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## EDITORIAL

The Society's residential conference, held at Westminster College, Cambridge, on 26 and 27 June 2019, took as its theme "Beyond Borders". Most of the contributions were dedicated to looking at our history either alongside those living outside Britain or from a non-British perspective. In this issue of the *Journal*, we are able to publish two of those contributions.

Stephen G. Brown's annual lecture discussed the relationship between the United Reformed Church and the Evangelical Church of the Union in the German Democratic Republic. As published, it constitutes a timely reminder that commitment to unity takes the URC beyond the confines of our own nations, while also prompting us to recollect that Berlin marked a particularly poignant anniversary in 2020, though its commemoration was low-key as a result of the pandemic. Dr Brown contributed to building the relationship between the two churches – he has even discovered a letter in his own hand in the archive! This, and his role as editor of *The Ecumenical Review*, means he occupies an appropriate vantage point from which to evaluate this particular part of the URC's international relations and to identify through it a genuine contribution to ecumenical theology.

A different, but equally poignant anniversary occurred in 2019 which we are reminded about in our second article. In her account of Africa's experience of the Great War, Anne Samson shows us that what appear to be shared experiences can be understood differently depending on one's location and therefore, in a literal sense, on one's point of view. The article draws on her research into the life and work of Lord Kitchener, which sees more detailed coverage in her monograph *Kitchener: The Man Not the Myth*, published earlier in 2020. She draws too on her wider research into the African experience of the conflict and provides an intriguing account of those who served but, crucially, from a non-European background. Dr Samson ends by revealing the carving up of Africa at Versailles to be what it was: the imperialist European powers garnering what they thought to be the spoils of war, though they did so, admittedly, with a degree of local collusion.

Our third article continues Clyde Binfield's study of Nonconformist architecture. Here the discussion proceeds to how Congregationalists came under the influence of scientific approaches and especially the fascination with, if not wholesale acceptance of, the theory of evolution. It demonstrates the confidence felt by many that advances in science demonstrated the inevitability of progress and that this was compatible with their understanding of Christian faith. While such an approach appeared "relevant" at the time, it might seem somewhat naïve today. The article then turns to consider the work of Congregationalist, artist and author Josiah Gilbert who, unlike the advocates of "science", appreciated "art" but tempered his thoughts as a result of loyalty to the authority of Scripture. The final instalment will appear in the next issue of the *Journal*.

I am grateful to our contributors as well as to our reviewers, and we welcome Professor Alison Shell of University College London to the reviews pages.

## BETWEEN EAST AND WEST: THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH AND ITS CONTACTS WITH THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC<sup>1</sup>

The year 2020 marked the thirtieth anniversary of German unification, which brought to an end the existence of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as the “first workers’ and peasants’ state on German soil”, ruled for four decades by the communist Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). The GDR was unique in Eastern Europe in that it was the only state in which a Marxist-Leninist regime faced a historically-dominant Protestant church, with the territories making up the GDR being the heartland of the Lutheran Reformation. The GDR Protestant churches were also unique in Eastern Europe in the extent and depth of their international ecumenical contacts and relationships, playing an active and prominent role in the commissions and governing bodies of the World Council of Churches (WCC). A highpoint for the international ecumenical activities of the Protestant churches was the five-hundredth anniversary in 1983 of the birth of Martin Luther. This was an opportunity for the state to celebrate the Protestant Reformer as a “great son of the German people”, and for the Protestant church to host guests and visitors from churches around the world. The church’s Luther commemoration included services, concerts, visits to local churches, and lectures, “perhaps rather too many for an Anglo-Saxon”, noted one of the guests, Boris Anderson, who had just retired as departmental secretary of the World Church and Mission (WCM) department of the United Reformed Church (URC) in the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

Boris Anderson’s participation in the celebrations was one example of the steady stream of visits and contacts throughout the 1980s in both directions between the URC and the GDR. Shortly before the Luther celebrations, the moderator of the URC’s Thames North province, Michael Davies, visited the Protestant church headquarters in East Berlin, as part of his sabbatical study into the church in the city. Earlier in the year, David Thompson of Cambridge represented the URC at an ecumenical consultation on peace in the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt where Luther had trained. In January 1984, Donald Elliott, Boris Anderson’s successor as WCM departmental secretary, chose to visit the GDR as one of the first of his official engagements, followed later in the year by Philip Morgan, general secretary of the British Council of Churches, on an official visit in his capacity as moderator of the URC General Assembly. There were short visits, and longer

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- 1 This article is based on research conducted in 2019 at the Ecclesiastical Central Archive in Berlin (*Evangelisches Zentralarchiv* hereafter EZA). I would like to thank Frau Christa Gregel for generously taking time to discuss the ECU’s relationships with the URC. Unfortunately the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic prevented follow up archival research in 2020 in the UK and Germany.
  - 2 Boris Anderson, “Two weeks in East Germany, 7–20 November 1983. A report to the World Church and Mission Department”, EZA 8/1140.

scholarships.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps no other church in the UK developed such an extensive network of contacts with the GDR in the 1980s, exchanges not only – and not primarily – at the level of church leaders, but of pastors and ministers, lay people, and younger people.

Through the links developed since 1947 between the Congregational Union and the Evangelical Church of the Palatinate, the URC already had a partnership with a church in West Germany.<sup>4</sup> Yet the contacts between the URC and the GDR were anything but obvious. The URC was formed in 1972 through the union of the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church in England and Wales (and then in 1981 with the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ) and belonged to the English Nonconformist tradition, which had historically grown outside and, at times, in opposition to the established Church of England.

In the GDR, where, as in Germany as a whole, the main Protestant churches are organised on a regional or territorial basis, the URC's partner was the Evangelical Church of the Union (EKU). This was the direct descendant of the Church of the Old Prussian Union, the largest and most powerful of the German territorial churches, and which symbolised the alliance between "throne and altar", having been formed in 1817 by Frederick William III of Prussia to bring together the Lutheran and Reformed confessions in his territory. Following the Second World War, the EKU lost the adjective "Prussian", and its church provinces became territorial churches in their own right, but the EKU remained an umbrella for its constituent churches in the whole of Germany, though organised from 1972 into separate regions for the West and for the East.

How did it come about that such a dense network of relationships developed between the URC and the EKU, despite their very different historical, cultural, and political contexts, and what significance did these contacts have for the respective churches? This article will set out the background against which these contacts developed, some of the main issues that developed in the relationship, and insights from the participants in the exchange. It will be argued that while the relationship developed against the background of international and theological ecumenism, the phrase that best encapsulates the relationship is that of "pastoral ecumenism". Finally, it will highlight the importance of friendship for ecumenical relationships.

### I: International Ecumenism

The relationship between the URC and the EKU needs to be seen in the wider context of the ecumenical relationships of the GDR Protestant churches: historical, cultural, theological, and political. *Historical* in that throughout the

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3 I was a beneficiary of one of those scholarships, spending 1983 to 1984 in East Berlin at the Theology department of the Humboldt University of Berlin. In return, a lecturer from a GDR theological seminary spent a year at Westminster College, Cambridge.

4 See John Reardon, *Together Met, Together Bound: Fifty Years of Partnership between the United Reformed Church and the Evangelical Church of the Palatinate* (London: United Reformed Church, 2007).

twentieth century, German Protestantism was closely connected to the ecumenical movement – one need think only of the Confessing Church in the 1930s or the 1945 Stuttgart Confession of Guilt to a WCC delegation that brought the German churches back into the ecumenical fellowship; *cultural*, because with their parliamentary decision-making and Protestant structures, the Protestant churches in the GDR were closer to the prevailing culture of the WCC than many other churches from Eastern Europe; *theological*, not least linked to the efforts that led to the 1973 Leuenberg Agreement to create ecclesial communion, or “church fellowship”, between Lutheran, Reformed and United churches in Europe and which had a direct implication for the German churches, which until then, as confessionally distinct Lutheran, United and Reformed communities, were unable to share communion together.

There was also a *political* dimension. Following the Second World War, all German Protestant territorial churches, East and West, formed part of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). As time went on, and especially after the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, it became increasingly difficult to maintain an all-German structure that covered the whole of Germany. As a result, in June 1969 the eight regional churches within the territory of the GDR formed their own Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR (*Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR*, or *Kirchenbund*) to represent their interests vis-à-vis the GDR authorities and to strengthen their “witness and service” in the socialist society of the GDR. At the same time, the GDR Protestant churches now had a structure through which they could develop their own international ecumenical relations. Contacts with the WCC in Geneva were a priority, but there were also bilateral contacts with churches in other countries. The first foreign delegation to visit the newly founded Federation came from the British Council of Churches (BCC),<sup>5</sup> in December 1969.<sup>6</sup> This was followed by a return visit from the GDR to Britain the following year, and in November 1972, the senior leader of the *Kirchenbund*, Bishop Albrecht Schönherr, who had been a student of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was invited to stand alongside the Queen Mother at the Act of Remembrance<sup>7</sup> as well

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5 Much of the impetus in Britain for the development of relations with the GDR came from Paul Oestreicher, born in Meiningen in 1931 in what would become the GDR. Emigrating as an eight-year old to New Zealand with his family in 1938, he would, after the war, train as an Anglican priest in England. In 1964, he joined the newly formed International Affairs department of the British Council of Churches as assistant secretary with responsibility for Eastern Europe, setting up the BCC East–West Relations Advisory Committee. A member of the Committee for the Diplomatic Recognition of the GDR, he would steer the Eastern European relationships of the BCC in various capacities for more than twenty years until 1986.

6 See Martin Conway’s “Report on a visit to the Churches of the German Democratic Republic, December 4th–15th, 1969”, EZA 101/1438: “A particular political significance arose from the fact that we were the first foreign delegation to be received by the new Federation. This ought to have made us slightly more popular and welcome with the regime, since the establishment of the Federation, and independence from the previous all-German body, was a step they had been pressing for some time”.

7 *Keston Newsletter*, No. 10 (2009), p. 13.

as being received by the Queen and the prime minister, Edward Heath.<sup>8</sup> In a sense, this visit symbolised the search for reconciliation between wartime enemies transposed onto the search for reconciliation between East and West at the time of the Cold War,<sup>9</sup> something that would continue to mark the contacts between churches in Britain and in the GDR.

One of the GDR church officials who took part in the early visits to Britain was Christa Gregel, at that time responsible in the *Kirchenbund* for issues related to congregational life. In early 1973, she spent three weeks on a study visit to the Church of England, something that attracted attention in the British media because it coincided with the establishment of diplomatic relations between Britain and the GDR, and because of a young, ordained woman preaching in an Anglican church, given that the Church of England, at that time, did not ordain women to the priesthood.<sup>10</sup> Several years later she was invited to give the Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham, and then, in 1981–1982 spent a sabbatical visit to Britain to study the process of Covenanting between the Church of England, the URC, the Methodist Church and the Moravian Church, spending part of this time hosted at Westminster College, the URC's theological college in Cambridge. She would become one of the experts in the GDR on relationships with British churches and a key figure in East Berlin for developing the relationship with the URC.

## II: Theological Ecumenism

If such “international ecumenism” was one of the sources for the development of relationships between the URC and the churches in the GDR, another might be described as “theological ecumenism”. As noted earlier, Protestantism in Germany is organised along regional or territorial lines, the borders of the churches often corresponding to the historical patchwork of kingdoms and dukedoms that marked the German realm. Each territorial church was organised along confessional lines. While many were Lutheran, others were United, in which Lutheran and Reformed confessions both were recognised.<sup>11</sup> There was, however, no sharing of communion (*Abendmahlsgemeinschaft*) between the Lutheran, United and Reformed churches, because of mutual condemnations and theological differences going back to the Reformation era. When the *Kirchenbund* was founded in 1969, it described itself for this reason quite deliberately as a “federation” and not a

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8 Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR, 1949–1990* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1990), pp. 195–196.

9 This was followed by visits in the other direction by the archbishops of Canterbury in 1974 (Michael Ramsey), 1979 (Donald Coggan), and in 1983 for the Luther anniversary (Robert Runcie).

10 *The Times* newspaper carried a large photograph of the then 33-year-old Christa Gregel, a “woman pastor from East Germany, who arrived in Britain on Saturday for a three-week tour of Church of England parishes and centres and to attend the General Synod”. *The Times* (19 February 1973).

11 In West Germany there were also Reformed territorial churches in Northwest Germany and Lippe.

“church”. Three of its constituent territorial churches were Lutheran and grouped in the United Evangelical-Lutheran Church (VELK) in the GDR; the other five were “united” churches, for which the EKU provided the umbrella. There was however a clear intention to overcome the existence of three separate but related church groupings – the *Kirchenbund*, the VELK, and the EKU – and to work towards a single United Protestant Church in the GDR grouping the eight territorial churches.<sup>12</sup> A doctrinal commission was set up in 1969 to examine the theological differences between Lutherans and Reformed, but these discussions were soon subsumed into the wider European discussions to create church fellowship between Lutheran, Reformed and United churches throughout Europe that culminated in the Leuenberg Agreement of 1973.<sup>13</sup> With the accession to the Leuenberg Agreement, the churches in the GDR were in church fellowship not only with each other but also with the other signatory churches, which included the URC. This common experience of the Leuenberg process would provide a basis on which the relationship between the URC and the EKU could build.

### III: Pastoral Ecumenism

The relationship between the URC and the EKU owed much to such international and theological ecumenism. The international ecumenical relationships of the *Kirchenbund* provided the framework for wider-ranging contacts, while the theological ecumenism that led to the Leuenberg Agreement and to consultations organised by the WCC of United and Uniting churches offered the URC and the EKU an awareness of belonging to the same “family” of churches, despite their very different histories, ecclesiologies and social contexts. Yet the relationship that developed between the URC and the EKU does not fall neatly into the categories of either international ecumenism or theological ecumenism. The visits were neither primarily those of church leaders (though church leaders did take part), nor focused on significant political developments, nor theological encounters in the strict sense. Rather the relationship might best be described as forming part of “pastoral ecumenism”: the delegations were made up of pastors and ministers, superintendents and district secretaries, active lay people (where possible from the GDR side, as it was always more difficult to get exit visas for lay people rather than pastors or church officials), and sometimes, younger people as well (though that could be even more difficult than getting visas for older lay people). While they sometimes included “official” duties such as attending an EKU Synod or

12 The constitution (*Grundordnung*) of the *Kirchenbund* stated explicitly that the aim of the Federation was to “deepen the fellowship and cooperation” of the regional churches and to “grow together in unity and common purpose (*Gemeinsamkeit*) according to the mandate of the Lord Jesus Christ”. Peter Beier, “*Kirchwerdung*” im Zeichen der deutschen Teilung: die Verfassungsreformen von EKD und BEK als Anfrage an ihre “besondere Gemeinschaft” (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), p. 151.

13 See Michael Beinker, “The Theological Outcome and the Lasting Significance of the Doctrinal Conversations in the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR”, *Ecumenical Review*, 59:2–3 (April–July 2007), pp. 315–52.

a URC General Assembly, they were structured in order to include a maximum of contact with congregations, pastors and lay people. The programmes were organised to allow as much exposure to local church life as possible; members of the delegations stayed with church members and only rarely in hotels, except perhaps at the beginning or the end of the visit.

As mentioned earlier, the EKU considered itself to be a single church covering the whole of Germany, but organised into two regions – the GDR (Eastern) region, and the (Western) region covering the Federal Republic and West Berlin. The initial contacts of the URC were with the western region of the Evangelical Church of the Union, but in 1978, a delegation from the GDR region was travelling to the Church of Scotland, and it was suggested the delegation should also visit the URC offices of their Leuenberg partner in London. This led to an invitation to Robert Latham, departmental secretary for Church Life and moderator-elect of the URC General Assembly, to attend the EKU Synod the same year. This was then followed by the practice of a regular exchange of delegations between the URC and the EKU in the GDR, in alternating years.

There were twin EKU structures in East and West – Synod, Council, and Presidium – but monthly meetings of the council members from the two regions, which had to take place in East Berlin, with the western members travelling over each day from West Berlin on day visas. There were also two ecumenical officers: Reinhard Groscurth in West Berlin, from 1969 to 1994, and Christa Gregel, who served in East Berlin from 1977 until the GDR church structures were wound up into their Western counterparts after German unification in 1990.

Reinhard Groscurth and Christa Gregel have described how they worked closely together, with Groscurth bringing matters for discussion over the border from West to East Berlin written as keywords on squares of paper in his breast pocket, so as to have as few documents on him as possible, in case he was stopped and checked by border officials. Three pipes and a packet of tobacco in his briefcase often provided enough interest for customs officials who then gave only a cursory glance at the rest of the contents.<sup>14</sup>

For partners such as the URC, Reinhard Groscurth and the EKU offices in West Berlin, Jebenstrasse 3, served as a bridge to the East. Correspondence intended for Christa Gregel or other church officials in the East could be sent to Reinhard Groscurth who would then take the letters over the border – quicker than sending directly to East Berlin, if they arrived at all and were not opened by the Stasi state security service en route.<sup>15</sup> He would welcome and brief delegations to the GDR before they travelled on the S-Bahn suburban train to Friedrichstrasse station

14 Christa Gregel, Reinhard Groscurth, “Von ‘J’ nach ‘A’ – von ‘A’ nach ‘J’ – Ein Beispiel für das alltägliche Miteinander der Kirchen in Ost und West”, in Hans Joachim Rieseberg and Dieter Winkler (eds), *Brücken über der Mauer* (Ueckerland: Schibri-Verlag, 2011), pp. 137–53. The letters “J” and “A” refer to the EKU offices in West Berlin (Jebenstrasse) and East Berlin (Auguststrasse).

