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EDITORIAL

It is easy – perhaps too easy – to find anniversaries to commemorate and it is tempting to use them not so much to remember events in their historical setting but to emphasise what we believe we have inherited from them. Of course, some anniversaries are more meaningful than others, and this edition of the *Journal* marks a significant one, namely the centenary of the ordination of Constance Todd, (the day before she married Claud Coltman), she being the first woman to be ordained into a mainstream Christian denomination in Britain on 17 September 1917. Kirsty Thorpe’s article, based on her annual lecture delivered at the Society’s conference held in Manchester University’s Behrens House*, 5 and 6 July 2017, shows that we have to be prepared to see Coltman as she was, rather than through the lenses of other, subsequent agenda. Pioneer she certainly was, but some circumspection is required over seeing her as a “role model”. We learn here of the denominational tensions, as well as those existing in the local church, which at that time surrounded the notion of women being ordained as ministers. At least some of this, Dr Thorpe admits, remains the case a century later. Julia Pitman, minister of St Paul’s and Armitage Uniting Churches and Adjunct Research Associate, Charles Sturt University, Queensland, Australia, assesses the international context for Miss Todd’s ordination, particularly how it relates to developments in the United States and in the “colonies”. Dr Pitman, who also lectured at the Manchester Conference, contrasts developments in the Free Churches with those in the Church of England, particularly regarding promises made in the marriage service. The two articles complement each other. Our final article, by Tom Arthur, was delivered in July 2016 at the Society’s Day Conference at Cardiff and in the church he formerly served. Dr Arthur reminds us of the complex nature of the Church of England in the seventeenth century through the experiences of one parish priest and the changes made in one parish church. I am grateful to all three contributors, (Dr Thorpe being a member of the Society’s Council, as well as minister at Wilmslow), for making their papers available for the *Journal*.

We welcome as reviewers Jonathan Carter, Stephen Chester and Alasdair Pratt.

* The fact that Behrens House became the first hall of residence for women students at the university was not known at the time that the conference was planned, but a happy coincidence, given the subject matter. The third main paper on Luther’s shaping of Reformed Theology was given by an Anglican priest, Dr Charlotte Methuen.

CONSTANCE COLTMAN: ROLE MODEL FOR WOMEN'S MINISTRY OR COMPLETE ONE OFF?

The faithful recording and telling of history always presents a particular set of challenges to those who attempt this refined academic pursuit. Researching the story of the first generation of women ministers in the United Kingdom is no exception to that rule. It is an undertaking fraught with difficulties. One reason for this is the scarcity of, and difficulty in tracking down, sources of information, which means the search for original and accurate records on which to base a faithful account of the past is more akin to a sophisticated detective enquiry than might be expected to be the case for events in the comparatively recent past. Then there is the surprising dearth of first-hand accounts of their ministry written by the female pioneers themselves, which leaves the researcher uncomfortably reliant on the few items of autobiography and personal writing which have come down to us.

As if these challenges were not enough, there is the high risk that a historian lacking self-awareness will find it difficult to engage with early twentieth century feminism without, however unconsciously, bringing a large amount of twenty-first century baggage to that pursuit. Our contemporary society relates to the stories of pioneering women through lenses strongly influenced by several decades of the academic study of feminism. Our attitudes towards pioneering women in the past cannot easily be separated from the rich pattern of present expectations and assumptions about women's roles, gender equality and social behaviour which have become accepted parts of public life and discourse over the last half century or more. We now live in a society where, since the 1970s, British governments have passed laws, and businesses and organisations evolved guidelines and codes of practice to control and guide our attitudes towards issues of gender and justice. How can we engage with the world of those early twentieth century women who felt a call to leadership roles in the Church without reading back into their experience incongruous and unhelpful comparisons from our own time and experiences?

Despite these difficulties and challenges, a conversation will sometimes offer up a personal memory which casts an intriguing light on the history of women's ministry. One such insight resulted from someone who remembered meeting Constance Coltman when she came to lead evening worship at a church where he was minister in the late 1950s. He commented that, at the time, no-one in the Congregational Union of England and Wales (CUEW) thought a great deal about the fact that she had been the first woman to be ordained. It was something unremarkable. He recalled her long, loose hair but not what she said or did in leading worship.

A second memory was from a retired minister who, as a young student in Oxford during the 1950s had often gone on Sundays to lead worship in small, rural Congregational churches. Many a time, he recalled, an elderly male deacon

would remark to him that the congregation liked "them lady preachers". He discovered this to be a reference to those women ministerial students from Mansfield College who sometimes came to preach in the chapels of deepest Oxfordshire.

Finally, a retired minister whose father had been treasurer of a London Congregational Church in the 1930s recalled how, as a child, his parents had given lunch to a visiting woman minister when she led worship at their church. After the meal his father had called a taxi for the Revd Mary Collins of North Bow Congregational Church and paid the driver to take her home. He told her that had he simply given her the money he knew she would not have spent it on her fare home but on the needy people in her church. On this occasion, in his view, she needed the help more than they did. This anecdote casts a fascinating light on the life of Mary Collins who died in 1944, aged just 60. Her ministry in North Bow had lasted ten years and, according to her obituary, had taken a heavy tax on her health causing her to retire at the age of 59. Self-sacrificial ministry was often a feature of the early women pioneers.

The moment at which it is possible to start tracing the public journey towards ordained ministry of Constance Todd (as she then was), came in 1913. The former History student at Somerville College, Oxford, aged 24, sought permission from W. B. Selbie the principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, to enter training for Congregational ministry. The concept of an ordained woman was not totally unheard of at this time. The early pioneers of women's ordination had emerged several generations earlier on the other side of the Atlantic, with the ordination to ministry in 1853 of Antoinette Brown in South Butler Congregational Church, New York. Sadly, her first ministry was not long-lived or happy, a symptom of an unease about female leadership that would play out with other, later pioneers in different church settings worldwide. Antoinette Brown discovered her theology did not fit the expectations of the congregation, as she could not preach eternal damnation, and refused to condemn an unmarried mother whose baby had died. Leaving active ministry and a pitifully low stipend less than a year after ordination she went on to marry three years later and relaunched a speaking career in support of women's rights, abolition and temperance. Only later in life, after motherhood and being left a widow, did she return to ministry as a Unitarian from 1908 until her death in 1921.

A combination of pioneering spirit and a motherly model for ministry were key parts of the late nineteenth century flowering of women's ministry in the United States, as exemplified by Unitarian Universalist women ministers among the western frontier settlements. Their successes would later cause a serious reaction against women's ministry from a number of denominations in the early twentieth century, some of whom stopped allowing women's ordination for a time. In 1888, however, Frances Willard, a founder of the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union, wrote this highly charged promotion of women in church leadership in her book *Woman in the Pulpit*:

The time has come when those men in high places, "dressed in a little brief authority" within the church of Christ, who seek to shut women out of the pastorate, cannot do so with impunity. To-day they are taking on themselves a responsibility in the presence of which they ought to tremble. To an earnest, intelligent, and devout element among their brethren they seem to be absolutely frustrating the grace of God. They cannot fail to see how many ministers neither draw men to the Gospel feast, nor go out into the highways and hedges seeking them. They cannot fail to see that, although the novelty of women's speaking has worn off, the people rally to hear them as to hear no others, save the most celebrated men of the pulpit and platform; and that especially it is true that "the common people hear them gladly".¹

Another celebrated woman, who was probably known of by the young Constance Todd, was English-born medical graduate and women's suffrage campaigner Dr Anna Shaw. In April 1909, she spoke in Whitefield's Tabernacle, London, on suffrage issues and her ordained ministry in the Methodist Protestant Church of the United States. *The British Weekly* article said:

Born in England, Miss Shaw migrated with her father's family to the United States when quite a child. After having completed the same curriculum in theology as any male student entering the ministry, she joined the Protestant Methodists (after being first refused by the Methodist Episcopal) and was ordained. Her work as a pastor has been successful in all her churches but having a call to the cause of woman suffrage she gave up her clerical work to be free for lecture work. At present she is the president of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association, a position which involves much work.²

As well as these North American examples of women's ministry, which were starting to have a growing impact in Britain in the early twentieth century, there was also an emerging campaign for women's ordination on this side of the Atlantic in which the most prominent national figure for more than half a century would be Anglican campaigner, speaker and preacher Maude Royden. As a lifelong Anglican, she never achieved ordination to the priesthood herself, since the campaign of which she was a leading member went into abeyance at the outbreak of the Great War and did not finally achieve its goal until the mid-1990s, long after her death in 1956. Educated at Cheltenham Ladies' College and Oxford University, Maude Royden first came to attention in public life as an advocate of women's suffrage but by the 1920s was known on the international stage for her preaching. She found a platform in Anglican churches

1 Frances Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit* (Chicago: Woman's Temperance Publication Association, 1889), pp. 52-3.

2 *British Weekly* (22 April 1909), p. 57.

when permitted to do so, spoke in church halls when bishops limited permission for women to speak within consecrated buildings, and also graced many Nonconformist pulpits over the years. In 1917 she would begin a post as preaching assistant to Dr Fort Newton at City Temple Congregational Church the day before her friend, and fellow suffragist and pacifist, Constance Coltman was ordained on 17 September.

If Maude Royden represented for many people the public face of feminism in early twentieth century Britain, what was the climate within the churches in terms of women's role at that time? It is tempting but risky to make generalised statements about a denomination as varied and theologically diverse as the Congregational Union of England and Wales was during this period. Despite being a tradition with deep historical roots, the CUEW was still relatively young in organisational terms, having been founded in 1832. Most of the rest of the nineteenth century was devoted to major projects bringing together the different strands of Congregationalism, as represented by the County and District Associations, through new shared ventures and structures. At the same time there was continuing respect for what the Revd Algernon Wells, the CUEW's first paid Secretary, described as the "distinct, indestructible independency" of each separate church.³ Projects such as fundraising, church planting, the production of that ideal symbol of unity a hymn book, and a new focus on missionary work at home and abroad, all helped to give Congregationalism a greater identity and voice during the nineteenth century. A more contentious issue throughout this period was the question of ordained ministry, in particular the level of training and recognition ministers should have. There was a continuing tension into the early twentieth century, between those who felt that the guidance of God could operate best through the Union having a greater role in the recruitment and settlement of ministers, and those for whom the local Church Meeting was the primary place where God's guidance must be discerned.

As principal of Mansfield College, and a member of the CUEW's General Purposes Committee, Dr Selbie would have been well aware of this background when he was first approached by Miss Todd about the possibility of ministerial training. He would also have been fully versed as to the latest denominational position on women's ordination. In 1909, the General Purposes Committee and the Settlements and Removals Committee of the CUEW had held a joint meeting to discuss the admission of women ministers. Their debate had been prompted by a request from Cardiff for the ministerial recognition of a woman lay pastor in a Congregational Church in the Docks area of the city. She was one of a growing group of active laywomen offering local leadership to churches during this period, some of whom were attracting wider attention, as evidenced by the gradual appearance of female names in the Congregational Year Book's

3 Algernon Wells' address to pastors and churches quoted in Albert Peel, *These Hundred Years. a History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales 1831-1931* (London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1931), p. 85.

List B of Lay Evangelists and Lay Pastors from 1898.

The CUEW's joint committee discussion on this issue in 1909 resulted in a recommendation that women candidates who had fulfilled the same criteria as men, and undergone the same training, could be admitted to Congregational ministry. However, as Dr Selbie would have known, that recommendation had not been accepted and acted upon by the CUEW Council. The minutes stated: "After a lengthy discussion it was agreed to proceed to the next business, the representatives of the Press being asked not to report the discussion".⁴ In fact, the *British Weekly* had gone ahead with the following entry in its diary column:

The talk was that the Council of the Union is steadily growing more business-like and effective, that it seems idle to pretend that its proceedings can be secret, that a proposal to recognise women ministers provoked strong opposition and was shelved at the Council, that the suffragettes are rousing reactions in unexpected quarters.⁵

It is interesting that the question of women's suffrage and women's ministry appear here side by side in the report. This suggests that the possibility of women's ordination was often seen at the time, even within religious circles, as one of a range of issues about women's rights and roles in society raised by early twentieth century feminism. Rather than the churches engaging in theological discussion about the basis of women's ordination, as would happen far more in the late twentieth century, the early debate on this was swept up within a larger societal discussion about women's right to vote, to have a voice in public life and to have the freedom to determine their own lives.

Hatty Baker, a Congregational lay pastor at Horsted Keynes, had written to several theological colleges, asking whether women applicants would be admitted, around the same time as the CUEW was reaching the decision to shelve this difficult issue for the time being. The reply from the principals was that not until such an application arrived would the appropriate committees decide on the response. Elaine Kaye commented: "When Constance Todd applied to Mansfield College in 1913, therefore, the questions had already been raised but not yet answered".⁶

So what did Dr Selbie expect he might encounter in a potential female ministerial candidate and what, in Constance Todd, did he actually meet? After her death, Constance Coltman's friend Lady Stansgate would give almost the only account we have of that unusual meeting in a tribute offered at her

4 CUEW Council Minutes, 12 October 1909. (Deposited at the Congregational Library, Dr Williams's Library, London).

5 *British Weekly* (21 October 1909), p. 66.

6 Elaine Kaye, "A turning-point in the Ministry of Women: The Ordination of the First Woman to the Christian Ministry in England in September 1917", in W. J. Sheils and D. Wood (eds), *Women in the Church: Studies in Church History*, no. 27 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 508.

Memorial Service which was held on 26 April 1969 at Whitefield's Tabernacle in Tottenham Court Road, London. Constance's widower, Claud, kept some of the papers and letters of condolence from that time. Among these is an account of that event which appears to come from the records of the Society for the Ministry of Women in the Church. The service was apparently attended by several members of the Society, an organisation which Constance Coltman had helped to found in the 1920s:

Lady Stansgate stressed her "dedicated pioneering spirit". When Constance Coltman felt the call to study theology and seek admission to the Ministry, she wrote to Dr. Selbie, then Principal of Mansfield College, and laid before him her sense of vocation. As they talked together, "he was surprised – even startled", but becoming convinced of her call by the Holy Spirit felt that he could not stand in her way.⁷

This account suggests that it was the face-to-face interview with a college principal, and the impact of a strong personal sense of call, which most influenced events when Constance Todd sought to train for ministry. The prime role of the principal in these matters would be borne out by later events, when some Congregational theological colleges encouraged and nurtured female applicants, whereas others strongly discouraged or openly opposed their entry. Whether or not Dr Selbie then referred his decision to a college committee is unclear from the records, but what is evident is the lack of fanfare or apparent batting of an institutional eyelid when the name "Miss Constance Todd" appeared in the minutes of the Board of Education on 18 June 1914 at the end of her first year of study, as the first female student in the institution's history:

The following candidates met the Board: 1) Miss C. M. Todd (Somerville College, Oxford). Age 24. Class 11 Modern History School, Oxford – Member of Presbyterian Ch. of England, since 1910. Recommended by Rev. J. P. Knightland of Devizes & Rev. J. Cochrane of Putney.⁸

Here is the first surprise, perhaps, that a pioneer lauded and owned by Congregationalists down the years and across the world should have come from another sister, though far from identical, Free Church denomination. As her Scottish father had been brought up in the Church of Scotland it is understandable that Constance's faith had been nurtured within the nearest equivalent tradition south of the border, the Presbyterian Church of England. She had been born in 1889, the oldest of George Todd and Emily Ellerman's four

7 Obituary of Constance Coltman from the minutes of the Society for the Ministry of Women in the Church, Coltman file, "Daughters of Dissent archive", Westminster College, Cambridge.

8 Minutes of Mansfield College Board of Education.

children. Her father had been born in Greenock, Scotland, in 1845 and made his career as a headmaster and educational administrator in the civil service. Constance's mother was born in Hull to a Yorkshire mother and German Lutheran father. Johannes Ellermann was a corn merchant and honorary consul for Hanover. He had moved to the port of Hull from Hamburg and would later become a naturalised British subject, dropping the second "n" from his surname. Emily had been an early female medical graduate but an accident with a domestic fire left her with life changing injuries and she never practised as a doctor. George and Emily Todd lived in an affluent, leafy part of Putney, west of London in a detached house on Colinette Road with their four children, Constance, Gladys, Arthur and John. Census records from 1911 show them having three domestic servants namely a cook, a parlour maid and another female domestic helper. It is difficult to track their presence within the life of Putney Presbyterian Church despite the undoubted personal faith with which Constance Todd arrived at Dr Selbie's study door in 1913. A close reading of the church records from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century reveal just one reference to the Todd family in the form of a financial donation made by George Todd.

