would be handed down a generation but was, however, delighted that, in moving to someone older than himself, it should go to one who had played a key role in the former Congregational Union, as the first woman chaplain to the forces, and in the development of religious broadcasting on the BBC, Elsie Chamberlain. My father was to play a supportive role. He also continued his involvement in Clarendon Park and in the local council of churches too. "The local Church is the visible Church in action. The whole responsibility rests on us. We must be a forward looking, constructive, go-ahead Church."[40] This was the spirit which still he brought to church life.

He was increasingly perturbed in the 1970s by the devastation of IRA terrorism. It severely tested his pacifist convictions, though he held firm to them. Through all the debates he kept up his theological reading. In the 1970s the book that caught his imagination was *The Myth of God Incarnate* (1977) edited by John Hick. My father wanted to explore the meaning of his faith and reinterpret it for the younger generation. In 1977 my father officiated when Felicity and I married at Clarendon Park. A month later he preached the charge to the minister at my ordination in Harden, near Bradford. He chose as his text words of Paul addressed to "Timothy, my son".

One concern that had deterred some colleagues from remaining within the Congregational denomination had been the question of pension. That too my father worked hard to secure, helping John Wilcox to set up a pension fund for ministers. As retirement approached he was delighted that he and my mother were allocated a Memorial Hall retirement manse.

On the last Sunday in April 1980, he preached what he described would be his last sermon. Little did we know as we listened that it would indeed be his

39 R W Cleaves "The Universal Priesthood of All Believers" paper delivered at the Spring School for Congregational Ministers, Cheltenham, 1978.

40 Waddington, *op cit* 50.

very last sermon. That evening he made one final record in the note book he had kept meticulously since preaching his first sermon. For the first time in that long list of entries he drew a line under the record. In the morning he had spoken of the faith within us, the Word of God which speaks to us, and the church which embraces us. In the evening he took as his text Luke 13:33, "Nevertheless I must go on, today, tomorrow and the next day". He spoke of the things that he could not deny: his faith, the Christ who is our Lord, the Church and the practice of prayer. "But most of all,", he concluded, "I cannot give up the love of the Lover of souls."

> "Christ is not a concept for theologians to seek agreement on,
>
> Christ is not an idea for philosophers to fit into systems of thought.
>
> Christ is not a past for historians to fix into periods which become outdated.
>
> Jesus Christ is Lord.
>
> He is the living presence who comes alongside us
>
> He is the Companion for all the journey.
>
> And if I travel with fear of what I might find on arrival."
>
> He says, "I go before you and will meet you there."
>
> Then came the final peroration.
>
> "Who is the cynic who jeers? Who is that tempter who hints a beckoning reversal? What are those circumstances that threaten to undermine? And what the warning voice of the likes of Herod, or even pharisaic cunning?
>
> Go tell that fox, I must go on—today, tomorrow and the next day—I must go on in the faith which is life to me, on in the Church which embraces me, on in the prayer that transports me higher, on with the Lord of lords who abides for ever and to whom I also sing:
>
> Breathe on me breath of God,
>
> Fill me with life anew,
>
> That I may love what thou dost love
>
> And do what thou wouldst do."[41]

None who heard that last sermon could fail to be moved.

The next week Mum and Dad moved out of the manse that had been our home since 1966 and moved into their retirement manse. They hoped to attend the annual assembly of the Congregational Federation that May in Bristol. My father was too ill to attend. Had he been there he would have heard that he had

41 R W Cleaves "The Love of the Lover of Souls"—sermons preached on Sunday 27th April 1980, Clarendon Park Congregational Church, Leicester.

been voted president elect of the CF, whose offices were to move to Castle Gate, also in Nottingham, where they have since remained.

My father's medication meant that they could not attend church on Sunday mornings when, instead, he returned to an early love, translating the Greek New Testament. He started with the first letter of John. My parents tried to find a church in the county with an evening service but failed. So it was that they both returned to Clarendon Park and for all too few Sunday evenings enjoyed an evening service. He was admitted to hospital to have a new heart valve. Initially it seemed the operation had been a success. However he died, still in hospital, on 10th July 1980.

