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EDITORIAL

Of our contributors, Professor Cross, who this year is President of the Ecclesiastical History Society, is in the Department of History at the University of York; Professor Matar, formerly of the American University, Beirut, is currently at the Florida Institute of Technology's Department of Humanities; Mr. Valentine is Head of Religious Studies at Bradford Grammar School; Dr. Argent is Minister of Trinity Congregational Church Brixton and Dr. Willmer is in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Leeds.

Of their contributions, Professor Cross's paper was delivered at York on 1 July as the Society's Annual Lecture for 1989. Since 1972 the exigencies of the Assembly's timetable and, sometimes, the inconvenience of the Assembly's location, have had a depressing effect on attendance at the Society's Annual Meeting and Lecture although not on the quality of the lectures themselves. York was not an exception to these rules. Professor Cross's distinction as a church historian of early modern England needs no rehearsal here. Her

presence and lecture at York were marvellously apt. Her theme is a contextual one for this Society, such a theme as one has often pondered but done nothing about. Dr. Argent's paper on Albert Peel is a late centenary tribute. Our Society's Congregational predecessor produced no more representative figure and, as is the way with representative figures, none, then or since, has approached him. Peel would have relished Professor Cross's lecture and he would have welcomed Mr. Valentine's paper as a useful note to add to our cumulative knowledge. Professor Matar's paper would have perplexed him. What Professor Matar discerns in the work of Peter Sterry speaks directly to more in this generation than would have thought of looking for it in earlier generations. Does that fashionable element render it suspect? Was Sterry no more than, as one commentator remarks, "a Platonist cookie of a rare and interesting kind who tends to appear on p.3 of books on the Cambridge Platonists; but above all, surely, a cookie"? Perhaps future articles will hammer this out.

NOTES AND QUERIES

The social and economic historian, W.H. Chaloner (1914–1987), is commemorated in the latest *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* (Vol. 85, 1988). Readers of this *Journal* will relish the tributes of pupils and colleagues in part because here is a celebration of one of the last thoroughbred members of that remarkable Manchester School, the Manchester Department of History, in part because his history was a consequence of his upbringing. He was born in Crewe, the son and grandson of skilled railway workers, father a Congregationalist, mother a Baptist, living in Gladstone Cottage. Education was in his bones. So was a fierce, affectionate, independent, healthily sceptical sense of place. Chaloner's seventh publication was a history of Crewe Congregational Church (1947) and his first major work was *The Social and Economic Development of Crewe 1780–1923* (Manchester U.P. 1950). English Nonconformity has formed a succession of distinguished economic historians, from W.J. Ashley (1860–1927), who held the first chair of economic history in the English-speaking world (at Harvard from 1892 to 1901) to T.C. Barker (professor emeritus at London). Manchester's reputation for economic history owes most to T.S. Ashton (1889–1968), whose family was nurtured in the heart of Albion, Ashton-under-Lyne, and his brother-in-law Arthur Redford (1896–1961), who directed Chaloner's first professional steps. Eric Robinson of the University of Massachusetts captures both the man and his work with a sentence which any historian must covet: "His eyes were not obscured by smoked lenses and, though his hearing was not good, he heard the truth when it was spoken clearly."

James Parsons (1799–1877) was minister at Lendal Chapel, York, from 1822 to 1839 and at Salem Chapel thereafter. He gained a national reputation for pulpit oratory in part at least because his weak voice compelled attention. A notebook

containing seven of his sermons, numbered serially 226–232 and dated from 22 June 1845 to 25 January 1846, has descended from one of his regular hearers, Elias Yelland Mann (1800–64), coach builder of York, to Richard Harland, Mann's great-grandson, of Four Winds, Intake Lane, Grassington, Yorkshire.

Dr. Edwin Welch, 7487 Forest Turn, Lantzville, B.C., VOR 2H0, Canada, is anxious to locate the diaries of John Reynolds (1740–1803). These diaries formed the basis of an article by Irene Fletcher in *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, Vol XVIII No.2, August 1957 pp. 59–68. That article states that the diaries had been deposited with the (then) London Missionary Society, but recent enquiry both at the London School of Oriental and African Studies and at Livingstone House has proved unavailing. Dr. Welch's particular concern is with Robert Keen, a trustee of Whitefields Tabernacle, who figures prominently in the printed extracts. Reynolds, a father and founder of the London Missionary Society, found Lady Huntingdon to be "a very amiable lady... A sweet mixture of dignity, affability, courtesy and piety".

A METAMORPHOSIS OF MINISTRY: FORMER YORKSHIRE MONKS AND FRIARS IN THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH PROTESTANT CHURCH

"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest". Time and again during the course of the sixteenth century English Protestant reformers had recourse to this saying of Jesus. They believed, perhaps too optimistically, that the word once preached would be accepted by the people, and constantly lamented the dearth of educated Protestant ministers. Historians have recently been questioning whether in fact the laity did harbour resentment towards the late medieval church on quite the scale which used to be supposed: if they are correct, even more attention needs to be directed towards the chief agents of religious change, the clergy. Briefly during the reign of Edward VI and then much more concertedly in that of Elizabeth some higher churchmen and royal servants combined to institute a coherent programme for the training of Protestant ministers in the grammar schools and the two universities. In the first generation of the English Reformation, however, such a long term scheme could not meet the needs of the hour. The church and state had no alternative but to employ erstwhile catholic priests, the religious as well as the seculars, in the mammoth task of Protestant evangelism. Sometimes the magnitude of an undertaking can be more readily grasped when its regional implications are understood and the local scene can often illuminate the history of the nation.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the way in which former monks and friars in the diocese of York in the sixteenth century at one period advanced the spread of Protestantism, and then at another, later stage proved a substantial obstacle to its implementation.¹

Around 1535, before the compiling of the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, which set out in minute detail all the possessions of the English church, and before a single monastery had capitulated to the crown, a young Yorkshire gentleman, Sir Francis Bigod, published a remarkable little book entitled *A Treatise concernyng Impropriations of Benefices*. A ward of Wolsey, Bigod had benefited from a thorough humanist education in London before proceeding to the Cardinal's recently founded college at Oxford. There, quite contrary to his guardian's intentions, he had come into contact with Lutheranism. Enthusiastically adopting the new teachings he went on to appoint as his chaplain Thomas Garret, one of the first of Luther's disciples in England. Consequently it is rather less strange than might at first appear that a northerner should have been voicing concern over the financing of the parochial clergy. In these very early days of religious change Bigod did not think it incongruous to approach Henry VIII, "by whose great and inestimable diligent labour, charge, study and pain we be delivered from the hard, sharp and ten thousand times more than judicial captivity of that Babylonical man of Rome, to the sweet and soft service, yea, rather liberty of the gospel", to gain redress from "the intolerable pestilence of impropriations of benefices to religious persons." In the past, he reminded the King, virtuous men had donated tithes so that the parson might study and then minister to his people the pure word of God, but the religious orders by "gleeking and gleaning, snatching and scratching, taching and patching, scraping and raking together of almost all the fat benefices within this realm" have "destroyed this most godly and holy provision." "Do we not say such an abbot is parson here, such a prior is parson here? Yea, such a prioress is parson here?" "Is not this abomination?" he concluded, "Is this tolerable?" For Bigod the solution lay in the King depriving the monasteries of their impropriations "to the end that the true religion of Christ might thereby something be set up and advanced, and sufficient company of the ministers of God's true word provided for in all parts."²

It cannot have been an accident that a Yorkshireman should have felt this urgent desire to draw the attention of the recently declared Supreme Head of the English Church to the evil of impropriations. In the diocese of York about two thirds of parish livings had been appropriated to religious houses and this in its turn can partly be explained by the abundance of monasteries in the county.

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- 1 *Authorised Version of the Bible* Matthew 9 vv 37, 38; see in particular J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, Oxford, 1984; C. Haigh, *The English Reformation Revised*, Cambridge, 1987, chapter 1.
 - 2 A.G. Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York, 1509-1558*, London, 1959, pp 58, 69-72. The spelling of sixteenth-century English has been modernised in all quotations.

Since the Norman conquest the Benedictines had established five houses in Yorkshire including the important and very wealthy St Mary's Abbey in York, Selby Abbey and Whitby Abbey and the Cistercians no less than eight, Byland, Fountains, Jervaulx, Rievaulx, Kirkstall, Meaux, Sawley and Roche. The Augustinian canons maintained eleven priories, the Gilbertines four and the Premonstratensians three. There were in addition two Charterhouses at Hull and Mount Grace, a single Cluniac priory at Pontefract, and a Grandimontine abbey at Grosmont. The friars similarly had made their presence felt from early in the thirteenth century, the Dominicans, the Franciscans and the Carmelites all having five convents, the Austins three and the Trinitarian friars one. Although some of these foundations were small and poorly endowed others were large and very rich. Between them in 1535 they contained in the region of a thousand religious, around eight hundred monks and a hundred and fifty friars.³

Committed Protestant though he was, Bigod had called upon Henry VIII to reform, not abolish, the monasteries. His plan had been to divert their superfluous wealth to the needs of the parochial ministry. When he saw the crown confiscating ecclesiastical lands and goods for secular purposes, he became bitterly disillusioned with the royal supremacy and joined the Pilgrimage of Grace in the vain hope of winning the commons over to the cause of a properly financed, reformed church of England. Bigod's revolt cost him his life: he died in 1537 three years before the last of the Yorkshire monasteries had fallen to the crown. The dissolution did absolutely nothing to advance his scheme for ameliorating the lot of the parish clergy; indeed, it probably made the situation worse, since the church nationally and locally had now to absorb a host of conservative clerics so precipitously thrown onto the ecclesiastical market.

It would, however, not be altogether accurate to imply that all the thousand or so Yorkshire monks and friars expelled from their communities in the 1530s still remained wedded to their calling. Yorkshire in the early sixteenth century was rather less insular, less isolated from national developments than has sometimes been suggested. Just as Bigod himself had been exposed to the "new learning" in both London and Oxford so at the two English universities a handful of Yorkshire monks and friars had also come into contact with the new educational and theological trends. Luther himself had been an Augustinian monk so it is scarcely surprising that some English members of his order sympathised with the German reformer. Robert Barnes, one of the most forward Protestants in England in the 1530s, had in the previous decade been warden of the Cambridge Austin friary. In addition to Thomas Garret, Bigod brought into

3 Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, p 74. The figure of around a thousand religious is compiled from a count of those clerics who appeared on the pension lists at the Dissolution; it is an underestimate as the commissioners did not list the members of certain houses surrendered in 1536 and 1537.

Yorkshire another chaplain, William Jerome, an Oxford bachelor of divinity and former monk of Christ Church, Canterbury: on Cromwell's disgrace Barnes, Garret and Jerome all suffered death for their faith at Smithfield in July 1540. Yet although Bigod had written and acted as if the north was a region of unrelieved religious conservatism, in fact, as Professor Dickens demonstrated thirty years ago, it contributed a small but by no means insignificant number of clergy to the band of confessors and martyrs who pioneered the introduction of Protestant ideas into England. Like Bigod a handful of monks and friars from the diocese had been attracted to Protestantism before the dissolution and their conversion also like his in virtually all cases had happened at the university.⁴

In the early sixteenth century about five percent of Yorkshire monks and friars at some stage in their ecclesiastical careers studied at either Oxford or Cambridge, a comparatively small part of all the religious in the county, but one which exerted a quite disproportionate influence upon the church at large. Some of these monastic scholars seem never to have questioned their faith. John Eldmer (or Aylmer), for example, a monk of St Mary's, York, who took the degree of BD at Cambridge in 1530 and DD in 1536, gave his support to the introduction of humanist teaching at the Minster school in York but never seems to have interested himself in Protestantism. Even more decisively Robert Pursglove, prior of Guisborough in 1539, a some time student of Corpus Christi, Oxford, and the founder of grammar schools at both Guisborough and his birthplace of Tideswell in Derbyshire, emerged in Elizabeth's reign as an uncompromising catholic recusant. For other monks, however, humanism led directly to religious reform.⁵

Robert Ferrar, an Augustinian canon like Pursglove, and a native of Halifax, was ordained from Nostell Priory acolyte, deacon and subdeacon at York in 1524. First a student at Cambridge he subsequently transferred to Oxford where in 1533 he proceeded to the degree of BD after twelve years of study. On one of his visits to Oxford, Thomas Garret won him over to Lutheranism which he was forced to recant in 1528. Having accompanied another member of his order, and another convinced Protestant, William Barlow, on an embassy to Scotland in 1535, Barlow brought Ferrar to Cromwell's attention, who in June 1538 intervened to procure his election as prior of Nostell. The community must have found their former colleague a difficult superior. Very soon after his return Ferrar set about promoting "faithful preachers" of whom, like Bigod, he found a great dearth in the north. Then, with the dissolution of the monasteries in its last stages, in September 1538 he petitioned Cromwell to intercede with the King for the conversion of Nostell into a seminary for the education of boys in godliness

4 Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, pp 138-140.

5 C. Cross, "York Clerical Piety and St Peter's School on the Eve of the Reformation", *York Historian*, II, 1978, pp 17-18; A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford, 1501-40*, Oxford, 1974, pp 467-8, 736; H. Gee, *The Elizabethan Clergy and the Settlement of Religion, 1558-1564*, Oxford, 1898, p 262.

and good learning and for the production of ministers to preach the word of God in the northern parts of the realm. A plan as radical as this contained no inducements for the crown, and the next year Ferrar surrendered Nostell, being compensated with a prebend in York Minister in addition to his very considerable pension of £80 per annum. After Cromwell's fall he evaded a charge of heresy, to receive on the next turn of fortune's wheel in Edward's reign the bishopric of St David's. Ferrar married about this time and consequently could be deposed from his see for having broken medieval canon law even before Mary had procured the reconciliation with Rome. He never faltered in his allegiance to Protestantism and was burnt for his beliefs at Carmarthen in 1555.⁶

Robert Ferrar seems to have been the only former Yorkshire monk among the Marian martyrs. Robert Holgate, whose career until then had followed a similar path, lacked perseverance at the end. A Gilbertine canon, Holgate had been born into a minor Yorkshire gentry family at Hemsworth in 1481 and like Ferrar he had also had a distinguished academic career, becoming bachelor of divinity in 1524 and doctor of divinity in 1537. He, too, espoused the "new learning" at Cambridge, joining some of the reformers who met informally in the 1520s at the White Horse Inn. By 1534 he had been appointed Master of the Gilbertine Order and by 1536, again at Cromwell's instigation, Prior of Watton. Exactly as at Nostell, Holgate's views also proved too extreme for his canons. During his absence at the time of the Pilgrimage of Grace they declared his election invalid, choosing as his replacement the prior of the sister house of Ellerton. With government backing Holgate overcame this insurrection, and, having been named both bishop of Llandaff and President of the Council in the North in 1537, returned to oversee the surrender of the priory in December 1539. He succeeded Edward Lee as archbishop of York in 1545 and worked vigorously in Edward's reign to further religious reform in his province. Regarding education as a crucial means of inculcating Protestantism, in 1546 he founded no less than three grammar schools at York, Malton and Hemsworth. He also married in the Edwardian period, and for this was deprived of his see in March 1554 and confined to prison. Mary's restoration of Catholicism caused him to doubt all his former certainties. By this stage an old man, he eventually conformed and obtained his release, but did not live long in retirement, dying in November 1555.⁷

Even more than the monks, Yorkshire friars had taken advantage of the

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- 6 Borthwick Institute, York [hereafter B.I.] Archbp Reg 27 ff 203r, 204r; J. & J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Cambridge, 1922-7, pt I, vol II p 134; Emden, *Oxford 1501-40*, pp 202-3; *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, XIII pt I nos 1195, 1518; pt II nos 285, 1265; *L & P Hen VIII*, XIV, pt I nos 526, 558; *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Mary*, I, p 175; Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, pp 138-140.
- 7 Venn, pt I vol II p 392; *L & P Hen VIII*, XII, pt I no 201; A.G. Dickens, *Robert Holgate, Archbishop of York and President of the King's Council in the North*, Borthwick Paper no 8, York, 1955.

opportunity of studying at the university in the early decades of the sixteenth century: at least a dozen friars are known to have gone to Oxford and Cambridge during this period, though, not all necessarily returned to one of their orders' convents in the north. The precise decade when they attended the university seems to have determined whether they subsequently succumbed to Protestantism or stayed loyal to Catholicism. Brian Godson, the prior of the York Dominicans at the surrender of his house in November 1538, after his ordination to the orders of deacon and priest in 1505 and 1506, spent some time in Oxford and then in London before returning to his York convent. After its dissolution he became a chantry priest in St Mary, Bishophill, Junior and when he died in 1541 made a very traditional will, leaving a suit of vestments to his parish church, a printed mass book of the York use to a local priest and a silver spoon to the late prioress of Clementhorpe nunnery. Similarly the York Franciscan, William Vavasour, who received the orders of acolyte, subdeacon and deacon at York between 1484 and 1487, seems never to have questioned the faith in which he had been baptised. A student at Oxford as early as 1490, he incepted doctor of divinity in 1500, and had become warden of the Franciscan priory in York by 1514. Vavasour, too, stayed on in the city after the surrender of the friaries, at his death in 1544 providing for a trental of masses for a priest to pray for his soul for two years at St Peter's altar in the same St Mary Bishophill, Junior. Having given twenty-six of his books to various York priests he bequeathed the remainder of his library of well over one hundred and sixty printed and manuscript books to a former member of his house, Ralph Clayton.⁸

A younger generation of Yorkshire friars reacted very differently to the theological debates of the 1520s and 1530s. The prior of the York Carmelites at the dissolution, Simon Clerkson, made an acolyte in York in 1520, after nine years of study, incepted as bachelor of theology at Oxford in 1533. As late as July 1538 John Longland, the conservative bishop of Lincoln, had no doubts about his religious orthodoxy, commenting favourably that the priors of the White friars of London and York had been present at the trial for heresy of one Cowbridge at Aylesbury and had "showed their learning to the party, what error he was in". After the suppression of his house, when he had obtained the vicarage of Rotherham, Clerkson seems gradually to have changed his views. In 1541 the King licensed him to be non-resident for ten years so that he might preach the gospel throughout England in Latin or English as might be most appropriate for his auditory. By the end of the reign of Edward VI he had

8 Emden, *Oxford, 1501-40*, p 236; B.I. Prob Reg 11 pt I f 334r; York Minster Library [hereafter Y.M.L.] D & C Prob Reg 2 ff 196v, 198v-199r (Godson); B.I. Archbp Reg 23 ff 390r, 394v, 409r; A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, III, Oxford, 1957, p 1843; *L & P Hen VIII*, pt II no 917 (2); Y.M.L. D & C Prob Reg 5 ff 6r-7r (Vavasour); B.I. D & C Original Wills [1544/5] (Vavasour).

married, and consequently lost all his ecclesiastical livings after the accession of Mary.⁹

Whereas Clerkson seems to have curbed his pulpit rhetoric sufficiently to avoid censure during Henry VIII's last years, a fellow Carmelite scorned any such discretion. John Bale, a native of Suffolk, had taken his BD from Jesus College, Cambridge in 1529 and then served as prior of Ipswich before becoming prior of Doncaster in about 1530. Bale's assault upon the worship of saints provoked the wrath of the warden of the Grey Friars, Thomas Kirkham (or Kirkby) and for three or four years Doncaster pulpits resounded with heated debates on the doctrine of purgatory. Bale left his order some years before the dissolution, and married. On Cromwell's execution he fled with his family to Switzerland and spent the ensuing eight years in exile. He came back to England in Edward's reign and held livings in Norfolk, Suffolk and Hampshire before being consecrated bishop of Ossory in Dublin in February 1553. On Mary's accession he went into exile for a second time, using his enforced leisure to publish in Basle his history of English literature, *Scriptores Illustrium Catalogus*. He lived long enough to see Elizabeth's restoration of Protestantism and to accept a prebend at Canterbury where he died in 1563.¹⁰

Like Bale, Gilbert Berkley, a young friar in the York Franciscan convent at the time of its dissolution in the autumn of 1538, chose exile rather than conformity to Catholicism under Mary. Ordained priest only in 1535 Berkley obtained the degree of BD at Oxford in 1538. He acquired the rectory of Attleborough in Norfolk in 1547 and married some time later. Deprived of his benefice soon after Mary's accession, he took refuge in Frankfort and stayed in the Rhineland for the rest of the reign. Soon after she came to the throne Elizabeth appointed him bishop of Bath and Wells. Reputed "an excellent and constant preacher" he retained this see until his death in 1581.¹¹

The period Berkley actually spent in York may well have been short, as also seems to have been the case with Yorkshire's most famous Protestant convert from among the friars, Miles Coverdale. In contrast with Berkley, however, Coverdale was almost certainly a native Yorkshireman, being described by Bale as "patria Eboracensis". An Austin friar ordained subdeacon at York in December 1523 and deacon in the following February, Coverdale attended the university at the very time when Robert Barnes was prior of his order's convent in Cambridge. He also frequented the circle known as "Little Germany" and befriended Barnes when he was imprisoned and sent to London in 1526. About

9 B.I. Archbp Reg 27 f 196r; Emden, *Oxford, 1501-1540*, p 123; *L & P Hen VIII*, XIII pt I no 144 p 53; *L & P Hen VIII*, XVI, no 1308 (38); Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, pp 145-147.