If Dr Selbie was not expecting to open the college doors to a young Presbyterian woman then he would soon have begun to revise his thoughts in the light of experience. The second woman to study at Mansfield College would be Dorothy Wilson, who had served the Presbyterian Church of England as its Young People's Secretary during the Great War and in 1924 had her application to train for ministry declined by the denomination's General Assembly. At that point she turned to Congregationalism and found, as did many others in the first inter-war generation of women ministers, a clearer path there to ordination than in their home tradition. Of the Trinitarian traditions, only the Baptists and the Congregationalists offered women any chance of ordination in the early twentieth century. Between 1923 and 1939 three women appeared in *The Baptist Handbook* as "woman pastors" or "woman probationers". Unlike their Congregational counterparts they were not listed alphabetically with their male colleagues but in a separate "List of Woman Pastors", conveying a subtle message about a distinct identity rather than arrival on the full ministerial scene.⁹ During the period from 1917 to 1937 a total of 19 women were ordained within the CUEW, of whom two were Anglican by background, three were Presbyterian and six from different parts of the Methodist Church.¹⁰ Of the first six women students at Lancashire College, only one came from a Congregational background; the others were Methodist.

Perhaps more challenging than her denominational origin was the wealth and privilege which lay in Constance Coltman's background as she entered Congregational ministry, and which remained a discrete underlying factor

9 *The Baptist Handbook for 1927*, p. 290.

10 Kirsten E. Thorpe, *Gender and Ministry: The experience of early women Congregational ministers*, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Manchester, 2005), p 158.

supporting her family and giving her personal resources to call on throughout her life. These almost certainly came from her mother's side of the family although it is difficult to identify exactly how and where this wealth appeared. Constance's Aunt Ida, mother Emily and their younger brother John had been left fatherless on the death of Johannes in 1871. At this point the three children, then aged 14, 12 and 8, had moved to the household of their aunt Mary in Edgbaston, Birmingham. It appears their own mother was either unable or unwilling to care for them. John went to the King Edward VI School in Birmingham, moved out into lodgings to start accountancy training aged 14, and on gaining his accountancy qualification set up his own business, J. Ellerman & Co.¹¹ Making his way in the world, he began investing in failing companies and turning around their fortunes. His first investment, the Brewery and Commercial Investment Trust, appreciated by 1,300 per cent in nine years under his care. In 1892 he began a highly successful merchant shipping business and was rewarded for his contribution to the Boer War by a title, becoming Sir John Reeves Ellerman (1862-1933). In 1917, the year of Constance's ordination, Ellerman Lines owned 1.5 million tons of shipping. The following year Sir John had stock in 70 breweries and owned, among other publications, *The Financial Times*, *The Times*, *The Daily Mail* and *The London Illustrated News*. In the 1920s he began buying in the coal industry and picking up property in London as the fortunes of aristocratic families tumbled and they began to sell off their vast estates. At his death in 1933 this intensely private and reserved man was estimated to be the richest man in England, and his estate was valued at over £36 million, exclusive of property abroad. One small but significant entry among the 47 clauses in his will shows he was aware of his niece Constance:

£7,500 + annuity of £1,000 to his sister Ida Butlin; £7,500 + life annuity to his sister Emily Todd; £14,687 upon trust for his niece Ida Cox, with the remainder as she may appoint; £15,625 upon trust for his nephew Arthur Todd and his issue + a life annuity of £400 to said nephew; £15,000 upon trust for his nephew John Todd and his wife and issue; £6,125 upon trust for his niece Constance Coltman; £7,500 upon trust for his niece Gladys Todd and her issue.

In an account of her parents written in 1986, Constance Coltman's daughter, Irene Brown, recalled: "I am sure they shared the salary but I do not know. When my mother gave me money as a student – hard up! – it was always from her private family money. She never said from my salary".¹²

The fact that Constance Coltman came from an upper middle class background, and was moreover a niece of the richest man in Britain in the early twentieth century, were probably not things she would have talked about in her

11 <http://www.exodus2013.co.uk/immigrants-made-good-sir-john-reeves-ellerman/>

12 Irene Brown, Letter, p. 4, "Daughters of Dissent archive", Westminster College, Cambridge.

role as a Congregational minister. Particularly in the first two churches she and her husband Claud served, in the East End and Greville Place, Kilburn, they probably lived unostentatiously and she would often have visited people with very few resources. She always seems to have used her personal funds to make family life easier, never to live in any sort of luxury, and also to support other women in their quest for ordained ministry. The minutes of the Society for the Ministry of Women in the Church give a good example of this from a meeting on 25 January 1940:

Application to the Priscilla Bursary Fund. Mrs Coltman brought forward Miss B. Reita Searle, who had applied for a grant to enable her to take her Intermediate BD. She asked for £5 and Miss Anderson offered £2.2, while Mrs Coltman promised £1.1. It was decided that the remainder should come from the £5 given by Mr Ronald Wynne for such help. Miss Jerwood to be asked to open a "Priscilla Bursary Fund" for such applications.¹³

Whatever else Dr Selbie was looking for in a female ministerial student, there can be little doubt he would have been delighted to encounter Constance Todd's academic skills and strong educational background. Like many of the first generation of pioneering women entering public life in the early twentieth century, she had benefitted from the dramatic improvements in the educational opportunities for girls which the second half of the Victorian era had seen. The Todd household had been a well-travelled, intellectually stimulating and culturally rich environment in which to grow up. Her father George, who died in Rome and was buried in the Protestant Cemetery there, had thirty books out on loan from the London library at the time, most of them about Dante.¹⁴ Constance Todd had been educated at a private boarding establishment for girls, St Felix School in Southwold. The school was founded in 1897 by Margaret Isabella Gardiner, whose declared ambition was "to make a school where girls are treated like sensible creatures". By September 1902 the present site of the school had been purchased and the first four boarding houses and teaching block completed. From this thriving and academically enlightened establishment Constance Todd was one of two pupils to win exhibitions to read history at Oxford in 1908. Her studies in modern history allowed her to further her interest in Italian culture, particularly Renaissance Florence, and her daughter later recalled that she had written a dissertation on a Botticelli picture.¹⁵ At Mansfield College she would excel in her study of Hebrew and Church History, regularly coming top in the Easter examinations, with average marks above those of the male students in her year. She continued her studies in Greek during her active

13 Society for the Ministry of Women in the Church, Minute books 1938-1947. (Deposited at the Women's Library, London School of Economics, London).

14 Irene Brown, Letter, p. 2.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

ministry, wrote a chapter on "Women in the Evangelical and Free Churches" for Maude Royden's 1924 book *The Church and Woman* and in the 1950s learned Swedish in order to correspond with, visit and support those pioneering women entering priesthood in the Church of Sweden.

It is striking how many of the women who made their mark on society a century ago had this same combination of a privileged background and a good academic education. An image which perfectly illustrates this comes from the front line in the Great War. A row of FANYs (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry) are pictured in France, wearing the impressive fur coats that were part of their uniform. These women acted as first aiders and casualty rescuers in those parts of the line where they were allowed access. Some of the well-heeled ladies who joined the FANYs brought with them not only their driving skills but also access to their fathers' motor vehicles.¹⁶ The presence of well meaning, properly equipped and highly motivated young women with courage, determination and the right skills to take action in times of need sent a quiet, yet powerful message to the nation. Women had arrived and were needed as part of the workforce, especially during the war effort. Alongside this, they were asking to be taken seriously, rather than showing signs that under pressure they might crumble beneath the strain.

Another aspect of Constance Todd's contribution to the Church, as her theological outlook grew and her ministry unfolded, was probably even more uncomfortable for some people within Congregationalism than her academic giftedness and upper middle-class background. She was unashamedly High Church in her tastes, as a lover of beautiful and ornate liturgy. It was no doubt partly for that reason, and also because of his outspoken pacifism, that she and her fiancé Claud Coltman began to attend the King's Weigh House Church, off Oxford Street, to hear the preaching of the Revd Dr W. E. Orchard. Both she and Claud had completed the Mansfield College ministerial training course in summer 1916. She had probably returned home to care for her widowed mother in Putney (her father had died in 1912), whereas Claud was now living and working for a year in the Mansfield College Settlement in Canning Town. This large Christian community, financed and encouraged by the college, offered a wide range of activities, entertainment, education and support for the poor residents of the surrounding area. Claud was thus receiving an ideal form of in-service training for the ministry he and Constance would soon begin in the East End.

The presiding minister at the King's Weigh House, W. E. Orchard, was a highly influential Presbyterian who had been appointed to the church in October 1914: "He had a magnetic personality. His intellectual ability and his emotional power impressed all who heard him preach. He aroused strong feelings amongst both admirers and detractors and had to bear both adulation and bitter criticism".¹⁷

Dr Orchard had made his mark at the Weigh House with his first Sunday morning service, which took the form of "A Reformed Eucharist, a Catholic

16 Kate Adie. *Corsets to Camouflage* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003), p. 34.

17 Elaine Kaye. *The History of the King's Weigh House Church* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968), p. 118.

Observance of the Lord's Supper". During this he had preached a sermon entitled "Sacramental Worship".¹⁸ The Society of Free Catholics had recently been formed by several Anglican clergy, Roman Catholic laity, and two leading Nonconformists including Orchard, as well as a Unitarian. The Society frequently held meetings at the Weigh House in the 1920s. Members shared both an attraction towards Catholic sacramental and devotional writings and a frustration with what they saw as the "arid and careless forms of so much Nonconformist worship".¹⁹ New Catholicism, as Dr Orchard espoused it, meant a service book for the Weigh House, the wearing of a surplice, white stole and a pair of sanctuary shoes adorned by silver buckles once worn by John Wesley.

Constance Todd would no doubt have felt totally at home in the worship at the Weigh House and Dr Orchard's conduct of liturgy. She was an active member of the Society of Free Catholics and wrote for its journal. Once she and Claud began their roles as assistant ministers in the Darby Street mission station of the West End congregation, following their joint ordination on 17 September 1917, things would no doubt have become far more complicated for her in terms of being true to her preferred forms of worship. This was a small cause, just off Cable Street in the East End, in an environment where a love of candles, incense and prayer books would very readily have been misunderstood at best. At worst these tastes could have been rejected aggressively as typical of "what those Irish people in the Catholic Church up the road do". As Elaine Kaye remarks in her history of the King's Weigh House: "Those who were drawn to Catholic ceremonial went to the Catholic church, and found the Darby Street 'experiment' incomprehensible".²⁰

To make matters worse, the Darby Street Mission itself was, in all probability, totally unprepared to receive a married couple as their new missionaries, particularly since they had earlier expressed a desire for a very different sort of female presence, not an ordained woman with two degrees. The minutes of the monthly meeting of the Church Committee at the Weigh House on Tuesday, 18 September 1915 record:

The Secretary reported an interview with the Ladies' Committee responsible for the meetings at the Darby St Mission on Wednesday afternoons. He was requested by them to convey to the Church Committee their unanimous opinion that a Biblewoman or Deaconess who would visit the homes of the people in the neighbourhood would do much more effective work than the present City Missionary.²¹

18 Ibid., pp. 121-1.

19 Ibid., p. 122.

20 Ibid., p. 131.

21 Deacons' Meeting minutes for King's Weigh House, 1887-1915, Church Committee, 18 Tuesday September 1915, pp. 465-6. (Deposited at the Congregational Library, Dr Williams's Library, London).

It is probably unsurprising that, throughout the twentieth century, there remained a strong voice within Congregationalism (and other parts of the Church) which responded warmly to the energy and commitment of women but did not wish to see them taking ordained, leadership roles. The preference for some form of deaconess order kept appearing, at regular intervals, partly reflecting a deep-seated uncase among some in the congregations, both male and female, at the prospect of a woman standing in the pulpit or taking the chair at Church or Deacons' meetings. In these roles it would be inescapably obvious that she was aspiring to exercise God-given authority over both women and men. That dynamic still causes challenges for women ministers in the twenty-first century.

In their third ministry, at Cowley Road, Oxford, the Coltmans followed a pattern where Claud took most public leadership roles and Constance presumably concentrated on pastoral care. In his study of Congregationalism in Oxford Michael Hopkins writes:

The Church Meetings were always chaired by Claud Coltman. There were a few references to "Rev. Constance M. Coltman in support" in early meetings, but these soon disappeared, and there was very little indication of what a joint ministry really meant. This should not surprise us as a joint ministry was previously unknown, and the social expectation of that age was that a mother should be at home bringing up her children.²²

At the end of his principalship of Mansfield College, Dr Selbie wrote for the *Congregational Quarterly* about his fifty years at Oxford, as student and then tutor. Once again, we are confronted by the risk of transferring twenty-first century expectations about women and men in ministry onto early twentieth century sources. Dr Selbie described the transformation brought since the 1880s by the advent of women students, and praised their contribution to University life. In 1932 there were 750 women undergraduates and he declared that "in every respect the women have made good". Of the few who had read theology he stated proudly that "Mansfield has never hesitated to admit fully qualified women, some to the full course in preparation for the ministry". However, he still remained cautious about their room for manoeuvre within the organisational structure of the Church, declaring:

Opportunities for women in the regular ministry will probably always be restricted, but there is likely to be an increasing demand for theologically trained women in schools, colleges and abroad.²³

22 Michael Hopkins, *Spires and Meeting Houses* (Farnham: John Owen Press, 2001), pp. 103-4.

23 *Congregational Quarterly* (July 1936), p. 287.

What Dr Selbie may not have known about his first female ministerial student were some of the other, less publicised aspects of Constance Coltman's ministry, elements of which emerge from her daughter Irene Brown's correspondence with Elaine Kaye in the early 1980s. She was an admirer of the great feminists, among whom she included Florence Nightingale, Mary Kingsley, the Pankhursts (even though she was herself a suffragist not a suffragette), Nurse Edith Cavell, Marie Stopes, Marie Curie, George Eliot and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, all of whom she regarded as having opened doors for women. She took a course in midwifery at a London hospital, and gave advice on natural childbirth, baby care, marriage issues, (including sexual problems), birth control and fertility. Their daughter commented: "I think my father must have been – indeed was – of an extraordinarily broadminded nature. He let her do whatever she thought best – always as I remember".²⁴

Perhaps this gives us the real key to the way Constance Coltman was able to pioneer ordained ministry, as a married woman with children, during a period when none of her contemporaries managed to achieve all three – marriage, ministry and motherhood – simultaneously. She had the benefit of a highly supportive, enlightened and open-minded husband. That was a factor in the equation that had probably never been anticipated by the male CUEW leaders who had first debated the possibility of ordaining women. If the issue had been raised they might well have expected that the vocation to ministry would outweigh any desire to marry. Constance saw things differently. She saw her vocation and her marriage as equally important and wrote on the frontispiece of a book she and Claud gave to friends in 1935: "Married life is the joining of two souls on their way to God".

That fresh, female voice reaches out to us, across the years. It enables us to see what a transformational gift women's leadership has been, and can continue to be in the future, for the further enriching of ministry and Church life in all its parts. Constance Coltman's contribution to the Church was, in many respects, very much of its time and quite unrepeatable, but by opening the door for others she allowed succeeding generations of women to make ministry uniquely their own, as indeed she did.

KIRSTY THORPE

THE CENTENARY OF THE ORDINATION OF CONSTANCE COLTMAN IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE¹

On Monday, 27 February 1922, Constance Coltman (née Todd, 1889-1969), the first woman ordained in a mainline Christian denomination in Britain, gave an address on “Women’s Vocation for the Priesthood” at a meeting of the Women’s Freedom League held at the Minerva Club, a feminist venue named after the Roman goddess of wisdom.² The daughter of Scottish Presbyterians, together with her fellow-student and fiancé, Claud Coltman, Constance had been ordained for nearly four-and-a-half years to the joint pastorate of Darby Street, the mission of King’s Weigh House Church in the East End of London, part of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. While prophets were chosen by God, Coltman reflected, priests were called by their contemporaries, and, during the first four centuries of Christianity, women probably served as “presbyters”.³ Once women were removed from this office, however, men recast the history of the church to make reconstruction of the position of women almost impossible. Women presbyters would have served Holy Communion with female as well as male elders, but the “increasing paganism of the Church, and certain ceremonial ideas of uncleanness” were responsible for “ousting women from priestly functions”.⁴ The existence of prohibitions indicated that women had probably exercised such functions, which the Reformation had not restored.