The Thinking and the Theology

Looking back over my father's life, it seems that each decade of his ministry was characterized by his reading. In the 1930s he absorbed the Biblical scholarship of his teachers in Cardiff, T H Robinson and H H Rowley. In the 40s it was Barth, Brunner, Baillie and those theologians who were grappling with God's word for a world torn apart by war and the holocaust. In the 50s it was P T Forsyth who did much to shape his understanding of the gospel, the word, written and preached, and the nature of the church. In the 60s the book that caught the spirit of the age was Henderson's *Power Without Glory*, while in the 70s it was Hick's *The Myth of God Incarnate* that fed his determination to keep alive the message of Christ.

Some may regard the divisions of the old Congregational denomination as his chief legacy; some may opt for the Congregational Federation; some may see his preaching and pastoral care as his legacy. For me the love of both my parents that made real the love of God in my life is his legacy. My father would, I think, be pleased if I gave him the last word.

"Whilst we intend 'not to be prisoners of the past but pilgrims of the future' we know that we are pilgrims with a lighted flame to carry, crusaders with a torch which will never be extinguished. The distinctive feature of our pilgrimage is what Christ has given and taught. We shall not let it go until what it stands for is achieved."[42]

A R W Cleaves

42 R W Cleaves sermon preached at Clarendon Park, 7th March, 1976, on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of Clarendon Park.

REVIEW ARTICLE

***"Strikingly Alive" The History of the Mill Hill School foundation 1807–2007.* By Roderick Braithwaite. Pp 376. Phillimore, 2006. £37.00. ISBN 1 86077 330 3.**

The author, an OM (Old Millhillian), trustingly invited my criticism as a contemporary OM and the CHS has kindly colluded! For an OM, this book more than lives up to hopes of providing a feast of 'scene sets', personal reminiscences and often, 'explanatory revelations'. For a Christian (with Protestant Dissenter prejudice!), it is much more. It highlights a Congregational 'pearl', at a time when the Congregational Union was denounced as a violent attack on the British constitution! It places Congregationalists within the context of a nation's social and political history as well as within educational philosophy and practice. It provides a fascinating perspective on the Mill Hill School raison d'etre and the part played by a publicly endowed Grammar, then Public, then Independent Foundation in accessing "quality education" for many for whom this had been denied in eighteenth century England. It even suggests a legacy of secular enlightenment that at one tinge may have saved England from revolution. As the narrative progresses, the emphasis moves to the part played by a developing management in relation to the English public school system, the part played by a Court of Governors and to educational statutes, with growing stress on change within international networks and 'pupil markets' and even railway networks! It takes us from the shadows of a Nonconformist 'Dr Arnold' style boys boarding school to, eventually, a fully co-educational, 'balanced' day/boarding, inclusive trio of pre-preparatory, preparatory and secondary educational establishments, now known as The Mill Hill School Foundation. The rise and fall of that iconic trio, rugby football, hockey and cricket, followed by what appears to be a 'Phoenix' of new-era wider ranging sporting activities fits the much larger and wider pupil community of later chapters, as does the emergence of an international self-awareness and a school commitment with significant and meaningful world-wide links. At the same time there is an account of more recent developments in the teaching of management and related technologies and the arts and in the teaching of drama, as well as a sustained emphasis on the academic. No doubt these changes have been fed by the considerable increase in pupil numbers in the last half century, and especially of girls within the last 20 years. It presents a rich kaleidoscope of facilities attracting pupils and pupils enabling facilities.

Braithwaite presents his book in two parts. The first has twelve chapters, each with a well-researched sub-history relating either to headships or to "events". Ten headships are highlighted out of 27 in this 200 year history of the main school (Belmont, the prep school emerges later and Grimsdell, pre-prep later still). Much of the earliest material is sourced from a long line of local historians, including the architect Martin Briggs and the nineteenth century member of school staff, Norman Brett-James, who himself wrote a commemorative turn of the century school history.[1] Even the latter material Braithwaite has further researched and re-written. National and local profiles are cleverly related to the school, as also is the fascinating network embracing other great schools, which provides yet another dimension.