10 *L & P Hen VIII*, IX, no 230; *Dictionary of National Biography*, III, pp 41-2; Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, pp 140-143; Venn, pt I vol I p 75; C. Garrett, *The Marian Exiles*, Cambridge, 1938, pp 77-8.

11 *D.N.B.*, IV, pp 359-360; Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, pp 147-148; Garrett, *Marian Exiles*, p 87.

this time Coverdale abandoned his order and adopted the habit of a secular priest to devote himself to evangelical preaching. Not long after he conceived his grand design of undertaking a new version of the Bible: it was Coverdale's translation which Cromwell ordered to be placed in all churches in 1535. Coverdale went into exile to avoid the conservative reaction which set in after Cromwell's death, married and ministered to a cure at Bergzabern. On Edward VI's accession he came back to England and in 1551 was promoted to the diocese of Exeter. Like so many others of that generation of Protestant bishops, he, too, lost his see on account of his marriage when Mary succeeded Edward but on the intervention of the King of Denmark was allowed to go into exile once more and eventually found his way back to his former parish of Bergzabern. When Elizabeth came to the throne he settled finally in England, and assisted at the consecration of Archbishop Parker in December 1559, though he never regained the see of Exeter, perhaps because of his scruples over vestments. Grindal collated him to the living of St Magnus by London Bridge in 1563 where he preached assiduously until his death in 1568.¹²

Their actions and their writings attest the Protestant allegiance of these former Yorkshire religious. There remains a further category of what could be called Protestants by association. Convinced Catholics looked with abhorrence at the Protestant rejection of priestly celibacy. Certainly for some clerics from Luther onwards marriage constituted an outward and visible sign of their renunciation of the Roman obedience. Under Henry VIII for a priest to take a wife was a dangerous decision which could well result in his deprivation, if not worse, so that any clergy who married at this period were almost certainly committed Protestants. The Edwardian Act of Parliament permitting clerical marriage, however, confuses the issue. Between 1549 and the autumn of 1553 when the canon law prohibition came into force once more all clergy could take advantage of the license to marry. Whatever their motivation in fact may have been, conservatives regarded those who did so as less than orthodox Catholics. Robert Parkyn, the incumbent of Adwick Le Street near Doncaster, recorded how very soon after Mary's accession "in many places of Yorkshire priests unmarried was very glad to celebrate and say mass in Latin with matins and evensong thereto, according for very fervent zeal and love that they had unto God and his laws". Going on later to describe the reconciliation between England and the papacy he observed that "heretical persons, as there was many, rejoiced nothing thereat. Ho, it was joy to hear and see how these carnal priests, which had led their lives in fornication with their whores and harlots, did lour and look down, when they were commanded to leave and forsake their concubines and harlots, and to do open penance according to the canon law, which then took effect."¹³

12 B.I. Archbp Reg 27 ff 200v, 201v; *D.N.B.*, XII, pp 364-372.

13 A.G. Dickens, "Robert Parkyn's Narrative of the Reformation", *English Historical Review*, LXII, 1947, pp 80, 82.

Given Yorkshire's reputation for backwardness in religion, therefore, it may be more than ordinarily significant that some priests in the county, including some former religious, had ventured into matrimony before Mary's accession. This may perhaps point to a greater sympathy for Protestantism, or, at least for Protestant mores, than has sometimes been allowed. A Benedictine of Monk Bretton, Thomas Wilson alias Silston, after the dissolution prebendary of Bilton in York Minster, rector of Badsworth, vicar of Silkeston and Master of St John's Hospital in Ripon, took a certain Mistress Moreton as his wife. In 1554 the ecclesiastical court at York ordered his divorce and excommunication, but he returned to his York canonry after Elizabeth came to the throne. Several other former Benedictine monks also married: in 1554 the court compelled Robert Best, then vicar of Heptonstall, to do penance at York and Heptonstall for this offence. A former Selby monk, Nicholas Rayner, then rector of Hethel in Norfolk, was deprived for the same reason while Robert Woodhouse, once of the Whitby community, was recorded early in Mary's reign as having acquired the Lincolnshire living of Roxby and to have recently wedded Katherine Pells. William Stapleton alias Bedale, at the dissolution a Cistercian of Rievaulx, lost his living at Easington in June 1554 and was made to do penance in his parish church for having married a certain Joanna Raby. Also in 1554 the Archbishop's Court deposed Richard Wagger, once an Austin canon of Haltemprice, who had been instituted to his priory's vicarage of Kirk Ella in 1534, pronouncing him contumacious for his failure to do penance for similarly having broken his vow of chastity. It began divorce proceedings on 16 April 1554 against the former prior of Marton, Thomas Godson, then vicar of Whenby and Barnby Dun, and subsequently deprived him of both his livings. It also insisted that another former Augustinian from Newburgh, then curate of Thirsk, Richard Lolly, should set aside one Dorothy Whitlocke, and that yet another Augustinian, Richard Calverd, from North Ferriby, should renounce Katherine Lowder whom he had married when serving at Kelfield. In 1555 the court forced a one time Cluniac from Pontefract, William Hutton, to divorce Isabella Duffen at Ledsham and required William Harland, a Premonstratensian from Easby Abbey, described as "clericus apud Hull" to put away Agnes Johnson. Because of bureaucratic inefficiency this probably does not form a comprehensive tally of all the Yorkshire religious who married but at the very least it indicates that a minority had emerged among the clergy prepared in the most public way possible to repudiate their monastic vow of celibacy. Some may have progressed even further and have consciously adopted other Protestant beliefs.¹⁴

Yet however much this addition of putative Protestants inflates the number of converts it remains abundantly clear that the sympathies of most of the former

14 A.G. Dickens, *The Marian Reaction in the Diocese of York: Part I, The Clergy*, Borthwick Paper no 11, York, 1957, pp 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29; G. Baskerville, "Married Clergy... in the Diocese of Norwich in 1555", *English Historical Review*, XLVIII, 1933, p 203; G.A.J. Hodgett, *The State of the Ex-Religious... in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1547-1574*, Lincoln Record Society, LIII, 1959, p 79.

Yorkshire monks and friars lay not with the new religion but with the old. Bigod may have been exaggerating when he asserted in his *Treatise concernyng Impropriations* "that he which hath once been in an abbey will ever more after be slothful; for the which cause they been called of many men, abbey louts or lubbers", but there can be little doubt that for those in the sixteenth century who were striving for Protestant reform in the county the greater part of the former religious constituted a major, if unintentional, barrier to change. A considerable number of dispossessed monks and friars managed to find a refuge very near the site of their former house. In York, for example, William Gryme of Holy Trinity Priory went on to serve as curate of the Blessed Trinity in Micklegate, that is in the secularised priory church, to which he bequeathed two great books of the Bible and an ordinary in Latin at his death in 1556. Another Trinitarian, Richard Stubbs, acquired two chantries, one in York Minster, the other in St John's, Ousebridge, the latter within a stone's throw of his former priory. In 1548 he was reported to be forty-nine years old, of good conditions and qualities, but not learned. Even after he had lost these benefices he still seems to have gone on living in the neighbourhood of York. At least three monks from St Mary's also stayed in the city. Thomas Baynes obtained the rectory of St Mary's, Castlegate. In 1550 he received a tippet in the will of Thomas Clint alias Staveley, an Oxford BD who after the surrender of his abbey had settled in the parish of St Martin's, Micklegate: in his will Clint requested burial in St Martin's church and asked his executors to continue his customary charity to the poor of the parish. For a time John Thompson held the rectory of St Wilfrid's in York, previously owned by St Mary's Abbey, before going on to act as curate of St Michael le Belfrey.¹⁵

With its multitude of poorly endowed parish churches York proved a haven for former monks such as those who, cushioned by their pensions, could afford to accept inadequately financed urban livings: outside the city many other monks also secured benefices in the vicinity of their houses. In 1539 John Harrison, a Cistercian of Byland, failed to qualify for a pension since he had already been provided by the abbot and convent with the rectory of Old Byland for life. Another Cistercian, Richard Elles, from Kirkstall Abbey, described himself as "priest of Leeds" when he died in 1550. In the same way as Elles had moved down into Leeds from Kirkstall, so another Cistercian, Thomas Jackson migrated the few miles from Rievaulx to the market town of Helmsley where until 1548 he possessed a chantry in the parish church. John Cromoke, similarly, when evicted from the Augustinian priory of Bolton became a curate

15 Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, p 72; B.I. Prob Reg 15 pt I ff 64v-65r (Gryme); W. Page, ed., *The Certificates of the Commissioners appointed to survey the Chantries in the County of York*, Surtees Society, XCII, 1895, p 459 [hereafter *Yorks Chantry Surveys*, II]; W. Page ed., *Inventories of Church Goods for the Counties of York, Durham and Northumberland*, Surtees Society, XCVII, 1897, p 93; D.M. Palliser, *The Reformation in York, 1534-1553*, Borthwick Paper no 40, York, 1971; B.I. prob Reg 13 f 683r (Clint).

in Ilkley where he ministered until well into the reign of Elizabeth, requesting burial in the chancel of the parish church when he died in 1573. John Clerkson, once a canon of Guisborough, established himself in the town after his priory's surrender, partly earning his keep by teaching grammar. He was serving as a curate in Guisborough at the time of his death in 1556 when he left 6s 8d to his successor to be prayed for annually in the pulpit for the ensuing twenty years. At Malton the former Gilbertine, Robert Emerson, had acquired the curacy of St Leonard's, New Malton, a mile or so from his former priory by 1572. Similarly Edmund Skelton, once a Premonstratensian of Grosmont, ended his life as priest in the neighbouring parish of Egton.¹⁶

The wills of five monks who died in the two decades following the dissolution illustrate how effective a bar to change the opinions of these former monks might prove. Thomas Ketland, monk of St Mary's, became vicar of Alne on the surrender of his abbey: when he made his will in December 1540 besides setting aside 8d a piece for "those that was of our monastery" he conferred a velvet tippet on another former colleague, Thomas Clint, in return for thirty masses for his soul. Requesting burial in Alne church he left boards for the repair of the steeple, a bed cover to the high altar and a mass book and vestments to Our Lady's Guild. When his former brother in religion, Thomas Singleton, drew up his will as rector of Foston eight years later, he bestowed a vestment and surplice upon Foston church, asked for £4 to be distributed for the health of his soul and gave the oversight of his books to the rector of Bulmer. John Hodgeson, once a member of the Gilbertine Priory of St Andrew in York, who had gone on to acquire the vicarage of St Mary, Bishophill Junior bequeathed all his books to Sir John Tyas in addition to remembering several other York priests when he died in 1550. A former Fountains monk, Christopher Jenkinson, obtained a chantry in Ripon until 1548. He was still in the town when he made his will in 1557 when he asked to be buried in the churchyard of St Peter and St Wilfrid and granted sums ranging from 10s to 6s 8d to four former members of his community, William Dunwell, Marmaduke Jenkinson, Thomas Greenwood and Richard Norress, and conferred the residue of his estate on the poor. Edward Heptonstall, once of Kirkstall Abbey, harboured equally conservative sentiments making provision in 1558 for a trental of masses in Leeds parish church to which he presented a popular late medieval book called *Sermones Discipuli* together with a vestment of silver and damask velvet. He consigned the books in his custody, formerly belonging to Kirkstall, to a young relative on condition that they should be immediately returned to the abbey if it were ever restored. These clerics showed no sign at all of any Protestant leanings,

16 H. Aveling, "The Monks of Byland Abbey after the Dissolution", *Ampleforth Journal*, LX, 1955, p 14; B.I. Prob Reg 13 pt II f 744r-v (Elles); *Yorks. Chantry Surveys*, II, p 508; B.I. Prob Reg 19 pt II f 535r (Cromoke); Prob Reg 15 pt I ff 242v-243r (Clerkson); J.S. Purvis, *Tudor Parish Documents of the Diocese of York*, Cambridge, 1948, p 121; B.I. Prob Reg 17 pt II f 474v (Skelton).

retaining to the end their belief in the efficacy of masses and prayers for the dead.¹⁷

Very many priests died in the recurrent epidemics of the sweating sickness of the late 1550s. The ensuing shortage of clergy made it impossible for the incoming Elizabethan Protestant bishops to take a critical attitude towards the survivors. As long as incumbents recognised the royal supremacy, they were permitted to remain in their cures and in consequence some erstwhile monks and friars continued to serve in the Yorkshire church well into the second and even the third decade of the reign. Their influence is particularly apparent in Elizabethan York. Thomas Lather, the one time cellarer and granator of Watton, had sided with the rebels during the Pilgrimage of Grace, perhaps aiding them with a grant of money from the priory, certainly participating in the election which temporarily deposed Robert Holgate, the unpopular new prior. After the dissolution he appears to have obtained first the vicarage of Bishop Burton and then that of Crambe before becoming rector of St Saviour's in York which he held till his death. Although he conformed at the time of the royal visitation of 1559 he remained "backward" in religion, an associate of the York recusant physician, Dr Roger Lee. When Lather composed his will in 1567 he still invoked the Virgin Mary before going on to bequeath two surplices to his parish church and a bonnet and gown furred with shanks to a former Austin Friar, William Motley.¹⁸

Thomas Grayson, once a canon of Newburgh priory, ministered in York well into the 1570s. If he can be identified with Thomas Grason, clerk, he was a native of the city, the son of William Grason, wiredrawer, made a York freeman in 1547, and the brother of John Grayson, a former canon of Drax. After the dissolution he procured the chantry of St Lawrence in York Minster worth a clear 55s 10d a year and in 1548 was recorded as being thirty-four years old, meanly learned, of honest conversation and qualities and to have an annual pension of £4 from Newburgh paid out of the Court of Augmentations. After he lost his chantry he served in several York parishes, being curate of St Martin's in Coney Street from 1557 until his death in 1578, curate of St Lawrence's from at least 1554 and curate of Stillingfleet also until 1578, throughout all this time drawing his two pensions. His patrons, the Stillington family of Kelfield harboured a recusant priest from Louvain, and in 1568 the High Commission charged Grayson with secreting

17 B.I. Archbp Reg 29 ff 73v-74r (Ketland); Prob Reg 13 pt I f 443v (Singleton); Y.M.L. D & C Prob Reg 3 f 31r (Hodgeson); B.I. Prob Reg 15 pt III f 55v (Jenkinson), f 59v (Heptonstall).

18 B.I. Sede Vac Reg 5A f 670r; L & P Hen VIII, XII pt I no 201; Y.M.L. J. Torre ms vols "Cleveland and the East Riding" p 436; "Archdeaconry of York" p 546; C.J. Kitching, ed., *The Royal Visitation of 1559: Act Book for the Northern Province*, Surtees Society, CLXXXVII, 1975, f 155v; P.I. Prob Reg 30 ff 30r, 45r-v (Lather); J.C.H. Aveling, *Catholic Recusancy in the City of York, 1558-1791*, Catholic Record Society, 1970, p 325.

papist books and vestments from Stillingfleet in his parish church in York.¹⁹

Another former monk, Edward Sandall, also found a haven in St Martin's, Coney Street for a time in the 1560s. Ordained subdeacon in 1527, after the dissolution he secured the chantry of St Agnes on Foss Bridge where in 1544 he was said to be aged forty-four and of mean learning and in receipt of a pension of £6 out of Kirkstall Abbey. Deprived of this chantry he seems to have maintained himself partly by teaching, partly by a curacy at Tadcaster. Far less discreet than Grayson, he appeared in the High Commission court in 1568 accused of being a misliker of the religion then established, with openly holding the erroneous opinion of praying to saints and with sowing seditious rumours among the Queen's subjects. The court suspended his teaching licence and imprisoned him in York Castle for recusancy but subsequently released him after he had taken the oath of supremacy. He was alive and still drawing his pensions in 1573.²⁰

Elsewhere in the county also some of these former religious went on offering passive if not active opposition to Protestant innovations for several decades. Alexander Jenyns, once of Drax priory, appointed by the crown to the vicarage of Bingley in July 1537, refused to acknowledge the royal supremacy on Elizabeth's accession. Yet he must subsequently have conformed since he stayed on at Bingley until he died in 1572. Thomas Marse, a former monk of St Mary's, apparently shared Jenyns' preference for the old religion. Made priest in York in 1520, after the dissolution he first gained in 1542 the rectory of Hargham in Norfolk, formerly appropriated to his abbey, which he resigned in favour of another St Mary's monk, Thomas Peyrson, in 1555. After this he migrated to the living of Truswell, subsequently becoming vicar of East Markham in the York diocese. When in 1573 he made his will, at the very same time as some of his Protestant contemporaries were calling upon Parliament to legislate for a preaching minister in every parish, he chose to transfer to the vicar of Tuxford five volumes of the medieval Catholic biblical commentator, Nicholas of Lyra.²¹

Marse's books may well once have pertained to St Mary's Abbey, and a desire to preserve their medieval monastic library seems to have been one of the reasons prompting a group of former Monk Bretton monks to continue a form

19 B.I. Archbp Reg 28 f 196r; *York Chantry Surveys*, II, p 436; Aveling, *York Recusancy*, p 324; F. Collins, ed., *Register of the Freeman of the City of York, 1272-1558*, Surtees Society XCVI, 1897, p 267; T.M. Fallow, "Names of the Yorkshire Ex-Religious, 1573", *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, XIX, 1907, p 100.