“Women are now demanding re-entrance into the Churches”, Coltman declared, with confidence that her role involved part of the unfinished work of the Reformation of recruiting women to the Christian ministry.⁵ Coltman recognised Maude Royden (1876-1956), a member of the Church of England, suffragist, peace activist and assistant to Dr Fort Newton at the City Temple from 1917 to 1920, who “had proved herself a true prophet” in presenting the case for women’s ordination to the churches.⁶ Moreover, the Anglican and Russian churches were discussing the scope of the work of women deaconesses, and women preachers were active in western Europe and America. Coltman also related women’s ordination to the next stage of suffrage activism because it was impossible to separate the spiritual and the material conditions of women. Women’s ordination, “which would have been

1 An earlier version of this article was delivered at the July 2017 conference of the United Reformed Church History Society, and I am grateful to the participants, particularly to David M. Thompson and Clyde Binfield, for their comments.

2 *Vote* (3 March 1922), p. 66.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

absolutely unthinkable" in Britain before the Great War, "was the crown and culmination of women's emancipation".⁷ For Coltman, social and political equality between men and women was limited unless individuals recognised their spiritual equality. Moreover, a large number of women ministers could reform theology, which was mostly conceived by men. Reform of the church would require "all the passion and devotion" which women "had lavished upon winning the suffrage".⁸

With their local footprint, multi-faceted organisation and admission by baptism, the Christian churches presented women members with many opportunities for service. Women in the Anglican Church could serve in lay ministries while they waited for the priesthood, women were studying theology in Congregational and Baptist colleges, and the Presbyterian Church of England, and the main branches of Methodism had "affirmed the principle of equality between the sexes".⁹ Coltman developed these ideas for publication as a chapter in Maude Royden's book, *The Church and Woman* (1924).¹⁰ A president of the Fellowship of Women Ministers (1926), Coltman was among the founders and the only ordained woman vice-president of the Society for the Ministry of Women (1929). In the 1950s she learned Swedish to encourage the ordination of women in Sweden (1960).

While Claud focused on conducting worship services, funerals, and charring church meetings, Constance worked on pastoral care, weddings, baptisms, and suffrage services. Women's suffrage journals that supported women's ordination reported on the approach of women ministers to aspects of their work. By the mid-1920s the content of marriage services was a matter of widespread concern in Britain, America and the Commonwealth because Christian feminists believed that the service itself supported the oppression of women rather than good theology. For church women activists, reform of the marriage service was the presenting issue or test case for the reform of theology, worship, discipleship and ethics. Coltman's response to this turmoil was not surprising, if a little sentimental, but her emphasis was on the love shared between two equals: "[n]eedless to say the word 'obey' did not appear, but instead the sentence, pronounced by both bride and bridegroom as they exchanged rings: 'As this ring encircles thy finger, so let my love surround thee all the days of thy life'".¹¹

Research conducted since the 1980s into the origins of women's ordination in Britain has unearthed information on the women ordained in the Congregational Union of England and Wales (1917) and the Presbyterian Church of England (1956) that formed the United Reformed Church (URC)

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Constance M. Coltman, "Post-Reformation: The Free Churches", in A. Maude Royden (ed.), *The Church and Woman* (London: James Clarke, 1924), pp. 80-135.

11 *Vote* (17 August 1923), p. 259.

in 1972.¹² The Churches of Christ joined the URC in 1981 and the Congregational Union of Scotland in 2000, and the first women were ordained in these churches in 1980 and 1928 respectively. Scholars have identified the personal background, experience of theological education, career paths and response to social issues of the first women ministers and, in particular, the pacifism and distinctive “high church” ecclesiology of Constance Coltman. The twenty-minute film, *Constance*, produced in 2015 by Kevin Snyman, a Training & Development Officer in the URC Synod of Wales, provides an historical reconstruction of the conversation between principal W. B. Selbie (played by David Reynolds) and Coltman (Celia Morris-Sanchez) that marked her entry into Mansfield College.¹³ While Coltman successfully negotiated several joint pastorates with her husband, the first women ministers endured long periods of unemployment, and often laboured in insignificant and poorly-remunerated churches that did not reflect their educational attainment or personal capabilities.

This history of women’s ordination has referred to women ministers and lay leaders of other denominations in Britain and America, but has been largely conceived in terms of change over time within the churches that formed the URC. Research has tended to rely on church-based sources, and, in the process, ironically, the full significance of the achievement of women’s ordination in Britain has been obscured. Church historians should set the origins of women’s ordination in Britain within the history of Christianity internationally. Greater context can be achieved by attention to the secondary literature for America and, for Britain, the records of other denominations, missionary societies (particularly the London Missionary Society), the women’s movement beyond church suffrage societies, and personal memoir and family history.

This article is limited to the English-speaking world where women were ordained first. It advances two main arguments to set the ordination of women in English and Welsh Congregationalism in international perspective. First, that the ordination of women in Britain followed that of America by more than half a century and preceded that of the British dominions by ten years, but should be viewed explicitly within the context of a society containing an Established Church and Free Churches where Nonconformity sought the reform of the church. By contrast, in America and the British dominions after about 1835

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- 12 E. Kaye, “Constance Coltman – A Forgotten Pioneer”, in *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 4/2 (1988), pp. 134-46; Elaine Kaye, “A Turning-point in the Ministry of Women: The Ordination of the First Woman to the Christian Ministry in England in September 1917”, in W. J. Sheils and D. Wood (eds), *Women in the Church: Studies in Church History*, no. 27 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 505-12; E. Kaye, “From ‘Woman Minister’ to ‘Minister’? One Hundred Congregational Ministers Ordained Between 1917 and 1972 in England and Wales”, in *JURCHS*, 6/10 (2002), pp. 761-71; E. Kaye, J. Lees and K. Thorpe, (eds), *Daughters of Dissent* (London: United Reformed Church, 2004).
- 13 <http://www.urch.org.uk/media-news/1767-constance-coltman-film-released-today.html> accessed 29 August 2017.

there was no established church in any of the states or colonies, and politically the Episcopal or Anglican churches existed on the same voluntary principle. The disestablishment of Anglicanism affected the whole outlook of Congregationalism in America, which was Puritan, Revivalist and ecumenical; and in some places, such as the east coast, where it was the majority denomination, it was the social establishment. In the British colonies, Congregationalism was relatively small and valued its historic lineage from the Reformation, but was more heavily influenced by the Enlightenment than in America. Colonial Congregationalists took pride in their contribution to community service, which was significant beyond their population size, and actively sought union with members of other churches, mainly Methodists and Presbyterians, to survive. By contrast, in England and Wales, Congregationalists formed the third largest church within a society with an Established Church and Free Churches; the latter grouping, after 1851, being as numerous as the Church of England. The ordination of women in Britain served as a precedent for women's ordination in the dominions of Australia (1927), South Africa (1929), and Canada (1936), yet the continued existence of the Church of England cast a shadow over any Free Church achievement. If historians are truly to honour Constance Coltman, then her searing ecumenical vision within the broad context of church life in Britain and internationally must be acknowledged, because Coltman's view of the purpose of women's ordination involved reform of the whole church catholic.

Secondly, after the ordination of women, the next major concern of church women activists in Britain was reform of Christian theology. This issue included a feminist perspective on Scripture and social policy, and often was expressed through campaigns on particular issues; the main one was the marriage services of the Church of England and the Free Churches. By the 1920s, this campaign had become highly organised within the Church of England and was waged for the purpose of improving the relationship between doctrine and liturgy, gender relations and the material conditions of women. In this ecumenical movement, ordained women in the Free Churches could model reforms to liturgical practice. However, disestablishment and reunion had not occurred, and the agency of Congregational women ministers was limited by the demands of their pastorates. Other clergy and lay women within the Church of England such as Percy Dearmer and Maude Royden, achieved changes to the wording of the marriage service with implications for Christian communions throughout the world. Were she alive today, we can predict that Constance Coltman would expect that church history might honour the individuals who were most significant in reform of the church catholic, rather than simply recognising those, such as herself, who gained access to the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament.

The first ordination of a woman in Britain occurred some sixty-five years after America and ten years before the British dominions. It coincided with the granting of women's suffrage and the desire of the Free Churches to reform, to work together and to some degree reunite with the Church of England. In

America and the British dominions the significant women leaders of the churches were mostly Protestant women ministers. The first women ministers in America were leaders in women's suffrage and, in Australia, Winifred Kiek, the first woman minister, prepared the Australian response to the World Council of Churches' inquiry into the "Life and Work of Women in the Church". By contrast, while Constance Coltman was recognised internationally as the first woman ordained in a mainline Christian denomination in Britain, Maude Royden had an international media profile as a proponent of women's ordination in the Church of England. In 1928 she conducted a world tour.

Constance Coltman followed developments in women's ministry in America and Europe and was aware that the first woman ordained anywhere was Antoinette Brown in South Butler Congregational Church, New York, in 1853.¹⁴ Brown was the first woman to prepare systematically for ordination in a particular denomination in the same way as would a man, by completing an ordination course in a theological college and seeking a call to a congregation. By the late nineteenth century in about a dozen denominations, women were ordained and active in the cause of women's suffrage.¹⁵ The historiography of women's ordination in America is well-developed because of the recognition by historians of the Puritan and Revivalist origins of the country. A denomination tended to ordain women at an early date if it had a decentralised polity, liberal theology, lack of sacerdotalism, (or requirement that a man preside at the sacrament or ordinance of the Lord's Supper literally to reflect the person of Jesus Christ), and autonomous women's organisations.¹⁶ Geographical mobility in the emerging frontier culture fostered egalitarianism and the downgrading of the status of the ministry, which suited disestablishment, congregational autonomy, liberal biblical scholarship, and the feminisation of the domestic sphere and the church.¹⁷ Gradually the Christian tradition was reformed to support the emancipation of women and their entrance to the ministry, which preceded the achievement of women's suffrage in 1920, and, within ten years, had reached more than 3,000 women ministers or 2.2 per cent of clergy.¹⁸

For the first generation of women ministers in America, the struggle to justify preaching and presiding at the sacraments prepared them for the roles of advocating women's ordination and reforming theology. Antoinette Brown's

14 E. Cazden, *Antoinette Brown Blackwell* (New York: Feminist Press, 1983); Coltman, "Post-Reformation in the Free Churches", p. 131.

15 B. Zink-Sawyer, *From Preachers to Suffragists: Woman's Rights and Religious Conviction in the Lives of Three Nineteenth-Century American Clergywomen* (Louisville, KY, and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

16 M. Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organisations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

17 P. D. Nesbitt, *Feminisation of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organisational Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 19-26.

18 J. W. Carroll, B. Hargrove and A. T. Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for the Churches* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 4.

early form of feminist systematic theology critiqued the passages used to deny women opportunity for ministry (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:1-12), and emphasised the equality of men and women in Genesis and the transcendence of difference in Galatians 3:28. For Brown, male headship was idolatrous, there was no prohibition against women preaching in the Bible, women were leaders in the early church, and all people, in every age, were expected to exercise leadership responsibly. The attempts of Protestant women ministers to reform theology included composing their own wedding services. Since at least the Women's Suffrage Convention at Seneca Falls in America in 1848, suffragists had viewed women's lack of right to own property and the vow to obey in the marriage service as explicit support for the subordination of women and their sexual coercion in marriage.¹⁹ Anna Howard Shaw (1847-1919), for example, the first woman ordained in the Methodist Protestant Church in 1880, generally found that wedding couples sought merely: "to vow to be faithful, kind, and loving to one another"²⁰

The historiography of women's ordination in Britain is not as well-developed as that of America. Women's ordination in the Free Churches coincided with the Great War and women's suffrage.²¹ After Congregationalists ordained women, Baptists followed in 1925 and, in Scotland, some elements within the United Free Church refused reunion with the Church of Scotland in 1929 for reasons that included the ordination of women.²² The Church of England and the Free Church Suffrage Leagues, formed from 1909, developed popular support for both women's suffrage and women's ordination. Hatty Baker, Congregational lay pastor and first honorary secretary of the Free Church League for Women's Suffrage, found suffragists were disaffected with male ministers who either ignored women, praised them for trivialities, or failed to help them to develop as persons.²³ In public lectures, pamphlets and women's suffrage journals, Baker suggested that suffragists would appreciate women ministers who presented the "Mother-Father God" to the churches. Encouraged by the more militant Women's Social and Political Union, in 1913-14 suffragists

19 Catherine A. Brekus, "Restoring the Divine Order to the World: Religion and the Family in the Antebellum Woman's Rights Movement", in A. Carr and M. Stewart van Leeuwen (eds), *Religion, Feminism, and the Family* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), pp. 166-182 [p. 166].

20 Zink-Sawyer, *From Preachers to Suffragists*, pp. 140-1.

21 E. Clark, "Catholics and the Campaign for Women's Suffrage in England", *Church History*, 73/3 (2004), pp. 635-65; J. Inkpin, "Combatting the 'sin of self-sacrifice': Christian feminism in the women's suffrage struggle, 1903-1918", unpublished PhD thesis (University of Durham, 1996); Jacqueline R. deVries, "Transforming the Pulpit: Preaching and Prophecy in the British Women's Suffrage Movement", in B. M. Kienzle and P. J. Walker (eds), *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 318-33.

22 L. A. Orr MacDonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland, 1830-1930* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2000), p. 210.

23 *Suffragette* (19 December 1913), p. 225.

approached the churches for support from the pulpit and in intercessory prayer, but when they received what they considered to be limited help, women set fire to over fifty church buildings, boycotted local churches, heckled ministers during services with questions, prayers, and shouts of “votes for women”, and staged dramatic walkouts. Baker prayed consistently for suffragettes languishing in prison, often mentioning them by name.²⁴

The vacancies created by the Great War gave Free Church women opportunities to preach, to serve as lay pastors and to study theology. On 17 September 1917 Constance Todd was ordained in a joint service with her fiancé whom she married the following day. Coltman viewed the debate on women’s ordination ecumenically as “the strategic centre of the struggle” between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.²⁵ The Reformation, a “two-edged sword” for women, closed the convents and emphasised motherhood, but intense bibliolatry impeded application to women of the Protestant principles of the priesthood of all believers and individual liberty.²⁶ Yet martyrdom was possible and Nonconformist women preached the gospel effectively, at times at the cost of their lives. In the twentieth century Free Churches, women ministers faced low stipends and opposition from a minority of members who could prevent a congregation from calling a woman to be its minister. Nevertheless, Coltman acknowledged, conditions had improved since Hatty Baker published her lecture, *Women in Ministry* (1911). With greater opportunities for education than previously, women ministers would increase gradually, would be recognised in ecumenical dialogues and would be better able to combine motherhood and ministry. Against any lingering ideas of “ceremonial uncleanness”, Coltman invested women’s presidency of the Sacraments with positive significance, reflecting the image of the incarnation through the body of Mary and the maternal functions of women: “What [could be] more fitting than that the child who is the fruit of that travail [the ordeal of child-birth] should be welcomed by the hand of a woman into the Church of Christ?”²⁷

Constance Coltman recognised the “very notable action” of the City Temple in calling Maude Royden to be its assistant pastor before she led her own ecumenical experiment, *The Guildhouse*, from 1920 to 1937.²⁸ At the City Temple Royden “made a deep impression on the public mind and greatly forwarded the cause of the ministry of women among all denominations, both in this country and abroad”.²⁹ Royden never witnessed the ordination of women in the Church of England, and her work for causes such as peace took her away from Congregational circles, but she did much to reduce opposition to women’s ordination and to encourage women to become ministers. In greater detail than Coltman, Royden exposed the issue of

24 *Suffragette* (28 November 1913), p. 148; (5 December 1913), p. 173; (27 March 1914), p. 546.

25 *Woman Citizen* [New York] (14 January 1922), p. 11.

26 Coltman, “Post-Reformation: The Free Churches”, p. 80.

27 *Ibid.* p. 135.

28 *Ibid.* p. 123.

29 *Ibid.* p. 124.

ceremonial uncleanness, theologically-sanctioned and ritualised revulsion against the natural functions of maternity, which informed Catholic and Anglican opposition to women presiding at the sacraments; she justified women priests by an appreciation of motherhood.³⁰

In Australia and the other British dominions, where women's ordination followed the achievement of women's suffrage, Congregationalists were aware of the precedent of the ordination of Constance Coltman, but the greater influence on the formation of women ministers was Maude Royden.³¹ Through *The Guildhouse* and the Society for the Ministry of Women, Royden's thought informed that of Christian women around the world. *The Guildhouse*, for example, communicated with more than 300 people from fifteen countries or country groups: almost four-fifths of the members on the overseas roll were from America, Australia and New Zealand.³² In 1920 Winifred Kiek migrated from England to South Australia when her husband became principal of Parkin College, Adelaide, the Congregational theological college for South Australia. Kiek had met Royden in England, and in Australia she promoted her book. During Royden's world tour, on 1 July 1928, Kiek conducted a service in Stow Memorial Congregational Church, the city church of Congregationalism in South Australia, and Royden preached.³³ Isabelle Merry, the fourth woman ordained in Australia and the first to be ordained in Victoria in 1937, was inspired to enter the ministry after hearing Royden preach, probably on 24 June 1928 in Collins Street Independent Church, the city church of Congregationalism in Victoria.³⁴ Maude Royden's outstanding capacity for ministry, her ebullient personality, and her talent for making feminist theology a recovery of Christian tradition, appealed to a generation of women in the British colonies wanting to become ministers.