The story begins with the two founders, Samuel Favell and Rev Dr John Pye Smith, and the first head, Rev John Atkinson from Homerton College (Evangelical Congregational), and takes us to the present day Pauline Bennett-Mills (Grimsdell), Lynn Duncan (Belmont) and William Winfield (Mill Hill), a trio of establishment heads. It starts with a spacious home inherited from the renowned botanist Peter Collinson, with its 8 acres of beautifully positioned land (proximal to the capital city, yet with magnificent views towards Harrow and Windsor Castle). Neighbours, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, included the befriending and supportive William Wilberforce (the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 shares the honours!). It begins with 60 boy boarders and ends 15,000 boys and girls later, with around 1,200 pupils in three inter-related day/board establishments. It takes the reader through William Tite's Grecian colonnaded principal buildings of the 1820s to the attractively contrasting and landscaped buildings of the last ten years, now standing in over 30 acres of groomed recreation grounds and gardens. It includes (for church historians) the part played by the Congregational head Sir John McClure[2] in establishing locally (Mill Hill Broadway) the first Union Church in 1908, now United Reformed. It takes the reader through the survival periods of two very different world wars, with a gratuitous and fascinating sub-chapter relating to the 1940s when, although the school was evacuated to what is now Cumbria, Mill Hill School buildings took on the mantle of a wartime hospital under a characteristically Braithwaite sub-title "They Also Served". References to those 5 years of pioneering hospital experimentation provide a taster for those interested in post-war medical history within psychiatric hospitals and indeed our prisons, not included! Subsequent is the remarkable contribution of the only theologian head in the last hundred years (Rev Dr J S Whale[3]), there having been nine in the previous century. Then come fascinating accounts of those heads who have had

1 N G Brett-James *The History of Mill Hill School, 1807–1907* (1909).
2 K M J Ousey *McClure of Mill Hill: a Memoir* (1927).
3 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*).

much to do with the change of ethos, institutional survival, pragmatic adjustment, even, with little stretch of the imagination, echoes of New Labour! It suggests a well directed shift, taking into account changes in pupil market, parent expectation and unpragmatical, the principle of co-education. The final chapter is brief but positive, anticipating another century.

Throughout is an undercurrent of references to many great and gifted teachers, including 21 'Mr Chips'ian (as yet no 'Ms Chips'ian) members of The Hundred Club, denoting 100 terms teaching at the school (pause for thought!).

Bibliographical and source notes come at the close of each chapter (helpful).

The second part of the book consists of 10 appendices. These include institutional language and tradition as well as more 'formal' source references. To some extent I found the layout of these reference systems over complicated and not always easy to follow.

The aphorism chosen by the author to enliven his book title is appropriate for more than one reason. Surely this book is alive! However, our author had in mind words in the diary of prime minister William Gladstone on 11 June 1879, after visiting the school as a distinguished guest. Intriguing are the visits and communications between Gladstone and his friend, Sir James Augustus Henry Murray MA, LLD, DLitt, PhD, then assistant head at Mill Hill, more often remembered for his pioneering dictionary and its part in subsequently creating *The New English Dictionary*.[4] Murray is also remembered in this book as a Congregationalist with an enigmatic 'political' role within the school; it reveals something of a conflicting yet creative relationship with Dr Richard Weymouth, a remarkable Baptist headmaster at the time. The school was by then explicitly 'non denominational'. The importance of constructive conflict within a loyal team, and this includes The Court of Governors, is not difficult to see. A similar theme re-surfaces to a lesser degree in later chapters and is instructive when retrospective!

Regardless of changing legislative and market pressures, faith and the place of religion does have an important part to play, whether atheistic, agnostic or theosophical. Earlier chapters record school chaplains as deputy or even as substitute heads, with an assumption of the part played by a school chapel. Later in the book we are told how an independent Nonconformist school has become "inclusive". The reader is left guessing. The role of religion, of the chapel and of a chaplain (extant) is implied rather than exposed or explored. Perhaps this is the cautious sensitivity of a Congregationally educated author!

I was not at first enthusiastic about the size of this book, which the author describes as "not a severe 'historian's history' … but for the reader for pleasure" The standard version (there is also a leather-bound edition) measures 29 x 22 x

4 For Murray (1837–1915) see K M E Murray *Caught in the Web of Words* (1977) and *ODNB*.

3.5 cms. This is not for reading on a bus! Nor does it sit easily on my shelves. However, slimming down would not have permitted such excellent print and generous page-by-page illustration. The author has used quality visuals with imagination and considerable resource. One is appreciative that pioneering photography has been put to such good use. The size of page has also enabled the imaginative use of graphs and flow diagrams, yielding clear exposition of often multi-faceted yet related data.