20 B.I. Archbp Reg 27 f 213v; H C AB 4 ff 4, 14, 21; *Yorks. Chantry Surveys*, II, p 468; Aveling, *York Recusancy*, pp 166-7, Fallow, "Names of the Ex-Religious", p 101.

21 N.K. Gurney and C. Clay, eds., *Fasti Parochiales, IV: the Deanery of Craven*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series CXXXIII, 1971, p 14; *Royal Visitation of 1559*, f 172v; B.I. Archbp Reg 28 f 14v; F. Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, Lynn, I, 1739, pp 366, 418; B.I. Archbp Reg 27 ff 186v, 187r, 188r; Y.M.L. Torre, "Archdeaconry of Nottingham" p 1087; Fallow, "Names of the Ex-Religious", p 100; B.I. Chancery Wills 1573 (Marse).

of community life for at least two decades after the dissolution. Soon after 1538 William Browne, the last prior of Monk Bretton took a house in Worsborough where he lived with Thomas Frobisher, his sub-prior, and two other former members of Monk Bretton, Thomas Wilkinson and Richard Hinchcliff; between them the four monks preserved a hundred and fifty Monk Bretton books. Brown and Frobisher both died in Mary's reign, the former prior still hoping that his house might be restored. Thomas Wilkinson having probably predeceased him, Richard Hinchcliff lived on until 1574. By the later 1570s only Robert Scolay alias Kirkby, who had been instituted as vicar of Brodsworth by 1557, survived. Aged seventy-eight he disclosed in a deposition in a court case in 1575 that he had dwelt in Monk Bretton monastery twenty years before its surrender, and in 1575 he was reported to have been a priest for fifty-four years. Still vicar of Brodsworth he made his will on 10 January 1579, mentioning the patent, or pension, he held of his former monastery. The books he passed on to his godson, Robert Helm, almost certainly once belonged to Monk Bretton monastic library.²²

Several other monks besides Scolay were ministering in Yorkshire until well into the third decade of Elizabeth's reign. John Dodsworth, made priest in York in 1522, "a white monk of Roche Abbey... by the space of twenty years at the least immediately before the dissolution", had acquired a chantry in Bramwith church by 1546. After he lost this living he obtained the rectory of Armesthorpe, once appropriated to Roche, which he was still enjoying in addition to his pension in 1575 when he drew up his will. Two other former Cistercians died later in the 1570s. Matthew Tort, alias Ampleforth, once of Rievaulx from where he had been ordained priest in 1535, obtained first a chantry and then a prebend in Southwell Minster and subsequently in plurality the parochial livings of Kettlethorpe in the diocese of Lincoln and Hockerton in the diocese of York. He seems never to have married, for when he made his will as parson of Hockerton he bequeathed most of his substantial estate to relatives, including £20 to Matthew Tort "to the maintenance of his learning". Robert Baynton, who may have been sent by Byland Abbey to the Cistercian house of studies in Oxford in the 1520s, for a time after 1539 served as a chantry priest in the parish of Wharrham Percy, though he never gained the parish living, being eventually instituted in 1571 to Hinderskelf and subsequently to Hutton on the Hill where he died still in receipt of his pension in 1578. He, too, never married and

22 B.I. Prob Reg 15 pt III ff 151r-152r (Browne); Archbp Reg 31 ff 80v-81r (Scolay); CP G 1775; Purvis, *Tudor Parish Documents*, p 121; J.W. Walker, ed., *Chartularies of the Priory of Monk Bretton*, YAS Record Series, LXVI, 1924, pp vi-vii, 5-9.

bestowed most of his estate upon his servant, Janet Ward.²³

Two of these former Yorkshire monks were still alive in the 1580s. John Marshall, ordained an acolyte from Selby Abbey in 1536, acquired the living of Kilnwick some years before Elizabeth's accession, but failed to appear before the royal commissioners in 1559. He must, however, have accepted the royal supremacy for he described himself as clerk of Kilnwick when he made his will and required his brother to deliver his patent to the Queen's auditor at York within a fortnight of his death. Probate of his estate was granted in March 1580. Probably the longest lived of all these Yorkshire monks with benefices within the diocese was Thomas Mooke, a one time monk of Kirkstall, who must have died an octogenarian. After the surrender of his abbey, he seems to have become a chantry priest at Thorpe by Newark. Although said to be fifty years old in 1547, he was still drawing his pension as a former Kirkstall monk in 1573. He made his will in March 1586 when he asked to be buried in Farnedon church or churchyard and, dying unmarried, divided his goods, which included arrears on his Kirkstall and Thorpe pensions, between his sisters and brothers and their children.²⁴

So in the 1580s, a full fifty years after Thomas Cromwell's officers had begun dissolving the Yorkshire monasteries, death was finally removing the last of the former Yorkshire religious from the scene. In retrospect Elizabeth's accession can be seen as marking a watershed in the influence of these former monks and friars upon the emergent Protestant church in England. From about 1530 until 1553 a minority of Yorkshire monks and friars like Coverdale, Ferrar, Bale, Berkley and Holgate enthusiastically promoted the dissemination of Protestantism at both the national and local level. Mary's reign brought their ministry to an end. Ferrar sacrificed his life for his faith; Bale, Berkley and Coverdale chose exile; Holgate alone submitted to Catholicism. After Elizabeth's restoration of Protestantism only Berkley returned to assume the office of a bishop. Through the sheer weight of numbers, therefore, the conservative former religious won the day, by their lack of commitment delaying the active propagation of Protestantism in the diocese for perhaps as much as a generation. It certainly would not be an exaggeration to claim that the religious conservatism of the city of York owed a great deal to the presence of former monks, friars and chantry priests in the poorly remunerated city livings. When

23 B.I. Archbp Reg 26 f 120r; Archbp Reg 27 ff 181v, 194r, 195r, 196r; CP G 1384/15, 1384/24; Archbp Reg 30 f 182r (Dodsworth); Sede Vac Reg 5A ff 669r, 671v; Archbp Reg 28 ff 185r, 191v; Archbp Reg 31 ff 10r-v (Torte); Prob Reg 21 f 107v (Baynton); W. Page, ed., *The Certificates of the Commissioners appointed to survey the Chantries... in the County of York*, Surtees Society, XCI, 1894, pp 135, 194; H. Aveling, "The Rievaulx Community after the Dissolution", *Ampleforth Journal*, LVII, 1952, pp 122-3; Aveling, "Byland", p 10.

24 B.I. Archbp Reg 28 f 194v; Prob Reg 21 pt II f 359r-v (Marshall); Prob Reg 23 pt I f 386r-v (Moke); *Royal Visitation of 1559*, ff 151r, 153v; A. Hamilton Thompson, ed., "The Chantry Certificate Rolls for the County of Nottingham (continued)", *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, XVIII, 1914, p 149.

Matthew Tort died at Hockerton in 1576 he asked his executors to arrange a sermon at his funeral; but in this he was quite unrepresentative of the monastic survivors. Perhaps Francis Bigod after all had correctly discerned that for successful Protestant evangelism only a cleric who ministered, taught and preached should have been permitted to hold a living, and no one else, "albeit he mumble up never so many matinses, David psalters, trentals, diriges, and such like long prayers". Although some became active Protestant ministers, by and large over the course of the sixteenth century the rank and file of the Yorkshire monks and friars did not prove an effective force for change. A metamorphosis had taken place in the ministry of a minority of former religious but for the majority this transformation never occurred.²⁵

CLAIRE CROSS

A DEVOTION TO JESUS AS MOTHER IN RESTORATION PURITANISM¹

Among all English writers in the seventeenth century, Peter Sterry (1613–1672) was unique in developing a devotion to Jesus as mother. While contemporary Puritan theologians and preachers compared God with a patriarchal figure of sternness,² Sterry, once Oliver Cromwell's chaplain and adviser, challenged this male portrayal of God. In his private letters, which remain in manuscript at the library of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, as well as in his public Restoration sermons, all of which were published posthumously, he focused on the maternal tenderness of Christ.³ This image served Sterry in portraying Jesus as a human rather than a metaphysical figure and in emphasizing to the defeated saints divine compassion at a time of persecution and political despair.

The devotion to Jesus as mother was familiar in the medieval spirituality of the continent. Writers from within the monastic and scholastic traditions, both male and female, all drew the parallel: Bernard of Clairvaux, Mechthild of

25 B.I. Archbp Reg 31 f 10r-v (Torte); Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, pp 71–2.

- 1 I am grateful to the Master and Fellows of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, for permission to quote from the Peter Sterry manuscripts.
- 2 Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, Oxford, 1964, pp. 57–63.
- 3 Emmanuel College MSS 289–295. See P.J. Croft and N. Matar, "The Peter Sterry MSS at Emmanuel College, Cambridge", *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, vol. 8 1981, pp. 42–56. I will be using the cataloguing and pagination of the MSS as corrected in the above article. Further, all contractions will be expanded and the year will be considered to begin on 1 January.

Hackeborn, Mechthild of Magdeburg, William of St Thierry and many others.⁴ But in English thought, the image was rarely used. Indeed between the beginnings of English religious literature in the fourteenth century, and the end of the seventeenth century, only Julian of Norwich, along with the anonymous author of the *Ancrene Riwe*, and an anonymous fifteenth-century writer developed the metaphor in some detail.⁵ It is therefore significant that the only other English writer to use this medieval metaphor should have been a nonconformist divine. It will be the purpose of this paper to survey the use by Sterry of this metaphor and to explain why he chose, much against the English, and particularly the Puritan current, to portray Jesus as mother.

I

That Sterry chose to compare Jesus with mother was deliberate and pragmatic: it was in direct consequence to the collapse of the revolution of the saints and the restoration of the monarchy. His nonconformity and unwillingness to renounce the spiritual goals of Puritanism were the direct factors behind his imagery. Although during the civil wars and Interregnum Sterry had focused on Christ in his political preaching, he never portrayed a gentle, motherly Christ. Rather, in his first sermon of 26 November 1645, Sterry, then an Independent member of the Assembly of Divines, pointed to Christ as the warrior who had effected the military victory over Anglicanism: Christ was the hero who had led the saints from Newbury to York until Naseby.⁶ Two years later, during the 1647 deadlock in the king-parliament-army negotiations and the fighting of "Counsailes", Sterry viewed Christ as the alchemist in the laboratory of war, "gradually" hatching from the "shell" of England's turbulence, the elixir of peace:

This Spirit [Christ] brought forth from it selfe the Creation, and still sits upon it, hatching it, till it breaks the Shell of This Darke Flesh, and spring

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- 4 See the extensive studies of the history of this image: Andre Cabassut, "Une Dévotion Médiévale Peu Connue: La Dévotion à 'Jesus notre mère'", *Mélanges Marcel Viller, Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, vol. 25, 1949, pp. 234-245; Eleanor McLaughlin, "'Christ my mother': Feminine Naming and Metaphor in Medieval Spirituality", *Nashota Review*, vol. 15, 1975, pp. 229-248; Ritamary Bradley, "The Motherhood theme in Julian of Norwich", *Fourteenth-Century English Mystics Newsletter*, vol. 24, 1976, pp.25-30; Caroline Walker Bynum, "Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother: Some Themes in Twelfth-Century Cistercian Writing", *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 70, 1977, pp. 257-285.
 - 5 Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Clifton Wolters, Penguin, 1966, pp. 151, 164; *The Ancrene Riwe*, trans. M.B. Salu, London, 1955, p. 175; *A Book of the Love of Jesus in A Collection of Ancient English Devotions in Prose and Verse*, ed. Robert Hugh Benson, London, 1904, p. 8 especially.
 - 6 *The Spirits Conviction of Sinne. Opened in a Sermon before the Honorable House of Commons*, 1645, p. 20.

forth into its owne Life and Image.⁷

In July 1649, Sterry became chaplain to Oliver Cromwell and as a result his Interregnum sermons of 1 November 1649, 5 November 1651 and 5 November 1656, interfused Christ with Cromwell. After the victory of Drogheda, Christ became "the Conqueror [whose] Garments [are] dyed Red in the Blood of his Enemies", as Cromwell certainly was; Christ was the army trainer and military strategist of the victorious saints: "who taught that New Army of Raw Souldiers to fight so, that a Royall Army was broken by them at Naseby? was it not thou, O God?" but also, Sterry implied, was it not Cromwell who had assembled the Ironsides in the 1640s? Christ became like Cromwell, a bloody slaughterer who had levelled his aristocratic enemies, "and fed upon the Flesh of Nobles, and the fat of Princes".⁸

Such an association between Christ and Cromwell served in justifying the millenarian kingdom which Sterry, along with other Independents, believed was imminent. But the death of Cromwell in 1658 and the failure of Richard to continue "the brightness of his father's glory",⁹ crushed in Sterry the millenarian expectation. As a result, Sterry withdrew from political action and in 1660, under the patronage of Lord Lisle, he established in the priory of West Sheen at Richmond a society of Puritan devotion. It was a small group consisting of his own and his patron's families, along with a number of pupils and scribes.¹⁰ Although no longer a millenarian nor a revolutionary, Sterry did not cease to be a firm believer in Christ's kingdom of the spirit. It was within the West Sheen society, shortly after the fall of the saints, that Sterry moved beyond the warrior Jesus to Jesus as mother.

II

The Restoration of Charles II signalled to Sterry the defeat of his community and their God. Indeed, the restrictions under the Cavalier Parliament of employment for nonconformists and of public worship led to the withdrawal of the church from the community at large to the family unit. As with his contemporary Philip Henry, a Presbyterian minister, the "Church" was now

7 *The Clouds in which Christ Comes. Opened in a Sermon before the Honourable House of Commons*, 1647, p. 15 and Epistle Dedicatory.

8 *The Commings forth of Christ in the Power of his Death. Opened in a Sermon Preached before the High Court of Parliament* 1650, pp. 4, 46, 51.

9 Gilbert Burnet, *History of His Own Times*, ed. Osmund Airy, London, 1897-1900, vol. II, p. 148.

10 For a study of the society, see my "Alone in our Eden: A Puritan Utopia in Restoration England", *The Seventeenth Century*, vol. II, 1987, pp. 189-198. See also Patricia Crawford for another, familial, nonconformist community: "Katharine and Philip Henry and their Children: A Case Study in Family Ideology", *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. 134, 1984, pp. 39-73.

moved into "the House".¹¹ Under such harsh circumstances, Sterry realized that his family congregation needed an image of a kindly rather than a warrior Christ.

The mother/Jesus association in the context of Restoration persecution appears distinctly in a 1662 letter by Sterry to his daughter. Sterry was consoling his daughter Frances on the death of her child. He had written in an apocalyptic tone, describing the "Earthquakes of Terrours, and Horrors" that threatened the world. He was expecting an imminent revelation of Jesus, not as warrior king, but as redeeming mother. Sterry urged his daughter to await this coming and to see in the family nucleus the centre of divine action:

Here see your Mother in this Circle, as your Jesus in a Chariot of Angells; heare her delivering it, as a secret of Love from the heart of the Godhead, as a Song sung to a golden harpe. (IV, 39)

Sterry further developed the image of Jesus as mother in letters to his son Peter.¹² In the early years of the Restoration period, Peter had shown himself to be morally wayward in his work as apprentice in London and then as sailor. Sterry wrote vigorously to his son, but significantly for a man who had preached a theology of war and massacre during the Interregnum, he did not try to frighten Peter into righteousness: there is little in the letters to his son about the fire of hell or the terror of damnation, rather there is advice, Biblical exegesis and the forgiving compassion of Jesus as mother:

Lay the mouth of your Soule by Faith to the Breasts of the Godhead laid forth in Christ, Swelling with all fulness, longing, delighting to be drawne, yea of their owne accord Spouting forth their Milky Streames into your face, and bosome. (V, 62)

Sterry repeated this sensuous image in other letters to Peter. Once when he was ill, he wrote to admonish his son for his sins and to remind him of the imminent revelation of Christ in the spiritual kingdom of the saints. He then implored Peter:

Lye ever at the breasts of the Godhead, in Christ, and draw from his fullness all Supplis, and blessings for your inward, and outward man. (V, 146-47)

When Peter finally returned to the ways of God, Sterry praised him in a letter of joy. In order to persevere in his devotion, Sterry reminded his son of the breasts of the mother God which nurtured the soul and preserved the body against sin:

Abide in the Eternall Spirit your true Mother, hang continually upon her breasts, draw forth from thence that heavenly Mylke that feedes, and nourisheth the Divine Nature in you, until all Strenth, Joy, glory and Immortality. (V, 170)

11 Matthew Henry, *Life of Philip Henry*, London, 1698, p. 75, quoted in Crawford, p. 44.

12 Because father and son shared the same Christian name, I shall refer to the former as Sterry and to the latter as Peter.

At a time when Sterry expected the imminent revelation of Christ, his only appeal to his son to prepare himself for this momentous climax of history was through the image of the motherhood of Jesus. In the decades of his power, Sterry had conceived of Jesus as the King who would destroy the enemy; now, in the years of persecution, fear and aloneness, Jesus did not promise retaliation and blood, but mother-like compassion to those who endured and persevered.

In his Restoration letters and sermons, Sterry developed a threefold portrait of Jesus' as mother: Jesus/Mother as the New Jerusalem, as Matrix and as Death.

Jesus/Mother as the New Jerusalem. In a letter to Peter expressing anticipation of the imminent coming of Jesus, Sterry recalled Isaiah's image of Jerusalem:

[T]he heavenly Jerusalem shall shall [sic] bear us upon its sides, and dandle us upon its knees. The Lord Jesus become a spirit, and exalted into the glory of the Father is this heavenly Jerusalem. My prayer is to him, that he would be a Mother, and a nurse to your inward man. He will bring forth that divine Birth in your Soule, which is himself in a spark of Glory. (III, 54-55)

The passage involves two associations with motherhood. Sterry opens with Isaiah's words in 66:12: the New Jerusalem which is an apocalyptic promise has become to Sterry, as to Isaiah, as real as a mother caressing and dandling her child. The New Jerusalem did not project itself into a future kingdom of the saints, but into an immediate relationship with God: it was not a millenarian promise but a present reality. Christ was already with the saints in England, as intimate as a mother.