Ordination gave the first generations of women ministers the opportunity to present a renewed form of theology to a mixed-gender audience at a time when the churches were relatively strong and access to the ministry was significant. Women ministers were aware of the complex relationship between doctrine, worship, discipleship and ethics. Once the vote was won, there was widespread concern in Britain that the social, legal and economic emancipation of women could only be realised if the sources of women's oppression in theology were overturned. On Sunday evening, 10 February 1918, following the achievement of limited woman suffrage in Britain, (to propertied women over the age of 30),

30 Royden, *The Church and Woman*, pp. 207-14; *Church Militant* (April 1921), p. 30, quoted in S. Fletcher, *Maude Royden: A Life* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 198-200.

31 J. Pitman, "Our Principle of Sex Equality": *the Ordination of Women in the Congregational Church in Australia, 1927-1977* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2016).

32 Women's Library, London, Royden Papers, Overseas Roll of the Fellowship Guild, 1929-1931, 7AMR/1/05.

33 *SA Congregationalist* (August 1928), p. 187.

34 *Australian Women's Weekly* (22 January 1938), p. 12; *Argus* (25 June 1928), p. 19.

Constance Coltman and Mrs Bonstead led a service of thanksgiving at the City Temple and Maude Royden preached.³⁵ Royden was the principal proponent of theology that recognised the motherhood and the fatherhood of God, the equal position of women and men as part of creation and as disciples of Jesus Christ, and the promise of a new world order in which gender equality was assured. From 1920 the National Assembly of the Church of England included women, and Royden was prominent among the forty women members of the 357 lay representatives.³⁶ Among Christian women activists, reform of the marriage service became the test case for the broad aim of Christian feminist reform of theology.

The historiography of church women's activism in Britain in the 1920s has acknowledged the attempt by women to gain access to roles in the church, but has not considered reform of particular services such as the marriage service, even though it was successful in the Church of England by 1928, whereas the ordination of women was not achieved until 1994. In the 1920s, there were ten marriages in the Church of England and two Nonconformist for one Catholic.³⁷ Marriage was permitted in registered Nonconformist meeting houses from 1837 and official services contained the vow to obey, but ministers increasingly left it out. Wesleyan Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational ministers asked the bride "to love, cherish and obey"; the Congregational churches provided an alternative, but only the Baptist churches omitted it altogether.³⁸ The number of marriages conducted in the Church of England had declined from 747,000 in 1874 to 597,000 in 1919.³⁹ Righteous indignation at the marriage service led increasing numbers of women to boycott the Church of England. Suffragists were not only affronted by the fact that the woman was given away by her father and asked to obey her husband. They were also concerned that the man promised to endow the woman with all his worldly goods, which, until the passing of the Married Women's Property Acts (1870, 1882 and 1893), had no basis in law: upon marriage a woman's property became her husband's. By the 1910s, a significant minority of Church of England clergy believed the marriage service no longer adequately reflected Christian principles; priests who departed from the prescribed wording of the marriage service in the Prayer Book were becoming increasingly outspoken. The Revd G. Herbert Davis, Minor Canon of Hereford Cathedral, for example, and a keen supporter of women's suffrage, sympathised with suffragists who requested marriage on the basis of "perfectly

35 *Coming Day* (February-March 1918), p. 15.

36 B. Heeney, "The Beginnings of Church Feminism: Women and the Councils of the Church of England, 1897-1919", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 33/1 (1982), pp. 89-109 [p. 105].

37 A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity: 1920-1990* (3rd edition, London: SCM Press, 1991), p. 475.

38 *Standard* (14 April 1913), p. 11.

39 Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p. 35. Casualties in the Great War offer only a partial explanation.

reciprocal vows".⁴⁰ In his view, Church of England clergy wanted to be loyal to their church, but could not conduct a marriage service "without 'editing' it".⁴¹ For his part, the Archbishop of Canterbury could not sanction reform of the service until the Church authorised an alternative order.⁴²

As a centralised church with a liturgy fixed by church courts and parliament, reform of the marriage service in the Church of England required access to and persuasion in the houses of the Church: Laity, Clergy, and Bishops. By the early twentieth century, the Church of England had become a smaller, more committed church than previously, with a greater focus on the sacraments and government by confirmed lay leadership. Voluntary parish councils and national Church Congresses established from the 1860s allowed lay men to participate in ecclesiastical government. Women were admitted to the Church Congress and the first paper was read by a woman in 1885. From the 1890s women became church wardens, from 1914 they gained access to voluntary parochial church councils, and in 1919 they were admitted to the House of the Laity by an Act of Parliament. The League for the Church Militant (LCM), the successor to the Church League for Women's Suffrage (CLWS), seized the opportunity presented by the reform of the Prayer Book to change the marriage service. LCM members were heavily influenced by the liturgical scholarship of Percy Dearmer, the Oxford graduate and Rector of Primrose Hill, London, 1900 to 1915.

Percy Dearmer's wide interests included journalism, architecture, art, Christian Liberal-Socialism, women's suffrage, democracy in church life and liturgy and hymnody; his *Parson's Handbook* became the Anglican priest's standard text on liturgical history.⁴³ Dearmer differed from other male reformers such as the Revd G. Herbert Davis, who advocated marriage service reform as a gender issue, but reinforced the assumption that domestic violence was found almost exclusively within British working class households. In contrast to the Greek, Latin and Russian versions of the marriage service where the vows were equal, Dearmer saw inequality in the marriage service of the Church of England (and in some parts of Germany) as "a late medieval abuse" of the fourteenth century.⁴⁴ Inequality in the marriage service was a casualty of the Reformation where the remedy was worse than the original ailment: "It is a pity ... that the Reformers, in their zeal to destroy mediaeval abuses, should have ... exaggerated this particular abuse of making the marriage vow unequal. And that is all there is to be said for 'obey'".⁴⁵

Dearmer encouraged women to lobby the Convocations of the Church of

40 *Votes for Women* (5 November 1909), p. 83.

41 *Church Militant* (June 1923), p. 45.

42 Lambeth Palace Library, London, Archbishop's Papers, Randall Davidson, Bishop of Norwich to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 29 September 1914, vol. 421, no. 37 and the reply, no. 38.

43 Nan Dearmer, *The Life of Percy Dearmer* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1940), p. 111.

44 *Votes for Women* (26 September 1913), p. 739.

45 *Ibid.*, (13 December 1912), p. 163.

England for complete reform of the service so that it might better reflect Christian ideals and the aspirations of wedding couples. He recommended the anonymous work, *A Prayerbook Revised* (1913), which simplified the introductory address, and made the questions and the vows identical. By 1917, mainstream women's organisations in the Church of England such as the Central Committee of Women's Church Work, a semi-official body composed of women from every diocese and voluntary women's organisations chaired by Archbishop Davidson's wife, Edith (née Tait), supported marriage service reform.⁴⁶ After the publication of the Revised Prayer Book (Permissive Use Measure) in 1923, final revisions began in earnest. Marriage service reform became the "chief activity" of the LCM, which submitted the whole service to scrutiny following Percy Dearmer's scholarship, along with the "in principle" decision in 1922 of the Episcopal Church of America to abandon the vow to obey, and the difficulty priests faced in explaining the vows to prospective couples.⁴⁷ The LCM encouraged widespread discussion, active lobbying and study of the Grey Books of the Life and Liberty Group, which simplified the wording of the service, made the vows the same, removed the giving away of the bride, and suggested the giving of two rings. LCM members revealed the irony of the Old Testament examples of Adam and Eve, Isaac and Rebecca, and of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as role models for modern Christian couples: Abraham and Sarah were polygamous, Rebecca deceived her husband, and Sarah was obedient to Abraham at the expense of her own conscience. The LCM advocated the removal of the giving away and the vow to obey, and suggested that the last prayer before the final blessing read: "that this woman may be loving, amiable, and faithful to her husband".⁴⁸

Yet the arguments of lay women could reinforce the assumption that domestic violence was restricted to the working classes who often co-habited because the *de facto* wife feared abuse from her husband if they married.⁴⁹ Maude Royden, based on her pastoral experience, showed that domestic violence was no respecter of class.⁵⁰ Married women of all classes confided in her that the vow of "unqualified obedience" had implications for their sexual relations with their husbands.⁵¹ In the discussion on Prayer Book Revision in the Houses of the Clergy and the Laity, 2 to 6 July 1923, Royden moved to substitute for "wilt thou obey him and serve him" the words "wilt thou love him and comfort him", arguing that the natural leader in marriage was not determined by gender.⁵²

The amendment was lost by 114 votes to 84, but Royden was determined to

46 Randall Davidson, Central Committee of Women's Church Work to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 27 November 1917, vol. 446, no. 190.

47 *Church Militant* (May 1923), p. 34.

48 *Ibid.*, (May 1923), p. 37.

49 *Ibid.*, (February 1923), p. 11.

50 Fletcher, *Maude Royden*, p. 238.

51 *Church Militant* (September 1923), p. 67.

52 *Ibid.*

turn this narrow defeat in the House of the Laity into a narrow majority in the two upper houses. At the Church Congress Campaign of 1924, she suggested that couples wanted to be married in their own Church under a thoroughly modified service because the concept of marriage expressed therein was “not only above the view of the ordinary public, but is even, in some respects, below it”.⁵³ For Royden, the linking of the first rationale for marriage, which was that it was the better way for those who “have not the gift of continency”, with the “unrestricted claim on the obedience of the wife”, provided explicit support for rape in marriage.⁵⁴ Most clergymen omitted the three rationales for marriage because of their reaction to the second one, that marriage was ordained “to avoid fornication”, which Royden believed should be omitted altogether.⁵⁵ Finally, Royden suggested that the last reason (which was originally inserted by Thomas Cranmer) that the two partners were “drawn together in a great love”, should be the first rationale for marriage.⁵⁶ Moreover, the current service was “a violation of natural law”, in that the female partner in a marriage took the initiative in sexual relations.⁵⁷ The violation of this order had led to an “obsession” with “sex”, and the reinforcement of the double standard of morality.⁵⁸

Maude Royden’s fiercest criticism, however, related to the inconsistent expectation of obedience within services of the Church of England. She noted that “in the other services of our Prayer Book ... vows of obedience” are “most carefully guarded”.⁵⁹ In the ordination services for deacon and priest, a candidate was only asked to promise obedience to all “*godly* admonitions and counsels” from the bishop.⁶⁰ Church leaders were therefore not expected to vow “absolute obedience” to anyone, but in the marriage service there was “an explicit statement that the obedience that is promised in matrimony is absolute in character”.⁶¹ Moreover, until recently the law assumed that a wife was not responsible for her actions, but acted as “her husband’s agent”.⁶² As for the promise of the husband: “The husband does not always or often endow her with *all* his worldly goods. In fact ... until the passing of the Married Woman’s Property Act he, in these very words, took the whole of her property and endowed himself with it!”⁶³

The centenary of the ordination of Constance Coltman should be observed in international context, where women were ordained in America from 1853, and, within the British Empire, where Maude Royden was the leading proponent

53 Ibid., (15 October 1924), pp. 153-9 [p. 153].

54 Ibid, p. 156.

55 Ibid, pp. 155-6.

56 Ibid, p. 155.

57 Ibid, pp. 156-7.

58 Ibid, p. 156.

59 Ibid, p. 157.

60 Ibid. Italics in original.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid, p. 158. Italics in original.

of women's ordination. The purpose of women's ordination included Christian feminist reform of theology and liturgy, which was expressed in the test case of the marriage service, that, in the Church of England, formed part of Prayer Book reform. LCM members reviewed the whole marriage service, and Royden exposed the way husbands – regardless of class – could use the service to support domination over their wives. Under pressure at home and abroad, the Church of England authorised an alternative service in the 1928 prayer book that, although it made no changes in structure, allowed for an alternative meaning.⁶⁴ The preface showed a new attitude to sexuality: there were no references to sin, fornication, or beasts, marriage was now “the hallowing and ordering aright the natural instincts and affections implanted by God”. The vows were equal for men and women, and, although the woman was still expected to be “a follower of holy and godly matrons”, these were undefined. The man promised to share – not endow – his earthly possessions with his wife. Although Parliament, which was pre-occupied with the wording of the sacrament of Holy Communion, rejected the revised prayer book, the Convocations authorised it and it was widely used as an alternative to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer - changes to the marriage service since the 1980s reflect the 1928 rather than the 1662 version. Royden's stress on Cranmer's rationale for marriage as a covenant relationship of love between two equals became triumphant and informed adaptations to the marriage service in the late twentieth century. In the “Christian idea of marriage”, Royden concluded, “love is the sole ground and foundation ... Into such a relationship ... the idea of obedience ought never to enter at all”.⁶⁵

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64 P. Coleman, *Christian Attitudes to Marriage: From Ancient Times to the Third Millennium* (London: SCM Press, 2004), pp. 226-7.

65 *Church Militant* (15 October 1924), pp. 158-9.

**JAMES WHITEHALL (1579-1645):
A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY CLERIC CHAFES
AGAINST
THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS**

James Whitehall (1579-1645) was rector of the Checkley parish church in Staffordshire from 1620 until his death in 1645. His significance in British cultural history is found in a marginal note Robert Burton made in the second edition (1624) of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. A major revision to the second edition, a new ending to the book, expressing consolation for religious melancholy in strict, Calvinist predestinarian terms, came “at the request of some friends”, according to Burton, whom he names in the margin as his brother George and James Whitehall, his “*quondam* chamber fellow and late fellow student in *Christchurch Oxon*”.¹

The Anatomy of Melancholy, which A. D. Nuttall in *The London Review of Books* has said Burton “jokingly described as a joke”,² was an immensely popular work published in six revised and expanded editions (1621, 1624, 1628, 1632, 1638 and 1651). It is an encyclopaedic satire taking “melancholy” as a metaphor for an unavoidable, universal human condition analogous to the Calvinist take on universal depravity – “’Tis an inbred malady in every one of us”.³ “For indeed who is not a Foole, melancholy, mad?”, Burton asks in his preface entitled “Democritus to the Reader”. “Take Melancholy in what sense you will, properly or improperly, in disposition or habit, for pleasure for paine, dotage, discontent, feare, sorrow, madness, for part, or all, truly, or metaphorically, ’tis all one”.⁴ From Burton’s conventional seventeenth-century perspective, all human action is ultimately pretentious and laughable. Despite the jokes, the book has an ultimately serious intent in the cure of souls that learn to laugh at themselves in the face of divine grace.

In the first edition the final subsection of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* was brief and ended with a recommendation of further reading in theologians who had written works of consolation in the context of a Calvinistic perspective on repentance and assurance of election.⁵ In the second edition we find the new, significantly expanded consolation suggested by Whitehall.

- 1 Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 3.4.2.6, p. 425.
- 2 A. D. Nuttall, “Joke Book?”, *The London Review of Books*, XI/22 (1989), pp. 18-19.
- 3 Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, preface, p. 32.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 5 For example, William Perkins (1558-1602), Richard Greenham (1539?-1594?), John Hayward (c.1564-1627), Timothy Bright (1551-1615). William Haller calls Greenham “the patriarch of Puritan divines”, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), p. 28. The collected works of William Perkins, his protégé, went through eleven editions between 1600 and 1635. Sir John Hayward wrote *Sanctuary for a Troubled Soule* (London, 1616), which he dedicated to Archbishop George Abbot, a strong Calvinist. Timothy Bright, another Calvinist, wrote *A Treatise of Melancholy* (London 1586), a medical text which gives significant attention to despair in relation to predestination. Bright was a physician who later became a divine.

The critical reception of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* has been reluctant to accept Burton's Calvinist perspective. Many readers describe Burton's Anglicanism as typical of a broad, inclusive high churchmanship that only became normative after the Restoration. Those who have recognised his affinity with strict Calvinist predestination thinking have said he was insincere. Recent contributions to Burton scholarship have even put him among the Laudian conformists.