On style, I found the writer over-inclined to colons and semi-colons, with an appetite for phrases qualifying phrases, sometimes to the detriment of comprehension. It no doubt says something about me, but too often (9 times to get this in perspective) I found need of a dictionary (thank you Dr Murray!). It has to be admitted that always Braithwaite comes up trumps in accuracy of usage, but I did find myself wishing sometimes for simpler expression. He is now promoting a series of post-publication 'information supplements', one of which he describes as "A Gallimaufry of Mill Hill School's 'Characters'". Well, perhaps you knew without looking it up! And how apposite! In contrast, he frequently treats the reader to lyrical and lucid forays. Self evidently, whichever style, the author presents new knowledge and much wisdom from the experience of Mill Hill School generations.

I have recently had the privilege of reading four school histories where I have association with past pupils: the first was commemorating 75 years; the next two 100 years and now Braithwaite's book launched on the eve of the bi-centenary. The first was written by a member of the teaching staff". The second was by an educational historian, with no previous connection other than a professional interest in the progressive movement, which the school had pioneered. The third was by collective alumni and staff. Roderick Braithwaite is both an ex-pupil and a professional historian. I found myself fancifully speculating on The Mill Hill School Foundation debate on authorship. Should it be a man or a woman and is gender relevant? Should we ask an outsider with history and education credentials? What about one of those many gifted but institutionally orientated members of the 'Common Room'? Or what about one of us, a motivated member of The Court itself? Their choice was an academic historian with a passion, yet with the blinkers of a loyal Old Millhillian. He is of course himself a part of the story. However he has coped with biography, without being too autobiographical. He has allowed his 10 years of research to be imaginative and fruitful. His reward and our reward is a book from which to learn, for posterity and for wider readership than MHS family. I am tempted to say it is strikingly alive!

Adrian Stanley

BOOK REVIEWS

***Continuity and Change: Evangelical Calvinism among eighteenth-century Baptist ministers trained at Bristol Academy, 1690–1791*. By Roger Hayden. Pp xiii, 273. Baptist Historical Society, 2006. Available from 'Hayden Thesis', 15 Fenshurst Gardens, Long Ashton, Bristol, BS41 9AU, United Kingdom (Cheques payable to 'Revd Roger Hayden'). Cheques in non-sterling currencies accepted provided £5 is added to cover bank charges. £35 including p & p. ISBN 0 903166 37 2.**

Continuity and Change is an important study of eighteenth Baptist history. Earlier Baptist historians have concluded that in this century Particular Baptist churches suffered from High Calvinism associated with the London ministers, John Skepp, John Brine and John Gill. While not denying the influence of these ministers Roger Hayden's study focuses on the Evangelical Calvinism associated with Broadmead Baptist Church and Bristol Academy, under the successive leadership of Bernard Foskett, Hugh Evans and Caleb Evans.

The Particular Baptist *1689 Confession* was used as the standard for the Welsh, Midland, Northern and Irish Baptist Associations after 1700 and by the Western Baptist Association when it was re-formed in 1734 under the influence of Bernard Foskett and Hugh Evans. The adoption of the *1689 Confession* enabled churches to resist Socinian and Arian theology and provided an evangelical alternative to the preaching of the London High Calvinists. Roger Hayden draws a sharp contrast between the Baptists of the Western Association and the London Particular Baptists, who did not use the *1689 Confession* as a basis for associating. Two attempts to form a London Baptist Association proved abortive. The only attempt at unified ministerial training in London was the formation of the London Baptist Education Society, whose tutor was Thomas Llewelyn, a Welsh Baptist trained at Bristol under Foskett. In Bristol the education of potential pastors was undertaken through the work of the Broadmead pastors. Between 1720 and 1791 at least 188 ministers were trained and they subsequently served in England, Wales, and Ireland, with a few going to America.

In a chapter entitled 'The Gathered Fellowship of Baptist Believers', Dr. Hayden notes that the centre of Evangelical Calvinism for members of the congregation was the worship of God every Sunday and the gathering of believers in the church meeting. He makes the important observation that 'the emphasis was not so much on the individual being a Christian but with being members of the body of Christ, the Church. Church membership was not an option for those who liked it, it was the vehicle through which the Christian faith found its proper expression.' Following baptism believers joined the church usually by signing the covenant of the local church. The Alcester church, for

instance, drew up in 1721 its own statement of faith and covenant for members to sign. It was drawn up by Bernard Foskett and one of his former students, Benjamin Beddome, but the handwriting in the church book is that of Foskett.