To explore the second association, Sterry turned to the New Testament mystery of the Incarnation,¹³ and transformed Peter into a mother, who would bring forth from himself Jesus, his own mother. As Christ to Mary was both maker and child, so would Peter be both son to the Christ mother and maker. Indeed, in his treatise on the *Freedom of the Will* (1675), Sterry elaborated on Jesus as father, son, husband and mother of Himself. Through the reference in Isaiah to the New Jerusalem, Sterry understood a figural anticipation of Jesus who descended on the Virgin Mary to become His own father, son and mother, while also serving as husband to her:

The eternal Spirit, which is Jesus himself in his Divine Forme and Power, comes down upon, over-spreads the Virgin Mary with his Ideal force: He also becomes the seminal Virtue in her. So he springs up out of her Womb into a distinct individual man, a frail, fallen man, though without spot, in the Person of God. Thus is he Father and Son to himself; Father, and Husband, and Son to his Mother. Yea, he is also his own Mother in his

13 Sterry's use of the Biblical canon as a source of mystical imagery supports the thesis of Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Puritan and Quaker Mysticism", *Theology*, vol. 28, 1980, p. 527.

Mother, of his own flesh taking flesh from her, inasmuch as he alone fills all in all, and is the Truth of all.¹⁴

In this passage, Sterry moved from the sensuous to the biological, trying to explain how Jesus could assume all the roles assigned to Him. The mystery of the Incarnation seemed only comprehensible through sexual imagery – thus the reference to Father Jesus’s “Ideal Force” and “seminal Virtue”. But wary of possible misinterpretation of the Incarnation as a purely physical phenomenon,¹⁵ Sterry immediately turned to emphasize the metaphoric level of his imagery: Jesus as father was also Jesus as mother. There was a transcendence of biology that only God could effect. It was through God’s motherhood that the revelation of the New Jerusalem was possible.

Jesus/Mother as Matrix. In a letter to Peter, Sterry implored him to pray in order to experience “the full sweetness of the divine love.” He then added.

O my Son; let your heavenly Mother, the Mother of all life, Love, Beauty, glory from above provide dainties continually in you[r] spirit, which you may bring to me by your letters. (III, 89–90)

This image of Jesus/God as matrix appeared in the writings of Jacob Boehme, with which Sterry was deeply familiar.¹⁶ Although Sterry found theological pitfalls in Boehme’s doctrines, he admired the German mystic’s piety and devotion, especially the image of God as mother/genetrix. In *Aurora* (1656), a text which Sterry read and from which he quoted in his commonplace book in the early 1660s, there is the following comparison between God and mother:

Though they [angels] are in God’s house, and feed on the fruit of their mother... [yet] their mother is not their property, as also their mother is not the child’s property.

...

She may well also thrust the child out of her house, when the child is stubborn... Thus God may withdraw his divine power, which is externally without the angels.¹⁷

Boehme’s *The Threefold Nature* (1650) opened with two chapters on the “eternal will [which] is the mother,” and “the genetrix which is the centre, and the essence of all essences.” Boehme then elaborated on “the genetrix, of the eternal mother”, “the mother of the genetrix [who] will conceive, and bring forth a

14 Peter Sterry, *A Discourse of the Freedom of the Will*, London, 1675, p. 231.

15 The proposition that Jesus was the natural son of Mary had been prevalent since the rise of Christianity. In the late sixteenth century, Christopher Marlowe was accused of subscribing to the principle that “Christ was a bastard and his mother dishonest”, cited in Paul H. Kocher, “Marlowe’s Atheist Lecture”, in *Marlowe*, ed. Clifford Leech, New Jersey, 1964, p. 160.

16 See my “Peter Sterry and Jacob Boehme”, *Notes and Queries*, vol. 231, 1986, pp. 33–36.

17 J. Boehme, *The Aurora*, trans. John Sparrow, ed. C.J.B. and D.S.H., London, 1914, pp. 101–102.

young son".¹⁸ Sterry quoted this image of the "genetrix" into his commonplace book:

Thus the 2 Genetrixes, the W[r]ath, and the Love have set they Model in the Wisedome.

There then the Heart of God in the love[r] longed, to create this Model into an Angelicall Image, out of the Divine Substantiality, to dwell in the Wisedome of God, to fulfill the longing of the Deity, and to the eternall rejoycing of the Divine Kingdome of Joy: [sic] (1, 61)

For Boehme, the maternal image portrayed the *mysterium* of God and the ceaselessness of the creation process. It conveyed the unknowability of divine generation. For Sterry, the mother figure conveyed the homeliness of Christ – thus the use of the Isaianic word "dainties". Although the matrix was the source of all being, she was as cuddling and warm to man as a woman to her infant. For Sterry, more than for Boehme, there was a proximity between the creator God and the human mother; the omnipotent God could be understood by comparison with maternal kindness, as also the Puritan mother could be reflected through the Christ matrix. Where for Boehme the maternal character was subsumed under the cosmic matrix, for Sterry, mystic-cum-preacher and pastor, the matrix reflected the social and spiritual significance which English Puritanism had bestowed on women.¹⁹ Sterry was writing to a frightened society whose faith was often sustained, during his absence, by the mother figure: thus, he wanted to make the recipients of his letters and sermons recognize the motherhood of Christ not only in the generation of the universe, but in the motherhood within their own household at West Sheen. The Christ matrix lived in the Puritan model of Frances Sterry.

Jesus/Mother as Death. In the "great persecution" of the Restoration period, Sterry preached on themes of suffering and death. As a result, the pang of a mother's labour inspired a parallel with God's labour to create a righteous soul in man:

A Mother forgets her Sorrows so soon, as a Man-child is born into the World. Sure then God cannot forget his Delights in me, his Loves to me, so soon as He hath brought me out from Himself into this world.²⁰

This image is inspired by *Isaiah* 49:15. It was as appropriate a text for Sterry's persecution community as it had been for the Israelites in their Babylonian exile. Isaiah had introduced this God-as-mother image to strengthen his people in their despair: Sterry too found himself in an Anglican exile, and laboured to

18 J. Boehme, *The Threefold Life of Man*, trans. John Sparrow, ed. C.J.B. and G.W. Allen, London, 1909, pp. 12, 25, 570, 417.

19 For a study of the portrayal of woman in Puritan spiritual love, see William and Mallevalle Haller, "The Puritan Art of Love", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 5, 1942, pp. 250–51; Levin L. Schucking, *The Puritan Family*, trans. Brian Battershaw, New York, 1969, p. 40.

20 Peter Sterry, *The Rise, Race and Royalty of God in the Soul of Man*, London, 1683, p. 75.

maintain the faith of his congregation in a God whose love was so maternal that no amount of political or social violence could ever shake it.

The verse from Isaiah informed many images in Sterry's *corpus*: there are frequent references to the "Womb of the God-Head" from which the "New-born Spirit" emerges. Once born, the soul turns to the "Breast of the God-Head" and draws the "pure Milk of the Living World".²¹ The breasts of God convey the Gospel salvation to the man/suckling. If there is pain and grief, preached Sterry in a treatise on Psalm 45:2, Jesus will help the "grieved" and "weak" spirits, in the same way a "tender Mother taketh a beloved Child, weak, and peevish; laieth it in her lap; [and] poureth a cordial down its stomack".²²

Sterry applied a similar image to death. Because of informers at nonconformist meetings, the danger of imprisonment and death was always felt. The maternal image of warmth inspired the confidence of dying in Christ, and of submitting to His gentle sleep:

As a Child lying in its Mothers lap, a branch from the Mother bearing her Image, with its mouth at the Breast, looking upon her Face, falling asleep in her Bosom... such is a Saint dying in Jesus Christ.²³

The image suggests an association between death and mystical suckling at the Christ/mother. For Sterry, real death, by plague or on the gallows, was not a metaphor of union with God, as it was to Richard Crashaw and to the Metaphysical poets: death was the actual *via mystica* towards divine oneness. In this respect, Sterry had before him the model of his Cromwellian associates who were executed in October 1660. Many showed such a love of death that they kissed hurdle, rope and sword, used in their torture. Major General Harrison, Sterry's erstwhile ally, thanked God for His "great loving kindness and faithfulness" when he was chained on the way to death; John Carew begged the spectators to "rejoice" with him in death, to let him "enjoy" the face of Jesus in the execution which God had "prepared" for him.²⁴ From John Foxe's martyrology, Sterry reminded his congregation of Eulalia, a "good woman, a martyr" who went "with joy to the Fire".²⁵

This association between death, love and mother also appeared in Sterry's interpretation of the *Song of Songs*. During the civil wars and the Interregnum, the poem had preoccupied many a Puritan reader who invariably interpreted it in a political fashion.²⁶ Now, in the Restoration persecution, Sterry turned to read it not as a prophecy of the millennium, but as a mystical treatise. Sterry returned to the established view that Solomon's epithalamium was about the

21 Sterry, *The Rise*, p. 310.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 406.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 292.

24 Corbett, *Complete Collection of State Trials*, London, 1810, vol. V, pp. 1230, 1249.

25 *Rise*, p. 476; *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, ed. George Townsend, New York, 1965, vol. I, pp. 270-71.

26 See Thomas Brightman, *A Commentary on the Canticles or the Song of Solomon*, Amsterdam, 1644; Nathaniel Homes, *A Commentary Literal or Historical, and Mystical or Spiritual on the whole Booke of Canticles*, London, 1652.

union between the church/soul and Christ.²⁷ Indeed, on his deathbed, Sterry spent his last months dictating and correcting “paraphrastically” rendered dialogue between the soul and Christ. Taking his cue from chapter 8:2, he compared Christ, “the Spouse”, to mother and death. The spouse addresses the beloved:

I by my Beauties’ bright, and Love’s sweet Power
 Will lead thee on, and bring thee to the Bower
 Of my bright Mother, who shall mee inspire
 With Love’s high skill, and with his purest fire.
 Now earth, and flesh no more are fatall Tombes
 To Beauties Light, but Teeming Virgin Wombes.
 They living Temples are, figures divine
 Where the substantiall Glories live, and shine.
 Death sweet as Life; Night faire as day
 Now in each other’s perfum’d bosomes play (IV, 317).

Inasmuch as the mother was the physical glorification of Christ, so was death: Christ was both death and mother, as affectionate as the latter, as peaceful as the Bridegroom.

III

Puritanism assigned the mother/wife an active role in family spirituality, and the letters of Sterry exhibit this role. Indeed, the more Restoration persecution curtailed the public functions of Puritans, the more it expanded the role of the father and the mother within the family. At West Sheen, Frances the mother/wife, emerges from the MSS pages as a spiritual equal who responsibly undertook family duties during her husband’s absence. Sterry grew to depend upon her and wrote to her revealing a relationship that was growing from marital participation into spiritual communion: “My Dearest Love, and most truly sweetest of all earthly Sweets,” he opened one of his letters to her (IV, 136). It is noteworthy that in seeking parallels for himself and Frances, Sterry neither turned to Old nor to New Testament historical personalities – as other Puritans frequently did to Rachel, Rebecca and Sarah – but to the *Song of Songs* where the beloved is the Shulamite and the lover is Christ. Only within this allegorical epithalamium could Sterry find the model for himself and his wife. That is why the letters are significantly lacking in contemporary expressions of male superiority over the female, or in husbandly rule over the wife. Like his mentor Edmund Spenser, Sterry idealized the marital relationship as the soul’s journey towards God.²⁸

27 George L. Scheper, “Reformation Attitudes toward Allegory and The Song of Songs”, *PMLA*, vol. 89 (1974), pp. 551-562.

28 Schucking, *The Puritan Family*, p. 113.

The wife/mother became the mystical medium, and so did the daughter. Like her namesake mother, Frances assumed for Sterry a devotional function. The way to God was effected by filial as by marital love. In one of his pre-Restoration letters from Whitehall, Sterry wrote to the daughter about a vision he had of the "Saint... bathed in the pure, pretious Blood of Christ." He then wondered about this vision:

What a sight is this? This is that sight, which mee thinckes I already see in you, and am ravished with the Sight of you. (IV, 36)

To be enravished with God began in enravishment through the daughter. Even from his hiding place, in the months of despair after the Restoration of Charles II, Sterry continued to be "filled with the rich, and ravishing sence of that glory, which dwells in you" (IV, 11). Such a view of his daughter was discordant with prevailing attitudes in England towards daughters, often seen as burdens on family wealth and reputation.²⁹ For Sterry, the daughter like her mother, was well-read, reliable, serious and devout, and thus qualified to conduct him to the "Beatific Vision": "I rejoyce", he opened a letter to his daughter on 3 December 1660. "to thincke of you, because then I thincke of Christ in you, and you in him." (IV, 88) And he concluded:

Meete your Mother and mee by Day, and by Night in Sions Fields. Pray continually, and Pray for us, who walke with God in the Spirit, and rejoyce in our Lord Jesus, according to the Visits of our Bridegroom, and his grace poured forth in us (IV, 90).

Sterry portrayed woman as priest/intercessor. During the plague on 9 November 1665, he wrote to his daughter in an apocalyptic anxiety about "Earth-quakes, Warres, Changes". Sterry was then awaiting the revelation of Christ, convinced that the plague, the poverty, and the persecution were all signs that Jesus would imminently redeem His enduring flock. Towards the end of the letter, Sterry asked Frances to intercede on his and her mother's behalf before Christ. The daughter assumed a soteriological office:

... appeare in Spirituall Glorys before your Bridegroom upon his Throne of Love. There beare our Names, and Persons before Him engraven upon those Glorys. There behold us in the glorys of His Person. (IV, 16; cf. IV, 23).

In another letter Frances is invoked by her father to accept the role of priest as her "High calling":

This is your worke, to bee a Priest to God, sanctifying all things, offering up all things, as a sacrifice by Spirituall Fire into the Glory of God. (IV, 44)

At a time of danger and persecution, Sterry turned to his daughter for hope. It was a sorry time of flight: Sterry felt the anxiety of aloneness and of a faith dissociated from the living members of Christ. Deprived of support from fellow ministers whose mobility had been curtailed by the Five Mile Act, Sterry turned

inward to the family: Restoration preachers found that they had to break the barriers of sex, age and authority and to reverse social and religious roles. In his letters to Frances, Sterry often inquired about his aging wife, and about his sons, grandchildren and son-in-law. He was worried but he realized that only his daughter could sustain the heroic endurance of the saints. Significantly, he refrained from offering her the typical parental advice on behaviour and submission. For Sterry, woman, this woman, was a spiritual equal – and Frances was well-prepared to lead both Sterry and the community in devotion. Having witnessed women preachers during the Interregnum,³⁰ Sterry recognized the role which his daughter now assumed: slowly, she was becoming the mystical medium for West Sheen. In this nonconformist's journey to God, there was no ultimate distinction between male and female: in the 1660s, the daughter had become spiritually and ecclesiastically liberated, and could as well effect the mystical union as the father:

Ah; My Daughter you doe not only open these Prospects to us, but as one of these Spirits of Love, and Glory, descending, Coming from these Heavenly Abodes to that End, you take us by the Hand, invite us, leade us into the Dances, the Feasts, the Walkes, the Thrones. (IV, 96; cf. IV, 26)

IV

In the *corpus* of Peter Sterry, the Puritan devotion to Christ attains a unique sensibility. In the midst of Restoration fear, anguish and family separation, Sterry deliberately developed an image of Jesus that no other contemporary writer had used. Jesus as mother was for Sterry the only image that could convey hope to the persecuted nonconformists after 1660. By choosing this image, Sterry not only broke from his previously militaristic portrayals of Jesus, but demonstrated that Puritan imagination, or at least one Puritan's imagination, was perfectly capable of balancing the elements of God's transcendence and immanence: the devotion to Jesus as mother challenges the cold rationality that is often associated with Protestant theology or the "popular notion of a Puritan".³¹ It also undermines the alleged "gloomy Puritanism" of Restoration spirituality.³² It offers proof of the vitality and resilient diversity of Puritan devotion. At a time of insecurity, Sterry contemplated the mystery and the tenacity of Jesus' love: the mystery of loving without merit, and the tenacity of loving even after defeat and sin. For Sterry's community of bewildered saints and wayward offspring, only such love of Jesus as mother could inspire perseverance in the "great persecution".

N.I. MATAR

30 Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 1st ed., 1972, Penguin ed. 1975, chapter 15.

31 McLaughlin, "Christ my Mother", p. 246 and Nuttall, "Puritan and Quaker Mysticism", p. 519.

32 Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, p. 322.

THE INDEPENDENT YEARS OF WESLEY'S JOHN BENNET: 1752-1759

John Bennet has been described as "the most outstanding of Wesley's young preachers".¹ By 1749 he had formed a well regulated circuit of religious societies extending through parts of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire and Derbyshire. In a letter to John Wesley he could state:

My circuit enlarges daily, so that I shall have near two hundred miles to ride each fortnight.²

Not only was Bennet tireless in his evangelistic labours in the northern counties but he was also instrumental in the establishing of the Wesleyan system. It has been argued that it was mainly due to his influence that the circuit quarterly meeting was introduced into Methodist polity.³

Despite his general usefulness, however, Bennet has largely been neglected by historians. This failure to examine the life of such an active preacher is partly explained by the fact that by 1752 Bennet had broken all connection with the people called Methodists, and any highlighting of the work of Bennet might cast a shadow on that of the Methodist leader. This secession of Bennet from the ranks of Methodism had been inevitable since the emotional furore resulting from his marriage to Grace Murray in October 1749, a woman already promised to Wesley himself. The relationship between Bennet and Wesley had also been shipwrecked on the Scylla of doctrine and the Charybdis of authority. Although originally agreeing with his spiritual leader on the tenets of "general redemption", Bennet, due mainly to the influence of George Whitefield,⁴ had by the date of his marriage, fully embraced the doctrine of Election as the cardinal point of his theology, and entered the lists of debate with Wesley. The final break occurred in 1752 when Bennet, resenting Wesley's authoritarian attitude, disputed Wesley's possession of the preaching house at Bolton and his method of restricting the use of the pulpit to preachers who expounded Wesleyan doctrine. On 3rd April of that year, after preaching at Acresfield, the Methodist Chapel in Bolton, Bennet ended his sermon by spreading out his arms and accusing Wesley of preaching "nothing but Popery, denying justification by faith, and making nothing of Christ".⁵ Bennet then left the church, taking with

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- 1 A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, Edinburgh 1970, vol. ii, p. 338.
 - 2 J. Bennet to J. Wesley, Bolton, March 6th, 1750, Letterbook, Methodist Archives, Manchester.
 - 3 F. Baker, "John Bennet and Early Methodist Polity", *Proceedings W.H.S.* vol. xxxv, March 1965 pp. 1-4.
 - 4 John Wesley wrote to Bennet from Newcastle, 10 October, 1749: "I have been fearful sometime least your conversing much with Mr. Whitefield sho'd incline you to his opinions, which (whether they are right or wrong) would exceedingly hinder your usefulness among the societies". Bennet's Letterbook p. 75, Methodist Archives, Manchester.
 - 5 John Bennet's Fragment Diary, April 1-4, 1752, Methodist Archives, Manchester.

him 107 out of 126 members of the Bolton Methodist Society.