I have argued (elsewhere) to the contrary, that the whole of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* finds its meaning in the context of an early seventeenth-century English Church which had a complex configuration of shifting theological loyalties but was still, in Burton's mind, broadly Calvinist.⁶ Discovering who James Whitehall was and what his loyalties were in this era of ecclesiastical turbulence will enable a more sure-footed reading of the *Anatomy*.

So what kind of a person was Whitehall? There is a large alabaster memorial to Whitehall in the Checkley parish church, on which he is described as "that grave, that orthodox divine". But which orthodoxy? "Grave and orthodox divine" seems simply to have been shorthand for a good, dependable cleric in those days.⁷ But the 1630s and 1640s were certainly years of competing understandings of orthodoxy in the English Church. What I wish to demonstrate, from the rather meagre evidence available to us, is that Whitehall represented what many in the early seventeenth-century perceived to be the mainstream English Church, largely a Calvinist consensus, but an uneasy consensus that was becoming increasingly undermined by a counter-reformation movement away from what "hitherto hath been constantly and generally held by our church", as the Calvinist divine William Bradshaw had already argued earlier in the century.⁸ This counter-reformation movement, in its 1630s expression, I will generally refer to as "Laudian", after William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury 1633-45, a movement Peter Lake and Michael Quester have described as "the distinctive synthesis behind the ecclesiastical policies of the personal rule".⁹

6 Tom Arthur, "Robert Burton's Anatomy of the Heart: Re-aligning The Anatomy of Melancholy", in Andrew D. Weiner and Leonard V. Kaplan (eds), *On Interpretation: Studies in Culture, Law, and the Sacred, Graven Images*, 5 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), pp. 141-165.

7 See Charles I, Royal Instructions to the Episcopate, 1629, V. iii and VI in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Early Stuart Church*, II (Woodbridge: Church of England Record Society/Boydell Press, 1998), p. 38.

8 William Bradshaw, *A Myld and Just Defense of Certeyne Arguments* (1606).

9 Peter Lake and Michael Quester (eds), *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church c.1560-1660* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), p. xviii. In "The Laudian Style: Order, Uniformity and the Pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness in the 1630s", Lake says "In using the term Laudian I do not mean to imply anything about the role of Laud either originating or disseminating the views discussed here. I am employing it merely as a handy shorthand term for the policies and religious temper of the Personal Rule as those policies and that temper were legitimated and explained by the regime's apologists in court and visitation sermons and works of polemic and justification". "Laudianism ... did exist as a coherent, distinctive and polemically aggressive vision of the Church, the divine presence in the world and the appropriate ritual response to that presence", in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early English Church* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 162.

It is important to emphasise that however the movement came to be identified with Laud and his policies in those years of the personal rule of Charles I, as a movement it characterises long-standing tensions in the English church. It is generally agreed that the compromises of the 1559 Elizabeth Settlement never really “settled” tensions between traditionalists and radical reformers, tensions clearly present when Bradshaw was making his complaints in *A Myld and Just Defense* in 1606, long before William Laud’s service as Archbishop of Canterbury.

The years of James Whitehall’s ministry in Checkley coincide with these years of high ecclesiastical tension. Born in 1579 in Sharpcliffe, Staffordshire, he wrote in his commonplace book that in 1597 he “came to oxford being then about 17 years; 1599 I came into Christchurch”.¹⁰ He remained at Christ Church for the next twenty-one years. At the age of 41 Whitehall married Elizabeth Hollins, the daughter of John Hollins, apparently a relative of Whitehall, as the name Hollins appears several times in his record of ancestors found in his commonplace book. As Whitehall’s Fellowship at Christ Church required that he remain single, he renounced his position at the College. Hollins obtained the benefice of Checkley for his new son-in-law, and Whitehall was installed as rector there in June 1620 and ordained priest the following September.

Our first clue to Whitehall’s ecclesiastical loyalties come in the year before he died. In the Checkley baptism, marriage and burial records, the death of James Whitehall is given as follows:

Jacobus Whitehall
Checkley sepultus
fuit quarto die Martii 1644¹¹

The same year of death, 1644, is carved into Whitehall’s alabaster memorial, which prompted one local historian to express thanks that Whitehall had at least died before the Prayer Book was outlawed in January 1645. But since before 1752 the new year, for all civil or legal records in England, began on 25 March (Lady Day), Whitehall in fact died on 4 March 1645, two months after the banning of the Prayer Book. The New Style date makes a world of difference to how we understand Whitehall’s life. In the Parish Register for 1644, Warden Thomas Browne wrote: “Communion at Midsommer, pd to John Arnold for taking downe the rales of the Communion table 0-0-6”.¹² The railing around the communion table, separating it off as sacred space, had been a matter of Laudian policy. Traditional Calvinists would have wanted their communion table unfenced.

10 Commonplace Book of James Whitehall, Rector of Checkley. William Salt Library, Stafford Hand Morgans Collection 308/40.

11 Baptismal, Marriage and Burials, deposited by Checkley Parochial Church Council, Staffordshire Record Office D3955/1/1(1644/45).

12 Accounts of Churchwardens and Overseers, deposited by the Checkley Parochial Church Council, Stafford Record Office D113/A/PC/1 (1644).

Having the communion railing dismantled was one of the last assertions of Whitehall's pastoral authority. The last diocesan visitation took place in 1641, the same year Archbishop Laud was arrested and Parliament presented Charles with the list of grievances known as the Grand Remonstrance, a significant instance of the tensions precipitating the Civil War, which finally broke out in August 1642. In September 1643 the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, Robert Wright, died at Eccleshall Castle, seat of the bishops of Lichfield, while the castle was under siege by Parliamentary forces. On 12 March 1644 (NS), more than three months before the Checkley midsummer communion service, Laud had been put on trial by the House of Lords. Michael Cahill quotes from the records at Myddle in the diocese: "When Parliament had gott the upper hand of the King, they made an ordinance, that the Comunion Railes should be pulled downe in every place; and these att Myddle were taken downe, and the chancell floor was made level, and the Comunion Table placed in the middle of it".¹³

Wardens' records note diocesan visitations with regular concern for the state of things at Checkley, the 1630 charge, for instance, for "an officiall his fees for viewing ye church & ornaments", and notes the money spent soon after on purchasing a communion table.¹⁴ They also include an amount paid in 1632 for a communion table cloth. Since it is difficult to imagine any church functioning without a communion table, these entries probably relate to the construction of an altar and to the provision of an altar cloth, innovations elevating the role of the sacraments associated with the tastes of Charles I and with the policies of William Laud that were strongly resisted by traditional Calvinists, for whom the centre of worship was the sermon. The eleven-year personal rule of Charles I had begun the year before, in 1629. Charles had already effectively deprived the Calvinist Archbishop of Canterbury George Abbot of power in 1627, leaving William Laud and his party in undisputed ascendancy. Correct ceremonial, Laud believed, was necessary for good order, and good order in ceremonial and a properly sacerdotal understanding of ministry illustrated obedience to the King as head of the church. When William Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, the visitations became a particular means of enforcing conformity and correcting irregularities in ecclesiastical practice.

In Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie (1594) Richard Hooker, a sixteenth-

13 Michael Cahill, "The Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1603-1642", unpublished PhD thesis (University of Warwick, 2001), p. 291.

14 According to Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, the earliest example in the Coventry and Lichfield diocese of the command that communion tables should be both placed at the east end and railed is found in the visitation articles of Samuel Clerke, the Archdeacon of Derby in 1630. He enquired: "Have you in your church or chappelle ... a communion table set on a frame, with a comely carpet, and is your communion table set at the east end of the chancel, and cancelled in from prophane use?", "Articles given by Doctor Clerke, Archdeacon of Derby, and delivered to the church- wardens. ... at his visitation there holden in the yeare of our Lord God 1630", in Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547-c.1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 186-187.

century theologian who would have a major impact on the seventeenth-century Caroline divines, had drawn on the line from Psalm 96, "O worship the Lord in the bewtie of holiness"¹⁵ to describe and advocate a number of practices in worship which he nevertheless considered *adiaphora* or things indifferent, but which were, in the 1630s, becoming a matter of national policy. Charles I's metropolitan order of 1634 called for a rail around the communion table, the altar-wise (north-south axis) position of the table, its relocation from its 1604 Prayer Book position in the body of the church or the chancel to the east end, and for the reception of communion, kneeling, at the rail.¹⁶ Even before Laud's Vicar-General, Nathaniel Brent, was to visit the Coventry and Lichfield diocese in 1636, Bishop Wright had already begun introducing the rail policy there.¹⁷ The Checkley Parish Register for 1634 notes an amount "paid for the hinges of the door for ye communion table", presumably hinges for the door of a rail when it was first constructed around the 1630 communion table. But Whitehall, perhaps with the Checkley community as a whole, seems to have chafed against these high church innovations, and abandoned their practice as soon as it was safe to do so.

Dismantling the furniture of high-church worship continued after Whitehall's death in 1644/45. In 1646 there was an amount "paid in expenses att the removeing of Timber ffram of the Channsell" (the "frame" presumably refers to the communion table constructed in the east end in 1630).¹⁸ Also in 1646, the Checkley wardens note an amount paid "for making a fframe to sett the Bason on for the Christening of Children". The Checkley church apparently wanted an alternative baptismal font to the magnificent twelfth-century stone font that sat at the church entrance, where the medievalising aesthetic of the beauty of holiness required it to be. Presbyterian understanding preferred it somewhere in close proximity to the communion table which, again, would have been relocated in these years from the east end to a position more central to the worshipping community.

Taking down the communion rail is not the only instance of Whitehall's resistance to a Laudian understanding of church practice. In several of the visitations the Checkley wardens seem to have been harassed about "the matter of the hood", the hood being a medieval monastic vestment mandated by Bishop

15 Richard Hooker, *On the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V (London, 1597), p. xvi. The first four volumes of the *Lawes* were published in 1593 and apparently the last four were held back for further revision by the author. See John E. Booty, "Richard Hooker", in William J. Wolf (ed.), *The Spirit of Anglicanism* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1982), pp. 3-8.

16 See Julian Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church: Charles I and the Remoulding of Anglicanism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 218.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 234, states that in 1634 Wright held courts of audience for churchwardens within his four archdeaconries to receive his instructions regarding the matter, citing Staffordshire Record Office D9/A/PC/1/43.

18 Michael Cahill cites several wardens' records where the communion table is referred to as a frame, "The Diocesc of Coventry and Lichfield, 1603-1642", p. 207.

Robert Wright's 1633 visitation articles and the 1604 canons.¹⁹ After several visitations in which this item was on the agenda, the wardens were summoned in September and October 1633 and then finally on 28 November, when "we were called thither by ye chauncellors officers about the hood". In the end they capitulated: "It[em] paid towards the hooe 0-9-7". The parish register indicates that the visitations often found Checkley parish practice wanting. A typical entry for 1637, for instance, noted "several charges at the visitation at Careswall 0-4-4".

The Checkley parish seems to have found themselves in solidarity with others who fell foul of the 1630s demands for conformity. In 1638 the warden Phillip Smyth noted an amount "given towards the reliefe of a distressed minister lying in prison in Yorke 0-1-0". This minister was probably John Burchall, rector of St Martin's, Micklegate, in York. In 1633, Archbishop Richard Neile, wishing to make an example of Burchall in a diocese dominated by Puritans, called the St Martin's church wardens to submit to a number of demands, including the need to "beautify" the church, and cited Burchall himself for non-adherence to the Prayer Book, among other irregular practices. The harassment dragged on for six years before Burchall finally submitted.²⁰

The general spirit of Laudian reforms included encouragement of the renovating and improvement of church buildings. But the renovations Whitehall undertook at Checkley were not to "beautify" the church in the manner advocated by Laudian reforms, such as relocating the table from the nave to its medieval altar position at the east end of the church. In 1636 Whitehall added a clerestory level and reconstructed the church roof to accommodate larger windows of plain glass, significantly brightening the nave of the church as the focal point of worship, making it more suitable for a congregation gathered around the sermon as opposed to the Laudian emphasis on the east end altar.

Whitehall was certainly uncomfortable with Laudian reforms. But was he

- 19 Fincham, *Visitation Articles* 2, 58. According to the 58th canon of the 1604 Prayer Book, "Every minister saying the publick Prayers or ministering the Sacraments or other Rites of the Church, shall wear a Surplice with Sleeves ... Further, such Ministers as are graduates, shall wear upon their Surplices at such times, such Hoods as by the Orders of the Universities are agreeable to their Degrees". See *Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical ... Anno Domini 1603* (London: Samuel Mearne and Robert Pawlet, 1678), p. 27.
- 20 R. A. Marchant, *Puritanism and the Church Courts in the Diocese of York, 1560-1642* (London: Longmans, 1960), pp. 74-92 and 227. Although Burchall is the only candidate, among the 246 Puritan clergy Marchant cites, likely to have been imprisoned in 1638, the disappearance of the High Commission act books for 1635-1637 means it is impossible to know the actual conclusion of the case against Burchall being prosecuted in these years. The harassment nevertheless continued in subsequent years. In 1639 he was ordered to preach a sermon justifying "the book of common prayers ... as a thing lawful and well pleasing to god ... and to justify the Church of England ... to be an orthodox and Apostolical Church". See Marchant, *Puritanism and the Church Courts in the Diocese of York*, p. 90.

a separatist? Certainly not - at one point in the Checkley Parish Register we find this deposition signed by one Thomas Wood:

I Thomas Woode doe humbly confes—and acknowledge, that I have grievously offended god, in contemning his Ma[jes]ties godly and lawfull governm[e]nt and authority absenting my self fro[m] church and from heareing divine service, contrary to the godley lawes and statutes of this realme and in using and frequenting disordered and unlawful conventicles and assemblies under pr[e]tenn[ce] and colour of exercise of religion. And I am hartely sorie for the same, and doe acknowledge and testifie in my conscience, that noe other person hath or ought to have any power or authority over his ma[jes]tie. And I promise and protest w[i]thout any disimulac[i]on or any colour or meanes of any dispensac[i]on That from hence forth, I will from tyme to tyme obey and p[er]forme his ma[jes]ties lawes and statutes in repaying to church and heareing divine service, and doe my uttermost endeavour to maintaine and defend the same.

sign[e]d Tho[mas] Wodde
 dat[e] 28 April 1632
 Ja[mes] Whitehall Rect[o]r
 Fra[ncis] Thorley
 Richard Rawline, Anthonie Witheringe churchwardens²¹

Whitehall may have chafed against vestments, as did the “Presbyterians” who began to emerge in the English Church in the 1570s, but he was no separatist and, as we see here, he had a keen sense of ecclesiastical authority. This was the conventional conformist Calvinist understanding of a church living between Catholicism and the Anabaptists. According to Whitehall’s friend Robert Burton, those who show “too much zeal in opposition to Antichrist”²² are, he says, not the Calvinists but “Anabaptists ... Brownists, Barrowists, Familists, and those Amsterdamian sects & sectarians”.²³ Indeed, this was Richard Hooker’s understanding of the *via media* of the English Church. Hooker, according to Michael Brydon, had only sought to oppose extremist Puritans and understood his own writing to be within the Reformed tradition.²⁴ The high church party of the 1630s, by contrast, was re-reading Hooker according to a new perspective, and defining the English church as living not between the Scylla and Charybdis

21 Baptismal, Marriage and Burials, deposited by Checkley Parochial Church Council, Staffordshire Record Office D3955/1/1(1632).

22 Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 3.4.1.4, p. 386.

23 *Ibid.*, 3.4.1.3, p. 387.

24 Brydon describes how divines of the 1630s transformed “Hooker, the conformist Calvinist champion, into Hooker the ceremonialist and theologian of a distinctive English *via media*”, *The Evolving Reputation of Richard Hooker: An Examination of Responses, 1600-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 44.

of Catholicism and Anabaptism, but between Catholicism and Calvinism.²⁵

After Whitehall's death in March 1644/45, minutes of the Westminster Assembly show that on Wednesday morning 2 July 1645 the name of William Langley came under the business of the Presbyterian-dominated Committee for Plundered Ministers for appointment to the Checkley parish. The minutes describe him as "godly" and "orthodox". He was installed on 10 July, but a month later his appointment was rescinded after the Assembly learned that the patron of the living, Richard Whitehall, James's brother, was not as "delinquent" as had been supposed. Richard Whitehall subsequently appointed John Taylor, a member of a prominent local family.