For teaching their faith Baptists produced a variety of catechisms. One of the most popular editions of *The Baptist Catechism* was issued in 1752 by Benjamin Beddome. Its use continued into the nineteenth century: an edition was published in London in 1839 and in America an edition was published in Virginia in 1849.

Amongst Particular Baptists congregational hymn singing became important and the first Baptist hymn book was produced by John Ash, a student under Foskett, and Caleb Evans in 1769. Thirteen hymns by Benjamin Beddome were included in this hymn book and they were all in regular use when Julian compiled his *Dictionary of Hymnology* in 1907. John Rippon, who had been a student under Caleb Evans, published in 1787 his own influential hymn book, *A Selection of Hymns*. Under the influence of the Evangelical Revival the hymns sung emphasized a believer's 'heart-felt experience' rather than an emphasis on membership of God's covenanted community found in earlier hymns. This change of emphasis had been noted previously by Karen E. Smith in her study 'Calvinistic Baptist spirituality in some town and villages of Hampshire and the borders of Wiltshire between 1730 and 1830'. A former Bristol student, Benjamin Francis, published in Welsh two volumes of poetry in 1774 and 1786 entitled *Hymnau Perthynol i Addoliad Cyhoeddus*. There is a difference in emphasis between the two volumes and Prof. Densil Morgan claimed that this reflected the fact that 'The centre-point of the religious drama had moved from the external, the correct ordering of church life, to the individual, God's involvement with the soul.'

Dr. Hayden has helpfully provided us with a list of Bristol students for the period 1720–91. In discussing the close links between Bristol and the Welsh Baptists, he has drawn attention to the lack of a substantial biography of the eighteenth century Welsh Baptist leader, Miles Harry.

All future historians of eighteenth century British Particular Baptists will need to take note of this important and interesting book.

Michael J. Collis

***A Well-ordered Town: The Story of Saffron Walden, Essex, 1792–1862*. By Jacqueline Cooper. Pp. 286. Self published, 24 Pelham Road, Clavering, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 4PQ, UK, 2000. £10 (includes UK p&p). ISBN 1 873669 06 2.**

There is a certain irony in the title of this book, which becomes apparent as the reader proceeds. The author uses a wide selection of archival material to bring the internal politics of the town to life, and in particular the means whereby the poorer people were kept in their place by 'establishment' figures as well as traders—and by the clergy. A conservative society, contrasted to that of nearby

Thaxted, where a radical tradition flourished (and still does), but not without its challenges. As the back cover puts it, "it will force us to discard the 'chocolate-box' image of the town".

Chapter 12, 'No Man Careth for our Souls: Religion and the Poor', takes up a subject which appears throughout the book: the distinction between Anglicans and Dissenters. The Religious Census of 30 March 1851 recorded one Anglican congregation, four Baptist, varying in strictness, one Quaker, one Independent (Congregationalist) and two Methodist, one Wesleyan and one Primitive. The roots of the Independents went back to 1665, meetings began in a barn in 1689, and the present (URC) chapel was built in 1811, and later enlarged. There is much to be learned about the Dissenters in the 'well-ordered town', not all of them well-ordered themselves.

The author brings out a great deal of detail about the churches, their ministers and members, with a section on sectarian divisions raising political issues, and a discussion of evangelical outreach. This book makes an important contribution to our interests and is a fascinating read as well.

John Hibbs

'Thomas Thomas, 1817–88: The first national architect of Wales'. By Stephen Hughes. Offprint from *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 152 (2003). Pp.98. No ISBN, no price. Illustrated.

For Welsh Nonconformists, the mid nineteenth century was a period of tremendous expansion. Increasing membership gave rise to the need for new, larger chapels, often designed to contain an option for further extension, a facility which belied the confidence that the future would herald further growth. As necessity is the author of invention, individuals with proficiency in carpentry or masonry were called upon to develop new skills as architects and overseers for what became a massive building project throughout the country. Thomas Thomas, minister with the Welsh Independents at Landore, Swansea, was one of these men and it is thought that he designed over 900 chapels, as well as houses, Sunday school vestries, day schools and, perhaps most notably, the impressive Memorial College, Brecon, where people trained for the Congregational ministry until the mid twentieth century. (The building now houses luxury flats). Clearly diversification is not a modern phenomenon.