15 In the archives I found a letter I sent to Reinhard Groscurth in June 1983 with documents about my forthcoming studies in the GDR to be passed on to East Berlin. Brown to Groscurth, 11 June 1983, EZA 8/1140.

to cross the border into East Berlin. And he was an East–West “interpreter”, explaining things that could not be put into writing, or offering important supplementary information.

By 1983, the relationship between the URC and the EKU had become firmly established. Reinhard Groscurth noted after a meeting in London with Boris Anderson, that “He was keenly interested in the relationships continuing with the EKU, especially, but not only with the GDR region, also after his departure. On the URC side, everything has been put in place. He was extremely happy that it had been possible to focus on the ‘middle-level’. The exchange participants that had come from the GDR ... had left a great impression”.<sup>16</sup> During this visit, Reinhard Groscurth also met Geoffrey Beck, one of the URC’s pioneers in East–West work from his time as warden of the Chapel of Unity at Coventry Cathedral. “He looks almost exactly like Richard von Weizsäcker”, the West German president, Groscurth noted.

One of the first letters sent by Donald Elliott, Boris Anderson’s successor, was to Reinhard Groscurth.<sup>17</sup> “It has been urged upon me”, he wrote in September 1983, “that I make early contact with you, and with Frau Christa Gregel in East Berlin”. He added, “We regard our contacts with you as very precious and important, and long to see how we might deepen and extend the fellowship and mutual learning”.<sup>18</sup> This led to a visit to the GDR in January 1984. Elliott returned with “a very strong desire to assist the developing relationship between our Churches. I feel that we have so much to learn from you, but I also feel that the relationship is a healthy one in that I believe we may be of some service to you as well”.<sup>19</sup>

Elliott’s report offers an insight into URC–EKU relationships at that time, as well as more general reflections on the situation in the GDR. West Berlin was “bright and brash (a superficial glance)”; East Berlin “solid, sober recovery, the feel of the 1950s, the omni-present wall creating a feeling of cut-off and a psychological pressure”; the church in the GDR (“‘East Germany’ not liked as a name”), “patient, open-hearted, careful, heavily reliant on ministers. Large, impressive machine, operated by a smallish dedicated bureaucracy, privileged position in state (‘but don’t tickle the lion!’); Bearer of German heritage. Structure of diaconal care (hospitals, special agencies for the handicapped)”.

The URC was appreciated as a partner, Donald Elliott wrote, for a number of reasons: “a Western church of modest proportions set in a country whose standard of living is similar to that of the GDR; a church engaged in the struggle for peace; a United church with a rather low confessional profile; a church without monarchical

16 EZA 8/1140.

17 This followed a strong recommendation from David Thompson, who had attended a consultation on peace issues between the EKU and its partner church in the United States, the United Church of Christ (UCC), in June 1983, for Elliott to visit Berlin as soon as convenient. Christa Gregel, he reported, is anxious to encourage a dialogue between the EKU and the URC. See David M. Thompson, “Report an UCC-EKU Consultation held at Erfurt, DDR, 12–17 June 1983”, EZA 8/1140.

18 Letter Elliott to Groscurth, 23 September 1983, EZA 8/1140.

19 Letter Elliott to Groscurth and Gregel, 20 January 1984, EZA 8/1140.

episcopacy and with a strong conciliar framework; an open church, concerned to care for all in society regardless of commitment to worship".<sup>20</sup>

Practical matters discussed during Elliott's five-day visit to the GDR included the projected visit to the GDR of the moderator of the General Assembly, Philip Morgan (a protocol issue as he was also general secretary of the British Council of Churches);<sup>21</sup> an invitation for the URC to send a representative to the EKU synod; a request for URC participants to an ecumenical study course for pastors in the Berlin-Brandenburg church and EKU participants for the theological consultation the URC was organising with its West German partner church from the Palatinate, four issues stand out.

The first was a request for a URC representative to serve on the *Kuratorium* (Board) of the *Predigerseminar* or pastoral seminary in Wittenberg, an institution for pastors in training following academic studies and before ordination. This was an attempt to develop long-term relationships between the URC and the EKU going beyond short-term reciprocal delegations.

The second was a request as to whether the URC could help with English-language training at Selly Oak for a GDR couple whom the EKU wished to send as missionaries to India; the GDR authorities had previously refused visas for overseas mission work on the grounds that it was imperialistic activity, but the EKU now wished to test this attitude. After much correspondence, the idea was eventually dropped when the GDR reaffirmed its stance on exit visas. That it could be considered, however, showed something of the creativity in ecumenical relationships in the 1980s.

The third issue was finding a way to celebrate the full intercommunion that existed between the EKU and the URC as signatories to the Leuenberg Agreement. The EKU had assumed that this existed already through the Agreement, "but some of their Lutheran partners have suggested that it is only preparation for full inter-communion and that a further step or declaration is needed". Eventually it was agreed that during his moderatorial visit to the GDR, Philip Morgan would concelebrate the Eucharist at the church of St Peter and Paul in Görlitz with Bishop Hanns-Joachim Wollstadt of Görlitz, the president of the EKU council: "This was a little strange to both our traditions", Philip Morgan commented in his report, "and so we had invented an appropriate liturgical form the previous evening!"<sup>22</sup>

The fourth issue, that of congregational and District links between the URC and the EKU, was one that would continue throughout the 1980s. The URC delegations visiting the GDR, and the EKU delegations visiting Britain, spent much of their time with local churches and Districts, getting to know local church life and staying with ministers and lay people.

Often both the receiving churches and the visitors wished to continue the relationship. Leeds District had already created a partnership with the Falkensee

20 "Departmental Secretary's Visit to EKU, 11-16 January 1984", EZA 8/1140.

21 See the letter from Gregel to the State Secretary for Church Affairs, 11 April 1984, EZA 8/1140.

22 "Assembly Moderator's Visit to the GDR", 14 September 1984, EZA 8/1141.

District in Berlin-Brandenburg in 1981. In 1984, Robin Hodgkin from the Cheshire District and Upton-by-Chester URC brought back to Britain 16 names of pastors in the GDR wishing for links with the URC.<sup>23</sup> Another member of the same delegation, Geoffrey Beck, noted in his report that many GDR parishes had their own links with a West German parish, and quite a few with the Netherlands. "What about the URC? These could be a parallel to the relationships that some of our churches already have with the Rhineland-Palatinate?"<sup>24</sup>

Such exchanges were "desired and appreciated", Donald Elliott noted in the report of his visit to the GDR. Yet the number of exit visas for members of the EKU was strictly limited, and these were even more difficult to obtain for lay people unless they held an official church position of some kind. And entry visas for URC delegations had to be negotiated with the state secretary for church affairs, usually several months in advance. Sometimes, invitations bypassed the official protocol, as when Upton-by-Chester, whose church secretary had been part of the URC delegation to the GDR in 1984, wrote directly to Christa Gregel to invite the pastor of the church in Potsdam-Babelsberg to the Mersey Province "Celebration Day" in 1986.<sup>25</sup> The Upton-by-Chester congregation would later organize their own five-person trip – as tourists – to the church in Potsdam-Babelsberg.

Official exchange visits at a congregational level, however, were much more difficult to organise, unless those taking part belonged to one of the "official" URC or EKU delegations: but might priority be given to widening the number of people who could travel by spreading out opportunities among the five member churches of the EKU in the GDR, or helping to strengthen and support developing congregational or district relationships?

The answer, of course, was to try and do both, to juggle the delegations to include "partners" as well as widening the numbers of those involved. There was also a steady stream of requests from URC local churches for partners in the GDR.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the church secretary of St Peter's Hill URC in Grantham wrote directly to Christa Gregel at the end of 1984, (having received the contact details via Philip Morgan), asking to be put in touch with a church in the GDR. Christa Gregel's response was to suggest to Donald Elliott that someone from the church be included on a future delegation so that they could make their own contacts.<sup>27</sup> In early 1986,

23 Geoffrey Beck, "Relationships between URC in the UK and the EKU in the DDR. Some Proposals and Problems", January 1985, EZA 8/1141.

24 Geoffrey Beck, "Report of URC delegation to EKU in DDR (German Democratic Republic). Aug. 27–Sept. 9 1984", EZA 8/1141.

25 Hodgkins to Gregel, EZA 108/1210.

26 A meeting of the senior EKU staff from the two EKU regions noted in 1988 the increasing number of invitations from the URC relating to partner congregations, that so far all were in Berlin-Brandenburg and that a discussion with the Berlin-Brandenburg church was needed. See the extract of the minutes of the "Gemeinsame Beratung der Kollegien der EKU – Bereich DDR – sowie – Bereich Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Berlin-West", 26 April 1988, EZA 108/1211.

27 Rosemarie Anderson to Gregel, 19 December 1984, (see Gregel's handwritten comment) EZA 108/1210.

the secretary of Broadstairs and Margate URC, who had just visited the GDR as part of a tourist group, wrote (in German) to the chairperson of the Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR asking to be put in touch with a congregation in the GDR. There were other, possibly more surprising requests: URC youth in the Portsmouth District wished to visit the GDR in a minibus, something difficult for the EKU to accommodate, who suggested instead that the group try and get tourist visas for campsites from the state youth travel organisation.

There was also sensitivity concerning the URC's long-standing relationship with the Palatinate in West Germany. While the Palatinate is a United Church, it was not a member of the EKU, although its partner church in the GDR, Anhalt, had joined the EKU in 1960. URC churches and members with contacts with churches in the Palatinate often wished to extend these relationships with partner congregations in Anhalt – thus Purley URC had a link to Dessau through its partnership in the Palatinate. Yet it was difficult for the EKU to give special attention to Anhalt compared to its other member churches when it came to selecting delegates or representatives to travel to Britain – and the GDR authorities were also nervous about official “trilateral” relations involving both the Federal Republic, and the GDR.<sup>28</sup> In April 1985, David Thompson from Emmanuel URC, Cambridge, wrote to Reinhard Groscurth following a discussion at Bossey about developing a link with a congregation in East Germany, noting that the church's existing partner, the Stiftskirche in Landau was linked to the Johannes-Mariengemeinde in Dessau – the Landau pastor provided the name of his counterpart in Dessau, while advising against any mention of Landau in correspondence.<sup>29</sup> Happily, the Dessau church responded positively to the request.<sup>30</sup>

In subsequent years, there were attempts to widen the scope of visits from the EKU to the GDR. The United Nations International Youth Year in 1985 which was being marked by the URC with the “Connect 85” youth event in Coventry offered an opportunity to try and include two younger representatives from the EKU on the delegation to Britain,<sup>31</sup> not least because the connection to the United Nations could be used as a reason for the visa application. Also from 1985, there were regular participants from the EKU at the annual Council for World Mission Conference (CWM) in Swanwick; once participation was established on a continuing basis, applying for exit visas became more of a routine matter as far as the GDR authorities were concerned. Indeed, the involvement of EKU representatives at the Conference led to the suggestion by Donald Elliott to Christa Gregel that the EKU might consider joining the Council for World Mission: “CWM tends to be a British Commonwealth family of churches, although it now embraces Taiwan, Madagascar and the Netherlands! From the point of view of CWM, I feel it would

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28 “As soon as the GDR government discovers something about ‘tri-lateral’ contacts, it becomes somewhat difficult, and therefore it is questionable whether it is wise to try it”, Groscurth to Joy Button (assistant to Donald Elliott), 23 March 1988, EZA 108/1211.

29 Thompson to Groscurth, 1 April 1985, EZA 108/1210.

30 Radeloff to Groscurth, 28 April 1985, EZA 8 / 1141 – somewhat curiously Pastor Alfred Radeloff wrote to Reinhard Groscurth in West Berlin.

31 Elliott to Gregel and Groscurth, 24 January 1985, EZA 8/1141; 108/1210.

be a great advantage if there was insight within it from Germany, the Socialist world and the Lutheran world. The EKU supplies all three!"<sup>32</sup> Plans were developed for visits of theological teachers from the GDR to URC colleges, though they never came to fruition because of the events that would lead to the end of the GDR, while Christa Gregel and Reinhard Groscurth took part in successive meetings of the central committee of the WCM Department in late 1986 and 1987.

Another area in which the URC-EKU relationship played a role was that of an "early warning system" about wider ecumenical developments. Thus in April 1986, Reinhard Groscurth wrote to Donald Elliott on his behalf and that of Christa Gregel to inform him, informally, that the Church of England and the German churches (East and West) were planning a consultation in February 1987 on closer relationships (which would eventually lead to the Meissen Agreement). Groscurth said that they had made it quite clear that they hoped the Church of England would invite a URC representative to the consultation: "Of course, we are not the hosts, but I hope this will fall into fertile soil. After all, your contacts with the Pfalz and with the EKU are of such importance that you should know what is going on ... The common Leuenberg foundation should mean that we at least inform each other on these points".<sup>33</sup> Donald Elliott wrote back a week later to say that the URC had now also heard from its "friends in the Pfalz" about the proposal. The URC would want to accept any invitation, he wrote but "we would also like to know what is the agenda". If it was part of the Anglican/Lutheran conversation, he wrote, "is the Church of England aware that the Evangelical Church in Germany includes substantial Reformed and United constituents? (Sometimes our Anglican friends have to be educated a little!)".<sup>34</sup>

#### IV: Reciprocal Impressions

Reports from delegation members to the URC and the EKU offer an insight into how the two churches and countries were perceived. One of the EKU participants was impressed with the intergenerational activities and the family services at the CWM Conference in 1985. "Meeting so many people from so many congregations from Britain and overseas was certainly the best way to get to know Christians in England", he wrote. Nevertheless, he confessed to be taken aback when he was asked to say something in a plenary session about the "13th August 1961" – a reference to the building of the Berlin Wall – "and I had to respond in English without any preparation".<sup>35</sup>

Dietrich Franke, a district superintendent from Zerbst in Anhalt was surprised that the URC appeared to bear no resemblance at all to the "small and poor" church he had heard described before his departure. To his question, how many members do you have in your church, he mostly received the reply 150 or 200.

32 Elliott to Gregel, 16 July 1986, EZA 108/1210.

33 Groscurth to Elliott, 14 April 1986, EZA 8/1141.

34 Elliott to Groscurth, 21 April 1985, EZA 8/1141.

35 Letter to Gregel, 26 August 1985, EZA 108/1210.

How many take part in the services – “100, 150, or 180” in the mornings and “60, 80 or 100” in the evenings. Cultural differences played a role in these different perceptions. Franke noted, since in the GDR, only between 0.5 per cent and 3 per cent of the members took part in worship. “I discovered a very lively ‘small’ church, a church that lives from the gospel as far as the individual is concerned”, he wrote. As for the description “poor”, he had encountered mostly people from the middle and upper middle classes (he was visiting Bromley), “a church of well off, often very well off people, who were prepared not only to offer their time, but also their money to the congregation”.<sup>36</sup> Franke appreciated the role of elders in worship, and gathering for prayer in the vestry before the service – but was very surprised at the individual communion glasses, especially when the main cup on the communion table was left empty. “Everything has its limits”. Attending a meeting of the provincial Synod, Franke was impressed by the way in which business was dealt with in only six hours, even given the same controversial issues such as money and political involvement as in the GDR. He was struck by the political involvement he experienced, such as the “Fight World Poverty” mass lobby of parliament organized by the World Development Movement, and an ecumenical event on “Peace in a Broken World”, with representatives of all churches, including the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand, it seemed that “people know what is happening in the world, in Hong Kong, Taiwan or wherever. But only a handful of people know where the German Democratic Republic is, and what its churches are like. Insofar the exchange programme is an incredible opportunity for communication and information”. There was a postscript to this visit. At the beginning of 1986, Franke received a letter from Eric Allen, now secretary for world mission in Bromley District, stating that the District Council had resolved “to create a link with the church district of Zerbst ... It sends greetings to Superintendent Franke, who helped to create this link through his recent visit, his personal enthusiasm, and his friendship”.<sup>37</sup>

One of the younger members of the same delegation, who took part in the “Connect 85” meeting in Coventry, was also impressed by the role of the elders – especially the elders’ districts and the way that elders became the contact people between church members and the ministers – as well as the social involvement of churches, such as a rehabilitation centre for drug-dependent women in Bournemouth (although the family she was staying with seemed to know next to nothing about this programme).<sup>38</sup> She was disappointed not to have been invited to speak at the main youth event “Connect 85” at Coventry Cathedral; “we turned out only to be onlookers”. However, the EKU representatives had to answer many, many questions in churches and at evening events, “including many that showed what a distorted picture people have of the GDR. But above all this visit contributed

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36 Dietrich Franke, “Bericht über das Austauschprogramm mit der United Reformed Church”, 14 November 1985, EZA 108/1210.

37 Franke to Landeskirchenrat (regional church headquarters), 16 January [1986], EZA 108/1210 (letter was wrongly dated 1985).