A detailed account of Bennet's early itinerant preaching can be constructed from what he himself wrote.⁶ However, Bennet's activities during the last years of his life can only be reconstructed with difficulty, especially after his break with Methodism. The available evidence supports the idea that John Bennet continued his labours and as a result became the founder of Congregationalism in Bolton. Two days after his dramatic departure from the Wesleyan Society Bennet commenced preaching at the nearby Market House where he soon assembled an "extraordinarily large congregation".⁷ Other meetings were held at the house of a friend, Richard Ashworth, and occasionally in the old meal house. This group, led by Bennet, had its effect on the people of Bolton. On one occasion, Bennet states in his diary:

Our congregation was numerous, and although several intoxicated persons came, seemingly, with a desire to oppose, yet they stood like lambs and pulled one and all their hats from their heads.⁸

The Market Hall at Bolton soon became too small to accommodate Bennet's people, and therefore it was proposed to erect a suitable chapel as a place for worship. Accordingly, on 8th September, 1753, a plot of land was leased on nearby Duke's Alley, and work began on the construction of a Meeting House. The following year "a large room" had been opened "without gallery, furnished with benches and had small leaded windows."⁹ Although the new chapel was "very rude and primitive and by no means imposing" it soon became the centre of Bolton Congregationalism. Bennet not only provided the leadership and expository preaching needed by the Independents but was also instrumental in drawing up the constitution of the new church, basing it on Calvinistic doctrines and the Westminster Confession.

Bennet's congregation was greatly increased as a result of the theological controversy which had divided the Presbyterian churches of Bolton in 1753. Dissatisfied by the unorthodox views of their new minister, Thomas Dixon, and their inability to obtain one sympathetic to Calvinism, some members of the Presbyterian church on Bank Street united with the Independents.¹⁰ Dixon who had ministered in Bolton from April of that year, fully embraced Socinianism and died twelve months later at the age of thirty-two.¹¹

It was at the time of the polemic relating to Bolton Unitarianism that Bennet, acting on the earnest requests of those attached to his societies, and the useful

6 Bennet's Auto-biographical Journal and the numerous fragment diaries preserved at the Methodist Archives.

7 W.H. Davison, *Centenary Memorials of Duke's Alley Chapel*, Bolton, 1854, p. 44.

8 John Bennet's Diary, 18 May, 1752.

9 Davison, *Memorials*, p. 41.

10 F.W. Peaples, *History of St. George's Road Congregational Church*, Bolton, 1913, p. 31.

11 For Thomas Dixon (1725-1754) see *Dictionary of National Biography* sub "Thomas Dixon M.D. c.1680-1729".

advice of Dr. James Clegg, the minister at Chinley,¹² decided to obtain the necessary licence for ministerial ordination. In his diary Bennet writes:

In the year 1754 – observing that the people I frequently visited very much wanted organizing being often disturbed with hearing the truth blasphemed and not having the ordinances amongst them I was moved by several to take upon me the ministry to qualify myself by Law for the office.¹³

Accordingly, application was made first to the Quarter Sessions at Bakewell, only to be refused. A second application, this time to the Quarter Sessions at Chesterfield, met a similar response. Dr Clegg, hearing of Bennet's difficulties, offered him a letter of commendation to Justice Haughton at Preston, and the appropriate licence was finally granted. Shortly after the acquisition of this certificate, Bennet informs us:

A small meeting house was built for me at Warburton in Cheshire and a congregation was soon raised.¹⁴

There is now no trace, either physical or literary, of an Independent Church at Warburton. It has been argued that "the chapel at Warburton was a room in Bennet's own house".¹⁵ Such an idea is possible yet it does not seem to be consistent with Bennet's testimony, nor does it answer the question as to why he did not state unequivocally that he held meetings in his own home rather than use the words "meeting house". One of the earliest references to the appearance of Dissent in that area is to Joshua Barnet, who after being ejected from his living at Wrockwardine in Shropshire, "moved into Cheshire some years before his death and preached publicly in the parish church of Warburton".¹⁶ There are also "early reports" describing "the good work which has been done by the Lancashire Congregational Union" and of the "preaching stations at Lymm, Woodhouses, Warburton, Carrington, Partington and Millbank in Chester".¹⁷ In an account book discovered at nearby Thelwall Hall, now preserved in the Warrington Library, there is a possible reference to Bennet indicating his connection with Warburton during the days of his Methodist "round". The book contains the following entry: "Feb. 17, 1748. A Methodist meeting at Thelwall

12 Clegg had an undoubted influence on Bennet's life for not only did the preacher's parents attend his chapel at Chinley, but Bennet himself, during his formative years, sat under the ministry of this notable Dissenter. Despite Bennet's later Methodism a close relationship continued between the two men. For references to John Bennet, see *The Diary of James Clegg*, ed. by Vanessa Doe, 3 vols. Derbyshire Record Society, 1978. *passim*.

13 Bennet's Diary Fragment, August 1752-1754, Methodist Archives.

14 Diary Fragment, August 1752-1754.

15 A. Mounfield, *Proceedings W.H.S.* vol. vii, 1909-10, p. 117.

16 W. Urwick, *Historical Sketches of Non-conformity in The County Palatine of Chester*, Manchester, 1864, p. 456. Warburton was a chapelry of Lymm, exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, and under the patronage of the family from which Matthew Henry took his second wife. There was thus a Dissenting tradition in the district even if no proven continuity.

17 B. Nightingale, *Lancashire Nonconformity*, vol. 5, 1893, p. 79.

Hall, where a man called Bennet held forth".¹⁸

Although little is known of the building in which the Warburton Independents met, it appears that Bennet was very active during the last years of his life "generally preaching four or five times a week besides in places in some distance."¹⁹ As well as undertaking his pastoral duties at Warburton, Bennet also continued to visit his former societies, especially at Bolton, and it is believed that he visited Donnington Park in Leicestershire, the residence of the Countess of Huntingdon.²⁰ At the request of William James, "a preacher belonging to the Welsh association", Bennet visited Chester, which he had previously been instrumental in persuading John Wesley to visit.²¹

In 1759 Bennet "was seized with the jaundice occasioned through his over exertions and a great loss of blood from a wound that he accidentally received in his leg".²² After lying ill for thirty-six weeks he died on 24 May at the early age of forty-five.

John Bennet's considerable achievements await their proper evaluation. He has been called "the first instrument of conveying what was afterwards called Methodism, into Derbyshire and the adjoining counties".²³ More recently he has been recognised as "one of the architects of early Methodist connexionalism".²⁴ Through his ministry at Duke's Alley he laid the foundations of Bolton Congregationalism and thus initiated a denominational influence which remains strong to this day. Further research must confirm his signal contributions to the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century.

S.R. VALENTINE

18 Quoted by Mounfield, *Proceedings W.H.S.* 1909-10, p. 117. Thelwall too had Dissenting links.

19 W. Bennet, *Memoirs of Mrs. Grace Bennet... relict of the Rev. John Bennet*, Macclesfield, 1803, p. 12.

20 Davison, *Memorials*, p. 50.

21 On 7 March 1747 Bennet wrote to Wesley: "I am assured that the time is come that the gospel must be preached in that city. The inhabitants received me gladly and said 'We have heard of Wesley and read his books, why could you not have come hither sooner?' " Quoted by F.F. Bretherton, *Early Methodism in and Around Chester*, 1903, p. 27. See also *Proceedings W.H.S.* vol. xxv p. 19.

22 W. Bennet, *Memoirs of Grace Bennet*, p. 12.

23 J. Everett, *Historical Sketches of Wesleyan Methodism in Sheffield*, 1827, p. 9.

24 F. Baker, "John Bennet and Early Methodist Polity". *Proceedings W.H.S.*, vol. xxxv, March 1965., p. 1.

ALBERT PEEL: THE RESTLESS LABOURER

Included in the obituary for Albert Peel, published in the *Congregational Year Book* for 1950, and written by his friend, Charles Surman, is this tribute.

He would be a rash prophet who declared that Albert Peel rests from his labours: it is certain, however, that his works do follow him, and his influence will abide in many lives and in the Congregationalism of the coming days.¹

Yet even in 1950 Peel's influence was on the wane and since then Congregationalism has moved in ways unsympathetic to his views. In time his books passed out of print. No biography has been written and no critical assessments of Peel's work have been published. There is no entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (an omission shared with two of his most "eminent Congregationalists" – P.T. Forsyth and C. Silvester Horne), although his contemporary and protagonist, Nathaniel Micklem, is included.²

Unlike Micklem, of course, Peel was not a full time academic. He spent his life as a pastor and a journalist. Indeed he was a sensitive and effective pastor, anxious for the other half – an unmarried mother of fifteen, sickly folk in Clapton Park who would have no holiday, an impoverished pensioner, those who had not been out of their rooms for years, the unemployed at Poplar and many more. Peel criticised those who "lived too much in the society of books" and "lacked contact with red blood, with the toil, drudgery, and squalor of the masses. Life cannot be known entirely through the printed page: there is a sympathy which can come only through direct touch with living souls".³

Sidney Berry, secretary of the Congregational Union from 1923 to 1948, believed that Peel would be "most gratefully remembered" for "his long and distinguished editorship of *The Congregational Quarterly*", although he recognised that Peel "himself would single out his two pastorates.... as the period of his best work".⁴ Peel founded the *Quarterly* in 1923 when he was "perhaps the most eminent man of letters in the ministry" and he succeeded in creating "a bulky and responsible magazine containing editorials, articles of theological interest, and reviews".⁵ He remained editor of this journal for twenty-two years, achieving for it "an acknowledged excellence among the religious reviews".⁶

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- 1 *The Congregational Year Book*, 1950, 524. I should like to thank Miss Margaret Peel, Dr Geoffrey Nuttall and Dr Donald Norwood for their help in the preparation of this article.
 - 2 A. Peel, *Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938, 121. Peel expressed surprise at the omission of Forsyth and Horne. *Dictionary of National Biography 1971-1980*, Oxford 1986, 569-570.
 - 3 A. Peel, *ibid.* 33, 36, 44, 50, 52, 60, 61.
 - 4 *The Christian World*, 10th November 1949, 2, R.T. Jones *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962*, 1962, 392.
 - 5 E. Routley, *The Story of Congregationalism*, 1961, 110.
 - 6 *The Congregational Year Book*, 1950, 523.

Nevertheless in 1926 he quoted Robertson Nicoll (founder editor of *The British Weekly*) and confessed that “any man who undertakes a new religious paper adds ten years to his age. The anxieties of the beginner are overwhelming”.⁷ Peel was also a serious historian and not only Norman Sykes (Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Cambridge from 1944 to 1958), believed that “when to the varied labours of his church, Peel added the foundation and editorship... of the *Congregational Quarterly*, the hopes of a continuance of his scholarly historical work steadily receded.”⁸ Sir Charles Firth, the great seventeenth-century historian, is reported to have berated Dr Selbie, then principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, in 1913 in the unflattering terms, “You fool, you!” for allowing the promising young graduate to depart to a pastorate in rural Lancashire, far from the libraries needed for historical research.⁹ However Peel published two years later his first major work, editing the two volumes of *The Seconde Parte of a Register*, a sixteenth-century compilation of separatist literature, and for this secured a commendatory preface by Firth. In 1920 appeared Peel’s important pamphlet *The First Congregational Churches and The Brownists in Norwich and Norfolk*. In the former Peel stated, “I have for many years had in preparation a work on ‘Elizabethan Puritanism and Separatism’, which will endeavour to trace the development of Nonconformity from Elizabeth’s accession to the Hampton Court Conference”¹⁰ This project was never completed although Peel’s resolve remained firm. In 1929 he wrote of this enterprise, “thousands of pages of notes were accumulated, hundreds of printed books and manuscripts in libraries in England and America examined – and then came duties of another kind”. The vision had faded:

Sometimes I dream of giving the rest of my days to historical research, turning a deaf ear to the claims of denominational committees, declining all invitations to preach and lecture, and refusing the task of reviewing. The mornings at the British Museum, the afternoons for the open, the evenings for reading whatever I pleased. How delightful it would be! Then come doubts, the feeling that such a life could easily be selfish.¹¹

Peel was, therefore, not merely a painstaking pastor and busy journalist but, above all, he was “the most assiduous student of Elizabethan nonconformity in the twentieth century”, one of “the two leading scholars” of the history of early dissent (the other was Champlin Burrage), one who “knew the Elizabethan

7 A. Peel, *op. cit.* 59.

8 N. Sykes, “Dr Albert Peel and Historical Studies”, *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, XVII, no. 1, January 1952, 5.

9 *ibid.* 4.

10 A. Peel, *The First Congregational Churches: New Light on Separatist Congregations in London 1567–1581*, 1920 preface.

11 A. Peel, *Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938, 132-3, 244-5.

religious scene from the inside",¹² with history as "the dominating interest" in his life.¹³ Yet Peel resolutely refused to confine his activities to any one sphere. "The mere specialist", he wrote, "cannot be called educated: his knowledge is like a third-class degree, a certificate of inefficiency in one subject. Such a man is prone to dogmatize and domineer."¹⁴

Peel was a Yorkshireman, born at Gomersal, near Dewsbury, in March 1887 and educated at Heckmondwike Grammar School. He was the eldest son of a family of modest means (his father was a joiner journeyman) and spent a brief period as a pupil teacher at Birstall before proceeding in 1905 to the Yorkshire United College, Bradford, to study for the Congregational ministry.¹⁵ He early displayed his voracious appetite for learning and books yet he had not seriously considered the Declaration of the Faith, Church Order and Discipline of the Congregational or Independent Dissenters of 1833 (printed in the *Congregational Year Book* from 1858 to 1918) when as a "shy lad" of eighteen he applied for admission to the college. His "school record, his examination results, and what was hopefully and euphemistically called a sermon, passed muster" but his theological beliefs "were of a very elementary and amorphous kind" and Principal D.W. Simon enclosed the 1833 Declaration "for his guidance". The mature Peel confessed that the aspirant student "believed that Christianity was the most important thing in the world, and that he was called to proclaim it, but he had neither the knowledge nor the wish to commit himself to detailed theological statements. He said so, and rather cheekily suggested that it was to obtain such theological knowledge that he was applying for admission to College, and he made very little use of the Declaration of 1833".¹⁶

In his home West Riding Peel seemed to his younger contemporaries to be "a kind of mythical figure of a bygone age" and certainly at Oxford Sir Charles Firth made "eulogistic references" to his early works.¹⁷ Peel elected to study for his Arts course at Leeds University (in preference to Edinburgh whose courses by custom Yorkshire College's students took) and he specialized in Elizabethan Puritanism. He attained a first class degree at Leeds and then spent two years at Oxford in which he tackled an Oxford B. Litt, Mansfield College's theological course, a Leeds MA and the London Inter BD. This load was "a strain on a constitution none too robust" and possibly "sowed the seeds of the malady that made him a sick man over many years and at last proved fatal. It showed itself in

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- 12 L.H. Carlson, "A Corpus of Elizabethan Nonconformist Writings" in *Studies in Church History* II, ed. G.J. Cuming, 1965, 299. P. Collinson *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism*, 1983, 529.
 - 13 *The Christian World*, 10th November 1949, 2.
 - 14 A. Peel, *Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938, 125.
 - 15 *The Congregational Year Book*, 1950, 523; *Who was Who 1941-1950* IV, 1952, 900.
 - 16 A. Peel, *These Hundred Years: A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales 1831-1931*, 1931, 77; A.J. Grieve "Albert Peel, MA, DD, Litt D, LLD, FR Hist S", *The Congregational Quarterly* XXVIII, 1950, 9.
 - 17 N. Sykes, *op. cit.* 4; K.W. Wadsworth *Yorkshire United Independent College*, 1954, 155.

a temporary breakdown in his last year at college".¹⁸

Peel began his first pastorate (an "inestimable privilege") at Great Harwood in Lancashire in 1913 and two years later received his Litt D, the first such degree granted by Leeds. Peel recognised his debt to his teachers, especially Firth at Oxford, Grant of Leeds and also W.B. Selbie, whom he remembered as "fearless and forthright" and also as "a loyal friend and a wise counsellor as well as a great teacher and preacher". Peel recalled "the finest scholars... as the humblest of men". He however "was himself – always: a man who had his own views... and then put them forward with incisive force and clearness."¹⁹ Neither Yorkshire nor Oxford made him, "though he had the true Yorkshire directness of speech and the true Oxford passion for precision of thought and language."²⁰ Whilst at Great Harwood he married in 1913 Ethel Constance, the daughter of Revd. William Harrop of Blackburn, and they had a daughter, Margaret.

After nine happy years, Peel moved in 1922 to Clapton Park Congregational Church, London, where he was close to the libraries and research facilities needed for historical study.²¹ However, only one year later he founded *The Congregational Quarterly*. "To the surprise of everybody, editor included, it made a considerable profit in its first year". *The Congregational Quarterly* remained a journal of "exceptional quality and interest". It was a "platform for conflicting views" and its editor "combined humour with a vast (if rather magisterial) learning."²² In 1924 he became editor of the *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society* and remained in this post for twenty-five years and for the same period was joint-editor of the *Congregational Church Monthly*. This publication was devised by Peel and A.G. Sleep as an inset for Congregational churches to use in their magazines and it achieved a circulation in excess of 100,000. Also in 1924 the Independent Press was formed by the Congregational Union and Peel served as one of its directors.²³ He was for many years a contributor to the Free Churches column of *The Manchester Guardian* and wrote regularly for *The Christian World*. Thus history was relegated to the sidelines and Peel listed historical research alongside cricket and walking as his "recreations".²⁴

The *Guardian's* obituarist recorded the marked "independence" of Peel's column. "He took his own line on all questions and perhaps sometimes stated his views with a frankness that proved disturbing, but he did not look for

18 A.J. Grieve, *op. cit.* 9; *The Congregational Year Book*, *op. cit.*

19 *ibid.*; *The Christian World*, *op. cit.*; A Peel *The Congregational Hundred 1530–1948*, 1948, 16, 271; A. Peel. *Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938, 126.

20 *The Christian World*, *op. cit.*

21 A. Peel, *Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938, 46.

22 R.T. Jones, *Congregationalism in England 1662–1962*, 1962, 412–413;

23 A. Peel, *These Hundred Years*, 132, 398–9, 402, 415; *The Christian World*, *op. cit.*

24 *The Manchester Guardian* 5th November 1949; *The Christian World*, *op. cit.*; *Who Was Who*, 1952, *op. cit.*; *Mansfield College Magazine*, Dec 1910, records Peel's "brilliant" play at football in, at least, one match to set alongside his great love of cricket.

commendation; he was content with freedom” and “his provocativeness... even if it led to controversy, was always refreshing”. *The Christian World* remembered him as “the most reliable and... manageable of contributors. His ‘copy’ always arrived on time, and it never needed sub-editing; there was never a comma out of place nor a proper name mis-spelt”. On occasions his writing needed a little editing “in the sense of a friendly suggestion that a particular paragraph might possibly have too pungent a flavour to please all its readers.”²⁵

Peel’s appetite for work was prodigious. In his first year in London (1922–3), he gave “three afternoons and two evenings a week to visitation, I called at more than 2000 homes”. In 1929 he described his working pattern.