Taylor's "orthodoxy" can be assessed by noting that he later signed the radical Presbyterian ministers' county Testimony of 1648,²⁶ and in 1654 was appointed an assistant to the Parliamentary Commission for the Removal of Scandalous, Ignorant and Insufficient Ministers. John Taylor served Checkley until his death in 1659. In 1662 John Whitehall, James Whitehall's son, appointed another Taylor, Nathaniel, the nephew of John Taylor and James Whitehall's son-in-law, to serve as the Checkley rector.²⁷

I think it is clear from the evidence surveyed here that Whitehall and his family practised an orthodox Calvinism typical of those who advocated further reformation of the English Church, not as radical Independents but perhaps as Presbyterians, if we can read John Taylor's commitments into the family retrospectively. Their practice seems in fact to have carried on past 1662. The accounts of bills paid in the Parish Register show that ordinary table bread baked by Catherine Overton at the White Horse Inn was being used for communion services well into the Restoration years.

The importance of a reading of Whitehall's life, as implying the kind of Calvinism that was rather conventional for the early seventeenth century and yet becoming undermined in the 1630s by Laudian reforms, is that it serves to illustrate on the one hand what being "Reformed" could mean long before the United Reformed Church or even a denominational understanding of Presbyterianism existed.

- 25 The phrase belongs to one Richard Montague, who in 1624 expressed in a letter to John Cosin his famous desire to "stand in the gapp against Puritanism and Popery, the Scilla and Charybdis of ancient piety", *The Correspondence of John Cosin*, I (London: Surtrees Society, 1872), p. 21.
- 26 Taylor was the first signatory to the 1648 Treatise of the Ministers of the County of Stafford, which in common with other county petitions in the heat of the second civil war expressed opposition to a general toleration and adherence to the Solemn League and Covenant, which asserted that "the Presbyterian form of Government is that Government which is most applicable to the minde of Jesus Christ". See A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised: Being a Revision of Edmund Calamy's Account of the Ministers and others ejected and silenced, 1660-2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), pp. 553, 557.
- 27 Rupert Simms, *Bibliographica Staffordiensis* (Lichfield: 1894); William Salt Archaeological Society (ed.), *Collections for a History of Staffordshire. 1915, Staffordshire incumbents and parochial records* (London: St Catherine Press, 1916).

However much Whitehall's story may show us our roots, it is nevertheless important that we do not read his story through the lens of our current experience of the United Reformed Church, any more than we read it through the lenses of today's Anglicanism. What Whitehall's story demonstrates above all is the Church's perennial dynamism. The identity of this Church of England in the years of Whitehall's ministry at Checkley was certainly unsteady and no longer clearly or even broadly Calvinist. In the 1638 edition of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, conscious of the declining fortunes of his own Calvinist orthodoxy, Robert Burton makes a telling minor revision to his description of the alignment of the English Church. It is no longer "most of our church" who hold to supralapsarian predestination, but "many of our church".²⁸

TOM ARTHUR

28 Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 3.4.2.6, p. 438. Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva, developed this extreme version of predestination, in which God's decree of who would be elect and who would be reprobate preceded the Fall.

REVIEWS

***Women, Dissent, and Anti-slavery in Britain and America: 1790-1865.* Edited by Elizabeth J. Clapp and Julie Roy Jeffrey. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 207. £25.00. ISBN 978-0-19872-521-3.**

This book comes from the Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, and brings together writers from a variety of disciplines. Historians, scholars of literature, American studies and gender each reflect on the ways in which women were part of anti-slavery movements and campaigns, particularly within "Puritan and dissenting traditions" in Britain and in America.

The introduction begins by citing the Anglican William Wilberforce, who believed that "for ladies to meet, to publish, to go from house to house stirring up petitions – these appear to me proceedings unsuited to the female character as delineated in Scripture" (p. 1). Yet, there were many women, in both Britain and America, who found their voice in the anti-slavery movement, and who defied both convention and even their church leadership to commit to the cause of freeing slaves.

The chapters reflect the disciplines and researches of their authors, though there is, inevitably perhaps, overlap between them and some repetition of themes. Some address the "gap" in much historical writing about anti-slavery movements such that women's societies and contributions have been under recognised. There are chapters about the contributions of particular women, like Martha Gurney (a publisher from London and a Baptist, who sold and published many anti-slave trade pamphlets) and Elizabeth Heyrick (a Unitarian who became a Quaker), who campaigned, against the majority view in many middle class Christian circles, for *immediate*, rather than gradual abolition of slavery and who wrote in the language of "rights" and "justice". There are chapters which highlight the differences between the American and the British contexts, evoking the realities of a pre-civil war American economy with its dependence on slavery and a British understanding of Empire. There is also a chapter about the influence of Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery popular literature (both novels and plays).

A number of important questions are featured in many places in the book, and indeed they echo issues and struggles evident among Christians who, today, are involved in campaigns to change the world. Elizabeth Clapp points out the difference between "evangelical" Christians who saw ending slavery as part of a wider narrative of God's transforming power, and more "rational" Christians who saw abolition as an (almost secular) ideal of liberty. There were those who would use the language of the Bible first and those who used the language of "equality" and "liberty" (though rather less once these had become tainted by the French revolution). The passion of evangelical revival, particularly in the American states, came to be a powerful part of the most radical movements to abolish slavery (an insight that contrasts with "evangelical" movements in the United States today). How far Christianity and enlightenment philosophy are related and how far they can make common cause in bringing radical change remains a live issue today.

The book reveals how women's involvement in anti-slavery was often framed in gendered terms. Women were recruited as those who had natural empathy, who could "suffer with" the suffering (so moving the men who would do the "political" work). Some of the women's movements (like the Unitarian women) deliberately worked in opposition to this and developed a more determinedly rational approach, but there are many examples of an understanding that women are more emotional, more "private" (not to be involved in politics) and able to bring about change in different ways from men. It is striking too that it was possible to defend anti-slavery as an appropriate cause for women, since it could be framed as religious rather than political.

The book also highlights instances where women were more radical than their male counterparts, less likely to defend the unity of the church with pleas for "gradualism", and more likely to favour economic steps like boycotts. There are stories of women who left their churches in protest at their unwillingness to challenge the slave owners in their midst. There are stories of women finding a voice of their own, even though it was often at the cost of their societal respectability as women.

There is also a fascinating glimpse into the world of fundraising for radical causes, as some criticised the "fairs" that women's societies held as becoming "luxurious emporiums", highlighting the contradiction between trading in frivolities for the cause of delivering people from slavery. Again, there are echoes of more contemporary discussions.

There are some telling windows into how far this issue was at the heart of what it meant to be the church in both Britain and America. In both contexts there is shameful evidence of a reluctance to embrace what many would now see as a pure and moral cause, though reading such history might make any contemporary reader ask what it is that we are turning from in our own days. It is clear, from this book, that it was often women, as those who had least invested in the *status quo*, who were most ready to face the moral challenge.

The book provides a fascinating, and very detailed, insight into the role of women, particularly those from Puritan and dissenting traditions in the anti-slavery movement. The collection would have been more complete with the addition of some more consciously theological voices among the writers. Though theological reflection is included, it is not always evident from these chapters how much or how consistently, for example, biblical stories of slavery and redemption influenced dissenting women. And it would be important to know more about the struggle of black women to be part of the anti-slavery movement too, and to know from what sources their inspiration and strength came. It is evident that some women from dissenting and Puritan churches drew on the narrative on their own dissent from the establishment in Britain, but how far did they hear the stories of the Bible and the command to "Let my people go"?

SUSAN DURBER

***After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology.* Edited by Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. xvi + 339. £25.49. ISBN 978-0-19975-629-2.**

One of the consequences of the recent revival of interest in the writings of the eighteenth century New England theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) - especially since the completion of the letterpress edition of his complete works in twenty-six volumes - has been a keen interest in the afterlife of his main theological ideas. For a century and more after his death, Edwards's theological output occupied the attentions of some of the greatest theological minds that New England produced. Some attempted to follow him slavishly, others to adapt his theology in sometimes highly innovative ways.

This interdisciplinary volume, consisting of essays with both an historical and theological focus, contains seventeen pieces which explore various aspects of the afterlife of Edwards's thought mainly in the nineteenth century, but with occasional forays into the more recent past as well. Inevitably, readers bring their own interests and specialisms to edited collections of this nature, especially when they span so long a period as this volume. Despite its title, there are a few chapters which treat Edwards himself at some length: Paul Helm, for example, examines some of the ways in which Edwards departed from his Reformed and Scholastic forebears, especially over the freedom of the human will. But the focus of this volume is elsewhere. The chief developers of Edwards's thought, his son Jonathan Edwards Jr, Samuel Hopkins, Joseph Bellamy, Nathaniel W. Taylor and Edwards Amasa Park are all dealt with at some length, some in their own essays, others in discussion of particular theological areas. The development of more governmental theories of the atonement, for example, which Edwards seems to have flirted with a little in his own writings, are treated in detail by Oliver Crisp. The appropriation of Edwards's writings on revival by Edward Dorr Griffin and Asahel Nettleton during the Second Great Awakening, are explored by David W. Kling. Edwards's views on religious awakenings remained highly contested.

For readers outside the United States, the final section of the volume will hold particular appeal. Although the international influence of Edwards has been explored in another edited collection (Kling and Sweeney (eds), *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad* (2003)), the six chapters in this section of the present volume provide a good introduction to Edwards's global appeal. Four chapters examine Edwards's influence around the world, including Britain, France, Germany and Asia. The British influence, particularly in the eighteenth century is well known, but Michael Haykin helpfully revisits Baptist responses, paying particular attention to that other Edwardsean innovator, Andrew Fuller. A chapter on Asia flatters to deceive a little. What we have is some information on efforts to translate Edwards into Korean and Chinese, but little on how his ideas were actually appropriated. The final essay looks at the revival of interest in Edwards among British and American evangelicals since the Second World

War. The notable absence here is the British Nonconformist preacher, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who perhaps did more than any one else in Britain to revive interest in the New England theologian during the 1950s and 1960s. The chapter ends with discussion of the current interest in Edwards among American “New Calvinists” such as the influential Baptist, John Piper, among others. In both instances it has been Edwards the theologian of religious experience, rather than Edwards the metaphysical theologian, who has been quarried by evangelicals in recent times.

This is a rich volume, inevitably a little uneven in places, but one that will repay close attention. Edwards remains a creative conversation partner for present day evangelicals and others. One hopes that that interest will in due course encompass the richness of Edwards’s entire *oeuvre*, rather than merely his works on revival and revivalism.

DAVID CERI JONES

***Coena Mystica: Debating Reformed Eucharistic Theology.* By J. W. Nevin and C. Hodge. Edited by Linden J. DeBie. The Mercersburg Theology Study Series, vol. II. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013. Pp. lvii + 186. £17.13. ISBN 978-1-62032-767-8.**

“On my right, in the Presbyterian blue corner, the Princeton Pummeller, Charles Hodge. On my left, in the German Reformed red, old gold and black corner, John Williamson Nevin, the Mercersburg Mauler”. These phrases came unbidden to mind as I worked through the second volume of The Mercersburg Study Series, for here we are in the presence of two theological bruisers, of whom Nevin, the younger combatant, had, during his Presbyterian days, studied at Princeton under Hodge, and deputised for him during Hodge’s two years in Germany.

This intense scrap over the Lord’s Supper, though swamped at the time and since by theological disputes of lesser importance, has continuing significance both for the Reformed family and for ecumenical relations – as we are reminded in the Foreword by Anne T. Thayer, the Paul and Minnie Diefenderfer Professor of Mercersburg and Ecumenical Theology and Church History at Lancaster Theological Seminary (the successor of Mercersburg Seminary, to which Nevin removed on leaving his teaching post at Pittsburgh Seminary and transferring from the Presbyterian to the German Reformed Church). Hodge’s aggressive treatment of Nevin’s *The Mystical Presence* (see this *Journal*, May 2013, pp. 123-7) in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* (1848) was the “bell” that started the fight. Nevin immediately donned his gloves and, having failed to find a home for his thoughts in an existing theological journal, published a series of twelve articles in the small-circulation *Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church*. Convinced that wider distribution of Nevin’s ideas was required, the Mercersburg Seminary *alumni* launched *The Mercersburg Review* (now available on-line) during the following year, with Nevin as its

editor. His *Messenger* articles were reprinted, and they are now before us. The sense that one is in the midst of a battle is enhanced by Nevin's method of interspersing passages from Hodge's review with his own replies.

Following Nevin's introduction to the debate there are chapters on the sacramental views of Zwingli and Calvin; Christ's real presence in the Lord's Supper; Nevin on the ancient Reformed creeds; Calvin's sacramental doctrine, and that of the Reformed Confessions; the meaning of the reception of the body and blood of Christ, and the sacrament's efficacy; modern sacramental theories debated, and Hodge's departures from Chalcedonian orthodoxy. Some final criticisms from Nevin conclude the work.

As the tussle proceeds, it becomes ever clearer that there are temperamental differences between the two combatants. Hodge emerges as the more down to earth and matter of fact (some might say, wooden), while Nevin is the more mystically-inclined of the two (which is not to say that he was "limp"; on the contrary, during his Presbyterian days he had annoyed many by his determined support of the anti-slavery crusade). More significant are their divergent philosophical presuppositions, with Hodge standing for the Scottish common sense realism of Old Princeton, and Nevin, a convert from that school to the post-Hegelian idealism of his Mercersburg colleague, F. A. Rauch, and to the German Mediating theology descending (but in some respects distinct) from Schleiermacher. One consequence of this is Hodge's charge that Nevin has succumbed to Eutychianism (the teaching that Christ's humanity was absorbed into his divinity), whereupon Nevin accuses Hodge of veering towards Nestorianism in his Christological dualism (Nestorius was charged with teaching that the humanity and the divinity of Christ were two separate natures). In more general terms, Hodge emerges as the static, selective doctrinal restorationist, while Nevin appears as an apostle of the organic development of doctrine. As to the Lord's Supper itself, Nevin finds that Hodge's rationalism leads him to downplay the sacramental mystery, and to deny that the sacrament confers a unique grace, while Hodge insists that the sacramental elements are but signs and symbols of the grace conveyed.

The delicate task of refereeing the fight falls to Dr Linden J. DeBie, and he discharges it well, judging, for example, that if Hodge was mistaken in denying that doctrines evolve, Nevin found more uniformity in the classical Reformed confessions than is really there. He also observes that if we agree that the sacraments are more than "mere reminders" of Christ and his sacrifice, the question "In what does the 'more' consist?" remains on the table.

In addition to his role as referee, Dr DeBie contributes an excellent "Biographical Essay" on Hodge and Nevin, and an "Introduction" to the debate between them. For good measure he also supplies copious informative notes. W. Bradford Littlejohn, the General Editor of the series, and the publisher are warmly to be thanked for their enterprise in mounting, and their ongoing commitment to, this important project.

ALAN P. F. SELL†

***The Incarnate Word: Selected Readings on Christology.* By John Williamson Nevin, Philip Schaff and Daniel Gans. Edited by William B. Evans. The Mercersburg Theology Study Series, vol. IV. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014. Pp. xxxvi + 251. £22.00. ISBN 978-1-62564-523-4.**

It is a pleasure to introduce the fourth volume (the third is not yet to hand) of the Mercersburg Theology Study Series, whose general editor is the enterprising W. Bradford Littlejohn. Here are gathered six Christological papers by Nevin, and one each by his colleague, the historian, Schaff and Gans, their student. After serving as a minister in the German Reformed Church, Gans converted to Rome – one of a small number of such cases that did not pass unnoticed by those German Reformed divines who excoriated what they deemed to be Mercersburg's Romanising tendencies.

To the editor, William B. Evans, we are indebted for a comprehensive general introduction, introductions to each paper, and careful annotations. Oliver Crisp contributes the Foreword.

Implicit throughout is the running battle between the Mercersburg theologians, who were influenced by the idealism of Hegel and Schelling, and the Princetonians (supremely Charles Hodge), who stood in the line of the Scottish common sense philosophy of Thomas Reid and others.

The following are among a number of themes that reverberate through the collection: the atonement is not extrinsic to the incarnation, and Christ's person is inseparable from his work; salvation is found in union with Christ, that is, by participating in his very person, and not by an atonement externally conceived; the Church, the body of Christ, is an organic unity which is the presence of Christ on earth; Christ would have become incarnate even if there had been no sin; Christ's incarnate humanity becomes accessible to all by the Holy Spirit, and finds its final vindication in the resurrection and ascension; the sinlessness of Christ shows that he differs from all other human beings not only in degree, but in kind; Christ is the Second Adam, in whom humanity is restored to union with God (echoes of Irenaeus, and a debt to Schleiermacher and to such German mediating theologians as Neander and Dörner).

I record these points bluntly and without comment, in the hope that they will stimulate thought. There are cases to be made, and doctrinal clarity can only benefit Christian proclamation. Not that clarity is all: some who are branded "heretic" have produced pellucid prose.