38 “Bericht über den Besuch der URC in Grossbritannien”, EZA 108/1210.

that we were all able to correct the wrong ideas we had about each other. I had to jettison my clichés of the reserved English. I was deeply impressed by the warmth, openness and tolerance of the people whom we met”.

The URC delegates, too, referred to the welcome they received from their GDR hosts. Writing after the 1984 URC delegation to the GDR, Geoffrey Beck described how the URC visitors stayed in the homes of ministers and church members, “whose generous hospitality for ‘special guests’ hid some of the shopping problems of daily life”. Meeting all kinds of groups in local congregations – children, young people, confirmation classes, church councils, women’s groups, church workers, and choirs – “made us increasingly aware of the pressures foreign to us with which Christians of all ages have to cope in the GDR”.<sup>39</sup> These included political indoctrination which began with school books for the youngest children; and various manifestations of military training in schools and apprenticeships, as well as the need for the Christian peace movement to remain within church premises, “even though young Christians especially show ingenuity in trying to get round the rules”. “We are all most grateful”, he concluded, “for this experience of the *oikoumene* – it has been rich, inspiring and humbling”.

One of the URC groups on the 1986 delegation was even able to visit a school, something that would normally be politically taboo. After the head of an agricultural production cooperative the group was visiting discovered that one of the British guests was a teacher, he arranged for them to visit a Kindergarten, and later a state school, where they had an hour-and-a-half meeting with the head teacher and two of his staff. “This latter event is, apparently, almost unknown, and felt by some to evidence that a slight easing of restrictions has come about since the advent of Mr. Gorbachev”.<sup>40</sup> They came away with the impression that in the villages – “and there are many, many, villages” – the church building is seen as a symbol for all religious life, and it is essential to keep it in good repair. “We had the impression that villagers wanted their Church and their pastor there, even if they did not always, or ever, show active support”. A disturbing aspect, however, “was that some Pastors seemed lacking in hope for the future ... However, we said we were encouraged by the many signs of life we had seen, and that we felt that because the Church was the only organisation witnessing to the truth, it would outlast the present environment, even though this might take a long time”.

This visit in November 1986 coincided with the annual *Friedensdekade* in the GDR churches. This was a ten-day period instituted in 1980 for activities related to peace, and the origin of the “Swords into Ploughshares” patch that became the symbol for an autonomous peace movement in the GDR. While its themes and materials might be organised centrally, wrote John Humphreys in his report, the *Friedensdekade* “belonged to the congregations. There was an obvious, active and informed involvement of church members. At the end of a very simple moving communion service the congregation were asked to write one sentence prayers for

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39 Geoffrey Beck, “Report of URC delegation to EKU in DDR (German Democratic Republic), Aug. 27–Sept. 9 1984”, EZA 8/1141.

40 Letter Donaldson to Elliott, 25 November 1986, EZA 108/1210.

peace which were then read out – a great depth of feeling and understanding came through in these short prayers”.<sup>41</sup>

It was impossible to escape the political dimensions of the exchanges, as John Humphreys’s report indicates. Reference has already been made to the GDR visitor to the Council for World Mission Conference who, probably somewhat uncomfortably, was asked to speak about the Berlin Wall. URC moderator Philip Morgan noted how when travelling around the GDR it was impossible to avoid “the massive presence of Russian troops, encountered in frequent tank movements in vast tracks of land restricted to their use”.<sup>42</sup> There were questions about the situation of Christians in both countries, issues of peace and conscientious objection, government policies in the UK, (this was the era of Margaret Thatcher), and about the situation in Northern Ireland.

Boris Anderson, reporting on his visit to the GDR in November 1983 for the Luther celebrations and after describing many positive aspects of the GDR, referred to restrictions on the expression of opinion, on children’s education, and of travel outside the country: “The wall itself, with all its paraphernalia of watch towers, barbed wire and dogs is a symbol, and a very unpleasant one, of the fear in official circles that people will be tempted away by the lure of West German prosperity. Citizens of the GDR can see West Germany, indeed, as its TV reaches to almost every part of the GDR and is normally watched daily, but they cannot touch”, he wrote. “One wonders for how long this can continue”.

By 1988, the internal situation in the GDR had deteriorated to the extent that the GDR authorities embarked on a wave of arrests of peace and human rights activists, and would-be emigrants, leading to protests throughout the GDR as churches filled with people demanding the release of those imprisoned (a forewarning of the protests that would erupt in autumn 1989). This led to one of the few examples of explicitly political issues impinging on the URC–EKU relationship. Donald Elliott wrote to Reinhard Groscurth asking how partner churches should react to the events, and whether the URC should consider issuing a statement. Groscurth responded by saying that it helped if the state knew that its actions were being observed internationally: “The hard-liners in the Central Committee of the party seemingly were surprised by so negative reports in the papers”. On the other hand, the West German churches had taken a decision not to criticise the developments publically, as long as the churches in the GDR were able to speak for themselves. But it was always appreciated when there were well-informed visitors. “Personal contacts are still of great value”, Groscurth wrote, “much greater value than any declaration of a board or a committee”.<sup>43</sup>

At the beginning of 1989, Donald Elliott announced to his counterparts in East and West Berlin that he was taking on a position for mission in the newly formed Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland. “What ... courage to enter a new boat which has not yet been tested in the tempests of our time”, Reinhard Groscurth

41 “EKU-Friedensdekade-1986: Report, Themes and Reflections”, EZA 108/1210.

42 “Assembly Moderator’s Visit to the GDR”, 14 September 1984, EZA 8/1141.

43 Groscurth to Elliott, 7 March 1988, EZA 8/1141.

wrote back.<sup>44</sup> In fact, little did anyone have an inkling, even in February 1989, about the tempests of the times into which Europe as a whole, and the GDR in particular, were about to sail.

The last URC scholarship holder to the GDR was Jane Stranz,<sup>45</sup> a student from Mansfield College, Oxford, who arrived in the GDR for a year's study in August 1989, shortly before the mass protests that would bring down the ruling Socialist Unity Party, lead to the opening of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989, and then to German unification on 3 October 1990. This meant not only the end of the GDR, but would lead to the GDR church structures being wound up into the structures of their Western counterparts, bringing this chapter of relationships between the URC and the EKU to a close. Christa Grengel was transferred to the main offices of the Evangelical Church in Germany in Hanover, as director of its overseas department. Reinhard Groscurth retired in 1994.

### V: "A Quality of Love"

The relationship between the URC and the EKU developed at a specific time and in a specific context, demonstrating that despite walls and borders, it was still possible to create friendship and fellowship across the East-West divide. This was perhaps the greatest contribution of the contacts between the two churches – to offer pastors and ministers, church members and lay people, an insight into everyday life in a different political and church context, and what this meant for church life and mission. Looking through the reports of the visitors to the two churches, it is striking just how often they referred to the special quality of their experiences. "Since this was my first visit to the West", wrote one GDR participant in 1985, "I was able to experience very clearly how important and enriching it is that such possibilities for travel are becoming more normal. One feels very strongly that we live in the same world, that we belong together, that all places have both pleasing and problematic aspects".

In his report of the theological consultation between the EKU and the United Church of Christ in Erfurt in 1983, David Thompson wrote that he "found this the most moving and stimulating church experience overseas that I have had (the Uppsala Assembly of the WCC not excepted). I am sure this was partly because of the setting in East Germany".

The relationship between the URC and the EKU perhaps also demonstrates the underestimated importance of friendship in ecumenical relationships.<sup>46</sup> Genuine

44 Groscurth to Elliott, 8 February 1989, EZA 8/1141.

45 Letter Dunford to Grengel, 24 November 1988, EZA 108/1211.

46 In recent times, ecumenical theologians have paid greater attention to the role of friendship in nurturing ecumenical relationships. Thus the Catholic theologian Margaret O'Gara has written: "Ecumenical friendships provide a particularly intense experience of both the desire for unity and the foretaste of unity achieved. Perhaps this is the reason they are so effective in nurturing ecumenical perseverance". Quoted in Beate Bengard, *Rezeption und Anerkennung: Die ökumenische Hermeneutik von Paul Ricœur im Spiegel aktueller Dialogprozesse in Frankreich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), pp. 320–21.

friendships developed – between Christa Gregel and Reinhard Groscurth, with Boris Anderson and with Donald Elliott, but also between the tens of people at local, district and regional level who took part in the delegations, and the many more people that they met on their visits.

Writing to Reinhard Groscurth shortly before his retirement in 1983, Boris Anderson stated: “I think it is very important for someone in the office here to have personal friendships in the offices of sister churches. I am anxious that my successor will have the same sort of wonderful opportunity that I have had to get to know so many real brothers and sisters”.<sup>47</sup>

On his visit to the GDR after retirement, Boris Anderson and his wife, Clare, were able to meet, and stay with many of the people he had welcomed to the URC as secretary for World Church and Mission. “For Clare and myself our two weeks with the EKU were one of the most moving experiences of a lifetime tolerably crowded already with ‘similar’ visits. Since returning, we have tried to puzzle out why this should be so”. There was, he wrote “a quality of love which opened out with each new encounter and took us into its heart. And, further, it has seemed to us in talking with others from URC who have visited EKU, and from EKU who have visited URC, that our experience is not an isolated or unrepresentative one”.

The relationship between the EKU and the URC, he wrote, “still seems to me an unlikely one ... I won’t enlarge on the disparities of size and situation or in the sense of humbleness I feel when I hear of the value which EKU finds in this new friendship”, he continued. “But I cannot hold back my belief that Christ is in it and that something is happening – I’m not sure what – to which we must cling with faith and hope – and of course with love”.<sup>48</sup>

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47 Anderson to Groscurth, 27 April 1983, EZA 8/1140.

48 Boris Anderson, “Two weeks in East Germany, 7–20 November 1983. A report to the World Church and Mission Department”, EZA 8/1140.

## AFRICA, VERSAILLES AND RELIGION

The conclusion of fighting on 11 November 1918 was a step towards agreeing a peace to end the “war to end all wars”. While the world was, and still is, focused on what happened in Europe between 1914 and 1919, events in Africa played a significant, but almost invisible, role. To mark the centenary of the peace discussions, this paper considers the war in Africa and how it featured in the subsequent peace talks. It also provides a platform to explore the presence and contribution of religion to the African battlefield.<sup>1</sup>

### I: The Great War in Africa

The war in Africa was one of the longest lasting of all the conflicts of the First World War. There were four campaigns fought on the African continent, in Togoland (Togo) and Kamerun (Cameroons) in West Africa, German South West Africa (Namibia) and East Africa. Additional skirmishes, not deemed part of the Great War, occurred in Egypt, Somaliland, Ethiopia and Sudan. These last actions were struggles between the British government and local “nationalist” leaders which had started before 1914 and continued into the 1920s. On the day the British Expeditionary Force landed in France, on 12 August 1914, the first British rifle shot of the war was fired in Togoland, the first shot of the war having taken place on 8 August 1914 from a British cruiser against Dar es Salaam in today’s Tanzania. The Australians claim, however, that taking time differences into account, they fired the first shot at a German ship leaving port soon after the ultimatum expired at midnight on 4 August. In addition to these firsts, the first “naval battle” took place on Lake Nyasa (Malawi) when the German armed boat on the lake was further disabled in its dry dock, the captain of the boat being taken prisoner when he innocently thought his British counterpart was coming alongside for their annual drink. The East Africa campaign which saw fighting, and sadly some deaths three days after the armistice was signed in Europe, finally ended with the German force laying down its arms on 25 November 1918. The German commander, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, is regarded as the only undefeated German General of the Great War and the only German General to have occupied British territory, Taveta in Kenya from 15 August 1914 to February 1916 while he also invaded the northern part of today’s Mozambique, eventually laying down his arms in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), which he invaded twice during the war. In addition to the land war and the naval aspects, which included a blockade of the East African coast and the tracking down of the German cruiser which sank the first British Merchant ship of the war carrying the year’s first tea harvest, there was action in the air, and as with France, the home front was on occasion the

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1 Thanks to Peter Howson for introducing me to the contribution chaplains made to the Great War in East Africa. Dahlia Harrison, working on chaplains in the 1899-1902 southern Africa war, helped expand the field adding to the context while my own research for a project on the history of the Presbyterian Church in South Africa opened up the complexity of Empire service and the relationship between missionaries and chaplains.

battle field. The defining characteristic of the campaigns in Africa was the use of carriers, literally manpower to move goods as roads were scarce and animals suffered from diseases carried by tsetse, and other fly, dying within a month of being bitten. It is estimated that over one million carriers were involved in the East Africa campaign alone, of whom 95,000 died. Of the forces, armed and labour, it is estimated that there were 75 per cent losses through malaria, blackwater fever exacerbated by malnutrition and other illnesses. Losses directly attributable to the war were less than 10 per cent. Women and children were also caught up in the conflict, often used as casual labour as forces passed through the territory or in their role as camp followers. This position varied across the other theatres until the fighting there ended: in Togoland on 26 August 1914, South West Africa on 9 July 1915 and Kamerun on 23 March 1916.

What is not well-known about the major campaign in East Africa, is the diversity of force.<sup>2</sup> The British force itself consisted of around 177 micro-nations (tribes)<sup>3</sup> including West Africans, Indians, West Indians, Chinese and Seychelloise labour. In addition to the British forces, Britain's allies, Belgium and Portugal were involved while attempts were made to keep French interests restricted to West Africa. This presented a challenge not generally experienced on non-African fronts, that of multiple languages where British officers did not always know the language of their men, or the men understand each other. In addition, there were often multiple religions and faiths within a military unit.<sup>4</sup> At the start of the war, most of the troops were Muslim, the result of Arab trading before western colonialism, whereas by the end of the war, Christianity dominated the rank and file alongside traditional African beliefs, Sikh and Hindu among others.<sup>5</sup>

While Britain and Belgium were reluctant to use African Blacks<sup>6</sup> in an armed capacity in Europe, by the end of the war they were the dominant force in Africa. This involved a marked change in policy in late 1915 when it was first agreed to escalate the war in East Africa, once Togoland and South West Africa had

- 2 Diversity is a feature of all the forces and campaigns in Africa and needs further investigation.
- 3 The term micro-nation is used here as described by Wangari Maathai in *The Challenge for Africa* (London: William Heinemann, 2009).
- 4 British White officers tended to be Christian, while rank and file soldiers were Muslim, Hindu, Sikh etc. Melvin Page's *Distinguished Conduct: An African Life in Colonial Malawi* (Mzuzu, Malawi: Luviri Press, 2019) describes how religion was perceived in the King's African Rifles. Timothy Lovering, "Authority and Identity: Malawian Soldiers in Britain's Colonial Army, 1891-1964" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 2002) discusses the role of religion in the King's African Rifles.
- 5 For more on Allied Muslim involvement in the war, including Africa, see *Forgotten Heroes 1914-18*, Luc Ferrier. *The Unknown Fallen: The Global Allied Muslim Contribution in the First World War* (London: Forgotten Heroes 1914-18, 2018); for Sikh involvement in East Africa during the war: Anne Samson, "East Africa", in Jay Singh-Sohal (ed.), *The Sikh Chronicles: The Official Journal of the WWI Sikh Memorial Fund* (Birmingham: Dot Hyphen, 2015).
- 6 African Black is used to distinguish between the various African groupings: Black, Arab, White, Indian, Coloured (a South African mixed-ethnic group).

surrendered, and then in late 1916 when the South Africans pulled their White forces out due to high levels of illness. With Cameroon having been subjugated in March 1916, the West African Frontier Force could be utilised in the east of the continent. At the start of the war, action in Africa was only condoned by the British cabinet if the aim was to secure the safety of sea routes and communication, yet by 1915-1916 it was about land acquisition.<sup>7</sup>

## II: Kitchener, Africa and Religion

One British cabinet member, however, was against action in East Africa. As he had been hindering other decisions the politicians felt expedient to make, Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, to safeguard his position, sent Lord Kitchener to the Dardanelles and assumed the office of Secretary of State for War in Kitchener's absence. Practically, Kitchener did not see the point of fighting for something Britain had decided to give away and the outcome of which would be decided ultimately at the peace table. (He had been involved in the committee which determined that Mount Kilimanjaro be given to Germany). Kitchener is a fascinating character, a man of complexities but of principle. He was a man of faith, a Christian, member of the English Church Union and, from 1 January 1876, the Guild of the Holy Standard which had been founded by J. C. Edgill in 1874 with the purpose of supporting Anglican communicants to work with army chaplains. Kitchener's favourite book was said to be the Bible and the hymn "Nearer my God to Thee". After a service in 1911, he was said to have reflected: "when I hear that response 'because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only Thou, O God,' I rather wonder where we generals come in, don't you?" But Kitchener's faith was more inclusive. When mapping Palestine in the 1870s he learned both Hebrew and Arabic, and living among the locals became familiar with Islam and was later known to have participated in Friday prayers, an action which resulted in the tribe concerned contributing 2,000 men to his military force which attacked the Madhi on Good Friday 1876.<sup>8</sup>

As indicated, Kitchener's view of religion was inclusive, some might say pragmatic: live and let live. When in Khartoum, he refused to allow Llewellyn Gwynne<sup>9</sup> of the Church Missionary Society to set up a mission station in Omdurman as it would not do for the British to be seen proselytising. In 1902, after Kitchener had left, a mission school was opened. Similarly, Islam was

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7 For more detail on the campaign in East Africa, see Edward Paice, *Tip and Run: The Untold Tragedy of the Great War in Africa* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2007); Ross Anderson, *The Forgotten Front: The East Africa Campaign 1914-1918* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007). For political background, see Anne Samson, *Britain, South Africa and the East Africa Campaign 1914-1918: The Union Comes of Age* (London: Tauris, 2006; 2020). For the war in West Africa, see W. D. Downes, *With the Nigerians in East Africa: On Campaign During the First World War* (London: Methuen, 1920); also, Hugh Charles Clifford, *The Gold Coast Regiment in the East African Campaign* (London: J. Murray, 1920).