I am writing this on Sunday night, after a week in which everyone of the seven days has brought more than twelve hours’ work, and before a week which must be at least equally full. Every day brings its duties: a day without pastoral work brings an uneasy conscience when the head is placed on the pillow at night; a day without two books read means trouble laid up in store for the end of the quarter. So I admit that at times the mind cannot refrain from looking forward to the days of leisure and freedom, and wondering if, like the horizon, they will recede as one moves forward.²⁶

When he retired from Clapton Park he looked back on “twelve years... working at full pressure generally fourteen hours a day”. Indeed “for a large part of this time only the hours from one to seven have been given to sleep.”²⁷

Peel’s writing therefore continued in London and “a stream of minor publications issued from his study”.²⁸ He enjoyed a busy and “very happy ministry” at Clapton Park with its “three large Sunday schools, a crowd of young people, and a scattered congregation”. Whilst there he introduced “Question services” (held six or eight times a year) in which he answered previously submitted questions such as “Why pray?”, “Does science disprove religion?”, “Did Jesus know everything?” and “Is psycho-analysis any use?”. Such services proved valuable, Peel believed, because he gave honest answers, confessing his ignorance where necessary and not hiding his own views. Clapton Park’s united Sunday school was the largest in the Congregational Union with 1,400 children and 180 teachers and Peel attempted in vain to know all his congregation and all the children.²⁹ In 1934 he resigned his pastorate, with much reluctance and “searching of heart”, wanting time “to think, to research, to read and write and

25 *ibid.*

26 A. Peel, *Thirty-Five to Fifty* 46, 130.

27 *ibid.* 242–3.

28 *Q. the earliest Gospel?*, 1923; *Oliver Cromwell*, 1924; an additional chapter, 1903–1926, by Peel to C. Silvester Horne’s *A Popular History of the Free Churches*, 1926; *A Hundred Eminent Congregationalists, 1530–1924*, 1927; *Letters to a Victorian Editor, Henry Allon*, 1929, ed. A. Peel; N. Sykes *op. cit.*

29 A. Peel, *Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938, 34, 37–40, 46; *The Times* 7th November 1949.

pray". He hoped that his editorship of the *Congregational Quarterly*, and his frequent visits to churches would mean that "without a church, I may yet be a pastor of a flock". He confessed that he would "never be content" without pastoral work of some kind for "a man who has heard the call to the ministry should decline no invitation for service that comes along". Therefore, after resigning from Clapton Park's ministry (he remained a church member there until his death), Peel preached regularly "here, there and everywhere".³⁰

Peel travelled widely, studying, preaching and lecturing often in the United States of America where he was popular with student audiences and where his authority and learning were recognised by the award, amongst other honours, of honorary doctorates from Rockford, Illinois, and Carlton, Minnesota.³¹ In 1940, immediately before he became chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, Peel visited the troops of the British Expeditionary Force in northern France and then embarked on his celebrated voyage to America, as recorded in *Journal 1940*, contributing to the changing climate of American opinion, from strict isolationism to sympathetic neutrality. During his year as chairman of the Union, he visited tirelessly "churches and people in the bombed cities and coastal areas" and travelled 11,000 miles in the effort.³² That travel reflected a love which had manifested itself in a six weeks' holiday in the Mediterranean in 1935 but his ideal was to relax in the Lake District.³³

The centenary of the Congregational Union, 1931, was a productive year for during it Peel published his "delightful" history of the union, *These Hundred Years*, his *A Brief History of English Congregationalism* and his important essay, "From the Elizabethan Settlement to the Emergence of Separatism", included in *Essays Congregational and Catholic* (which he edited).³⁴ During the 1930s Peel became increasingly concerned with the direction in which Congregationalism in this country was heading. *A Brief History*, described by Erik Routley as "immensely able and learned", was written at the request of the Young People's Department of the Congregational Union. Peel's aim in writing the book was to show his readers that

the Congregational churches have not merely had a history of which their members can be proud, but have still a witness to maintain which is absolutely vital to the Church of Christ. To stand for Christian liberty, for the free play of the Spirit of God, and a conception of the Church which is

30 A. Peel, *ibid.* 48, 242, 245; *Christian World*, *op. cit.*

31 *Christian World*, *ibid.*; *Congregational Year Book*, 1950, 523-4. Peel refers to his visits to the USA on several occasions in 1928, 1938, 1940, 1947/8 and 1949. A. Peel *Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 148; A. Peel *Christian Freedom*, 1938, 7; *Journal 1940*, 1941, 91; *The Noble Army of Congregational Martyrs*, 1948, 11; and S. Berry in *The Christian World*, *op. cit.*

32 A. Peel, *Journal 1940*; *The Times* 7th November 1949.

33 A. Peel, *From Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938, 155-6, 159.

34 E. Routley, *The Story of Congregationalism*, 1961, 6. Later in the 1930s Peel published *Inevitable Congregationalism*, 1937; with J.A.R. Marriott *Robert Forman Horton*, 1937; *Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938; and *Christian Freedom*, 1938.

at once independent and Catholic, is as necessary today as it has ever been. That freedom and fellowship need not be enemies, that liberty and co-operation can lie down together, and that a group of people, realizing that 'Christ in the midst' is clothed with power from on high: these things the 20th century needs to learn as much as any that preceded it.³⁵

Freedom and independence were vital concepts for Peel's understanding of Congregationalism and the church. For him the Congregational Union was an attempt to combine both these concepts within a centralized structure. Yet he had fears. "It is the old paradox", he wrote, "if anything is to live, it must be organized, and yet organization kills it".³⁶

In an earlier work, the chapter on the years 1903-26, added to Horne's history of the Free Churches, he had predicted the future: "Untrammelled by literal views of the Bible, unfettered by ancient creeds, believing that the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth, with an open mind and a free hand in regard to forms of worship, the Free Churches are in a unique position to help the present discontents." According to Peel's interpretation of the signs of the times, "having tried all else the disillusioned world will turn again to religion - but the religion it will seek will be one that is free and tolerant, one that can speak the language and meet the needs of the age".³⁷ The judgement proved sadly wrong in the coming age of the dictators. The spirit of the times showed a need for authority. It sought firm boundaries rather than Peel's "unfettered" freedom. Peel realised the changed situation. In 1935 he urged the Church to "summon youth to a campaign... for social justice", for the continent's "Youth Movements, originally pacifist and international, have almost entirely gone over to Fascism or Communism".³⁸

In 1931 Peel confessed that the Congregational Union had not resolved all its tensions:

The problem of combining entire freedom with the full advantages of union is not yet solved. Some Congregationalists lean toward closer organisation and an idea of the church and ministry that may perhaps be labelled Presbyterian. Others still believe in complete independence for church and minister alike. For a hundred years the Congregational Churches have been trying to discover how to unite freedom and fellowship and keep the advantages of both.

Peel was not happy about the introduction of moderators in 1919 into Congregationalism, regarding them as a threat to the liberty of the individual

35 A. Peel, *A Brief History of English Congregationalism*, 1931, 3; E. Routley, *op. cit.*

36 A. Peel, *These Hundred Years*, 1931, 3.

37 A. Peel, *The Free Churches 1903-1926*, 1927, 449 (being an additional chapter to C. Silvester Horne's *A Popular History of the Free Churches*, 1903).

38 A. Peel, *Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938, 169.

churches and ministers.³⁹ He also indicated (and showed) the anxiety of some with regard to the "negotiations subsequent to the Lambeth Conference between bishops and Free Church leaders" of 1930, "fearing lest in their desire to conciliate and to secure the manifest unity of the churches," Congregationalists might make "compromises which would entail the abandonment of fundamental principles".⁴⁰

In 1931, too, Peel indicated his own position in the debate. Congregationalism, "when true to itself, has stressed the spirit rather than the letter, life rather than organisation, freedom rather than order. Its conception of religion is dynamic, not static.... it has been felt that if the churches continued to maintain their witness, any who did not share it would soon find themselves so out of harmony that they would either reconsider their ways or depart."⁴¹

Those who did not share this view of Congregationalism, however, did not depart from the denomination although Peel tried to show how "out of harmony" he felt them to be. His most prominent protagonist was Nathaniel Micklem (1888–1976), Selbie's successor as Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, supported by John Whale, (born 1896) President of Cheshunt College, Cambridge, and Bernard Manning (1892–1941) senior tutor and bursar of Jesus College, Cambridge. They criticised the negative attitude of many Nonconformists to the sacraments, to the ministry, to churchly order. They criticised too the general "acquiescence in disorder", "that unmanning and devastating affectation of amateurism," which Congregationalists adopted, in Manning's view, to avoid formalism.

In contrast to this group Peel (who regarded Manning as a friend) maintained that the way forward for the churches "is in simplicity of organization". "Inevitably the development of the Church must be away from the building and probably from the paid ministry". Like the first Christians the modern Church needs "faith and courage rather than organization and tradition".⁴² In 1933 he noted that in Congregationalism (and "in Christendom in general") "parties are ranging for a critical fight". The two sides he described thus:

On the one side will be those who think that the Church of Christ will be saved by the might and power and efficiency of its organization. On the other will be those who believe that organization counts for little, and that if there is life and faith among Christian people all will be well. On the one side will be those who lean to the Roman Catholic view of the Church, on the other, those who lean to the Independent and Quaker view, the former

39 A. Peel, *These Hundred Years*, 1931, 372–382.

40 *ibid.* 405, 409.

41 A. Peel, *A Brief History of English Congregationalism*, 1931, 88.

42 J.W. Grant, *Free Churchmanship in England 1870–1940* (no date) 279; B.L. Manning "Some Characteristics of the Older Dissent", *The Congregational Quarterly* V no 3, July 1927, 298 – quoted by Grant.

43 A. Peel, *Christian Freedom*, 1938, 95, 98; A. Peel *The Congregational Two Hundred 1530–1948*, 1948, 16.

stressing the idea of the Visible church, the latter that of the Church Invisible. The first will regard Baptism as the one and only mode of admission to the Church, which will be dependent upon the existence and ministrations of a clerical class. The other will hold loosely to the Sacraments, feeling that they – and the ministry – may be necessary and useful, but not essential.

Peel believed that Christianity had been kept alive not by Roman Catholic organization but by the “Simple faith and devout following of Christ by lowly Christians”.⁴⁴

Micklem, Whale, Manning and others were labelled “Genevans”, so J.W. Grant recalled, asserting an orthodox position and a dogmatic Christianity. Peel, in common with other liberals, rejected the need for visible links between the denominations and was content with “a unity of spirit manifested in a common loyalty”.⁴⁵ The two main parties, competing for the allegiance of Congregationalists, have also been characterised as those of “Reformed Churchmanship” and “the school of spontaneity”. This school, to which Peel belonged, defied definition because it was “so inchoate” but it tended towards the “anti-historical and anti-authoritarian”. Horton Davies (like Grant, a former student of Micklem’s) recognised that this loose grouping claimed the loyalty of most Congregationalists in this country and he traced its influence in the devaluation of the Lord’s Supper, and in creating “a prejudice against liturgical worship as consisting of only ‘stinted forms’.” This “school of spontaneity” caused the churches to derogate orderliness and dignity of worship. Sometimes it led to “informality indistinguishable from gaucherie”. Alongside Peel in the “inchoate” group, Davies includes W.B. Selbie, 1862–1944 (Principal of Mansfield College 1909–32), J. Vernon Bartlet, 1863–1940 (professor of ecclesiastical history at Mansfield 1900–29), and C.J. Cadoux, 1883–1947, (professor of church history at Mansfield 1933–47 and vice-principal). He could also have included A.J. Grieve, 1874–1952, (Principal of Lancashire Independent College 1922–43) and a younger man, Charles Surman, 1901–86 (Grieve’s son-in-law). Davies finds it curious that so many historians were attracted to this grouping yet surely such historians (and Peel, above all) were aware of the various strands which had cohered in Independency.⁴⁶ P.T. Forsyth had identified not only Geneva but also the sixteenth-century separatists and anabaptists as contributing to Congregationalism.⁴⁷ Here was no easy prescript for a “return” to dogmatic Calvinism. As Donald Norwood has noted, Peel was critical of those who write of “classic Congregationalism” as if

44 A. Peel, *Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938, 177.

45 J.W. Grant, *op.cit.* 355.

46 W. Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: The Ecumenical Century 1900–65*, 1965, 350–9, 388.

47 P.T. Forsyth, *Faith, Freedom and the Future*, 1912 reprint 1955, 91–155; A. Sell *Saints Visible, Orderly and Catholic*, Geneva 1986, 97.

there were a fixed body of beliefs and practices. Rather he asserted that if there ever had been such a thing its key feature was (and is) "the insistence of the guidance of the Holy Spirit".⁴⁸

Although the present writer may happily concede Manning's argument that "the Christian revelation was historically given" and must be "faithfully accepted rather than modernistically modified", he cannot feel that this leads inevitably to the search for visible unity between the denominations (as it has been pursued), or to a condemnation of informality or "gaucherie" in Congregational or other Churches. There is too much of Oxford and Cambridge in such views.

As early as 1924 Peel had expressed his reservations about the church unity discussions (of which he then broadly approved):

The discussion seems to be too closely concerned with the union of denominations, organizations which are neither particularly scriptural nor specially sure of permanence. Behind the ecclesiastical proposals there is a spiritual unity, and it is to this unity that Congregationalism has always testified and must testify still.⁴⁹

In 1936 Peel wrote that "all those who proclaim the supreme advantages of Presbyterian or any other system should depart from Congregationalism until they can be loyal to it. Why some people in all spheres of life delight in proclaiming the weakness of the societies to which they belong while exalting the virtues of other societies is one of the mysteries of human nature".⁵⁰

Peel struggled against not only his opponents within Congregationalism but also those advocates of church unity outside. He regarded himself as opposing the authoritarian spirit of the age and in 1937 compared "the demand for authority", as expressed in the attractions of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin, with "the demand for dogma" in the Churches. "Are those who would tell us what is the faith – as if the faith were a static thing, and not living and developing – not unconsciously moved by the same spirit as the dictators?"⁵¹ Peel characterised the struggle as one between the "totalitarian state and church" and "our historic witness for Christian freedom".⁵² Peel's complaint here is directed principally at Micklem who in 1937 published *What is the Faith?* and also at Whale who in the

48 A. Peel, *Christian Freedom*, 1938, 42, 48; D.W. Norwood "The Case for Democracy in Church Government", unpublished Ph. D thesis, King's College, London, November 1983, 153. Later writers continued to use the phrase "classic" or "classical" Congregationalism, as Erik Routley did of the years between 1600 and 1649; (E. Routley *The Story of Congregationalism*, 1961, 22–37); and Alan Sell of the years from 1640 to 1690; (A. Sell *ibid.* 29–52). This discrepancy over dates does not lend force to the case for including the term.

49 A. Peel, *Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938, 178; W. Horton Davies, *op. cit.*

50 *ibid.* 195.

51 *ibid.* 181.

52 A. Peel, *Christian Freedom*, 1938, 33f.

same year published *What is a living Church?* Peel struck out at those “voices” within the Free Churches “calling us back to Nicaea, to Aquinas, to Calvin” and in 1939 denounced by inference Whale and Micklem again. “We must have Dictators who shall tell us what we must believe and what we may say and do if we remain within the Church... And our Dictators offer themselves. Obviously it is College Principals in the ancient Universities who are best fitted to declare what is the faith, and to tell those who do not accept their dogmas that they are guilty not of heresy but of unbelief”.⁵³

Peel’s love of Christian freedom (expressed in 1927 in his additional chapter to C.S. Horne’s *History of the Free Churches* and more expansively in *Christian Freedom*) contrasted with the “theological reaction” of the 1930s. J.W. Grant suggested that Peel’s statement of the Congregational witness contained “much liberalism, little of historic Nonconformity” and that Peel identified Congregationalism with the spirit of the 1920s.⁵⁴

In 1937 Peel published *Inevitable Congregationalism: Essays and Addresses 1917–34* which expressed, too stridently for some, his confidence in his own churchmanship. Nathaniel Micklem replied in his *Congregationalism Today*, claiming in the preface that his critics will aver, “I am tilting against the leaders of my denomination and attacking Dr Peel, that it is all too polemical and in that pontifical and offensive style of mine.” Although he described Peel’s book as a “welcome publication” he seized on the fact that its first essay was written in 1917. Micklem exaggerated. “The book is to me as a voice from the remembered past. Thus we spoke of Congregationalism, thus we rejoiced in it, thirty years ago.” He criticized the “ambiguity” of Peel’s language, providing possible cover for the view that “there is room in Congregationalism for an unqualified liberty of belief and a rejection of all standards”. Peel, perhaps reflecting on his own experiences in two pastorates, claimed that the Church consists “of the entirely consecrated, of the ‘keen’ people” but Micklem, the theologian, removed from the rough and tumble of pastoral life, denounced this as “heretical”. Rather, he said, the Church “consists of the forgiven”, those who are “within the covenant of grace”. And he went on, defensively: “Congregationalism is true, but it is not the whole truth. To say this in public is, I am afraid, often regarded in high places as a kind of treason.”⁵⁵

Peel explained the slow progress made by Congregationalism (in an essay first published in 1926) by stating: “it is because men trained in our Colleges and occupying our pulpits have so often looked with yearning eyes to Presbyterianism or hankered after some form of Connexionalism”. Commenting on this Micklem justified this yearning: “We are feeling ourselves called of God to emerge from our isolation”. He went on, “I have no doubt that the Congregational

53 *ibid.* 41; *Congregational Quarterly*, 1939, 319.

54 J.W. Grant, *Free Churchmanship in England 1870–1940*, (no date), 355–6.

55 N. Micklem, *Congregationalism today*, 1937, 5, 17, 21, 22; A. Peel *Inevitable Congregationalism*, 1937, 11, 20, 21; D. Norwood, *op. cit.* 147, 151.

Churches in Canada did right when they 'went into union' with the Methodists and Presbyterians."⁵⁶ Indeed Micklem's own period in Canada (1927-31) resulted in his being greatly impressed by the recently formed United Church there. Not surprisingly, as Donald Sykes has written, Micklem experienced "the perils of his convictions as not a few of his own order chose to see disloyalty in his discovery of the treasures of others. He was attacked with asperity, a quality not always absent in his eloquent replies."⁵⁷

Micklem's desire to re-state the Christian faith was recognised as "an urgent task" by not only Whale and Manning but also by many of their students. Peel and his allies, Grieve and Cadoux, found themselves increasingly isolated. Micklem's own comments on his Mansfield colleague, Cadoux, could in large part also be applied to Peel. "We did not quarrel, but he really believed I had gone back on the free traditions of Congregationalism, that the line I was taking was disastrous for religion and the churches, and that he was called of the Lord to be a champion of the true faith in Israel."⁵⁸

If Peel used his editorials in *Congregational Quarterly* almost openly to attack Micklem, then Micklem, writing as "Ilico" in *The British Weekly* almost every week for thirty years, was well positioned to defend himself and propound his own views.⁵⁹ Peel's comments on Micklem's *Congregationalism and the Church Catholic* (1943) summarise his attitude, "we much prefer his criticising Congregationalism in the open rather than sniping at it from behind an anonymous column".⁶⁰

Peel's service to the Congregational Union included not only his scholarship and journalism, preaching and pastoral activities but also much committee work. He was chairman of the British Commission on Congregationalism which reported in 1920 to the fourth International Congregational Council.⁶¹ He was at Lausanne in 1927 for the international conference of the churches on Faith and Order representing the Congregational Union with Drs. Garvie, Berry and Vernon Bartlett.⁶² In 1945 he was among those, including Nathaniel Micklem, chosen to discuss with Presbyterian delegates the possibility of a scheme of union satisfactory to both denominations. When the report of the Joint Conference was presented in 1947 to the May assembly of the Congregational Union Peel, in common with most Congregationalists, opposed

56 A. Peel, *ibid.* 85; N. Micklem, *ibid.* 25, 26.

57 *Dictionary of National Biography 1971-1980*, Oxford 1986, 569-570.