ALAN P. F. SELL†

***Practical Predestinarians in England, c.1590-1640.* By Leif Dixon. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014. Pp. viii + 380. £80.00. ISBN 978-1-4094-6386-3.**

The doctrine of double predestination – that God both predestines the elect to eternal life and also the wicked to damnation – was widely held and publically taught in the Church of England from the middle of Elizabeth I's reign through to the end of the Jacobean period. The basic intent of Dixon's

work is to survey and account for the pastoral usage and (thus indirectly) the reception of the doctrine at this time. To date scholarly interest has either been narrowly focused on the theological issues at the expense of historical and cultural factors or else has uncritically assumed that the doctrine of predestination drove believers into a state of anxiety over assurance of salvation, with ministers encouraging their hearers to oscillate between extremes of presumption and despair. Dixon's study aims to balance the former by providing a dedicated historical analysis, and to challenge the latter by arguing that predestination was principally understood as a doctrine of comfort. His project, therefore, seeks to address several key questions: What were the historical circumstances which caused the doctrine of predestination to rise to such prominence in the English church in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries? Why was the doctrine seen by many as the source of tremendous comfort? How did preachers employ the doctrine to achieve this end? Dixon's chosen methodology is to examine printed sermons and treatises of pastoral theology. Conceding that this focuses on what ministers wanted people to think rather than what people actually thought, Dixon appeals to the abundance of these sources for analysis and also to the sheer popularity of such works as indicative of their widespread acceptance.

The shifting historical context is, in Dixon's opinion, vital to proper understanding of how predestination functioned and the ways in which predestinarian preaching was forced to adapt. The first chapter argues that the rise of predestination as a central dogma of Protestant writers was provoked by a growing crisis of ethical and epistemological certainty. Driving this crisis was the emergence of nominalism, an increasingly pessimistic assessment of human nature and a fracturing understanding of how the individual related to society. Furthermore, in a period of immense upheaval and one often involving personal risk to those choosing the Protestant way, predestination was a doctrine that granted comfort and certainty. The remaining chapters chart the impact of the shifting cultural circumstances upon the role of predestination in preaching. In short, Dixon argues that as Protestantism became the consensus viewpoint, the doctrine served to guide believers through their earthly pilgrimage. Challenging the traditional opinion that predestination invariably resulted in spiritual anxiety, Dixon instead contends that this doctrine was used to produce assured believers who were motivated to live out their calling. In this vein, chapters 2 to 5 survey a range of predestinarian preachers and their distinctive pastoral strategies. Dixon's examination of William Perkins (1558–1602) serves as a reference point to examine the wider English practical predestinarian tradition and argues that Perkins, responding to psychological problems appearing in light of the crisis of certainty, employed predestination to fashion a whole worldview centred on the power and authority of God. The following chapters examine the thought of Richard Greenham (early 1540s–1594), Richard Rogers (1551–1618), the lesser known Thomas Wilson (1562/3–1622) and the intriguing case of the committed anti-puritan yet evangelical

double predestinarian Robert Sanderson (1587–1663). The threads of Dixon's argument are drawn together in chapter 6 with a thematic survey, where he concludes, contrary to persistent scholarly doubts, that preachers were able faithfully to hold to a Calvinistic theology and simultaneously comfort their hearers. The final chapter pushes the argument into the thorny pastoral issues presented to the preacher by bereavement and the fate of the deceased.

What, then, is the contribution of Dixon's work? His study which grew out of his doctoral research extends and follows current historiographical trends. Indeed, Dixon self-consciously builds upon the seminal work of Nicholas Tyacke which argued for the emergence of a "Calvinistic consensus" only to collapse during the 1620s. Alongside this, he notes Patrick Collinson's work demonstrating that Puritans (who particularly championed evangelical predestinarianism) were an influential and integrated force within the established church. More directly pertinent is the work of Peter Lake who has argued that fervent evangelistic activity rather than seen as contradictory was held complementary to a strident predestination theology. Dixon's work improves and develops Lake's more optimistic stance to the function of predestination, by refining Lake's historical argument and further demonstrating that predestination chiefly operated as a positive doctrine in granting assurance, organising theology, characterising the God-human relation and enabling believers to interpret their fortunes.

This is an expensive book and I suspect will be mainly of value for academic scholarship. The introduction, chapter 6 and the concluding thoughts of chapter 7 allow the reader to grasp a summary of the overall argument. The remainder of the material will be particularly of interest for those wishing to become better acquainted with the Protestant divines examined. These are sure-footed examinations and contain some incisive reassessments of pivotal issues. The chapters are lengthy and the reader would be aided by clearer conclusions at times. Unfortunately, theological terms are occasionally employed rather loosely as one might expect in a historical study. For example, the author repeatedly writes of the "imputation" of faith (p. 94) when he refers to the infusion of faith – the distinction between imputation and infusion was axiomatic to Reformed theology. Or, to take another example, Dixon states that the typical *ordo salutis* of English Protestants of the period "began with justification, moved to calling, and then to sanctification" (p. 57). However, divines commonly placed calling before justification as exemplified in Perkins's highly influential golden chain. While irritating, such theological misdemeanours do not detract from the argument of Dixon's work.

What is more frustrating was the absence of consideration of the pastoral theology of Richard Sibbes (1577?–1635). More than one study has alleged a significant departure of Sibbes from Perkins's theology, yet Dixon dismisses this claim in a footnote (p. 124), reasoning that if such a division existed, then why did no one notice it at the time? This is rather unfortunate given Dixon had just claimed that Puritans tended to conceal differences

between themselves. While Dixon specifically cites Janice Knight's work, more pertinent is Ronald Frost's doctoral thesis "Richard Sibbes' Theology of Grace and the Division of English Reformed Theology" which was devoted to exposing the divergence of Sibbes' theology from that of Perkins.

These criticisms aside, Dixon is to be applauded for recovering the positive import of the doctrine of predestination in this formative period of English Protestantism. He observes that "Even 'objective' modern scholars are prone to expressing their distaste for a doctrine which they often find to be depressing at best, and morally repellent at worst" (p. 3). Arguably, it is this factor which has most blinded modern scholarship to how the doctrine actually functioned. Dixon's work is, therefore, an important corrective and a welcome addition to the *St Andrews Studies in Reformation History* series.

JONATHAN CARTER

***Did the Reformers Misread Paul? A Historical-Theological Critique of the New Perspective.* By Aaron O'Kelley. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2014. Pp. xviii + 170. £24.99. ISBN 978-1-84227-794-2.**

Within Pauline studies it is universally acknowledged that the publication in 1977 by E. P. Sanders of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* inaugurated a new era. This revolution rapidly gained a label: "the new perspective on Paul" and the label still persists even as it becomes ever clearer that what has resulted is not a monolithic single viewpoint but rather a variety of newer perspectives. Even so, one common factor in these newer perspectives is a shared conviction that older trajectories of interpretation derived ultimately from the Protestant Reformers are significantly in error. Second Temple Judaism was not a legalistic religion revolving around the attempt to earn salvation but rather one that emphasized grace. As such, it "could not have served as Paul's foil in the promotion of a doctrine of justification that resembles that of the Reformation" (p. 117).

It is this assumption that Aaron O'Kelley sets out to challenge. He does not do so by rejecting the contention that Second Temple Judaism was a religion of grace. Instead he argues that the late mediaeval Catholicism against which the Reformers reacted was also in its own way a religion of grace. It synthesised demand and promise, law and gospel, works and grace (what O'Kelley, relying on the work of Michael S. Horton, terms a "monocovenantal" approach), whereas the Reformers insist in relation to justification that these pairs are incompatible and opposite (a "bicoovenantal" approach). It is in reacting against a "monocovenantal" approach that the Reformers develop their insistence on the basis of Pauline texts that works cannot save because only perfect obedience to the law will suffice. Consequently, the sinner's only hope lies in receiving by faith the alien righteousness of Christ. If the Reformers could develop these positions, then why could Paul not also have done so in reaction to a Second Temple Judaism that similarly brought together works and grace? For all that they are very different, in other ways the analogy between Second Temple Judaism and the opponents of the Reformers is plausible

in relation to these central issues.

This argument is laid out clearly and concisely. The pervasiveness of the assumption that the Reformers must have misread Paul if Judaism emphasised grace is demonstrated by quotation from Pauline scholars. The blending of divine grace and imperfect human obedience, offered in response to that grace as the joint basis of final salvation, is traced through major streams of mediaeval theology, culminating in the Council of Trent. The shared commitment of Luther, Melancthon and Calvin to the demand of the law for perfect obedience and the resulting necessity for the alien righteousness of Christ is described, as is the continuance of these themes in subsequent Protestant theology. O'Kelley's historical scholarship is impressive and, if there is a weakness, it is that positions that the Reformers share are allowed to overshadow important differences between them. Limited doctrinal differences between Luther and Melancthon are acknowledged but the much more significant exegetical difference is ignored that Melancthon makes little or no response to Paul's language of union with Christ whereas Luther and Calvin make it central to their accounts of justification.

Despite this reservation, overall O'Kelley successfully exposes fallacious reasoning in recent discussion of Paul. Yet, as O'Kelley recognises, it is a limited victory to show that it does not follow from the emphasis of Second Temple Judaism on grace that the Reformers interpreted Paul wrongly. This is not the same thing as a positive demonstration that they interpreted the apostle correctly. For this reason, the final chapter exegetes three key Pauline texts (Gal. 3:10-14, Rom. 9:30-10:13, Phil. 3:2-11) in order to demonstrate the presence of a "bicoventantal" pattern in Paul's thinking and also discusses the relationship between Paul's teaching on justification and that of James. The work of contemporary Pauline scholars whose conclusions are similar to those of the Reformers is competently summarised and weaknesses are pointed out in the exegesis of those whose conclusions are different. This leads to the final judgment that "The new perspective on Paul rests largely on an unfounded hermeneutical presupposition" (p. 148).

It is this closing claim that is perhaps the most problematic part of the argument. While the dismissal of Reformation perspectives in contemporary Pauline scholarship is frequently made without adequate understanding of the Reformers' exegesis and their context, it is an exaggeration to say that it is upon this that the new perspective on Paul largely rests. Whether soteriology within Second Temple Judaism follows a "monocovenantal" or a "bicoventantal" pattern is far from the only or main question. Of greater significance is historical argument concerning what Paul means by the phrase "the works of the law", which is taken to refer not to human deeds that contribute to justification but rather to boundary markers (circumcision, food laws, Sabbath observance) that maintain Jewish separation from Gentiles. The assumption that an emphasis upon grace within Judaism necessarily disproves Reformation perspectives does sometimes serve to shield this historical claim from adequate critical scrutiny. Yet even if we are not wholly convinced by the historical claim, it can only be adequately engaged through historical

argument. Further, it is possible to demur from a fashionable dismissal of the Reformers' Pauline exegesis while still recognising that the demands of their own historical context led them to underemphasise the impact of Jew/Gentile issues upon Paul's formulation of the gospel. O'Kelley's study exposes a false assumption in new perspective debates and in doing so makes a valuable contribution to scholarship, but it should be recognised that this assumption is simply one component within a wider debate.

STEPHEN CHESTER

***God's Watchman: John Knox's Faith and Vocation.* By Richard G. Kyle. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014. Pp. xii + 286. £25.00. ISBN 978-1-62032-918-4.**

The image of John Knox in the popular mind is of what Jane Dawson notes in her magisterial 2015 biography as the "personification of the puritanical kill-joy who championed the strictest Presbyterian tenets on all issues and delighted in haranguing Mary, Queen of Scots ... preaching or prophesying doom ... expounding misogynist ideas". Knox certainly had a darker side, a "holy hatred" of Roman Catholic idolatry, depression and concerns about the future of Protestantism in Scotland, England and Europe, but was much more than the "monochrome portrait of the dour Scottish Reformer".

Richard Kyle's book on John Knox explores at length and in depth the writings of the Scottish reformer, revealing the connections and contradictions in this man who was preacher, prophet and pastor.

Kyle notes the apparent tensions in Knox's character. We first meet Knox in his *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, (perhaps more of a memoir than a strict historical account), entering with a sword. Knox portrays himself as a man of action. Yet on his deathbed Knox is found with his second wife, Margaret Stewart, reading to him John 17, Christ's pastoral prayer, where Knox writes he "first cast anchor". With Knox there is always the tension between his (self) perceived calling as an Old Testament style prophet, (he was drawn to Ezekiel's image of God's watchman alerting the nation with the sound of the trumpet), and his pastoral work, (which was considerable and personal). This reflects a lesser-known aspect of the reformer. Kyle reminds us that in his pastoral care for his mother-in-law Elizabeth Bowes, and a London friend Anne Locke, Knox saw their problems as reflecting his own: "The exposition of your troubles, and acknowledging of your infirmity, was first unto me a very mirror and glass wherein I beheld myself".

Kyle notes that Knox was not given to writing extensive theological doctrine, or formulating a precise philosophy of history. Knox saw his function and calling to be a preacher who would proclaim God's Word to nations and individuals enthralled to what Knox saw as the idolatry of Roman Catholicism. Kyle suggests that Knox's crusade for purity in worship and ecclesiology, was based on Deuteronomy 12:32, "Everything that I command you you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to it or take from it". Knox's faith, though orthodox, tended towards an affinity to the God of the Old Testament, rather than to the Christ of the

New Testament, leading to Kyle's assertion that Knox's Christology was underdeveloped. It is hardly consistent for Kyle to make this charge while earlier noting that Knox had little time to formulate complex theology, and that Knox's approach to most things was dictated by historical circumstances.

Most controversial in Knox's career was his attitude to constituted civil authority and what has been described as his "resistance theory". Knox's notion of political resistance was related to his belief in active resistance to sin. It was therefore justifiable for citizens to rebel against ungodly rulers in pursuit of the defeat of idolatry. Kyle correctly identifies that Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* is a theological and political treatise against idolatrous rulers, primarily Mary Tudor, Mary of Guise and her daughter Mary, Queen of Scots, not a misogynistic diatribe against women *per se*.

Knox was not always consistent in his theory of resistance. Kyle fails to comment on the Perth riot of May 1559 where Knox preached a sermon, "vehement against idolatry" and sparked an iconoclastic riot. Knox was probably taken aback at the reaction to his words and he had little control over the riot. In his *History* Knox distances preachers and leading nobility from the action, blaming the "raschall multitude", an observation confirmed later by another sixteenth century Scottish historian George Buchanan who wrote, "These were the operations of the very lowest of the populace, while the more respectable were gone to dine". One is left wondering why Knox, who had preached the incendiary sermon, was less than fully supportive of the outcome. One might conjecture this might have something to do with the sometimes strained relationship with the pro-Protestant nobles and lairds, the "Lords of the Congregation" whose eyes were sometimes more on acquiring the wealth and land of the Old Church than on Knox's goal of a Scotland religious, virtuous, intelligent and happy.

Kyle draws attention to Knox's advocacy of a Christian commonwealth – a Christian society where civil and ecclesiastical powers co-operate to cultivate "true religion". While the Scottish Parliament of 1560 approved the Scots Confession of Faith, a subsequent Parliament failed to approve the First Book of Discipline. Among the goals of the latter were the sustenance of an educated Church ministry, the provision of a school in every parish, and the financial support of the poor. Kyle notes that the provision of schools was not simply to provide an educated ministry, but also to implant in individuals the principles of morality, religion and the development of their intellectual gifts so they might go on to serve the Church and Commonwealth, and to train young people in whatever occupation they served. While Knox's commonwealth was not classically egalitarian, he was content with the traditional stratification of society, his concern for the poor was genuine, and he saw it as a Biblical responsibility for a reformed church to make appropriate provision for their needs. It provided for a concept of society that has been described by one commentator as an early form of Christian Socialism.

As confirmation of Kyle's thesis that Knox's call was to be preacher, prophet and pastor, perhaps the complex but great reformer's own words provide the best summary. Knox writes: "in considering my selfe rather cald of my God to instruct the ignorant, comfort the sorrowful, confirme the weake, and rebuke the proud, by

tong and livelye voice in these most corrupt dayes, than to compose books for the age to come ...”

DEREK BROWNING

***The Dissenters Volume III: The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity.* By Michael Watts. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. 512. £85.00. ISBN 978-0-19822-969-8.**

When Michael Watts died in 2011 it seemed we might be denied the volume in his magisterial history of dissent intended to cover the period from 1860 to the Liberal electoral landslide of 1906. But marvellously here it is, edited by Chris Wrigley and with a short introduction in which David Bebbington assesses more recent scholarship.