8 Anne Samson, *Kitchener: The Man Not The Myth* (Warwick: Helion and Co., 2020).

9 See Peter Howson, *The First World War Diaries of the Rt Rev Llewellyn Gwynne. July 1915-July 1916* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019) which considers Gwynne's later service and encounters with Kitchener.

restricted to specific sects which had a track record in the area. There was no room for fundamentalists of any faith. Education of the masses was important to ensure they were able to make informed decisions rather than be manipulated as he had witnessed in Palestine and elsewhere. This was the only way to ensure lasting peace – if there was no equality, and people were suppressed, they would rebel.<sup>10</sup> Kitchener's views would not have been popular among the missionaries operating in Central Africa during the war, who complained to recruiters that there were insufficient Christian African Blacks being recruited and that the army was too Islamic.<sup>11</sup> With the expansion of the King's African Rifles, this was to change.

This brings us to the local religious leaders involved in Africa during the war: missionaries and chaplains. Looking back one hundred years at accounts of missionaries, it becomes apparent that Christianity was not as widespread as one tends to think.<sup>12</sup> The Meru micro-nation still had a very strict process, of nearly a year, to follow if someone touched a dead body, bodies were left in the open for wild animals to deal with,<sup>13</sup> while the Wataveta had a burial system where bodies were buried standing up.<sup>14</sup> The eating of chicken had not happened until the missionaries arrived. These raise important considerations when looking back at how carriers and African Black soldiers were buried, which is being questioned by some in Britain today.<sup>15</sup> Where a soldier's religion was known, and the body available, the person was buried in a war grave cemetery. These men were generally mission educated with an anglicised name – a rule of thumb extending to Islamic madrasa educated individuals being named Mohammed, or a variation thereof, Ishmael and so forth.

British missionaries operating in enemy territory were interned, often accepting parole on condition they worked in German hospitals. In this way, some got to minister to their own when taken prisoner. Similarly, German and other missionaries operating in British territory were also interned, some being allowed to remain in East Africa at the end of the war when most Germans were repatriated.<sup>16</sup> What has been surprising on this front are the number of different

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10 Samson, *Kitchener: The Man Not the Myth*.

11 The National Archives, Kew (TNA): CO 534/29/9 18335, King's African Rifles: Provision for spiritual needs, 8 February 1918.

12 M. Louise Pirouet, "East African Christians and World War I", in *The Journal of African History*, 19/1 (1978), pp. 117-130 [pp. 118-119].

13 Mary Ciambaka Mwiandi, "The Role of African Evangelists and Teachers in the Development of Western Education and Christianity in Nithi Division of Meru District of Kenya, 1907-1960" (unpublished MA dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1993), p. 40.

14 Burial rites in the Taita community, <online: <http://elimuasilia1.blogspot.com/2012/09/burial-rites-in-taita-community.html>>.

15 Anne Samson, "Some thoughts on African burials in World War I" <online: <https://thesamsonsedhistorian.wordpress.com/2019/12/02/some-thoughts-on-african-burials-in-world-war-1/>> in response to Channel 4, *Unremembered: Britain's Forgotten War Heroes* (2019).

16 Daniel Steinbach, "Colonials in Conflict: Europeans in British and German East Africa and the First World War" (unpublished PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2014); Mahon Murphy, "Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees Captured by British and Dominion Forces from the German Colonies during the First World War" (unpublished PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 2014).

missionary groups operating across East and Central Africa, from the mainstream CMS (Church Missionary Society), CSM (Church of Scotland Missionaries), LMS (London Missionary Society) and White Fathers through to the Marists. In essence, they were responsible for the well-being of the local population. While some missionaries went off to serve with the armed forces, the running of the mission was left to African Black evangelists who by all accounts grew the number of Christians as they were able to mediate the cultural aspects more effectively than their White counterparts whose arrival was often associated with difficulties.<sup>17</sup>

While missionaries looked after the civilian population, chaplains looked after the armed forces. However, the nature of the campaigns in Africa and the different forces used within the British Empire mean that records are not complete. Chaplains were mainly supplied by the British Army and the South African Union Defence Force, while local forces supplied their own. It is difficult to identify the chaplains who served in Africa. However, John Thompson has found 64 who served in East Africa with the Army Chaplains' Corps. South Africa had approximately 150 full time chaplains serve while 41 ministers supported the 254,666 uniformed members operating both in Africa and Europe. Theoretically, it worked out at one White chaplain for every 2,000 men and one Black chaplain, otherwise known as a "native chaplain", responsible for 500 men. While the British Army gave chaplains a rank, they had no official rank in the Union Defence Force.<sup>18</sup>

When South Africa went to war in 1914, no provision had been made for chaplains in the Defence Force set up in 1912, with the result that chaplains in the Active Citizens Force had been asked to resign. The Bishop of Pretoria, Michael Furse, a chaplain of the Imperial Light Horse, refused and on the outbreak of war, he and the five main churches (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist and non-episcopal) lobbied the government. It was too much for local ministers to attend to military needs. The South African government eventually gave way and appointed P. W. Guinness (Church of England) as principal chaplain. He was supported by two senior chaplains, one of whom was Presbyterian and the other non-episcopal. The churches decided who would be a chaplain but the Minister of War appointed them to the role.<sup>19</sup>

After the campaign in East Africa was reinvigorated in 1915 by the sending of a South African contingent, the number of chaplains present increased, reaching a peak of 64. When the South African forces were withdrawn at the end of 1916, the number of chaplains dropped to twenty for all denominations. The breakdown in October 1916 and February 1917 was as follows:<sup>20</sup>

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17 Pirouet, "East African Christians and World War 1", pp. 117-130.

18 Sybrand Gerhardus van Niekerk, "The History, Role and Influence of the South African Military Chaplaincy: 1914-2002" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of South Africa, 2002); John Handby Thompson, "The Free Church Army Chaplain" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 1990) p. 360.

19 van Niekerk, "The History, Role and Influence of the South African Military Chaplaincy: 1914-2002".

20 Thompson, "The Free Church Army Chaplain", p.387.

Denomination/Faith	East Africa (1916)	East Africa (1917)	Egypt (1916) <sup>21</sup>	Egypt (1917)
Anglican/Church of England	31 + 6 local	12	92	140
Roman Catholic	14 + 6 local	4	47	81
Presbyterian	5	1	20	18
Wesleyan	5	1	15	19
United Board (Congregationalist & Primitive Methodist)	5	2	13	19
Welsh Calvinists	1	-	1	1
Jewish	-	-	1	1
Dutch Reformed Church	3	-	-	-
Total	64	20	189	279

Even at its height, the number of chaplains was insufficient to meet the needs of the men with the result that some chaplains enlisted with the medical corps, which allowed them a dual function.<sup>22</sup> This, when discovered, was frowned upon by the military bureaucracy. Encountering a chaplain was hit and miss. Some men never saw a chaplain throughout their whole African service whilst others felt they had more than their fair share, some chaplains giving up to six services a day.

The chaplains did their bit as noted by the awards made to South African chaplains:<sup>23</sup>

Award	South West Africa	East Africa	Europe
Distinguished Service Order (DSO)	1*		
Military Cross (MC)	2	5**	5
Officer of the Most Excellent order of the British Empire (OBE)			1
Member of the Most Excellent order of the British Empire (MBE)	(South Africa =1)	1	
Mentioned in Despatches (MiD)	2	10	4
Meritorious Service Medal			1***

\* 2 Distinguished Service Orders (DSO), one to Presbyterian Thomas Jones who was the only South African chaplain granted the award for services in South West Africa (1914-1915), the other to Roman Catholic James Dey in East Africa for service in 1916.

\*\* Roman Catholic chaplain Elijah Cobham died of wounds in East Africa on 19 September 1917. He is commemorated in Bristol.

\*\*\* C. J. Dambusa.

21 Egypt has been included for a comparison. Although there was no major action in Egypt, there were numerous hospitals, the territory forming a link in the transport of men between Europe and Asia/Mesopotamia. It was also the base for the evacuation from Gallipoli.

22 van Niekerk, "The History, Role and Influence of the South African Military Chaplaincy: 1914-2002", p. 44.

23 Ibid.

Twenty-two of the 49 South African chaplains in East Africa were invalided home of whom three were pensioned for reasons of ill health.<sup>24</sup> The Great War in Africa “In Memory list” for East Africa, has a total of 80 Chaplains across all services as identified to date (May 2020).<sup>25</sup> This includes Black Kenyans and South Africans. Identifying them all is painstaking work as records, if they exist, are held in archives in at least four countries.

It is easy to forget the “other side” when looking at a war, but the South West Africa campaign which was interspersed with a rebellion in South Africa is a helpful reminder that all belligerents called on a supreme being in their time of need. Seldom were the men on both sides of the same denomination, but in South Africa they were. For example, Herman Fourie, the brother of Jopie Fourie who was executed for failing to resign his military position before rebelling, was of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk (NHK). He was captured, found guilty of treason, fined £250 and imprisoned for two years. With the Union force was Revd J. J. Khun, the only minister of the Hervormde Church to join against the rebels. He did so for financial reasons; when most of his flock joined the rebels, his community was unable to pay his keep. He used his position to negotiate with the rebels to bring about peace.<sup>26</sup>

### III: East Africa

In East Africa, chaplains tended to be depot based as opposed to being in the field with the men. Unlike the war in Europe which was noted for its trenches, the war in East Africa was mobile from 1916. Where there were chaplains in the German army, they would have moved with the columns particularly after Tabora had fallen to the Belgians in September 1916.

The South African forces serving in France had their own chaplains while the South African Native Labour Corps (SANLC) used missionaries or evangelists to support their men. In total, 12 White chaplains and 14 native chaplains were to serve in Europe ministering to 20,887 South African Black labourers. Two ministers lost their lives when the SS *Mendi* was sunk off the Isle of Wight on 21 February 1917. Of these only one, Revd Koni Hlongwana, was officially a chaplain, the other, Revd Isaac Wauchope Dyobha was employed as an interpreter for the SANLC and not recognised as a missionary by the authorities.<sup>27</sup> The 33,546 and 18,000 South African Black labourers who served in East and South West Africa respectively had no chaplains allocated to them.<sup>28</sup>

Locally, ministers were involved in supporting the war. Bishop Furse was to be found at recruitment drives and visited East Africa to see how things were

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24 Ibid., p. 58.

25 See [www.gweaa.com/theatres](http://www.gweaa.com/theatres).

26 van Niekerk, “The History, Role and Influence of the South African Military Chaplaincy: 1914-2002”, p. 7.

27 Ibid., p. 86.

28 Ibid., p. 103.

progressing there.<sup>29</sup> The bishops of Zanzibar and Uganda both led carrier corps, joining their men on the march to ensure their well-being. Their men were also trained before embarking on their arduous task, resulting in fewer deaths than among general carriers.<sup>30</sup> Among the Kikuyu in British East Africa (Kenya), 1,600 readers enlisted under missionary officers. When they all returned alive, Christianity was given a great boost resulting in many conversions.<sup>31</sup>

A few chaplains and missionaries expressed their views. Father Eustace Hill writing to Canon Nash at St John's College, Johannesburg: "hope[d] that those who are left are willing to follow those who have gone, not to let diplomats sow seeds for more wars. but to deliver our children from turning hell loose on earth". He finishes: "I hope this war goes on and on until men loath war and determine forever to give it up as an unchristian damnable method for settling disputes". Despite Hill losing an arm on the Western Front, he wanted to go back and continue serving. He was awarded an MC for his service. Edward Paget complained about the poor provisioning of the forces in East Africa. He too, was awarded the MC for going beyond the call of duty.<sup>32</sup>

While the end of the war saw rejoicing in England, in East Africa the head of the Chaplaincy, Roman Catholic William Joseph Flynn, recorded on 10 November 1918 that he and the Political Officer met to discuss the ringing of bells to mark the armistice. While he felt the Bishop should be approached due to the damage caused by bombing, the District Administrator and the Quartermaster General decided that for reasons of safety there would be no celebration in East Africa when the war finally ended. Nothing is recorded about the armistice or peace on 11 November or about the German laying down of arms in Northern Rhodesia on 25 November 1918.<sup>33</sup>

The end of the fighting was, however, not the end of the war. That would continue until the peace treaties were signed and for the African territories, the terms of individual mandates agreed. The latter took until 1923 and 1924 to be finalised, despite the decision over what to do with the conquered German territories being one of the first made. Although Africa was, for Europe, a sideshow, a study of the peace discussions provides a microcosmic view of the international arena, as five of the sixteen countries involved in East Africa had divergent claims in Europe.

In late 1916, Britain had started to ascertain its allies' interests in Africa and what each wanted out of the war. This had been prompted by South African deputy Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, commanding the forces in East Africa, making the suggestion that the British forces take over administering the German East African town of Tabora from the Belgians who had captured it.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

30 Melvin E. Page (ed.), *Africa and the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 140; John Lonsdale, "Kikuyu Christianities", in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 29/2 (1999), pp. 206-229.

31 Lonsdale, "Kikuyu Christianities", p. 213.

32 van Niekerk, "The History, Role and Influence of the South African Military Chaplaincy", p. 45.

33 TNA: WO 95/5303 Senior Chaplain War Diary November 1918.

South Africa, trying to reconcile its divergent population where a significant minority wanted independence from Britain, was keen to stake its claim at the southern end of the African continent and realise expansionist aims its various constituent parts had from before Union in 1910. However, neither of the two leaders, Prime Minister Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, wanted to appear greedy and so moderated their suggestions accordingly. In doing so, they suggested Britain had a greater claim to African territory than allies Belgium or Portugal, as Britain and its empire had contributed far more to the war effort. South Africa was ultimately after Portuguese territory – the ports of Beira and Delagoa Bay and it was hoped that a territorial swap could be effected with Portugal being compensated with equivalent land in German East Africa. For this, Britain's assistance would be needed, especially if the British South Africa Company which administered the two Rhodesias (North – Zambia and South – Zimbabwe) who were wanting access to a port, put in a claim. It does not appear that they did.<sup>34</sup>

South Africa was also happy to support India being given German East Africa as that country would not border on the Union and might attract South African Indians to move north, thereby easing the “South African Indian problem”. India, too, was keen to obtain territory in East Africa which would allow “an admirable field for Indian expansion”. If this could not be met, India requested that immigration be permitted on equal terms as for Whites, which would help resolve the population issue on the Indian sub-continent.<sup>35</sup>

Britain, therefore, had to manage its subordinate territories' desires alongside those of the empire itself, and its allies. Both Belgium and Portugal were wary of British intentions and desires for their African territories. Portugal was well aware of pre-war negotiations between Britain and Germany over splitting Portuguese African territory, if Portugal defaulted on loan repayments. Portugal's main desire, however, was for the Kionga Triangle, a piece of land Germany had “stolen” from Portugal in the late 1800s. Belgium's initial, and main, interest in Africa was retention of territory it had captured, namely Ruanda (Rwanda), Urundi (Burundi) and Tabora. This was to be used at the negotiating table to restore European Belgian territory occupied by Germany or for monetary compensation. Directly in Africa, Belgium was keen to obtain Portuguese territory in West Africa at the mouth of the Congo River. Belgium, too, was concerned about southern African desires over the Katanga mining territory, but so long as South Africa did not join with the British South Africa Company territories, the threat was reduced.<sup>36</sup>

34 Samson, *Britain, South Africa and the East Africa Campaign, 1914-1918*, chapter 8.

35 India Office Records, British Library: Chelmsford MSS EUR E 264/34; Curzon MSS EUR F 112/180; Aga Khan, *India in Transition: A Study in Political Evolution* (London: P. L. Warner, 1918), pp. 115-7, 128 supports the Indian claim for East Africa; P. Lewsen (ed.), *John X. Merriman: Paradoxical South African Statesman* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 289; G. H. Calpin, *Indians in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1949).

36 TNA: FO 371/2600/256826 & 156921, “The war: Africa: Proposed employment of Belgian native troops in East Africa under British officers”; General R. van Overstraeten (ed.), *The War Diaries of King Albert: King of the Belgians* (London: W. Kimber, 1954), p. 79.

France, Britain's other ally in Africa had satisfactorily been kept out of East Africa by agreements over West Africa. Further, Italy's interest in expanding control around Somaliland was covered through the Treaty of Rome signed in 1915.