58 N. Micklem, *The Box and the Puppets*, 1957, 82; C.J. Cadoux's *The Congregational Way*, 1945, contains a thoughtful critique of a possible future united Congregational and Presbyterian church.

59 *The British Weekly* 1932-62.

60 *Congregational Quarterly*, 1943, 204 quoted by D. Norwood, *op. cit.* 176.

61 *Proceedings of the Fourth International Congregational Council, New York 1921*; A. Peel and D. Horton *International Congregationalism*, 1949, 44-50.

62 A. Peel, *These Hundred Years*, 1931, 404.

it.⁶³ Again with Micklem, he was chosen to be among a group of five, selected to report on the various strands of international Congregationalism in 1949.⁶⁴ Ironically the uncompromising Peel served as chairman of the Union in the year of crisis, 1940–41, when the blitz ravaged Britain's cities, while the pacifist Micklem, ultimately victorious in his desire for inter-denominational union, was chairman in 1944–5, the year of the Allies' victory over Germany.⁶⁵

At the end of the Second World War Peel returned to historical studies in earnest. He resigned the editorship of the *Congregational Quarterly* in 1945 and developed his ambitious scheme to edit the principal works of the Elizabethan Puritans and separatists. In 1944 Peel had produced for the Royal Historical Society *The Note-Book of John Penry*, writing a scholarly introduction for it. He also began to transcribe a manuscript belonging to St John's College, Cambridge, which he believed had been written by Richard Bancroft. This was published posthumously, prepared for the press by Norman Sykes.⁶⁶

He still felt the need to work on lesser projects. Thus he published *The Throckmorton Trotman Trust, 1664–1941* (1942), *The Christian Basis of Democracy* (1943), *Reconciling the World* (1946), *The Noble Army of Congregational Martyrs* (1948), *The Congregational Two Hundred* (1948) and edited *The Life of Alexander Stewart* (1948). In the year of his death *International Congregationalism*, written jointly with Douglas Horton, was published. These works are, for the most part, useful and informative, serving to popularise aspects of church history, which, Peel felt, deserved more attention. Perhaps his books' sales justify that opinion too. Clearly Peel believed himself called to use his historian's gifts and knowledge to set before the twentieth-century churches issues of denominational principle, often witnessed to through privation and sacrifice in earlier centuries. His Congregational forefathers were real to him, like old friends, and he attempted to convey their immediacy to contemporaries who were in danger of belittling their witness and jettisoning their freedoms.⁶⁷ Peel was unable to accept that such concerns were of academic interest only. Hence his refusal to confine himself to the research for which he was supremely suited.

Peel's long cherished desire to write a definitive history of Elizabethan nonconformity had evolved into a scheme to publish scholarly editions of the principal works of the early Puritans and separatists as an aid for other researchers. He successfully persuaded his fellow trustees of the Sir Halley

63 *The Congregational Year Book*, 1946, 31; 1948, 87; R.T. Jones *Congregationalism in England 1662–1962*, 1962, 433.

64 *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congregational Council*, 1949, 35–39.

65 *Dictionary of National Biography 1971–1980*, Oxford 1986, 569–570.

66 *The Note-Book of John Penry*. Camden Society, Third series, vol 67, 1944; *Tracts Ascribed to Richard Bancroft*, Cambridge 1953; N. Sykes, "Dr Albert Peel and Historical Studies", *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, XVII no. 1, January 1952, 6.

67 A. Peel and D. Horton, *International Congregationalism*, 1949, 6 where Peel quotes R.W. Dale on this point.

Stewart Trust to finance this scheme and at the time of his death the first volume, *Cartwrightiana*, was in page proof.⁶⁸

In 1937 Peel wrote of a "horribly realistic and vivid" dream in which he died by drowning. "Life came to an end, and from beyond it I looked back at a lot of loose ends, unfinished tasks, foundations without buildings, books without print. Never before had I appreciated the tragedy of lives cut short, with work unfinished."⁶⁹ Peel, of course, lived a further twelve years but his was still a premature death which left much work unfinished. Even so, he had either written or edited some thirty-seven works and, as editor of the *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, he had prepared thirty-eight issues for publication, contributing over twenty major articles, as well as the editorials.⁷⁰ However skilful his journalism and distinguished his ministry, Peel's refusal to specialise in the study of history must be counted a weakness. Firth's verdict on *The Seconde Parte of a Register* (1915) was that the young Peel combined judgement and industry in a scholarly fashion.⁷¹ For Peel to turn his back on an academic career of such promise, and to work so ceaselessly at both his pastoral ministry and his denominational journalism was to display a character of conflicting and complex variety. Peel was a man driven to overwork by duty and guilt, as well as Christian conviction, to satisfy the unending demands of heart and mind. For him one life was not enough.

Peel's language in his "critical fight" in the 1930s became more and more warlike as he opposed "dictators" within the denomination. Even Micklem wrote of his own supposed "treason".⁷² Such highly-charged words do not strike chords of reason and do not win converts. But Peel felt too threatened to conciliate and once he had resigned from *The Congregational Quarterly* he had no platform from which to propound his views.

To Peel the fight to preserve the independence of the Congregational churches was imperative. He recognised that Congregationalism was not contained exclusively within the Congregational Union and that a degree of centralisation was necessary. Yet increased centralisation put at risk the distinctive principle of Congregationalism.⁷³ If Peel the historian was sensitive to those who had felt threatened by the establishment of the Congregational Union in 1831, and as a pastor was suspicious of the moderators, then the increased power of the Union

68 *Cartwrightiana*, 1951, ed A. Peel and L.H. Carlson. See also L.H. Carlson, "A Corpus of Elizabeth Nonconformist Writings" *Studies in Church History* II ed G.J. Cuming, 1965, 302-303. Carlson agreed to continue the project and subsequently revised Peel's scheme and produced the remaining volumes.

69 A. Peel, *From Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938, 242.

70 *The Christian World* 10th November 1949, 2. See also relevant volumes of *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*.

71 N. Sykes, "Dr Albert Peel and Historical Studies", *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society* XVII, no 1, January 1952, 5.

72 A. Peel, *Thirty-Five to Fifty*, 1938, 177; *Congregational Quarterly*, 1939, 319; N. Micklem *Congregationalism Today*, 1937, 22.

73 A. Peel, *These Hundred Years*, 1931, 3-5.

after 1945 was to him also part of this centralising tendency. During the 1940s the consolidation of the powers of the Congregational Union was rapid. The Union was well on the way to becoming a Church.⁷⁴ Peel's responses to the perceived needs of his own time were overlooked as increasingly his fellow Congregationalists saw the answer to the pronounced decline of their churches in centralisation and ecumenism. Peel's solution – that recovery would come only with the return to small fellowships in gathered churches, disowning large buildings and the professional ministry – would receive more support now than in the 1930s and 1940s.⁷⁵ Peel's criticisms of the professionals were likewise not geared to ingratiate him to his fellow ministers.

In addition Peel held resolutely to a theological liberalism out of step with many of his colleagues, especially the younger ones. His vehement advocacy of a traditional independency became unfashionable and dated. In 1928 he expressed satisfaction that liberal modernism held sway in Congregationalism yet the re-examination of theology after 1918 was leading a number of his most articulate contemporaries to shun liberalism. The Word of God theology of Barth and Brunner gained a following within Congregationalism and the influence of its Genevan school increased during the 1930s and 1940s.⁷⁶

Thus Albert Peel's star waned as Nathaniel Micklem's rose. Micklem's work for twenty-three years as a theological teacher at Mansfield, then a postgraduate college, gave him a clear advantage in framing the churchmanship of many of the more talented younger ministers and future leaders within Congregationalism. Peel, the articulate but blunt Yorkshireman, from a small working-class community, and Micklem the southern poet with a Liberal MP and barrister for a father, offered the supreme contrast.⁷⁷ Mutual distrust was predictable and to young men, free and fresh from chapel backgrounds, who sought their birthright at Oxford (or Cambridge) and the excitements of elevated social and ecumenical interchange, the choice was clear.

During the 1940s Peel was obviously in poor health. Haunted by his dream of death, leaving so many unfinished tasks, he returned to scholarship too late, as the anguish of Norman Sykes testifies. For Sykes, Peel's death was an "injustice done to church history":

When the eye passes from his early works which gave promise of so rich a harvest to the long catalogue of books left unfinished at his departure, one is compelled vehemently to grudge the years which he gave to his pastoral cure and to the drudgery of proof-correcting and reviewing.⁷⁸

74 R.T. Jones, *Congregationalism in England 1662–1962*, 1962, 404–5.

75 *ibid* 391; A. Peel *Christian Freedom*, 1938, 95, 98.

76 R.T. Jones, *ibid.* 447, 455; A. Peel and D. Horton *International Congregationalism*, 1949, 59; N. Goodall, "Nathaniel Micklem C.H. 1888–1976", *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 1 no 10, October 1977, 292.

77 N. Goodall, *ibid.*, 286; A Sell *Saints Visible, Orderly and Catholic*, Geneva 1986, 97.

78 N. Sykes, *op cit.*, 4.

Here surely is Peel's mistake. As a scholar his legacy would have been recognised as of lasting value. As a teacher he could have wielded a formative influence on his students and thence upon the churches.

His historical studies may not be lightly dismissed. Peel was familiar with the library and manuscript collections on both sides of the Atlantic. Naturally, his denominational loyalties tended to direct his investigations as he searched primarily for the first Congregationalists among his sources. His calendar of *The Secondé Parte of a Register* (1915) is of first importance for the study of Elizabethan nonconformity while his essay, "From the Elizabethan Settlement to the Emergence of Separatism", in the 1931 collection, and also *The First Congregational Churches* (1920), and *The Brownists in Norwich and Norfolk* (1920) are still consulted by historians.⁷⁹ Peel's centenary survey of the Congregational Union, has yet to be replaced; his life of R.F. Horton is a valiant biography, its importance outweighing Mrs. Horton's dissatisfaction with it; his *Brief History of English Congregationalism* (1931), is a useful work too. Inevitably their denominational focus limits their appeal. Even so, Peel's edition (1929) of the correspondence of that earlier pastor-editor, Henry Allon of Islington and the *British Quarterly Review*, is now a set text for a university special subject in Victorian history. Again *The Note-Book of John Penry 1593* (1944) remains a helpful publication, despite Peel's inability to check vital details because of wartime restrictions. Peel's finest literary work, therefore, had been the editing and printing of source material which the series of Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts (published in the years since his death) has continued. The first two volumes, *Cartwrightiana* (1951) and *The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne* (1953), were edited jointly by Peel and Leland H. Carlson, who was alone to edit the remaining volumes. Originally Peel had intended to publish these writings in seven volumes. These became ten, greeted as a "great series", "most useful", and an "enormous" facility.⁸⁰ Peel maintained the "strictest standards" of historical integrity, his work characterised by "indefatigable industry and patience."⁸¹

Certainly Peel remained very busy to the end of his life. In 1949 he was looking so much better than he had two years previously and was carrying such a large programme of work that his friends believed he had overcome the worst of his long illness. Only recently he had completed a series of speaking and preaching engagements in the United States. Consequently his death on 3rd November came to his friends as a "painful shock of surprise". He died a sad figure, with a note of tragedy, in a nursing home in Glasgow.

Albert Peel may have appeared a curious figure to the world at large. By no

79 P. Collinson, *Godly People*, 1983, 529; B.R. White *The English Separatist Tradition*, Oxford 1971, 28, 48; *Essays Congregational and Catholic*, 1931, ed A. Peel.

80 L.H. Carlson, "A Corpus of Elizabethan Nonconformist Writings", *Studies in Church History*, II ed G.J. Cuming, 1965, 303, 308; Collinson *ibid*; M. Watts *The Dissenters* Oxford 1978, 511; C. Cross *Church and People 1450-1660*, 1976, 257.

81 N. Sykes, *op. cit.* 7.

means a typical Nonconformist minister, this northerner, with his precise and sophisticated scholarship did much to render acceptable the study of Puritanism and Elizabethan Separatism in universities and theological colleges. The Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts brought "refinement and reinforcement" to a historical school which he himself had helped to set up.⁸² His journalistic flair made *The Congregational Quarterly* outstanding among denominational journals. It was read avidly and greatly influenced the reading of thoughtful ministers and church members, not least by its reports of theology in other countries, its surveys of German literature, and its account of significant conferences. Peel deliberately cultivated wealthy laymen as well as other writers and journalists. Behind his shy and conservative public demeanour – he invariably wore wing collars to his shirts – Peel had a deep love for his many friends "and was loved by them in return with a warmth of feeling which might have surprised" those who did not know "the friendly and unaffected private person".⁸³

Peel's faith was quiet and unobtrusive. Charles Surman saw him as a "man of prayer" and A.J. Grieve as a "man of God" and he always began his public prayers by addressing God as "Father and Friend". Peel went to considerable trouble for people and for their churches. He had often criticised ministry and churches alike but he also often gave counsel to younger colleagues and he had deep affection for the churches. From this grew his concern that they should remain "free, broad and evangelical" and never be complacent about their heritage.⁸⁴

Coincidentally his two allies in the struggle for the future of Congregationalism, Cadoux and Grieve, died within a few years either side of Peel, Cadoux in August 1947 and Grieve in September 1952.⁸⁵ Thus the field was relatively clear for Micklem to propound his views. Peel's own protégé, Geoffrey Nuttall, who, as a schoolboy, had been a prize-winner in the competition which preceded the publication of *A Hundred Eminent Congregationalists*, assumed Peel's mantle as Congregational historian succeeding him as editor of *Transactions* and as one of the trio who edited the *Quarterly*. He too was critical of the neo-Calvinists:

The desire to lean upon a powerful external authority, which politically found expression in Fascism and National Socialism, has favoured the claims both of the Roman Catholic Church and of a 'Word of God' in Scripture which judges but may not be judged... Neo-Thomists and Neo-Calvinists agree in laying emphasis upon dogmas and confessions, and

82 P. Collinson, *op. cit.* 529.

83 *The Christian World*, *op. cit.*

84 *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society* XVI no. 3, September 1950, 117.

85 *ibid.*; *The Christian World*, *op. cit.*; *Congregational Quarterly* XXVIII 1950, 9-11; C. Surman's index of Congregational ministers, in typescript at Dr Williams's Library, London.

tend to treat faith as assent to a static deposit, to a closed system of doctrine, rather than as an 'εὐεργετία' springing directly from living, personal experience.⁸⁶

However, Dr Nuttall avoided taking Peel's campaigning position as the diehard opponent of the Word of God school.

The *Congregational Quarterly* survived until October 1958.⁸⁷ Its loss, like that of its founder, was great. It has found no replacement. Yet Peel's eclipse has been almost total. He is largely forgotten. His death and his failure to win the argument with Micklem and his associates have enabled others to dismiss him with the causes he espoused. He deserved better.

ALAN ARGENT

REVIEW ARTICLE

Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s. By David W. Bebbington. Pp. xi, 364, Unwin Hyman, London, 1988. £11.95 paperback.

This excellent book gives us exactly what the subtitle promises. It is based on a thorough knowledge of the sources, and is written with clarity, verve and a good eye for the interesting and telling quotation or example. It is fun to read without being in the least unscholarly, sensational or polemic. In circles where Evangelicals still do not know themselves and non-Evangelicals shrink in distaste from what they are too fearful to understand, this book should have a considerable ministry.

Evangelicalism is a modern form of Christianity which has had a significant presence in the Church of England and the other main protestant churches of Britain. Its history demands to be told ecumenically and not denominationally: this Dr Bebbington achieves, while pointing up the specific forms and strengths taken by evangelicalism in particular denominations. It is a significant change from earlier periods, for example, that in the 1980s Anglicans and Baptists provide the major part of the supporters for some of the most significant of explicit, organised forms of British Evangelicalism. In 1800, it was not so: then, for example, Congregationalists were major, indispensable and creative parts of the movement.

Since it appeared in the eighteenth century, Evangelicalism has gone through various stages: Dr Bebbington quite rightly emphasises that Evangelicalism has a history and cannot be known apart from it. It is misrepresented by those Evangelicals who claim that their religion consists of nothing but the

86 G.F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 1946, vii; J.W. Grant *Free Churchmanship in England 1870-1940*, no date, 365-6.

87 R.T. Jones, *op.cit* 413.

unchanging faith once delivered to the saints. This historicity means that Evangelicalism had no settled identity. Yet Evangelicalism always has a tendency to conceal its crises of identity behind the assurance that it is raised up and defined by God in His active control of His cause in the world. When that immediate, even naive, self-understanding of "faith" is for any reason shaken, the movement inevitably engages in the renewed task of self-definition, by both doctrinal and organisational means. When modern liberal, critical and culturally open theology grew irresistibly in the late nineteenth century, Evangelicalism split into the traditions we are now familiar with, as people sought to define Evangelicalism and fought to control the movement in accordance with their chosen definitions. So there emerged the Liberal Evangelicals (did they have a role, though not a greatness, comparable to that of Modernists in the Roman Catholic church?), the Fundamentalists, and then Conservative Evangelicals. Dr Bebbington analyses this prolonged crisis of identity well.

I think he might also have shown that from the start Evangelicalism was always in such crises. Then he might also have brought out more than he does how Evangelicalism has always been a divided movement, and that one of the key divisions is between those Evangelicals who, believing without qualm that Evangelicalism's identity is a given and constant reality, fight to impose that definition, and those who are aware that it has no such defined identity and so experience being an Evangelical as a quest within the terms of *I John* 3.2: "it does not yet appear what we shall be". It could be that the preponderance of the first sort of Evangelical in much of its public history accounts for that brashness and shallow spirituality and theology which so disturbs some of the friendliest non-Evangelicals. That is not to say that Evangelicals do not produce certain kinds of theology in great quantities – rightly, Dr Bebbington picks out activism as one characteristic of much Evangelicalism and he could have added loquaciousness – but it is to ask how we describe the quality of the theology and the reasons for it. I do not think this book probes these questions deeply and I fear that it will be too easy for Evangelicals to use it for self-affirmation rather than for penitence and reform.