It is full of truly wonderful things. The statistical analysis of when a decline in Nonconformist church attendance began is hugely authoritative. As Congregationalists did not publish a run of membership figures till 1898 the best evidence is for the Methodists whose membership reached a peak of 4.57 per cent of the total population in 1841 after which membership, despite some periods of recovery, generally declined until “from 1881 irreversible decline set in” (p. 86). Baptist membership peaked slightly later, with continuous decline from 1890. Statistically, too, there is a very insightful analysis of how the social class basis of Nonconformity narrowed as it both lost touch with the working class and its upper social class members to Anglicanism

“The Crisis of Dissent” is for Watts theological: the great Victorian crisis of faith precipitated by new knowledge in science and history and exemplified by the theory of evolution. This is mostly the retelling of a familiar story, but for Watts its most grievous effect was to destroy the lynchpin of Nonconformity – the belief in torment in hell: “The belief that those who were not the elect of God, in the Calvinistic scheme, or who had not responded to God’s offer of salvation, in the Arminian scheme, would spend eternity in torment in the fires of hell, lay at the very heart of Evangelical Dissent” (p. 48). As a kinder, gentler liberalism, committed to critical biblical scholarship, the immanence of God, and social justice, replaced such Calvinism, Nonconformity lost its dynamic force.

“The Conscience of Dissent” is a reference to the “Nonconformist Conscience” which Watts argues, despite its periodic censoriousness, was a genuine attempt to translate Christian values into political and economic life.

There are some fascinating portraits of people. I was especially interested in that of Charles Spurgeon, who at the Metropolitan Tabernacle preached for thirty years to the largest congregation in the world. Asquith said of him: “He had the finest voice I ever heard, all the resources of an accomplished actor and could move his hearers at will to laughter and tears”. Watts argues his central appeal was his utter conviction that anyone who had not had a conversion experience like his would burn in hell: “You have seen the asbestos lying in the red hot fire, but when you take it out it is unconsumed. So your body will be prepared by God in such a way that it will burn forever without being consumed” (p. 62). He dealt with

developing science and biblical criticism by ignoring both. Evolution, he said, “was a monstrous error which will be a theme of ridicule for another 20 years”. A critic once said it would require a surgical operation to get a new idea into Spurgeon’s head. He seems to have regarded this as something of a compliment. His response to the Indian Mutiny (or war of national liberation) was to tell an audience of 23,000 at the Crystal Palace that “the Indian government never ought to have tolerated the religion of the Hindoos at all ... It is evil and must be put down. The sword must be taken out of its sheath, to cut off our fellow subjects by their thousands” (p. 323). This is religion as fear and ignorance.

Wonderful as this book is I have serious hesitations. First, our awareness of the impending decline of the Churches rather undercuts the sense of what it was like to be a Victorian Nonconformist who knew of no such thing. Think of the hope symbolised by the building of Mansfield College to be for Nonconformity in Oxford what Christ Church was for the Anglicans. We know it was a delusion, but they did not. You could well argue that for most of this period Nonconformist influence in society was increasing and its churches were never more alive than in their liberal heyday.

Second, for Watts hellfire preaching had been the most effective recruiting agent for the church and the main cause of late nineteenth century church decline was that liberals rejected it and had nothing to put in its place. Both parts of that are questionable. There is no doubt that the fear of hell historically has been an important part of Christian belief. However, when you look at the accounts of those who lost their faith in Victorian Britain it seems to have been experienced less as a release from fear than as a loss of coherence and meaning. Think Tennyson, think Matthew Arnold on *Dover Beach* fearing that now there is neither “certitude or peace, nor help for pain”. Think W. H. Mallock, “Our hearts are aching for the God we can no longer believe in”. Fear was not the central heart of faith. What is more, the eventual decline of the churches was the product of a range of intellectual challenges and the decline in a belief in hell was more a product of a growing secularisation than a primary cause of it.

Third, this vision of Christianity has something of the heart of darkness about it. Watts sees Christianity as more about fear than grace. It lives by the fire of hell (and declines where these die out). Its love of the Bible is really only possible when combined with ignorance – accepting biblical criticism undermines faith: “Higher criticism destroyed the Bible as the authoritative basis of Christianity” (p. 33). It is as if for Watts Christianity is the abominable Spurgeon writ large. If it were true, then the only thing a decent human being could do would be to reject it. I am grateful that my experience has been different. Liberal Christianity introduced me to a gracious God and to the freedom of faith. It gave me the confidence that I could study the Bible with mind as well as heart. Above all it pointed me to a Jesus whose life is so full of love and grace that I can say with Isaac Watts: “Love, so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all”.

Wonderful as this book is, I turned away from it with something of relief.

***The Reluctant Minister: Memoirs.* By David W. Torrance. Haddington: Handsel Press, 2015. Pp. 309. £23.00. ISBN 978-1-04823-290-6.**

The Torrance family has been a powerful force within the Church of Scotland from the mid twentieth-century and into the twenty-first. David, the youngest of six, was born in China in 1924 of missionary parents.

Dedicated to the Lord before birth, he was converted at five at his mother's knee. From an early age she taught him that to read three chapters of the Bible a day – and five on Sunday – would mean that he was able to complete the reading of the scriptures within a year. The whole family was steeped in the personal disciplines of Bible reading and daily prayer.

With a father and two brothers who were ministers, and three sisters who all married ministers it is hardly surprising that he felt he was being called to become one himself. The title of his autobiography indicates a resistance over several years before accepting that this was God's purpose for him. The memoir, written well into his retirement in his nineties, is his account of a lifetime's work that may have been initially accepted with reluctance, but was undertaken believing "there is no calling more satisfying and spiritually fulfilling".

To get the flavour of the man it could be enough to read the lengthy appendix in which he sets out his theological understanding of ministry. However, to do so would be to miss out on how this credo encapsulates everything that is set out in the preceding pages. There he gives a detailed account of how his Christ-centred theology, which has to relate to ordinary people, was worked out first as an evangelist in the Tell Scotland campaigns under D. P. Thomson, then later at parishes in Livingstone New Town, a tough part of Aberdeen and finally at Earlston in the Borders.

What we get from this book is a clear sense of the structure and ethos of traditional Presbyterianism with its strengths and positives that retain their challenges to this day. These positives come out most clearly in some of the priorities of this particular ministry.

For example, he emphasises the crucial importance of praise at the heart of worship, ideally overflowing into the heart of daily living. He is passionate about preaching, believing people need to be fed by the Word. "We are called to trumpet forth both in preaching and teaching the mighty acts of God"; "True preaching is where people hear God speaking, not man". Is that passion still shared today?

Pastoral care of people in the parish was shown in regular visiting. This is another challenge to today's church where it is often said that some ministers, let alone elders, no longer see visiting as a priority. Even so, one wonders how many ministers today would make it their practice not only to lead in prayer but precede it with a reading from scripture.

Above all he saw ministry as teamwork with the Elders. At Session meetings, as well as consideration of routine business, half an hour was set aside for spiritual teaching. He saw Elders as spiritual leaders, equipped to teach those in their pastoral districts how to pray. It has to be said that many could not meet

his expectations of either visiting or prayer. He made a practice of meeting with Sunday School [*sic*] teachers so that their preparation for work with children was soundly undergirded with knowledge of the context and content of their lessons. At a less austere level he introduced the now common practice of building up fellowship by having refreshments served after worship.

Within all these strengths and positives we see not only a passionate man, but one whose rigour and austerity, betokening a vision of the minister as authority figure, is redolent of another age. There are considerable strengths. There are also negatives.

Within his conviction that a minister has a duty to care for the spiritual well-being of his people, there is often a severity that sits uncomfortably in today's climate. He was not averse to calling someone a sinner, while an agnostic was deemed an ignoramus or on the road to hell. Conflicts in Presbytery were not unknown and are recorded vividly. He does not seem ever to have had a place for doubt in his spiritual life. Apart from an interest in beekeeping we are given no awareness of how he relaxed, except for one occasion when he was afraid that enjoying a hobby was distracting him from God's work.

There is no acknowledgement of Higher Biblical Criticism, certainly no sense of having any time for it. Because God's hand is to be seen in everything, the authority of scripture is unquestioned, so completely missing are any references to contradictions, difficulties in texts or how the Bible was created by the bringing together of diverse traditions. Nor are there any reflections on how understanding has changed across the centuries. There is very little indication of awareness of other contemporary, influential groups in the church such as the Iona Community. Mention is made of it at most three times, and with some hostility. Indeed, he is dismissive of all liberals, though he did affirm the importance of seeking to work with everyone wherever possible.

David Torrance rejected all opportunities to be drawn into academia. There is no doubt he had the ability, but his heart was in the pastoral ministry. For him faith was not an intellectual exercise, but must relate to life. Even so he was gratified to have helped ensure the appointment to a post at St Andrews University, of a theologically conservative biblical scholar.

This memoir vividly reveals a minister who is himself deeply conservative. But whatever one's own theological position, and however much astonished irritation is aroused, this book is very readable, even though it would have benefitted from much more editing. There are too many repetitions, too many anecdotes about God's guidance, too detailed an account of a wartime military career in which God deliberately kept the author away from any direct action so that his life was spared for His purpose.

Intensity is not really the right word to describe David, but there is in him a depth of devotion, conviction, dedication and unwavering zeal that is rarely apparent today. He is clearly held in high esteem in the Church of Scotland. His was certainly a singular ministry, and the book gives a vivid picture of a man who gave his all in the service of Christ.

ALASDAIR PRATT

***Heaven on Earth: Reimagining Time and Eternity in Nineteenth-Century British Evangelicalism.* By Martin Spence. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015. Pp. 307. £24.00 ISBN 978-1-62032-259-8.**

This is a widely read, vigorously argued and well-researched study of a seriously neglected aspect of Victorian Evangelicalism, a view of the ending of time called historic premillennialism, which, in fact led to the granting of a heightened significance to the present. Accordingly, it must be carefully distinguished from a backward-looking, world-rejecting dispensationalism, particularly as developed following J. N. Darby in Brethren circles; rather, the historic premillennarian thought here presented came mainly from the established church north and south of the border. Perhaps surprisingly it shared an historic optimism with those liberal theologians who held progressive views about the development of the historical process, challenging the traditional dichotomy perceived between liberal and conservative (evangelical) streams of nineteenth-century Christianity, arguing that these evangelicals rather than espousing “pessimism, despair, and judgment [were] actually in the vanguard of nineteenth-century revisionism” (p. 203). This leads Spence to argue that no less a person than F. D. Maurice in his kingdom theology was influenced by premillennial thought, especially that of J. A. Stephenson (p. 190ff).

Spence, therefore, engages with a profound analysis of a changed perception of time, and the language used to describe it, speaking of “a conceptual softening of the temporal and the eternal, of the material and the spiritual, of this life and the life to come” (p. 27). Such a changed eschatology had significance for understanding the present seen in a new emphasis on Incarnation in Evangelical thinking; thus David Bebbington’s summary judgment: “As a historicist premillennialist, Shaftesbury accepted the importance of the Incarnation and so appreciated the needs of the human body. He was, therefore, committed to the improvement of the physical environment” (p. x). This group of evangelicals clearly canvassed for “a broad thesis concerning the materiality of Christian salvation” (p. 62), so very different, with their world-affirming stance, from their predecessors and many of their contemporary opponents. Central to their thought was not just an intellectual category but a commitment to an expectation that time-space was the site of significant divine interest and activity: God’s purposes could not be confined to “saving individual souls for translation to heaven, but with the universal establishment of the kingdom of God on earth” (p. 64), for “God was less concerned with saving an elect that he would remove to an immaterial heaven, than he was with a process of cosmic redemption to recover the entire temporal-spatial sphere” (p. 99).

Thus heaven, through a renewal of the material world, was to come about here on this earth where believers would experience a resurrection of their physical bodies. Some even went so far as to suggest that millennial time could become a period of extended probation so that some who appeared to have rejected God in their lifetime would have a second chance. There was, in their judgment, physical continuity between the present age and the age-to-come; indeed history was now

seen as a process leading onward to a future realisation of divine intent. Moreover, truth was not simply an intellectual category but a reality demanding engagement. All this change in thought was occurring when there was a new awareness of time in a world where the mechanical ticking of the clock became more demanding than nature's succession of day and night and season following season, not to mention "the deep time" discovered by the geologists (pp. 69-70). It is no surprise, therefore, to find these evangelicals discerning in contemporary events and developments, "Signs of the Times" and the "Coming of the Kingdom" (pp. 92-8).

All this thinking was set within and influenced by a Romantic culture with its emphases on psychology, emotion and the inner life, rather than within the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Interpreted theologically, this meant that "Historicist premillennialists understood the symbols of biblical prophecy as revealing eternal principles within temporal images; they conceived of history as a sacramental disclosure of the eternal mind of God, and they longed for the reunification of spirit and matter which would occur in the *eschaton*, and which might be prefigured among the faithful even in the present" (p. 66). Thus they "sought God and Eternity *in time* rather than positing a salvation that removed believers from the pulse of temporal-spatial life" (p. 73). This is why their eschatology represents not just speculative excursions into the future but the driving force of an urgent and engaged discipleship in the here and now. One special manifestation of this was to be the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, which was a microcosmic aspect of their belief in "the restitution [*apokatastasis*] of all things" (pp. 102ff), in contrast with that interpretation which focused on the church alone as the new Israel fulfilling all Old Testament promises (pp. 112-3).

More flowed from this reorientation, first, "the possibility of universal salvation and the downgrading of hell and punishment; second, a stress on the incarnation of Christ" not to mention "the downplaying of the future nature of salvation in favour of an emphasis on enjoying the eternal in the present" (p. 147). This also opened the way for consideration of conditional immortality by these evangelicals, as an alternative to the more radical option of some form of universalism (pp. 157ff). Adventurous as was such thinking, the reader needs to know the extent of such premillennialist views among evangelicals and how many adopted the historicist version rather than the futurist or dispensational. And secondly, its period of influence is shown to have been time-limited as by the 1870s revivalism and the holiness movement came increasingly to occupy evangelical attention: "with its new emphasis on personal empowerment and experiential unction, premillennialism shifted away from the hope of the corporate, temporal-spatial renewal and became a symbol of an imminent and immediate divine visitation – whether of the Spirit or the Son". Though still highly romantic, "it was the romanticism of personal consolation and epiphanous vision, not the romanticism that concerned itself with the renewal of the social order and natural world ... The king was still a focus of attention, but the kingdom slipped from view" (p. 255).

***Wrestling with a Godly Order: Encounters with the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.* Edited by James Steven. Salisbury: Sarum College Press, 2015. Pp. 126. £18.99. ISBN 978-0-95506-603-0.**

This volume is a collection of essays on the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, largely written from the outsider's perspective, with contributions from Methodist, Orthodox, Roman Catholic and United Reformed writers, as well as a couple of Church of England contributions. Norman Wallwork writes on the Methodist liturgical use of the book with his usual lucidity and insight. Colin Buchanan tells the story of the book in the worldwide Anglican Communion. Chris Ellis, a Baptist, reflects upon text and orality in liturgical spirituality. Susan Durber writes from the United Reformed Church on history, sociology and liturgy, demonstrating the reality of much relationship with the book, despite protestations to the contrary from many within that tradition. David Frost offers an Orthodox voice on the influence of the book. A Roman Catholic perspective is given by Alan Griffiths. Finally, Bridget Nichols provides an "afterword" drawing together various threads. This book is well written, and although not the cheapest, is well produced in hardback. Those interested in liturgy, and in history, will find something here.

MICHAEL HOPKINS

***The Spirit of Dissent: A Commemoration of the Great Ejection of 1662.* Edited by Janet Wootton. Winchester: Institute for Theological Partnerships Publishing, 2015. Pp. 203. £10.00. ISBN 978-1-90853-204-6.**

This book is not for those looking for a thorough, systematic, academic or original, treatment of the topic. Those looking for a wide variety of snapshots and perspectives from widely differing authors, often looking for an unusual angle or with less common perspective, at a very reasonable price, will be much more satisfied. Readers of this journal are likely to be very familiar with the general subject matter of the Great Ejection. Well-known names such as Janet Wootton, Alan Argent, David Cornick, and Barry Coward do not disappoint with their chapters. I found Barry Coward's paper particularly helpful in thinking about Cromwell and the wider context of his times. However, I was somewhat baffled by what Beverley Clack's chapter "Against the pursuit of the snazzy life: a feminist theology and loss" was saying, or why it was of any relevance to the subject matter of the book. Andy Vail's papers on Victorian Birmingham were helpful in analysing the national pattern in a regional context. Overall, this is a helpful book and good value for money at today's prices. There is much of interest, but less that throws new light on the Ejection itself.

MICHAEL HOPKINS

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