This left one complication, that of the United States of America (USA). Technically, the USA had no direct interest in Africa, yet President Woodrow Wilson had a desire to make the world safe using international organisations. The USA's wishes had to be considered in return for its financial assistance in the post-war world. In January 1918, Wilson announced the Fourteen Points he saw as the basis of the peace discussions. Of these, clause five concerned the German colonies: "A free, open-minded and impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based on the principle that the interests of the population concerned have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined".<sup>37</sup> For Wilson, this meant the colonies would be given their independence, while the colonial powers understood they would retain the colonies. This was to bring cautious action especially as the USA was not interested in obtaining African territory but, as a means of keeping the country sweet, some in Britain were prepared to offer German East Africa to the USA.<sup>38</sup>

#### IV: Africa and the Peace Conference

Having started preparations in 1916 concerning the future world, by the time the peace conference got underway on 18 January 1919, the British Empire Delegation was the most prepared of all attendees. This allowed Britain, together with the USA, to dominate proceedings.<sup>39</sup>

By 25 January 1919 when the Second Plenary Session met, the decision concerning the captured German territories had been made although they were still to be allocated. It had been a straightforward decision with two of the "big four" wanting German colonial territory.<sup>40</sup> Despite Wilson trying to delay decisions in favour of his mandate system, by the end of January 1919, the colonies had been allocated.

When the proposal was presented to the Council of Ten on 30 January, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George pointed out that the British Empire Delegation had compromised in order to achieve a decision. Louis Botha had expressed the Empire's views explaining that one had to "give way in the little things to achieve the highest ideals";<sup>41</sup> and in this South Africa was prepared to forgo annexing South

37 A. Walworth, *Wilson and His Peacemakers: American Diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (London: Norton, 1984), pp. 64-5.

38 R. S. Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, Vol I (London: Heinemann, 1923), pp. 265-6; Secretary of State Lansing was the exception on the American delegation – he actually proposed that the USA acquire colonies.

39 E. Goldstein, *Winning the Peace* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 101-4, 281, 285-6.

40 The "big four" were Britain, France, United States of America and Italy.

41 Donald Hankey, *The Supreme Control at the Paris Peace Conference 1919: A Commentary* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 62.

West Africa in favour of a mandate to prevent discussions faltering. Australia and New Zealand were unhappy, as they had to sacrifice their annexation-desires for New Guinea and Samoa.

On 7 May 1919, Germany learned that the colonies were not to be returned, and after the meeting Wilson was presented with the allocation. France objected to the wording over Cameroon, and Italy complained about not receiving territory until it was reminded of the terms of the 1915 Treaty of London. Despite Belgium requesting it get the German territory it was administering, Britain allocated the territory to itself.<sup>42</sup> Belgium registered a “most emphatic protest”, which led to Lloyd George summoning Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Milner, to France to resolve the issue with Belgium, thereby circumventing USA interference.<sup>43</sup>

A week later, Milner and Baron Orts of Belgium had formulated a plan at the expense of Portugal which had failed to submit its objections to the initial proposal.<sup>44</sup> The plan was a three-way exchange where Belgium would get West African territory it wanted, and South Africa the East African Portuguese territory. In return, Portugal would receive the equivalent of territory in German East Africa. In effecting this transfer of colonial control, Belgium would cede to Britain the German East African territory (Ruanda and Urundi) it would receive, as a mandate to keep the USA out of the discussions. Britain was keen on having access to the territory as it was said to be the most fertile in Africa and was also necessary for completing the long-desired Cape Town to Cairo railway.<sup>45</sup>

On 24 August 1919, the first part of the plan was effected when German East Africa was divided between Belgium and Britain. However, Portugal refused to part with its West African territory at the mouth of the Congo River, despite being compensated with territory in East Africa. The reason for refusing the offer was prestige, the republic having requested financial assistance to develop its African territories.<sup>46</sup> The result was that few saw their African colonial desires fulfilled and Belgium had control of territory it did not really want.

42 Samson, *Britain, South Africa and the East Africa Campaign 1914-1918*, chapter 8.

43 TNA: FO 608/216 (registry no 9546, file 724/1/1) 8 May 1919 telegram from Sir C. Villiers to A. J. Balfour, 10 May 1919 note by M. P. A. Hankey.

44 W. R. Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914-1919* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), p. 150.

45 Bod: Milner 390, 29 May 1919 ps to memo, f181 & 26 May 1919 letter from Milner to Orts, f130; W. R. Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi, 1884-1919* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), p. 257. The strip of land ceded to Britain for the Cape Town to Cairo railway was returned to Belgium in 1923 following the first cross continental flight which put paid to completing the railway.

46 TNA: FO 608/216 (registry no 18287, file 724/1/1) 24 August 1919, f106 & 27 September 1919, f123; *Paris Peace Conference Vol. III*, 30 January 1919, Document ref 180.03101/25, BC-18, IC-128, pp. 808-13; N. S. Teixeira, *O Poder e a Guerra 1914-1918: Objectivos Nacionais e Estratégias Políticas na Entrada de Portugal na Grande Guerra* (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1996).

### V: Conclusion

The First World War was the war to end all wars, yet the opportunity to remove as many potential causes of future conflict as part of the Paris peace talks was lost when Lloyd George and French premier Clemenceau became caught up in a war of words, demanding the Kaiser's head and reparations. Had it been left to the two heads of government, Germany might well have been wiped off the map of Europe. While this had been prevented, there was little opposition to removing German control in Africa and other non-European areas. The African territories were divided between Britain, France, South Africa, Belgium and Portugal, the German Pacific Islands went to New Zealand, Australia and Japan, the latter also receiving the naval base of Shangtung.

The peace discussions concerning East Africa in particular provide an insight into the values of each of the colonial powers; values which are less easily discernible when considering the European discussions clouded by regional interests and age-old feuds. Britain and France believed, as the strongest powers and having held the allies together as well as sacrificing the most, that they should have the biggest say. Belgium took umbrage at not being recognised for the role it played throughout the war, while Portugal realised it was no longer a superpower. Holding onto its African territory at all costs would go some way to maintaining a vestige of power. Of the subordinate British territories, South Africa failed to realise all its expansionist dreams but proved itself a country in its own right. India was completely ignored in having its contribution recognised. Despite the large contributions the various non-Dominion African territories made, at no stage were the views of the local inhabitants ascertained, other than to gather evidence against Germany retaining its colonies.<sup>47</sup>

Opportunities to reconsider boundaries and reduce potential conflict were overlooked. Rather, the decisions made provide evidence that the colonial powers were more interested in their own gains than in the position of their dependencies. The consequences have played out in the form of civil wars, genocides and other conflicts such as witnessed in the 1990s in Rwanda and in Burundi, and in the late 2010s in Cameroon.

At the local level, the dominating powers were able to consolidate their hold more fully through the introduction of structures and systems implemented as wartime measures.<sup>48</sup> Individuals educated by missionaries received preferential treatment and were promoted over those traditionally educated. This led to the furtherance of Christianity across the continent, although the absence of white missionaries from mission stations for extended periods led to a merging of local traditions with Christianity as traditions were mediated. This was similar to the spread and development of Islam south of the Sahara; it is not pure and true to the Prophet's way. Another outcome of mission education and the structures

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47 Samson, *Britain, South Africa and the East Africa Campaign 1914-1918*, chapter 8.

48 Geoffrey Hodges, *Kariakor: The Carrier Corps* (Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press, 1999).

introduced during the war was the rise in African nationalism.<sup>49</sup> Men, and women, began to realise the effect of collaborating to achieve their aims and to assert their rights as they had been taught the equality of all in God's eyes.

One of the conditions Lord Kitchener had made on being appointed Secretary of State for War was that he be allowed to attend the peace talks. Even at the start of the war, he believed that Germany should retain its colonies to keep a balance of power, but also that the defeated should retain their sense of self-respect and dignity. He had insisted on this at the Vereeniging talks that ended the 1899-1902 war in southern Africa and which saw the Union under Boer leaders support Britain over Germany.<sup>50</sup> How much Kitchener would have been able to influence the leading politicians in 1919, given his decline in status before he drowned in June 1916, remains one of history's unanswered questions. Yet, his strong faith, discernment about using religion for political reasons and his sense of fairness and justice when dealing with the defeated and downtrodden, provides food for thought when one considers the impact the Great War and its subsequent peace discussions had on Europe and Africa at the time, and one hundred years later.

ANNE SAMSON

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49 Lonsdale, "Kikuyu Christianities", p. 207; Pirouet, "East African Christians and World War I".

50 Samson, *Kitchener: The Man not the Myth*.

## NONCONFORMIST ARCHITECTURE: A CONGREGATIONAL FOCUS PART II

### X: "Congregationalism and Science": or, Character in Evolution

Spiritual liberty, clear-eyed and responsible pragmatism and, most suggestive of all, the evolutionary principle, informed "Congregationalism and Science", Philip Henry Pye-Smith's contribution to *Religious Republics*.<sup>1</sup> Its thesis was expressed in its epigraph ("Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty"); and fellow feeling, the coincidences of personal friendship, and traditionary Dissent, quite as much as actual and potential distinction, explain his inclusion.

The inherited Dissent was flagged in all his names, Philip Henry after the Ejected divine and Pye-Smith, hyphenated after his grandfather's death.<sup>2</sup> That grandfather, John Pye Smith (1774-1851), the "Beloved Doctor", had been the essence of provincial social mobility, evangelical mental-artman style.<sup>3</sup> He had moved from the nervy political radicalism and edgy enlightenment of an as yet municipally unformed Sheffield (where Pye-Smiths long remained as movers and moulders) to the tutorship of Homerton, a London Dissenting Academy evolving into a contemporary theological college. A discriminating fascination with geology marked the "Beloved Doctor" rather as later it marked S. R. Pattison.

John Pye Smith's scientific interests were transmitted to his son Ebenezer (1807-1885), a successful London surgeon, and thence to his grandson Philip Henry, who rose steadily through London's medical establishment, as successive addresses in Harley Street, Brook Street, and Hyde Park Square indicate; his term as Vice-Chancellor of London University and his membership of the Athenaeum confirm the academic dimension of his reputation.<sup>4</sup> The Congregationalism was also transmitted.<sup>5</sup> The ties of personal friendship were cemented in the late 1850s and early 1860s at University College London. That was where Pye-Smith became an intimate of H. S. P. Winterbotham and H. H. Cozens-Hardy (future Master of the

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1 P. H. Pye-Smith, "Congregationalism and Science", in *Religious Republics: Six Essays on Congregationalism* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1869), pp. 169-201.

2 For Philip Henry (1631-1696), see *ODNB*; young Pye-Smith, however, was "Harry" to his family.

3 For John Pye Smith, see *ODNB*.

4 In the early 1840s, Ebenezer Pye Smith's pupils/lodgers included a young Congregational second cousin, with a fine medical career ahead of him, S. O. Habershon (1825-1889), who was also a first cousin of the architects W. G. and E. Habershon. For Philip Henry Pye-Smith (1839-1914), see *Who Was Who 1897-1916* (London: A. and C. Black, 1920), p. 580. In 1901 his establishment in Brook Street included a butler and page boy (Census Return).

5 The family church was Old Gravel Pit, Hackney. In the 1880s, Pye-Smith was active at St Paul's Congregational Church, Hawley Road, Kentish Town, noted for its discriminating congregation, which had included the even more distinguished medical man and fellow F.R.S. Sir Michael Foster (1836-1907).

Rolls and pillar of Kensington Chapel), through whom he also met James Anstie: Pye-Smith, Cozens-Hardy, and Anstie would meet from time to time to relax over Greek ("Homer usually").<sup>6</sup>

It is, perhaps, unsurprising that Pye-Smith's essay contains quotations in French, German, Greek, and Latin, none of them translated, or that it celebrates "the scientific spirit": "that carefulness, caution, and sobriety which have always been recognised as essential in the search after truth"<sup>7</sup> Carefulness, caution, and sobriety were pre-conditions for certainty, and Pye-Smith was appropriately certain about one of the issues of the hour, Natural Selection, that

Theory, often put forth at random, but lately supported by Mr. Darwin, with reason so patiently elaborated and so moderate, with learning so extensive and accurate, and authority so great, that it is already accepted by many of those best qualified to judge in this country and abroad.<sup>8</sup>

In explaining his certainty he called in aid two architectural similes, at least one of them probably drawn from Darwin. The first was to oppose the theory of "ideal types": "what should we think of an architect who put in the top of some magnificent cathedral a fragment of thatch to denote the relation to the rude hut of which it is the fully developed idea?"<sup>9</sup> The second was to support natural selection:

We ... find in all pure styles of architecture a constant reference to the primitive and common forms of which they are the development. So that if we recognise in the construction of the world those Divine thoughts of which the highest human art is a first echo, we may well believe that the Great Architect did not plan this earth only as a palace to dwell in, or a temple to worship in, but also as a school where His children may learn so much of His mind, that they may hereafter behold with no unfamiliar wonder the more perfect revelation of His glory.<sup>10</sup>

Here spoke the instinctive Congregationalist,<sup>11</sup> convinced that the form of Christianity best able to cope with science "is that which is the most free, the most varied, the most elastic". He added an instructive rider:

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6 For Herbert Hardy Cozens-Hardy (1838-1920), see *ODNB*. The links of friendship are taken from Cozens-Hardy's MSS, "Autobiography", pp. 24, 29-30, 33, 37, 48-9, 52, in private hands when consulted.

7 Pye-Smith, "Congregationalism and Science", p. 169; his definition of science, incidentally, was "knowledge of those phenomena which can be apprehended by the senses".

8 *Ibid.*, p. 173. The reference is more likely to be to *The Variation of Animals Under Domestication* (1868) than to *Origin of Species* (1859).

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*, p. 174.

11 Perfectly caught in his comment, "Let [the humble seeker after truth] 'read the Bible like any other book', and he will soon find that there is no other book like it". *Ibid.*, p. 199.

Uniformity is always artificial ... Comprehension is yet more dangerous, for it makes religious differences seem unimportant, while differences in science are admitted to be all-important. It fosters the growth of esoteric doctrines of enlightenment, different from those publicly and officially expressed.<sup>12</sup>

His conclusion. Congregationally speaking, was almost foregone: "it does appear that, now especially, the flexible and light-armed organization of this one branch of the great Christian army is better fitted than other more regularly and stiffly-drilled battalions to cope with the spirit of irreverence and unbelief".<sup>13</sup>

Neither of the two remaining essayists, the brothers Edward Gilbert Herbert (1838-1871) and Thomas Martin Herbert (1835-1877), fulfilled his potential. The former died before achieving what his friends predicted, the latter died on the verge of fulfilment. Their essays, on "The Congregationalist Character" and "The External Relations of Congregationalism", respectively, complete and confirm the themes of *Religious Republics*; their inclusion completes the picture of a naturally evolving mentality; and they bring us back to the cultural, aesthetic, and mental-artman background for the shaping of a specifically Nonconformist architecture.

They were the sons of Thomas Herbert (d. 1878), Nottingham lace manufacturer, mayor (1846), deacon and treasurer of his county Congregational Union.<sup>14</sup> They were London graduates and had been lay students at Spring Hill, Thomas Martin during its rebuilding by Joseph James and Edward Gilbert just after. Thomas continued as a ministerial student and completed his training at Lancashire Independent College, one of the three Congregational buildings in the "English style" which Blackburn had singled out for their completeness.<sup>15</sup> Edward moved to London for University College, lodging in Doughty Street, followed by Lincoln's Inn, the Chancery Bar, and chambers at 2 New Square. These he shared with Herbert Cozens-Hardy, whom he had met at Mrs Anstie's, in Queen Square, a short walk from Doughty Street, and whose "dearest and most trusted friend" (and best man) he became.<sup>16</sup>

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., pp. 200-201. Over and against this surprisingly military language is the meliorism possible before 1914, not least to the missionary-minded, (Pye-Smith was a medical consultant for the London Missionary Society), and understandable in one who had studied in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, and been honoured by Dublin and Philadelphia: he believed in the international spirit of science and its "influence in neutralizing national prejudice, and promoting comity of thought and feeling". Ibid., p. 200.

14 London: DWL, Surman Lay Index.

15 *Congregational Year Book* (hereafter *CYB*) (1847), p. 161. In 1848, T. M. Herbert had briefly been at Mill Hill School, which Blackburn noted had rejected "a beautiful plan and elevation in the English style" for a more costly Grecian that, despite its noble portico, was "very destitute of appropriate decoration" (ibid.). A nephew of Sir William Tite, Mill Hill's architect, was a school contemporary of Herbert's: Hampden-Cook, *The Register of Mill Hill School 1807-1926*, p. 89.