This comprehensive and thorough study of Thomas's life and work is a notable addition to our understanding of Welsh Nonconformist culture during the period when it was at its most powerful and influential. Although aware of wider historical considerations, Stephen Hughes's essay is concerned to survey the architectural accomplishments more than the historical significance of the subject and Thomas's contribution is placed alongside such illustrious names as Inigo Jones, James Cubitt and John Humphreys (designer of the cathedral of Welsh Nonconformity—Tabernacl Chapel, Morriston, near Swansea). The

author's meticulous research provides an occasionally technical description of the architectural qualities of the chapels themselves. The major influences on Thomas were classical and his chapels were largely of Gothic or Italianate design, with some debt to Lombardic style all constructed to appeal to spiritual needs rather than aesthetic sensibilities. Yet beauty is conveyed in their simplicity, and the buildings somehow encapsulated Nonconformist theology and worldview, particularly the importance of the proclaimed Word and corporate worship. Thomas's chapels could be found from Holyhead in Anglesey to Wrexham in Denbighshire, from Pembroke in south-west Wales to Blaina in the south-east and while most were Independent they were not exclusively so, all of which gives rise to the claim in the title of the essay that he was indeed a 'national' architect. (It is worth mentioning that his designs could also be found in Liverpool, Gloucestershire, London and, possibly also Durham). Yet few now remain, and some that do have long since ceased to serve the cause for which they were originally built.

If Thomas was the product of a powerful and expanding Nonconformity, it is perhaps cruelly ironic that this study arises from the fact that the religious movement which he serviced appears now to be in terminal decline. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales and the Chapels Heritage Society have ensured that as comprehensive a record as possible has been kept of the chapels in Wales, and Stephen Hughes's study draws on that work. Copiously illustrated and intricately detailed, this study will prove to be of benefit to all who are interested in the history of Welsh Nonconformist culture. A full gazetteer of buildings which Thomas designed, running to over two hundred entries, is included as an appendix.

Robert Pope

***Protestant Nonconformist Text Vols 2* and *3*. Series editor Alan P F Sell. *The Eighteenth Century*. Ed Alan P F Sell with David J Hall and Ian Sellers. Pp xviii, 459. Ashgate, 2006. £37.50. ISBN 0 7546 3853 7. *The Nineteenth Century*. Ed David Bebbington with Kenneth Dix and Alan Ruston. Pp xx, 400. Ashgate, 2006. £37.50. ISBN 0 7546 3850 2.**

These are two volumes of the long-awaited series. The breadth of churchmanship among the editors reflects the broad interests of this enterprise to introduce the world of the nonconformists to those for whom it is a lost continent. Both volumes span centuries when there was considerable change in the outlook and condition of nonconformists in England and Wales. In his introduction to the eighteenth century volume, Professor Sell refers to the intentionally "relatively narrowly focused picture" that concentrates on the nonconformists and not on their religious opponents or socio-political commentators.

The sections in each book are themed to illustrate an aspect of the life of churches or their contact with the society in which they operated. For each

section there is a general introduction and each text has a short accompanying text and suggestions for further reading. The editors have been given flexibility to organise as they think best so there is not a common format, although many topics appear in both books.

It is important to assess this series for what it is rather than what it is not. It does not pretend to be an encyclopaedia of nonconformity so the books do not chart the development of ideas and themes in an era where the political, intellectual and social standing of nonconformists changed. The selected texts are indicative not systematic, illustrative not exhaustive. Whether this relieves the reader of the questions "why this?" and "where is that?" is another matter. How the editors must equally have wrestled not with what to put in but what to leave out!

What these two books offer is a unique kaleidoscope of church history relating to protestant nonconformists. Extracts are chosen from the vast array of literature available—books, confessions, sermons, church books and personal journals. The resource material is opulent. It includes material intended for public audience and for private reflection. It embraces confessional statements and congregational or personal piety. It ranges over doctrine and piety and discipline and worship and so much more. Here we have an evocative and eclectic collection.