Evangelicalism has been missionary and converting: it has always been winning people. Even in its low periods it has not given up trying to do that and it has always sustained its spirit and self-esteem by rejoicing over the one who repents. It has also always been losing people, sometimes driving them away. That is a method and a price of fighting out crises of identity. Crises, handled in that way, involve great pain of spirit and broken relations within Evangelicalism. That means that this history is not only a story of personal hurts but also raises the perennial theological problem of any church which claims to be the work of, and the true witness to, God: how can so much lack of love or sheer incompetence in human relations be attributed to the God of love? Evangelicalism is comparable with Roman Catholicism in understanding its being as the product of God's operation and will and it lacks the extensive humanity and humour by which the Catholic Church softens its pretensions.

I think Dr Bebbington tends to underplay Evangelicalism's uncertainty about its own identity and the effects of its processes of dealing with that issue as a key to the changes Evangelicalism has undergone in its history. As a result he has to offer another explanation of the changes which he describes so clearly. He argues that changes in a movement like Evangelicalism are determined most of all by the cultural context, which he distinguishes, unhelpfully and unrealistically I think, from economics and politics (p.272). These cultural contexts are shaped by those who control ideas in what he calls "high culture" of which the important examples are the rationalism of Locke, the Romanticism of Coleridge and the Modernism of the Bloomsbury Group. It would of course be silly to exclude cultural influences of this kind from the attempt to explain Evangelicalism but I am not convinced by the way they are used in this history. Where do they themselves come from? Is it merely because I have been shaped by the now sadly eroded high culture of the era of liberal and social democracy, that I find it hard to accept that culture simply comes down from on high? May not the culture of the high be a product, even an already obsolete excrescence, of something that comes from living roots below? These cultural influences appear in this book in too monolithic a way, as though they were determining forces. Are they not rather complex and therefore often confused, shadowy, fragile things, agonising in their own crises of identity? They enter into Evangelicalism, I suspect, not to define its character in one epoch after another, but as material which Evangelicals eclectically make use of in their own apologetic self-assertion and self-definition.

Moreover, the omission of politics and economics is serious here, for they might lead us to investigate systematically the social forms within which Evangelicalism operated. Evangelicalism was changed not so much by "high culture", to which for the most part it offered, if not a blind eye, at least a narrow aperture and a very short exposure, but by the interaction between its churchly organisation and activity and the way people lived day by day at home and at work and in local communities. When the order or the technology of the home changes, Evangelicalism changes. Dr Bebbington reports much that could be used to build up such an interpretation but it comes to nothing because of his interest in higher things. Rationalism, Romanticism and Modernism are expected to explain so much, they end up merely serving as broad labels for different cultural styles of Evangelicalism. They do not explain change from one sort of Evangelicalism to another because they are too remote from the processes in which changes take place in the detail of people's living.

So Dr Bebbington has told a very full story, certainly better than it has ever been told before and than it is likely to be told for many years to come. He has given material that needs explanation, because we all, Evangelical and non-Evangelical, inevitably have to deal with this kind of Christianity as practical citizens and Christians. All practice implies some kind of explanation, satisfactory or otherwise. It is one cause for gratitude that we are given material here that needs explaining and can be used in explanations. It is another cause

of gratitude, at least for those of us who enjoy puzzles, that this book leaves the explaining still to be done.

HADDON WILLMER

REVIEWS

Truth, Liberty, Religion. Essays celebrating Two Hundred Years of Manchester College. Edited by Barbara Smith. Pp. xxiv, 325; Oxford: Manchester College, 1986. £20.00 (including postage).

Manchester Academy was dedicated by its first Principal, Thomas Barnes, 'To TRUTH! to LIBERTY! to RELIGION!' The institution, founded in 1786 following the collapse of Warrington Academy, continued at York from 1803 to 1840; returned to Manchester (1840–53); migrated to London (1853–89); and reached Oxford, where it continues to this day, in 1889. This bicentennial collection of essays is a welcome, scholarly and readable contribution to Unitarian history. It is much more than that, for there is nothing narrowly institutional here. On the contrary, the significance of the College's liberal stance for, and the contribution of its alumni to, the nation are made plain. Thus we have chapters on the natural sciences (Jean Raymond and John Pickstone), the medical revolution (Charles Webster and Jonathan Barry), anti-slavery (G.M. Ditchfield) and P.H. Wicksteed's economic theory (Ian Steedman).

Not, indeed, that the institution as such is neglected. We hear of (generally inadequate) lay support from David Wykes; of the contribution made to education in the years between 1786 and 1853 from Ruth Watts; and of its books from Paul Morgan – and one of the subsidiary objectives of the volume is to advertise the richness of the College's bibliographical and archival resources.

As to distinguished ministerial alumni: the present Principal, Ralph Waller, writes knowledgeably on Martineau, while his colleague at "the other place" (Unitarian College, Manchester), A.J. Long, contributes a sensitive essay on J. Estlin Carpenter.

The whole is set against its Unitarian background by R.K. Webb; introduced by Asa Briggs; and furnished with a chronology, illustrations, lists of officers and an index. The preface is by the former Principal of the College, Tony Cross.

The papers prompt a variety of observations. R.K. Webb had, perhaps, the hardest task: that of setting the scene. Selection and compression were inevitable, but the result is not entirely happy. Thus, he advises us that Watts and Doddridge "were Independents in whom the Calvinist inheritance had been profoundly modified" – leaving us to guess in which ways; he goes too far in saying that "By early in the nineteenth century English Presbyterianism had ceased to exist" (though it was, admittedly, vestigial); he brands the Deists with one doctrinal iron; he names Ashworth's Daventry colleague Gray, whereas he was in fact Clark; he declares that Priestley was "a dogmatist without

dogmatism" - though that is not how he appeared to some of the older Presbyterians; he unhelpfully and anachronistically describes the heritage of some working people who came over to Unitarianism in the early nineteenth century as "fundamentalist"; and Thomas Chalmers is mentioned in such a way as to suggest that he was the sole cause of the Scottish Disruption of 1843.

Making the best of sometimes scanty materials, D. Wykes shows both the narrowness of the College's base of financial support between 1786 and 1840, and the difference in the type of lay student at Manchester as compared with York: the lay clientele of the latter were less commercially and more professionally orientated. R. Waller clearly explains why Martineau recoiled before Hegel and how, having fled Priestley's materialism, he settled in a Kantianism seasoned with Plato, Aristotle and the Scottish philosophy. Thus equipped, he countered the views of Spencer, Tyndall and Sidgwick. A.J. Long's account of Carpenter will give pause to any who mistakenly suppose that Rational Dissent necessarily issues in spiritual-emotional coldness and austerity.

The contributors to this volume pursued their researches in the College's library between 1974 and 1984. There was mutual interaction between some of them, and there is less repetition in the collection than might have been expected. There was, however, no formal plan for the book. Not surprisingly, therefore, some matters have fallen through the gaps between contributions, and this despite the way in which many of the papers fit together with providential neatness.

Thus, for example, the overall impression is of a positive and relatively painless (except financially) contribution to society by the College and its alumni. Is this the whole story? Most of the alumni were ministers; some were doughty controversialists; some were ostracised by those of other denominations. A chapter on the pastors and preachers, with references to the content of their sermons, their liturgical practices, their social witness, would have directed greater attention to the College's principal *raison d'être*. Again, we hear of scientists, medical men, Martineau and Carpenter; but what of such luminaries as G.V. Smith, J.J. Tayler and A. Gordon? Studies of these and others would enable us, among other things, to detect any changes of connotation of "truth", "liberty" and "religion" through the two centuries. What part have Manchester alumni played in ecumenical and peace movements during this century? How did those of other traditions react to the presence of Unitarian colleges in their several localities? Did any Unitarians fear the "Anglicanisation" of their students on the removal of the College to Oxford - as some Congregationalists did when Mansfield was established there?

These questions are prompted by our real interest in, and gratitude for, this volume. May Manchester College's library be invaded (though not plundered) by enthusiastic researchers eager to fill the gaps in the story - before 2186.

ALAN P.F. SELL

So rich a soil – John McLeod Campbell on Christian atonement. By George M. Tuttle. Pp. 174, The Handsel Press, Edinburgh, 1986. £10.50

A minister's son, secure in the Calvinism of the Westminster Confession, content with the "commonsense" philosophy of Thomas Reid which he imbibed as a Glasgow undergraduate, happy handling Scripture without benefit of critical theory, John McLeod Campbell was an unlikely revolutionary. Yet in 1831 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland deposed him for heresy, and twenty-five years later he published what was arguably the most original and significant work of British systematic theology of the nineteenth century, *The nature of the atonement*.

George Tuttle's warm and sympathetic study synthesises historical scholarship and theological perception. It falls into three well-balanced parts. The first considers Campbell the man, his ministry, trial, deposition and influence on the changing theological climate of nineteenth-century Scotland. An analysis of his contribution to atonement theology follows, and the book concludes with three chapters of critical assessment.

The best Reformed theology is forged in the pulpit. Tuttle shows this to be as true of Campbell in Row, and after his deposition in Blackfriars Street, Glasgow, as of Barth in Safenwil or Niebuhr in Detroit. Early in his ministry he diagnosed "the want of living religion" amongst his parishioners and proposed "resting assured of [God's] love" as a palliative. The roots of Campbell's theological revolution lay deep in pastoral soil. It was watered by careful study of the New Testament, the writings of Martin Luther, and friendship with three of Scotland's sharpest (the Kirk thought heretical) theological minds – Thomas Erskine, Edward Irving and A.J. Scott. Readers of this Journal will note with interest that the latter two were sometime ill-fated colleagues at Regent Square. A perceptive analysis of the trial reveals the size of Campbell's task, for to see the Westminster Confession through the glass of Scripture rather than *vice versa* was to issue more than a theological challenge, it was to call into question the very hallmark of Scottishness. Failure in 1831 was inevitable, but as Tuttle emphasises, that failure spelt freedom for Campbell.

After a careful analysis of the genesis of *The nature of the atonement* Tuttle claims greater originality for Campbell than is frequently allowed him. His thought is shown to have evolved independently of Erskine, Scott, Maurice and Schleiermacher; his method, Scriptural exegesis and long unpaid years occupying the pulpit in the nondenominational chapel in Blackfriars Street.

The way in which Campbell broke the mould of the penal theory is expounded with exemplary clarity, and a telling exercise in theological archaeology lays bare a seam of Campbell's ideas in British theology, beginning with J.J. Lias's "virtually forgotten" Hulsean lectures of 1883–4, passing *en route* through such diverse thinkers as John Caird, B.F. Westcott, R.W. Dale and P.T. Forsyth (who thought "Every minister ought to know that book and know it well"), and ending with Vincent Taylor.

The final chapters are a sensitive exploration of some of the most common criticisms of Campbell. Tuttle's use of New Testament studies, Christian

psychotherapy and eucharistic theology in defence of the treatment of Christ's confession of human sin and repentance for human guilt is particularly significant.

Inept proofreading is unfortunately evidenced at several points – for example footnotes 11 on p.114 and 8 on p. 121 have disappeared completely. An index would also have been helpful. However, no-one interested in the development of theological thought in the nineteenth century could fail to benefit from Dr Tuttle's thorough and deeply reflective study of the man whom Edward Caird called "the heretic [who] in the long run converted the church."

DAVID CORNICK

Not Bricks Alone. A Century of Worship and Service (How Ferme Park Baptist and Park Chapel Became Union Church, Crouch End.) By Irene Spackman and John Aston. Pp. 133. 1989, £2.00 (plus postage: obtainable from the church).

It is not easy to write the history of a London church. Few have the means or the members to sustain a full account. Most have to be presented as stories of decline. Even if the myth of qualitative decline can be scotched, the story usually remains one of numerical and architectural decline. Irene Spackman and John Aston have entwined the stories of two great (or once great, if that is how you see such things) suburban churches, Ferme Park Baptist (once General Baptist) and Park Chapel United Reformed (once Congregational), Crouch End. The full history of each of these churches remains to be told. And it deserves to be told. The makers and moulders of a Crouch End worshipped in their pews, its architects, builders and developers as well as those who serviced it and those who gave it flavour. Not all who worshipped were mere transients, treating their suburb as a dormitory, a staging-post en route for better views and less demanding pews. For many who moved on, Ferme Park and Park Chapel were formative influences. Countless British churches were stamped accordingly and the diaspora of these two churches still has its effect.

Not Bricks Alone is more for internal consumption, an unsentimental but loving account of the factors which brought these two churches together as Union Church, Crouch End. In their prime each had over a thousand members. Today there are sixty-two in the united church. From the 1950s the numerical decline has been rapid. From the 1930s it was inevitable to clearer-sighted members. But the rest of the story is not inevitable. Park calls to mind the name of Alfred Rowland (minister 1875–1911) and Ferme Park calls to mind that of Charles Brown (minister 1890–1925) but this account reminds us that these were not one-minister causes. A twin succession of able men (whose service is now upheld by a woman, Rachel Harrison) backed by clear-eyed deacons kept the churches lively. Whatever lies in the future this book suggests that the united church's membership has the quality of commitment required to cope with a Crouch End which is once more under rapid change. There is much to savour, little to regret. This reviewer, however, cannot help regretting the demolition of

Ferne Park's great Edwardian preaching space, designed by Baines, that most representative architect of Baptist Churches, roomy, friendly, with a dash of fantasy. Park Chapel (whose buildings still cling to existence) was representative in another way, an extraordinary gothic city of buildings which had grown in all directions to serve a mountain of needs. Both were visually important to their suburb, buildings to be read by all who passed by. There is nothing fantastic about Union Church. Its dreams, like its memories, will be quite different.

J.C.G.B.

Dear Girl: the diaries and letters of two working women (1897-1917). Edited by Tierl Thompson. Pp. 320, The Women's Press Ltd., London, 1987. £6.95

Eva Slawson died suddenly of undetected diabetes in March 1916. She was in her early thirties, a student at Woodbrooke for whom a world of social opportunity seemed at last to be opening. Ruth Slate, her close friend, died by her own hand in April 1953. She was in her late sixties. She too had been at Woodbrooke though the professional life which had opened for her proved to be a succession of opportunities snatched and then snatched away. *Dear Girl* is an account of their lives and particularly their friendship as explored in their diaries and letters. If that were all to *Dear Girl*, it would be enough since their story is a very moving one. But it is not all, which is why The Women's Press have published it.

Dear Girl's contribution to women's studies is patent. Here are two women from the East London edges of the working and lower-middle classes. They are coming to maturity in Edwardian England. Their lives are bounded by respectable but unappetising office work and by family ties in which most relationships are defined by ill-health and the threat of poverty. Drink, T.B., wife-battering, are down the street, even next door. Home is safe enough, save for the stresses of adolescence in confined spaces. With those stresses our story begins. Teasingly and frustratingly such lower-middle class lives as those of Ruth and Eva were being enlarged by the opportunities which Edwardian England's suburbs, trains and trams provided for leisure and education. Steadily Ruth and Eva discovered themselves.

This Woman's History is also Labour History. It is the world of vegetarianism, communitarianism, pacifism, Letchworth and Arts and Crafts, and meetings in Red Lion Square. It is also a world where such single women as Ruth (who eventually marries) and Eva (who dies unmarried) have to come to terms with the way in which their lives and relationships are determined by men whose sensitivity and intelligence seldom match their own. "That people are so ignorant of their own being and the Laws of God seems to me simply awful" wrote a third friend, Minna Simmons during the Great War. "Do you know, since I have been nursing, I have only nursed one woman who wanted her baby - they are all accidents. The most precious thing, this glorious sensation, that fuses two people in one, and creates a third, is then to be degraded. No wonder we have a war".

But *Dear Girl* is also Free Church History. At this level it has been least well served by its editor, who has skipped over too many clues and misinterpreted too many subtleties. Ruth Slate was reared a Free Methodist. She found something of a pulpit hero in Joseph Hocking and went on to find something of a home at R.J. Campbell's City Temple. Eva Slawson, whose faith, though no less questioning, seems to have stood on firmer ground, was active at Trinity Congregational Church, Walthamstow.

Trinity's minister, Stanley James, figures in *Dear Girl* as fit for a novel: passionate, intellectual, idealistic, radical, desperate for the fellowship of applause, veering between the freedom of congregationalism and the release to be found in symbolism. In him fused City Temple, Weigh House, and Whitefields; Campbell, Orchard and Horne; the worlds of Brotherhoods and Institutes and Settlements. The combination was explosive. It exploded.

James was dangerously intense in his enthusiasms and relationships, especially with women ("what we call a dipper", one of them reflected) and Trinity was riven accordingly. In his ministry (1906-17) membership dropped from 228 to 128. He moved on first to the Weigh House where he was briefly an assistant minister (1921-3) and then into Roman Catholicism. He wrote about it in *Adventures of a Spiritual Tramp* (1925); at least the title was honest.

Dear Girl touches upon the personal passions but the intricate congregational complex of which they were part is barely explored, whether from delicacy (in 1989?), policy (it will take time for women's studies to warm to the small change of Edwardian chapel life) or ignorance (*Adventures of a Spiritual Tramp* is not in the bibliography). There is the suggestion that there is more about all this in the letters and diaries than the editor has released. Even so, enough is here to provide a rare evidence from a truly representative pew (truly representative because it is lower-middle class and because women sit in it) of how attitudes change. Here are New Theology and women preachers and the allure of Quakers (and Christian Scientists). Here are the intellectual worlds of H.G. Wells and Edward Carpenter as well as George Eliot. Here are the crusading worlds of Josephine Butler, Maude Royden and Margaret Ethel MacDonald. And all of them are swirling into Walthamstow and pondered upon in the pews of Trinity, Orford Road. This is how Congregationalism, in the pew as well as from the pulpit, pushes against the liberal-most edges of evangelicalism. More yet, here, in Edwardian England, are the all-too-human tensions and failures reflected in current ministerial stress and failed ministerial marriages. And here, for many of us, shines through what motivated those devoted and undervalued women who battled faithfully and intelligently for our best selves in long past Sunday school classes. As a scholarly text *Dear Girl* is a frustration; but it must be read.

J.C.G.B.

REVIEW NOTES

Members of this *Journal* will be particularly interested in a new journal, *Bunyan Studies*. This journal, launched in Autumn 1988, aims to provide "a forum for scholarship and research on Bunyan and on the literary, religious and historical contexts within which his works were produced". Like *J.U.R.C.H.S.*, *Bunyan Studies* appears twice a year. Its first contributors included Roger Sharrock and Richard Greaves, with a review article by P.N. Furbank. Individual subscriptions are £10 and enquiries should be addressed to Bunyan Studies, Counter Productions, PO Box 556, London SE5 0RL. The journal is promoted by the Open University and the editorial team is headed by W.R. Owens of Parsifal College (still better known to members of this society as New, formerly Hackney, College) to whom editorial contributions should be addressed at: The Open University, London Region, Parsifal College, 527 Finchley Road, London NW3 7BG.

Dr Edwin Welch's edition of the early records of the *Bedford Moravian Church* has been published by the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society. This church was the first Moravian settlement in Britain. It developed from an Anglican religious society through a Baptist church, and it had links with the Countess of Huntingdon. The volume may be obtained from the Society at the County Record Office, County Hall, Bedford, MK42 9AP, price £12 (inc. p & p).

J.C.G.B.