16 Census Return 1861; Cozens-Hardy MSS, pp. 39, 44. Mrs Anstie was James's widowed mother.

Their contemporaries were agreed as to Edward's flair and Thomas's steady application. The latter's health, complicated by a speech defect which was eventually cured, cut short his pastorates in otherwise eligible northern churches. One such was Nether Chapel, Sheffield, a vertiginously galleried Classical building by the elder Pritchett of York (1827). Herbert left after two years, "warned that so large a building, planted ... amidst a dense population, required a different style of preaching".<sup>17</sup> That was in 1861. In 1869 he was happily settled at Cheadle, near Manchester, and in 1876 he would return to Lancashire Independent College as Professor of Philosophy and History. Locals "thought we had found the very man for the church's needs" but he died suddenly, late in 1877.<sup>18</sup>

T. M. Herbert's essay celebrated a variant of Pye-Smith's "flexible light-armed" Congregationalism in which, since "spiritual convictions are the determining considerations" for membership, no rigid conditions could be imposed "because such convictions are but partially revealed to human observation".<sup>19</sup> The fundamental, formative, condition was "personal allegiance to the Divine Christ":

Christ ... is ... the Divine Head of a kingdom or society, the animating principle of which is personal allegiance to Himself, expressed in worship and in service. Of the subject of this invisible empire, some are pilgrims on earth, and some have arrived in heaven, and their muster-roll is a sealed book in the keeping of Christ.<sup>20</sup>

The local church, as the visible expression of that invisible society, "in admitting an applicant, proceeds upon evidence that the more momentous step has already been taken". This allowed for responsible flexibility: "there is substantial agreement ... as to the great outline of Christian doctrine, greater diversity exists in details, and greater freedom in expression than existed formerly".<sup>21</sup> It also allowed for a family spirit and if, as in families, "internal dissensions and unbecoming exclusiveness are to be found in Christian societies", it remained true that:

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17 *CYB* (1879), p. 320. Yet Pritchett prided himself on his acoustics; he was architect (and senior deacon) of Lendal (1816) and Salem (1839) Chapels, York, whose minister, James Parsons (1799-1877) was equally famed for his weak voice and his preaching. Perhaps it was the content of Herbert's preaching which unsettled a relatively conservative congregation: his obituary picks its phrases – "simplicity and clearness ... choice beauty of phrase ... exact sequence and coherence of thought, and ... ingenious and often strikingly original conceptions of his subject" (*ibid.*). Nether was the chapel of the Sheffield Pye-Smiths.

18 F. J. Powicke, *A History of the Cheshire County Union of Congregational Churches* (Manchester: Thomas Griffiths & Co., 1907), p. 180. T. M. Herbert's son, Thomas Arnold Herbert (1863-1940), followed in E. G. Herbert's footsteps and fulfilled his promise: Lincoln's Inn, Chancery Bar, K.C., and Liberal MP Wycombe 1906-10: *Who Was Who 1929-1940*, p. 628.

19 T. M. Herbert, "The External Relations of Congregationalism", *Religious Republics*, p. 60.

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 63-4.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 64, 66.

A church of moderate size, whose members meet often to survey their Christian heritage, and revive their Christian allegiance, attains to a unity of feeling like that which animates a family; the social instinct, which is inseparable from the idea of a church, obtains scope for development.<sup>22</sup>

Many such churches were “brotherhoods in which a broad equality of need and of privilege sets social distinction aside”; their “democratic constitution” demonstrated this and their fundamental condition of membership demonstrated that Congregational churches were “not exclusive in any sense inconsistent with universal brotherhood”.<sup>23</sup> T. M. Herbert’s message was one of tolerance made possible by the awareness of due limits. His rhetoric – family, brotherhood, equality, “the social instinct”, “scope for development” – looks ahead. It lends force to the regret – given his “almost unrivalled knowledge of the feud between science and theology” – that he had died before he could exercise his “rare faculty for abating their unnatural strife”.<sup>24</sup>

Edward built on the familial revolution. His was the most alluring of the essays.<sup>25</sup> He began with the observation that “character is never a definitely settled thing; it is always moving”.<sup>26</sup> He set the characteristics of contemporary Congregationalism against the broader religious scene:

Less fervid than the Wesleyan, but with religious feelings more equable; insisting upon a doctrine like the Evangelical, but still with a love of intellectual freedom as real as that of the Broad Church, though more restrained both by faith and by prejudice; unlike the Ritualists in his disregard of the machinery of devotion, in his view of the simple and direct relations established between God and man, and in his appreciation of the best enjoyments of this world, and resembling them in impatience of any control of religious work by secular authority, the Congregationalist has many both of the virtues and of the faults of other sects, but these qualities are cast in a distinctive mould of his own.<sup>27</sup>

To explain the nature of that mould he drew on family recollections.<sup>28</sup> There was the impact of public prayer:

The spontaneous outpouring of one spirit to God aroused more powerfully the sympathetic action of the rest. His soul did not wait passive until the completion of each petition. Almost every expression, as it passed, touched

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 75, 74.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 75, 76.

24 Powicke, *A History of the Cheshire County Union of Congregational Churches*, p. 180.

25 E. G. Herbert, “The Congregationalist Character”, *Religious Republics*, pp. 91-132.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 91.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6.

28 Especially of his maternal grandfather: J. Gilbert (ed.), *Autobiography and Other Memorials of Mrs. Gilbert (Formerly Ann Taylor)* (4th ed., London: Kegan Paul & Co., 1879), p. 377.

some eager feeling of praise or of desire, The effort thus to keep pace in sympathy with his fellow-worshippers demanded a more versatile energy of emotion than the smooth and easy pathways of a familiar liturgy, but it brought its own reward in the higher intensity of prayer it made possible.<sup>29</sup>

There was the sermon ("in harmony with this simplicity of form and strenuous vigour of spirit ... The preaching of the Word was one of the leading elements in his Sabbath privileges"), and there was the weekday outworking: "He had a high appreciation of the virtue of industry, and a constraining sense of the value of time, as a talent for the full employment of which, to its last fractions, he was responsible ... Thus his life in the world, while he strove to keep it distinct from the life of the soul, ministered to his soul's health".<sup>30</sup> This spirit infused more recent changes. In obedience to a new and "almost universal" feeling for art, Congregational worship had "conformed to highest aesthetic standards"; and Herbert gently warned against what he nonetheless welcomed: "No doubt, they sometimes attach an undue measure of importance to their music and their architecture".<sup>31</sup> Even so, the older fellowship and simplicity remained fundamental to the reality of what was experienced. Herbert focused on the fellowship at communion:

The sacredness of the service depends on the confidence in each other's faith and spiritual love which the communicants may confess. This confidence is the basis of that sympathy, that communion of saints, which to the Congregationalist is essential to the due celebration of the Lord's Supper. To him the elements have no mysterious agency. The words of Christ, "Do this in remembrance of me", cannot be obeyed by a solitary act. He regards them as enjoining on a church an act of communion, that is, of united remembrance of Christ, and thus he recognises in the institution not only an efficient aid to the religious life, but also one of the strongest bonds of Christian fellowship.<sup>32</sup>

He described the ritual: no altar, but bread and wine on a table covered with a white cloth; a hymn; St Paul's words "describing the Last Supper"; perhaps a short address, its tone "more subdued than at other times"; a short prayer; then the minister "repeats the words of the apostle, which tell how our Lord broke bread, and puts a plate into the hands of the deacons, who so carry the broken bread round to the people, as they sit in the pews"; and the same is done with the cups of wine.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, not a display of feeling, but a reserve and restraint of all outward expression of emotion, is characteristic of the service. And yet no spectator,

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29 Herbert, "The Congregational Character", p. 98.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.

33 "no rule is violated when the ordinance is administered by a layman", *ibid.*, p. 109.

observing the pervading stillness which makes audible even the tick of the chapel clock, and the reverent quietness of manner with which the deacons perform their office, and seeing how each communicant after taking the bread and the wine bends the head in silent thought or prayer, could doubt that the occasion was one of the deepest and most solemn feeling.<sup>34</sup>

That was the spirit which meeting-house, chapel, or church should be designed to promote. The Herbert brothers were as well placed as Pattison, with his four years' experience of an architect's office, to appreciate that side of things. Their mother's family, the Taylors "of Ongar", from the 1750s to the 1860s furnished one of the most remarkable collectivities of Dissenting culture: several generations of engineers, artists, printers, and publishers. Their uncle Martin Taylor (1788-1867) and their great-uncle Josiah Taylor (1761-1834) published W. F. Pocock's trio of pattern-books. Their uncle Isaac Taylor (1787-1865) was better known as an amateur philosopher and theologian.<sup>35</sup> He married into the Medland family of architects and in the 1850s conformed to a gentle Anglicanism. His son, James Medland Taylor (1834-1909), articulated to his uncle and namesake, James Medland of Gloucester, and briefly associated with S. S. Teulon, set up practice in Manchester in 1860.<sup>36</sup> It was estimated that he designed over fifty churches and restored ninety more, chiefly in Lancashire and Cheshire. His work was overwhelmingly Anglican, but it included one of Manchester's leading Baptist churches, Union Chapel, Oxford Road (1869). His association with S. S. Teulon in part explains his standing as a prime provincial rogue architect, a muscular practitioner who, knowing the rules, knew how to break them, but it also confirms the professional pedigree, several generations long, of architects with chapel clients and membership, and consequent knowledge and experience.

Medland Taylor was not the Herberts' only architectural kinsman. Their aunts, Ann and Jane Taylor, had secured a prolonged fame with their *Hymns for Infant Minds* (1808); "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" has outlived their family's many achievements. Ann Taylor's husband, Joseph Gilbert (1779-1852), was a leading provincial Congregational minister with pastorates in Sheffield, Hull, and Nottingham at a time of denominational shaping.<sup>37</sup> In Nottingham he was the young Herberts' pastor as well as their uncle-by-marriage. Ann Gilbert was an alert, engaging woman of increasingly Whiggish views and the Gilbert children fitted the mould of high-achieving manse mobility. Henry was the pioneering agricultural chemist who from 1843 co-developed the Rothamsted estate as the "Greenwich Observatory of Agriculture".<sup>38</sup> Isaac Charles (c. 1818-1885) became

34 Ibid., p. 110.

35 For Taylor, author of *The Natural History of Enthusiasm* (London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1829) see *ODNB*.

36 For J. Medland Taylor, see *Manchester Guardian* (1 June 1909); Felstead et al., *Directory of British Architects, 1834-1900*, p. 903.

37 For Ann and Joseph Gilbert, see *ODNB*.

38 For Sir Joseph Henry Gilbert FRS (1817-1901), see *ODNB*; J. Taylor (ed.), *Autobiography and Other Memorials of Mrs Gilbert (formerly Ann Taylor)*, p. 389.

an architect. His professional pedigree is almost predictable. Like S. W. Daukes and Daukes's early partner, James Medland, Jr, of Gloucester, he was a pupil of J. P. Pritchett of York (who had himself been articled to James Medland, Sr, of Southwark).<sup>39</sup> In 1825 Medland's sister had married the philosopher-engraver Isaac Taylor and Medland designed the Taylors' Congregational church in Ongar, white brick, big pediment, in 1833; it must have been one of his first commissions. In 1865 and in 1870 I. C. Gilbert added ancillary buildings and refurbished the interior, and in 1866 Gilbert and Fothergill Watson were responsible for Ongar's Nonconformist and Anglican cemetery chapels: "exceptionally plain, but (unusually) semi-detached".<sup>40</sup>

By 1865 Gilbert was an established Nottingham architect with a portfolio of villas and Congregational churches, chiefly in the Midlands and south Lancashire, chiefly in shades of Early Gothic and Romanesque. It would be too much to call him a rogue or even a muscular architect, but the *Year Book* account of his Ryecroft Chapel, Ashton-under-Lyne, found "a beauty and a convenience peculiarly its own", and an originality "quite refreshing in these days of servile copyism and cheap ornamentation". At Ryecroft Gilbert had been challenged to preserve the integrity and beauty of Gothic without falling for the Anglican stereotype of nave and aisles: there was not "a single pillar or column throughout the whole edifice".<sup>41</sup> Gilbert painted in watercolours and his obituaryist noted "the artist hand" and mind in all his work. Thus in the 1840s, "when there were only four other architects in the town", he had designed Nottingham's "People's College ... in an early Gothic style ... grouping most lovingly with the adjoining somewhat severe specimens of domestic architecture built by the same architect some few years later", his widowed mother's house among them.<sup>42</sup>

That obituaryist was probably Nottingham's own rogue architect, the vigorously muscular and none-too-severe Watson Fothergill (1841-1928), who had worked with Gilbert on Ongar's cemetery chapels. Fothergill and Gilbert had a long if loose association and Fothergill had been Gilbert's pupil in the early 1860s.<sup>43</sup> Gilbert attracted muscular pupils; in the 1850s they included James Cubitt and Cubitt's future partner, Henry Fuller.<sup>44</sup>

39 G. R. Potts, *Biographical Guide to Darlington Architects, 1840-1914* (Sunderland: priv. undated (c. 1985), p. 53.

40 J. Bettley and N. Pevsner, *Essex: The Buildings of England* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 233-4.

41 *CYB* (1854), p. 276.

42 *Nottingham Journal* (7 March 1885). I am indebted to Mr K. Brand for this reference. J. Gilbert, *Autobiography and Other Memorials of Mrs Gilbert (formerly Ann Taylor)*, pp. 426-7.

43 Fothergill Watson was of Quaker stock; his mother became a Congregationalist; he became an Anglican and switched his name to Watson Fothergill. In 1886 he designed a public hall, Budworth Hall, for Ongar, supposedly "Elizabethan" (Bettley and Pevsner, *Essex: The Buildings of England*, p. 234). I am indebted for much information about this to Mr K. Brand. See also K. Brand, *Watson Fothergill: Architect* (2nd ed., Nottingham: Nottingham Civic Society, n.d.), p.3.

44 C. Binfield, *The Contexting of a Chapel Architect: James Cubitt 1836-1912* (London: The Chapels Society, 2001), pp. 17, 29.

### XI: "Art and Religion"

There was a third notable Gilbert brother, Josiah (1814-1892), artist, engraver, and author. Josiah Gilbert was a professional artist, trained at the Royal Academy Schools, exhibiting fifty times between 1837 and 1865 at the Academy and the Society of British Artists, acquiring a reputation as a portrait painter, chiefly of children and chiefly in pastel, with a superior clientele.<sup>45</sup> He was also the last of the engraving "Taylors of Ongar". Much of his childhood had been spent in Ongar with his grandfather Taylor, educated in what he recalled as that "remarkable spectacle – a literary and artistic workshop"<sup>46</sup> From the early 1840s he lived near Ongar, associated with his cousin Isaac Taylor in a thwarted attempt to mechanize line-engraving. That process succeeded when applied to calico-printing in Lancashire but Josiah remained in Ongar, continuing the family's Congregationalism when Isaac moved to Anglicanism.<sup>47</sup> Josiah became a deacon of Ongar's Congregational church and chaired the Essex Congregational Union, of which his grandfather had been a founder, in 1880.<sup>48</sup>

Josiah turned increasingly to writing: *The Dolomite Mountains* (with G. C. Churchill, 1864), *Cadore, or Titian's Country* (1869), *Landscape in Art before Claude and Salvator* (1885) and, posthumously, *Nature, the Supernatural and the Religion of Israel* (1893). This last had been seen through the press by his old friend, H. R. Reynolds, President of Cheshunt College since 1860.<sup>49</sup> Twenty years earlier Gilbert had been one of two laymen to contribute to the second of two volumes of essays, *Ecclesia*, which Reynolds had edited.<sup>50</sup>

With one exception *Ecclesia's* contributors were older, weightier, and more established than the six religious republicans.<sup>51</sup> Most of them were, or soon became, denominational leaders. Their aims, however, were not dissimilar. Their modest ambition was to "indicate some of the ideas touching the Divine life in man, the incarnation of God, and the worship, the revelation, and the Church of the living God, to which Congregationalism in part owes its origin"; "to show the extent to which it is reasonable for Congregationalists to claim the designation of Christian and Catholic"; and to introduce "other questions of deep

45 B. Stewart and M. Cutten, *The Dictionary of Portrait Painters in Britain up to 1920* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 1997), pp. 211-2.

46 J. Taylor (ed.), *Autobiography and Other Memorials of Mrs Gilbert (formerly Ann Taylor)*, p. 260.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 390-5, 398-401, 420.

48 *CYB* (1881), p. 211.

49 For Henry Robert Reynolds (1825-1896), see *ODNB*; C. Binfield, "'A saint if ever there was one': Henry Robert Reynolds (1825-1896)", in P. Clarke and T. Claydon (eds), *Saints and Sanctity: Studies in Church History*, no. 47 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), pp. 318-333.

50 H. R. Reynolds (ed.), *Ecclesia: Church Problems Considered, in a Series of Essays* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1870); *idem*, *Ecclesia: A Second Series of Essays on Theological and Ecclesiastical Questions by Various Writers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1871).

51 The exception was the other lay contributor, A. S. Wilkins (1843-1905), Cambridge classicist and Professor of Latin at Owens' College from 1869; he wrote on "Our Nation's Universities".

practical interest, bearing upon the culture and education of Nonconformists ... discussed by gentlemen who have earned peculiar right to deal with them".<sup>52</sup> Gilbert's essay, "Art and Religion", fell into the last category although in fact it met each criterion.

Gilbert, heir to generations of artist-craftsman practitioners, wrote with the passionately complex fluency of the Ruskinian preacher. He was enthralled by geology. Sculptural mass gripped him. Comparisons in architecture, art, culture, language, race, and religion entranced him. He was an anthropologist in the making, exercised by origins, by the ebb and flow, the dialectic, of evolution. He was well, if idiosyncratically, educated. He was well-read and kept abreast of popular science: Max Müller, Sir John Lubbock's *The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man* (1870), Sabine Baring-Gould's *Origin and Development of Religious Belief* (two volumes, 1869-1870). He was well-travelled, especially in southern Germany and Italy, but also the Near and Middle East.