The extracts range across church life, ministry and relationships to other Christians, and also document views on society and the political system. The nineteenth century contains nearly a third more texts and the larger extracts appear in the earlier volume. The eighteenth century has a section on philosophy (largely from rational dissenters) whilst the nineteenth century carries a section on public issues reflecting the increasing sense of influence and political confidence that growing membership nurtured. Some texts illustrate inter-denominational enterprises, for example the Evangelical Alliance Basis of Faith. Here household names (at least to historians of nonconformity) rub shoulders with the domestic affairs of church records and expressions of personal piety. There is a name index but no cross-referencing of subject matter.

Tidy definition can be a difficulty. Protestant Nonconformist sounds so seductively simple but the selections illustrate the blurred edges. It is relatively straightforward to trace the progress of the Three Denominations and the Quakers, born in social upheaval and upheld in barely legal gatherings during the Restoration. They moved from illegality to toleration whereas later groups started in toleration albeit facing opposition, sometimes from Old Dissent. What counts as Protestant Nonconformity? Why Swedenborgians but no Muggletonians, Methodist Unitarians but no Independent Methodists, for example? The dialogue with the Evangelical Revival is acknowledged by contributions about Wesley, Whitefield and the Moravians but the influence of Principal Edwards is barely noted.

Within the body of nonconformity as presented, there are differing views on Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, soteriology and the Trinity that might lead the outside observer to conclude that the only common thread between the

tribes of Nonconformity was that they were not subject to the structure, doctrine and discipline of the Established Church and they were not Roman Catholics.

It is very good to have this series. It brings texture and detail to the narratives of nonconformity. But who is this series for? In his preface Professor Sell suggests that it will be an appetiser for students and a stimulus to further quarrying. We may hope for such serendipity. The volumes offer a welcome mat of nonconformist history but it remains to be seen whether those other than the confessional historian and academic researcher will wish to enter. I suspect that the price of the series will deter and most access will be though libraries and institutions, thus limiting the readership. And if it is not to be solely an eloquent headstone, what of its significance to those churches, leaders and members today who stand in the line of descent of Protestant Nonconformists?

Stephen Copson

***Foreign Encounters: English Congregationalism, Germany and the United States c1850–c1914: The Congregational Lecture 2006.* By Keith Robbins. Pp 24. The Congregational Memorial Hall Trust (1978) Ltd. available from Dr Williams's Library, 14 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0AG. £2.00. ISSN 0963–181X.**

Professor Robbins surveys the foreign travels of a number of leading English Congregational ministers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As he points out, some of these are Scots whose pastorates or college principalships are English. He also reminds us that Congregationalism is not merely a largely English-speaking phenomenon, but a product of the peculiar nature of the English Reformation. (The Welsh unfortunately are not mentioned here—presumably due to the constraints of a one-hour lecture.) The introduction—two fifths of the lecture—mostly describes the formation of the International Congregational Council and the "Atlantic" nature of Congregationalism whilst pointing out that Britain remained part of Europe and was affected by continental developments. Apart from political and military developments, these include the enormous importance of German theologians, a fact Robbins does not state explicitly, though he informs us that often a minister's first visit to Germany would be to study theology there upon the recommendation of their tutor at home. Robbins informs us that, whilst some ministers made visits both to Germany and the USA, most visited either one or the other. In a number of incidental remarks we learn also of the propensity of ministers to holiday in Switzerland, often enjoying views of Mont Blanc.

It is unfortunate that in this *Congregational Lecture* Robbins twice uses "Congregationalist" incorrectly (p12 and 19) when "Congregational" would be correct. He also confuses Charles Berry who was not secretary of the Congregational Union with his son, Sidney, who was. There are also a couple of occasions when "he" is used ambiguously, requiring careful reading to divine

who exactly is meant. In his references to the unions of Congregationalists with other denominations in various countries there is no recognition of the many in those places who believed that the distinctive witness of Congregationalism could only be maintained by remaining outside those unions and thus did not join them.

This is, however, an interesting survey with many useful nuggets of information. It serves to confirm the author's view of British ambiguity towards Europe in particular and "the foreign" in general.

Ian Black

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

The Baptist Quarterly (vol 41 no 6 April 2006)
Donald Goertz "Immigration, Evangelism and Exclusion: Tensions in the Canadian Baptist Vision". Christine Lumsden "A Family's Service: The Andersons of Bristo Place, Edinburgh—Part 2". Stephen Wright "Edward Barber (c1595–1663) and his Friends". Stephen Copson "Significant Questions about Baptist Origins: a review article".