Gilbert's thesis was Blackburn's writ large but there was a painstaking comprehensiveness about it. He deserves attention because it was the work of an informed layman, a professional artist, from the heart of a tradition which had always made a point of keeping art in its place. That was Gilbert's point too but his application of it resulted in a nuanced encouragement for Nonconformists to have their architectural and artistic cake and eat it. It led him on occasion in some startling directions. His theme lay in a suggestive, deceptively conventional, epigraph from the Wisdom of Solomon (14:18): "Also the singular diligence of the artificer did help to set forward the ignorant to more superstition".<sup>53</sup>

This was a bold text for a man to take whose living depended on art but Gilbert's essay diligently explored its implications. It was in fact more of a sermon on Wisdom welling up from what Watson Fothergill would have called the artist mind. Thus Gilbert contemplated the blue sky. To the scientist that was

simply systems of reflections of the solar light from floating atoms in the atmosphere. Yet to most of us the blue sky is a sufficient fact, and so too, to most of us, the sublime anthropomorphism of Genesis, picturing the Divine Will in operation, according to a purpose, upon primeval elements, is also sufficient ...<sup>54</sup>

That captures Gilbert's stance. It was what allowed this apologist for art to remain a scriptural Congregationalist and yet flourish among contemporaries. Its spirit catered for origin, evolution, comparison, and resolution, consonant with artistic and creative reason. For Gilbert, representative art was that fascination for Victorians, a language. It was "through clothing itself in material form, a mode of

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52 Reynolds, *Ecclesia: A Second Series of Essays on Theological and Ecclesiastical Questions by Various Writers*, pp. i-ii.

53 J. Gilbert, "Art and Religion", in Reynolds, *Ecclesia...Second Series*, p. 173.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

utterance addressed to the eye”: it was “an exercise of that creative faculty which belongs to him who was formed in the image of the Divine Creator”. Thus “a building worthy of the name approaches more nearly a work of creation”, a pure expression of human thought “moulded not only to the wants, but to the ideal requirements of men”.<sup>55</sup> This allowed Gilbert to project antiquity into the present: “Every vacant fane, every violated tomb, almost every carved or painted fragment, belongs to the photograph left by the spiritual light that was in them”.<sup>56</sup> He was ready to begin his narrative.

Its spine, elaborating the Apocryphal spirit of *Wisdom*, was the evolution and intertwining of fetish and idol, interpreted through cycles of growth and decay to the present day. A fetish was the universal localized into an artefact, “a disease of religious life, rather than a living germ”; an idol was the invention of Art, “a thing of civilization, an intellectual product”.<sup>57</sup> An idol was a shaping of God. God should be housed. There must be a temple and that implied hierarchy, mystery, and ritual. There could be no doubt as to the role of Art in the evolution of religion, neither could there be doubt as to its role in religion’s decay; the idol invariably became the fetish.

Gilbert traced and compared developments in Egypt (its architecture “cavernous and massive as a stone quarry”), Assyria (its buildings “terraced like a hill-side in the plain”), and India (“the growth of a tropical woodland”), each picturing a region, each “moulded by a particular cast of religious thought”.<sup>58</sup> Egypt’s architecture reflected class, and the complete union of religion and state; Assyria’s presented “life in all its energy”, it was more masculine, it was a *lay* art.<sup>59</sup> The democracy of true art was beginning to emerge in Gilbert’s thesis.

So to Greece, whose gods were “a social circle of superb intelligences, busy with the elements, busy amongst men, part rulers, part playmates”, their temple “a house in which symmetry and cheerful grace were the ruling characteristics”.<sup>60</sup> The result was more deadlock than equipoise: “Art cannot thrive when Religion is supreme. Religion dies if Art comes uppermost. But Art does not long survive” – and in Greece “paganism of the highest culture worked itself out into atheism, superstition, and sensuality”.<sup>61</sup>

The narrative turns next to the Hebrews, first their Tabernacle (that meeting-place and sanctuary focused on an empty space) and then their Temple (a work of greater art which still enshrined “the awful vacuum”) and the inevitable consequence: the fact that the prime Hebrew belief in an ever-present Deity, “and yet of an invisible presence”, could only be met by the conservation of a particular spot, with the embodiment of an artefact, the Ark, that “one special object ... to which

55 Ibid., pp. 173-4.

56 Ibid., p. 176.

57 Ibid., p. 179.

58 Ibid., p. 191.

59 Ibid., p. 189.

60 Ibid., p. 191.

61 Ibid., p. 192.

a fetishistic feeling did strongly cling".<sup>62</sup> Unless, that is, there could be safeguards – the ark, for instance, regarded as a memorial, “a perpetual sign of the covenant which had been made with the fathers” and safeguarded beyond peradventure by the “noble order of prophets – those great lay-preachers of righteousness who ... kept up a direct intercourse between men and God ... by the living word”.<sup>63</sup> Gilbert steadily combines his artist’s critique with a Congregational commentary, persevering with the paradoxes of Art and Scripture, teasing out his Protestant simplicities and confronting the challenge of inspiration: “For the divine scheme of worship was liable to perversion. Why should we hesitate to say so? Be it divine, yet the instrument was human ... What divine appointment is there that is not perverted to evil?” So even here, Art “corrupted itself, it waxed old, and was ready to vanish away”.<sup>64</sup>

It was replaced by “the individual character of the new dispensation”. It was now “no longer a nation that was dealt with, but a Church, an association of individuals called to be saints, called one by one, and yielding personally to the call ... standing alone with God”; and Christianity evolved “as a principle in continual conflict; and continually overcome for a time, or modified by that which it encountered”, cast into the world as a leaven and “so gradually leavening the whole lump, that for ages the characteristics of the lump predominated”.<sup>65</sup> The leaven and the lump now enter Gilbert’s thesis, to become a persistent theme.

The Christian dispensation was at first the negation of Art: “A bare upper room in Jerusalem ... a Prophet ... The glory of the Lord ... beams forth in the words and acts of a marred and sorrowful man”.<sup>66</sup> There was no symbolism beyond water and bread. There were no sacred places. And then, in an elevated seat for the Word, in a table for the supper, in the open emergence of an organized hierarchy, and in the appropriation of useful public buildings, Art found its place. And the consequence?

... the figure of the Lord, – no longer the loving Shepherd of the sheep – became the bearded, stern-faced Ruler, robed, enthroned, colossal, and filling the far-off apse with His majesty; while prophets and apostles made the pomp of His court.<sup>67</sup>

And as fear “became more and more the instrument” so “the “Rex tremendae majestatis” assumes a throne of flame; His hand grasps thunderbolts; a river of fire flows beneath His feet; the very angels tremble; and (strange anomaly) the ministers of Christ are demons, who do His pleasure in hurling the wicked into torment ... [But] the glaring mosaic only echoed what the [contemporary] pulpit fulminated. The curses congealed upon the walls” and “Christian” Art became

62 Ibid., pp. 195, 196.

63 Ibid., p. 197.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., pp. 198-9.

66 Ibid., p. 199.

67 Ibid., p. 202.

“an engine in the hands of power”.<sup>68</sup> It created “that hell which dwelt before the medieval mind and has descended to our own day”:

would the suffering of the soul have been so lost in the suffering of the body, if Art had not supplied the red tongues of flame? The “oven of God’s anger” might have remained but the powerful metaphor of an ancient prophet, had not Art depicted its red-hot vault and bars of iron ... [and that] creation almost as terrible ... that grotesque figure which for ages held possession of the European mind as the Evil One ...<sup>69</sup>

In fact Art degenerated Heaven as well as Hell. “Those ludicrous fledglings, the bodiless cherubs, can only be attributed to inanity of Art” and – most dangerous because most enchanting – there was Art’s treatment of “the sacred Virgin – the holy Mother”. This restored “that female element in religious worship which had so large a place in paganism” and thus “Art seized the gracious opportunity granted by dogmas and filled every fane with that fascinating presence”.<sup>70</sup> The Virgin Mother. “Our Lady”. first of ladies, Queen of Heaven, shone in Art and reigned on earth, her shrines supplying “material shape to many an ecstatic vision”, as by contrast the throned Christ, King or Judge of men, turned into the “human suffering victim”. The crucifix was held aloft, the element of joy was banished. “Art became thoroughly sensational”, and in that “completest and grandest product of ... this Art-thought”, the medieval cathedral, the Christian hall of assembly was “brought into singular union with the temple of Paganism”. Here were “different degrees of Fetish power, always depending upon tangibleness”.<sup>71</sup>

Yet here too works the leaven, and here we come to the Puritan nub of Gilbert’s argument as the religious roundabout of Art gathers speed. Gilbert pictures “that primitive company of men and women, with their ministering elders, edifying one another, gathering together round the table of the Lord, and abjuring priesthood and sacrifice excepting the Eternal Priest and the one sacrifice of Himself”. He sees it disappearing “with the departing radiance of the primitive age” to be replaced by “again an altar, again a priest, again the mysteries and the sanctity of the inner fane!” He sees both sacrifice and god, found there in “that piece of wafered bread!” It is there, with that “most homely of all symbols”, and “on that altar that was once a table, we discern with horror under the harmless wafer the demon leer of the Fetish!” This time another leaven had been at work, a “leaven of hell, not of heaven ... travestying the words of the Lord”, to make “the reception of Christ, the indwelling of Christ, the nourishment through Christ, to consist in an act of deglutition and digestion – the food for the soul as carnal as the food for the body!”<sup>72</sup>

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid., p. 203.

70 Ibid., p. 204.

71 Ibid., pp. 205-7, 209.

72 Ibid., pp. 209-11.

The challenge for primitive, scriptural Christians was clear: "Having begun in the Spirit, the Church of the Spirit has sought to be made perfect by the flesh".<sup>73</sup> The outworking of that challenge, glory battling with decadence, could be seen in Gothic architecture and its implications for representative art. It was there in "the imitation of Nature's free, graceful, and delicate handiwork", in the "mystery of 'glimmering bowers and glades'", when architecture "lifted its roof far above the heads of the worshippers, as if to give room for the ascending breath of prayer ... [and] towered to the clouds in pinnacle and spire, as if emulating those mountain summits which seem to dwell in heaven". It was also there when architecture dwindled "into the mere fetishism of the building" and when artists began to paint "their own mistresses as virgin saints". It was memorably there in the work of Michelangelo, "pagan, but not sensuous ... personal, melancholic, spiritual; and in this sense ... the great Protestant of Art", creating "pagan forms of physical strength and beauty, possessed and energized by the Christian ideas of suffering and sorrow, and by the powers of the world to come"; and unable to save Art or Religion, for the "Fetish slime soon destroys Art".<sup>74</sup> So it was that Gothic architecture lost "simplicity and beauty" and "Rome found in Old Rome that which suited her better, and developed the bold, bad bigness of St. Peter's, a not inappropriate temple for a religion that was imitating all the vices of paganism and falling into the same decay".<sup>75</sup>

It was not quite full circle, for the true Christian leaven worked on. It was found in the "assertion of the rights of the individual soul in the intercourse with God".<sup>76</sup> It was found, (here Gilbert wrote as a fifth-generation engraver), in the boost given by the "invention of wood-block and copper-plate prints", so that "every one could have his private gallery of sacred pictures". Here was Art – that of Dürer and Holbein – "for the thousand in their homes". Here was Art finding a new field in Nature, as "portraiture came into vogue, animal painting, still-life, and especially landscape painting". That last spoke especially to Gilbert's sensibility: "For the first time we notice a recognition of the infinite pathos and ministry to human thought of natural scenery"; and here he warmed to the genius of Titian, among the last of the great Christian-pagan painters and "the earliest of the painters of landscape".<sup>77</sup>

That was on the continent. What of England, that "land of cathedrals" (historical museums "stored ... by the natural selection of ages") and of parish churches, all "closely linked with the natural piety and the home delight of every Englishman's heart"? Here "every principle and detail of the architecture, every line of the art ..." was "hostile to this gust of the Spirit blowing where it listed – was a protest against this religion of the individual heart, drawn from the Holy Book and propagated by

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73 Ibid., p. 210.

74 Ibid., pp. 213-4.

75 Ibid., p. 215.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., pp. 216-7. In *Adore, or Titian's Country* (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1869). Gilbert had set out to show "the relation of Titian and Landscape Art to the great movements of the time".

the living voice":<sup>78</sup> and yet here too the true Reformation left its mark as a different sort of landscape bore witness, for alongside every tower and steeple,

and ever in greater number, certain ugly, wide-spanned roofs, and walls pierced with windows which are a travesty either of classic or of Gothic forms: or buildings which, if of later date, and greater pretensions than these, are yet unmistakably different from the national edifices. These tasteless erections, deformities for the most part in every lane and street, are a unique feature in the aspect of England. No other country shows the like; and these are what the Reformation built for itself.<sup>79</sup>

Here was a startling cultural paradox. For here was life, "a personal and intense conviction", which everywhere built its "meeting-houses", where Christians met with each other and with God. Their ruling principle was individual responsibility, their primary unit comprised "the man or woman who had acknowledged Christ, and a certain number of whom formed the 'Church'", in which the man, "the soul of the man – was everywhere put before the thing, however sacred".<sup>80</sup> Gilbert found the "intense realism and spiritual thoroughness of all this ... appalling to contemplate – as the demands of the Sermon on the Mount are appalling", but it was in harmony with Pentecost's new soul-life and the "Nonconformists of England ... claim nothing less than this high parentage for their Churches".<sup>81</sup>

Much in Gilbert's account is derivative. One wonders, indeed, how widely it was read. It remains nonetheless a remarkably full statement of how a Puritan artist might, in fidelity to his tradition and without succumbing uncritically to Pugin or the Ecclesiologists, accommodate the historic elements of art and architecture and apply them to his times and cast of mind. For now he was ready to put Art firmly in its proper place. He could recognise that "Art expression" is an essential requirement of human nature, "an utterance that cannot be denied" but its true expression required "FITNESS – adaptation to use".<sup>82</sup> Fitness determined size, stability, and form. Consider form: its governing principles should be "the equality of the assembly before Him who is worshipped, and the absence of any special sanctity in person, place, or thing, in His eyes who ordained the destruction of the once Holy Place". The ruling consideration must be Truth. How acceptable was the cruciform plan? For all its symbolic allure, it lent itself "to the special sacredness of a part". Or was the parallelogram preferable? Yet even here, the interior columns might get in the way and "in the apse there was a danger".<sup>83</sup>

Here Gilbert's alertness to historical comparisons came to his aid. He saw in Islam, or in Buddhism, types of parallel to the Reformation. Buddhism was

78 Gilbert, "Art and Religion", pp. 220, 221.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 222.

80 *Ibid.*, pp. 223-4.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 224.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 227.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 228.

a revolt against Brahmanical materialism; Islam was a revolt against idolatry within the Christian fold. Islam provided “an emphatic instance of The Prophet ... destroying what the priest has set up”, his “burning words recalling men to the worship of the One Almighty”. And when in time the mosque emerged as “a place for prayer and preaching only”, its square plan proved ideal for the company of equal believers and its natural roof, the dome, was “one of the noblest of art conceptions ... another sky spreading over all worshippers, and expressing alike the unity of the object worshipped, and the unity of those who worship”. Certainly the mosque had its taint of fetishism – the “localized sanctity” in the “niche that marks the direction of Mecca” – but even so, faith here projected itself in an “entirely architectural, beautiful, and noble” art, developing a new style, the arabesque, “exquisite complexities of curve and angle, and leaf and flower, and Arabic letter”.<sup>84</sup> Something of the mosque’s aptness was echoed in the shape of Italian baptisteries – the octagonal form, for instance, of that of San Giovanni, Florence, so admirably “disposed for congregational purposes”.<sup>85</sup>

Size and form will dictate the character of a building’s exterior; climate and available materials will relate to it; all should bear on a style “suitable to national characteristics, to historical associations, to the type of civilization”, always in harmony with its purpose. Where that purpose is “the common worship of a multitude, invoking the divine presence”, it demands dignity, with “unity and simplicity of form”, a point “perhaps less understood than any other principle of architecture by those who have felt constrained to depart from ecclesiastical tradition”.<sup>86</sup>

What qualities should be sought in their buildings by those who have felt so constrained? Gilbert began by reminding his readers of the roof, the element so emphasized by Ruskin that “really constitutes a building” and “without which the four walls are meaningless”. Though it was a “glory of medieval architecture”, their roof did not have to be medieval. The oriental dome, for example, displayed “a kind of roof, majestic, simple, beautiful, and especially in harmony with that form of worship which calls forth the prayer and song of a multitude”.<sup>87</sup> The qualities almost suggested themselves: harmony, beauty, mystery. Beauty was not the same as ornament any more than mystery was the same as darkness. Beauty lay in “proportion, and the simplest lines”, breaking up “the heavy massiveness of parts, which, as in St. Peter’s, are the very vulgarity of size”; it might also involve elaboration of detail and “imitate the delicacy and tenderness” of Nature.<sup>88</sup> Mystery was inherent in religion, given an invisible God, an invisible state, and “aspirations after that which is not yet revealed”, but mystery should not suggest darkness when God is light, and it should no more imply “dim religious light” than light implied glare.<sup>89</sup>

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84 Ibid., pp. 218-9, 220.