(no 7 July 2006)
Ian M Randall "English Baptists of the 20th Century". Jonathan Calvert "Reginald William Waddelow: 'A man of no ordinary dimensions' ". Stephen Wright "Edward Barber (c1595–1663) and his Friends—Part 2". Sean Winter "Tracks and Traces: a review article".

(no 8 October 2006)
Karen E Smith "The Baptist College in Montreal, 1836–1849: The British Connexion, with special reference to the contribution of the Baptist Missionary Society". Sybil Phillips "A Northamptonshire Lacemaker: An introduction to the Life, hymns and poetry of Eliza Westbury (1808–1828)". Kara Blankenship "The Role of Women in the Church: *The Sword and the Trowel* and *General Baptist Magazine*, 1865–1891—Part 1". Paul Dew "C H Spurgeon's Funeral, 1892: An Early Example of Public Order Planning".

(vol 42 no 1 January 2007)
Christopher J Ellis "Gathering Struggles: Creative Tensions in Baptist Worship". Kara Blankenship "The Role of Women in the Church: *The Sword and the Trowel* and *General Baptist Magazine*, 1865–1891—Part 2". Larry J Kreitzer "A 'Famous Prank' in Oxford: The Jacobite Riots of 1715 and the charge of sexual scandal". R E Davies "Robert Thorner". "Cote Baptist Chapel, Oxfordshire".

(no 2 April 2006: part 1)
Paul S Fiddes "The Place of Christian Theology in the Modern University". Peter Shepherd "Spurgeon's Children". Karen Smith "Women in Cultural Captivity: British Women and the Zenana Mission". Timothy Whelan " 'I am the Greatest of the Prophets': A new look at Robert Hall's mental breakdown, November 1804".

(part 2)
Ken R Manley " 'To the Ends of the Earth': Regent's Park College and Australian Baptists". D W Bebbington "Baptist Members of Parliament: A supplementary note". Geoffrey R Breed "Shakespeare's Walk Baptist Church, London". Faith Bowers "A Deaconess Marries". Ruth Gouldbourne "Being Human: review of the Whitley Lecture 2006".

The Journal of the Friends Historical Society (vol 61 no 1, 2006)
Sheila Wright "Town and Country: Living as a Friend in Urban and Rural Yorkshire 1780 - 1860". Kenneth L Carroll "American Quakerism's 350th Birthday: A look at its Maryland Birth Pangs". Kees Nieuwerth and Fritz Renken (translated and edited by Marieke Faber Clarke) "A Plea for Freedom of Religion, William Penn and Friends in Emden". Elizabeth Alley "Penn's 'Solicitous Thoughts' for Europe". David Matthews "Quaker Shillings". Claus Bernet "Corder Catchpool (1883–1952): A Life Between England and Germany".

The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society (vol 7 no 8 June 2006)
Malcolm J Harrison "Daniel West: George Whitefield's Forgotten Trustee". Stephen Orchard "Christian Philanthropy in London 1830–1850". Nigel Lemon "Cross-Border Congregationalism—Benevolent Imperialism and Shared Independence: The first Half-Century of the North Wales English Congregational Union". Paul D Walker "Snapshot Survey of Listed URC Churches":

(no 9 November 2005)
S J D Green "Was there an English Religious Revival in the 1950s?" David Keep "David Culy: A Reappraisal". Nigel Lemon "A Congregational Soap: Some Product of a Nineteenth Century Blackcountry Manse".

Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society (vol 55 part 5 May 2006)
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The Strict Baptist Historical Society Bulletin (2006)
Michael Haykin "Abraham Booth and his Sermon against The Slave Trade".

Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society (vol 24 no 1 April 2007)
Alison Kennedy "Paths to History—John Kenrick and the transformation of Unitarian thought". Thórunn Erlu Valdimarsdóttir "Mathias Jochumsson—national poet and Unitarian Protégé". Tony Cross "A Unitarian ministry of 'quite special happiness'—R R Suffield in Reading,". Notes: "James Martineau and the USA".

(Supplement to vol 24 no 1 April 2007)
"Obituaries of Unitarian Ministers 1800–1849—Index and Synopsis" compiled by Alan Ruston

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