85 Ibid., p. 228.

86 Ibid., p. 229.

87 Ibid., pp. 229, 230.

88 Ibid., p. 230.

89 Ibid., p. 231.

When it came to pictorial adornment, the professional artist met the Congregational deacon, perhaps inconclusively: "All things we may consider are permitted to us if we are not brought under the power of any". There was scriptural precedent. "Nothing could be more vividly anthropomorphic ... than the language and belief permitted to the Hebrews respecting Jehovah; and Christians ... are encouraged to picture to themselves a Father". Why not, therefore, depict the ideal of Paternity or the reality of the Incarnation – of historical scenes from the Lord's life? The key was balance. The "hard literalness, and consequent degradation, of a spiritual fact, when presented in form and colour", could be as harsh as a doctrine which, "consigned too rigorously to verbal definition, solidifies in process of time into an impracticable tenet". Beware of absurdity: "'Riding upon the wings of the wind' is grand as poetry, but its incongruities stare us in the face when put upon canvas". Beware especially of "the localizing power of all such representations", for the encouragement of worship in which the "Universal Presence disappears before the local presence" changes it into a Fetish.<sup>90</sup> Here Gilbert drew on his travels:

The water that serves for the common use of a village in Tyrol flows from the wound in the side of a life-size image of the Saviour; pails and dishes stand under it! What remains to such a symbol except the superstition which turns it into a local Fetish?<sup>91</sup>

Here too Gilbert came to his judiciously accommodating conclusion. Art in church, whether picture or architecture, "should be limited to the production of that fitness which acts with the gentle suasion of sympathy ... Art should never attempt to rule our thought, but only to sympathize with and cherish its aspirations". The architecture which did this best tended to be that which he had just criticized for encouraging Christian fetishism, and the architecture which did it worst was that currently favoured by the "spiritual forces of Christianity". This was a conundrum soluble by a discerning reason. The *architectural propriety* of older buildings could be dissociated from any lingering fetishism; there was "no reason why Gothic or Lombardic forms of roof, of window, of column, should not be applied to buildings in which no trace of that fetishism is permitted".<sup>92</sup>

For Nonconformists were people of their time. They partook "of the art-culture of the nation". In the spirit of their age they too easily adapted forms running counter to their beliefs and leading to inconsistency, even a "ludicrous bathos", as when the organ was "incontinently thrust" into "the holy place adapted for the altar" and the pulpit, placed in church at the side so as not to impede the view of the altar, now in chapel merely revealed a row of singers, all showing "small credit to the skill of the architect, or the intelligence of the people". Gilbert deplored the "machine-made imitations of ancient ornament thickly encrusted over a building". He preferred to return to "the plain unadorned barn of a 'Bethel'", but in Bethel

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90) *Ibid.*, pp. 231, 232.

91) *Ibid.*, pp. 233-4.

92) *Ibid.*, pp. 234-5.

he found possibility: "What sort of Bethel was it that that plain man Jacob – so inferior to the chivalrous Abraham, or the intellectual Isaac – set up at first, and yet found it the very gate of heaven?"<sup>93</sup> Perhaps, through such a gate, "All that was beautiful in Gothic remains to be appropriated by a purer faith". That was good stewardship. He went further. Precious types of moral beauty were to be found in "the thousand years' accumulation of portraitures of our Lord" and in "that ideal of purity and maternal sorrow which the long devotion of Art to the Virgin has provided for us", but here was no longer the whole of Art.<sup>94</sup> In the present age, now that "All hard lines of belief are softened away", representational art might properly give way to music and poetry: "'A Christian Year' now supersedes the Pisan frescoes".<sup>95</sup>

There Gilbert left it. The conflict was far from over. It was strong in the "fetishism of the sacred bread", where the Host was not representative of God but was Divinity itself, the Lord upon the altar, a "real presence" in a material object, the purest fetish and thus the very essence of idolatry, dangerously adaptable to the scientific spirit and jargon of the day.<sup>96</sup> He ended as the optimistic heir to his line-engraving ancestry, reminding his readers that Art had always possessed "a strong individual element", feeding in particular the "abundant stream of art illustration that floods our own time". Much of this was Biblical. It was intended for private use, devoid either of Church authority or fetishistic value, yet helping "the mind to realize events ... of ever-present moments". Its products neither distracted from worship nor guided it, but they opened up a great and legitimate evangelistic field. One thing was essential. It had produced "Christ in the Temple", the "Light of the World", "Christian Consolation". It brought man back to the "old vital question" of the great transaction between himself and God". It was genius.<sup>97</sup>

CLYDE BINFIELD

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93 *Ibid.*, p. 235.

94 *Ibid.*, pp. 236, 237.

95 *Ibid.*, p. 238.

96 *Ibid.*, pp. 238, 239.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 240, 241.

## REVIEWS

***Public Religious Disputation in England, 1558-1626.*** By Joshua Rodda. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014 (republished Abingdon: Routledge, 2016). Pp. x + 232. £93.99. ISBN 978-1-47241-555-4.

***Catholic Renewal and Protestant Resistance in Marian England: Catholic Christendom, 1300-1700.*** Edited by Elizabeth Evenden and Vivienne Westbrook. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015. Pp. xviii + 329. £93.99. ISBN 978-0-75466-162-7.

England's Reformation can be seen as an argument that was never completely won, either by Catholics or Protestants. In different ways, the two books under review illustrate the interminable nature of the period's religious quarrels, as well as how those quarrels were shaped by individual personality. As Joshua Rodda comments, disputes could be "more about the participants than the *quaestio*; more about victory than revealing truth". Yet, conversely, those participants can sometimes appear no more than mouthpieces for the formal requirements that governed the expression of competing opinions.

Disputations – the debates, typically public, between those of differing religious positions – are much invoked by scholars working on the early modern period, but seldom studied in detail. Thus, Rodda's study fills a gap, and its expositions of disputation protocol will be useful to students of literature as well as historians. Disputations were a means of asserting both religious truth and academic prowess, and the invitation to dispute was frequently an offer one could not refuse. That said, not everyone respected schoolmen's modes of argument. The separatist Henry Barrow declared: "I desired to reason after a Christia[n] manner, according to truth, though ... I would not bynde the majestie of the Script[ure] to logical forms".

While Barrow was in a minority, there was wide awareness that human reason and learning were imperfect ways of approaching faith-related matters; conversion was, after all, in God's gift. For this and other reasons, Rodda's book raises interesting questions about the motives of the audience members who made a silent majority on such occasions; might one come hoping to be converted, or to be confirmed in one's current views, or simply to be thrilled by the emotionally compelling spectacle of authority up for grabs? In an age when playwrights writing for the public stage dealt with religious matter obliquely at best, the element of courtroom drama in disputation must surely have added to its appeal.

Protestants disputed with each other: Rodda's book concludes with an account of the 1626 York House conference, a debate between representatives of the Calvinist and Arminian strands in the Church of England. But the highest-profile disputations in the previous period pitted Catholic against Protestant. Perhaps the best-known of these, between the Jesuit Edmund Campion and a posse of Protestant churchmen, was one which Campion himself had called for in his famous "Brag"; yet it only took place after his capture, and in conditions of conspicuous unfairness. Without books, and debilitated by imprisonment, Campion complained that "these

conferences are unequal, both in respect of the suddainnesse of them, as also for the want of such necessary helpes as were fitte and convenient". But perhaps one can hardly blame Campion's Protestant opponents for handicapping such a formidable disputant.

If Campion had been of a different generation, England's best-known early modern Jesuit might well not have been a Jesuit at all, given that the Catholic revival which took place under Mary Tudor owed little to the Order. Mary's reign, so inconveniently disrupting England's passage towards Protestantism, has always invited counterfactual speculations – not least because the common notion of Mary's failure as a political and religious leader is at odds with much of the evidence. The burning of Protestant martyrs casts a long shadow over Mary's reign, but it was also characterised by more positive features. As Elizabeth Evenden writes in the introduction of *Catholic Revival and Protestant Resistance in Marian England*, "there is, perhaps, an element of truth to the old adage that the only thing Mary did wrong was to die when she did".

The fact that Edward VI died when he did, and that his possible Protestant successor Lady Jane Grey fell victim to the succession crisis precipitated by his death – as chronicled by Dale Hoak in this volume's first chapter – could certainly have been fatal to the hopes of English Protestants. The three succeeding chapters illustrate the robustness of Marian reform and renewal.

Elizabeth Evenden points to England's involvement in international Catholic reform through Mary's husband, Philip of Spain; Ceri Law describes the 1557 visitation of Cambridge University, designed to encourage Catholic orthodoxy and eradicate the memory of the Edwardian Reformation; Thomas M. Mayer describes the close attention paid to cathedrals by Mary and Cardinal Reginald Pole. All help to refute the notion, much touted by an earlier generation of historians, that Mary and her advisors were blind to the reformers' challenge:

One might even say that the Marian regime spearheaded a counter-reformation, implying not merely the internal reform of Catholicism but a conscious polemical engagement with Protestant energies. The term is used in William Wizeman's article, "The Marian Counter-Reformation in Print": a title which pays tribute to A. F. Allison and D. M. Rogers's monumental bibliography *The Contemporary Printed Literature of the English Counter-Reformation*, and underscores the recent scholarly stress on the relationship between print and religious change. Ian Gadd argues that a 1558 bill to regulate the press, which never made it into law because of Mary's death, may indicate a more proactive response to printed matter than the censorship for which the regime is best known; Scott C. Lucas discusses the way in which the rule of law, as opposed to the expression of monarchical will, was used by Mary's supporters to reinforce her claim to the crown, then appropriated by her opponents as they argued against the legitimacy of her policies.

This looks forward to Part III, "Enemies of the Marian Order", in which Protestant resistance is highlighted. John F. McDiarmid examines the career and writings of Sir John Cheke, who was captured on the Continent, imprisoned in the Tower of London and persuaded to recant his Protestant faith. Another Marian exile, John Ponet – a more bellicose, less nicodemite personality than Cheke –

is considered by Andrew Hadfield. And since John Foxe has to figure even in revisionist assessments of Mary's reign. Vivienne Westbrook analyses the story of an early Marian martyr, John Rogers, as it was rewritten over successive editions of *Acts and Monuments*. Rogers is best remembered for washing his hands in the flame "as one feling no smart", and in later versions of the story, Foxe ramped up Rogers's exemplary fortitude by describing his refusal to be moved at the sight of his wife and ten children on the way to Smithfield.

This emphasis on the contingencies of historical memorialisation finds an echo in the last essay in the volume, Carolyn Colbert's study of Mary's funeral sermon, in which Colbert reflects: "Various factions and personalities compete to produce representations of a monarch in life and in death". This is as true in our own age as in Tudor England. While the contributors to this volume are largely in agreement with each other as to the qualities of Mary's reign, they conduct a bracing, often polemical dressing-down of earlier scholars whose more dismissive assessments owe much to the anti-Catholic discourse of a more distant past. We may not have formal disputations in our own time, but historical debate sometimes helps one imagine how these must have felt.

ALISON SHELL

***Philip Doddridge and the Shaping of Evangelical Dissent.* By Robert Strivens. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015. Pp. x + 201. £75.00. ISBN 9-781472-440754 (also available in ebk – PDF and ebk – ePUB versions with different ISBNs).**

The pre-eminent position of Philip Doddridge in eighteenth century Dissent is unquestioned, but what that position is, precisely, has been a matter of debate for a long time. Because of his refusal to subscribe to any humanly-devised test of faith, and his open-ended methods of teaching at the Northampton Academy, should he be regarded as a precursor of the rational dissent that emerged fully in the second half of the eighteenth century? Or, rather, should he be seen as laying the foundations for an evangelical dissent that remained loyal to its Puritan inheritance without insisting on the finer points of dispute about "Calvinism", in the form that high Calvinism assumed as the century developed? If the polar ends of the spectrum are posed in that way, it is difficult to find a plausible mid-point. Dr Strivens presents an answer by examining the roots of Doddridge's theology, before examining his letters, which, thanks to Geoffrey Nuttall's exhaustive *Calendar*, makes the context for any answer easier to elucidate and understand.

Thus, after an Introduction setting the scene and reviewing the current literature, he offers a general introduction to the state of Dissent at the end of Queen Anne's reign: and then discusses what might be called the "inheritance of Richard Baxter", and more interestingly the differences between them: Doddridge was not so concerned with the fear of antinomianism that characterised Baxter, but rather emphasised freedom of the will; likewise Strivens notes Doddridge's emphasis on the "covenant of redemption", notwithstanding Baxter's hesitations. In chapters

3 and 4, on the relative influence of Locke and Watts, Strivens concludes that Doddridge is content to rely on Locke for his philosophical base, but prefers Watts as a guide for determining the relative roles of natural law, natural theology, and reason in theological thought. Although at first sight these opening chapters seem rather detailed and distant from the wider issues of the dissenting world, in fact, they determine the answer to the underlying question posed above. While Doddridge had no reservations about the use of reason, he would not allow reason to trump revelation; and the unwillingness to go all the way into rationalism established the dividing line between Doddridge's personal position and that of those Arian-tending dissenters.

After the thoroughness of these chapters, the relative shortness of the one on "Preaching Evangelicalism" was rather disappointing. This may have resulted from lack of evidence on a comparable scale; but it probably has more to do with a reluctance to draw a distinction between "heart religion" and the straightforward emotionalism of some of the preaching of Whitefield and the Wesleys. If there is a weakness in the book, it is here. Despite the emphasis on personal religion in Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, or even *The Family Expositor*, there is nothing quite to compare with the power of the *Sermons* of Whitefield or the Wesley brothers; certainly Philip's hymns do not compare in quality to those of Charles Wesley. (In fact, there is nothing here on Doddridge's hymns at all.) The chapter on Spirituality notes without comment the fact that Doddridge was ready to draw on Anglican and indeed Catholic sources, (as so many evangelicals did), but also that Doddridge regarded Holy Communion as the enacted climax to preaching. From this links are readily and interestingly drawn between Doddridge's concern for church order among Independent churches – something which Wesley explicitly disavowed, saying that church order had to adapt to contemporary needs (while insisting that, during his lifetime, only episcopally-ordained Wesleyan preachers could preside at the Lord's Table). But it is the final chapter on "Doddridge and his Circle" that provides the clinching evidence for the view that those closest to Doddridge were not those moving towards Unitarianism, but those who were moderates on the traditional side of the divide; and that is simply the fact that the proportion of letters to and from that group far outnumbered the radicals. In that context it is interesting to reflect that at the very end of his life, Doddridge was seeking the support of ministers from Northamptonshire eastwards for some kind of organised effort at revival. If one considers the significance of Northamptonshire for both Independents and Baptists in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, it is tempting to see at least the shadow of Doddridge hovering over them. Ministers with a day or two to spend on a sabbatical would gain from this book, but otherwise I think this is one for the specialist rather than the general reader.

DAVID M. THOMPSON

***Richard Baxter: The Gospel Truth.* By Alan C. Clifford. Norwich: Charenton Reformed Publishing, 2016. Pp. 459. £20.00. ISBN 978-0-99294-653-1 (hbk). £15.00. ISBN 978-0-99294-650-0 (pbk).**

Alan Clifford comes to his study of Baxter and the Puritans, through a Methodist upbringing and having passed through Anglicanism to his present status as a “minister-without-charge” of the Presbyterian Church of Wales. He came to admire the Puritans through the influence of Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He is pastor of Norwich Reformed Church and has written several books – on Philip Doddridge, Calvin and the Huguenots, and the Welsh Calvinistic preacher John Jones. Talysarn (1796-1857), among other works.

Here the first three chapters deal with Baxter’s friends, namely Matthew Sylvester, William Bates, Edmund Calamy and the fourth offers a vindication of Baxter (chiefly against the evangelical critic J. I. Packer). Clifford then includes under the title “Baxter’s Gospel” two tracts by Baxter. Lastly Clifford turns to Baxter’s Legacy, that is his interaction with the work of others by whom he means Calvin, John Davenant, Moise Amyraut, Matthew Henry, Edmund Calamy, Doddridge, Calvin and John Wesley, and John Jones, Talysarn.

The book includes footnotes, a bibliography and an index. It is the work of a committed theological conservative who wishes to defend Baxter from the attacks of those evangelicals who do not see his clear significance. Baxter is undoubtedly important, as serious scholars from all backgrounds recognise still.

ALAN ARGENT

***Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America.* By Michael P. Winship. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2018. Pp. xiv + 351. £20.00. ISBN 978-0-30012-628-0. Illustrated.**

This is a readable and informed account of Puritanism as it developed from roots in the earliest days of the Henrician Reformation. Described as “an introduction”, the relationships between England and New England are expertly and intricately handled, adding value to the narrative. The relationship between Presbyterians, (initially Calvinists seeking a particular settlement for a national church in England and offering an open sacramental table), and Congregationalists, (who sought a national agreement in theology, who were also theologically Calvinistic but practised a closed table as a result of their conscionable sense of who might constitute the true church), is particularly well-described. There is, perhaps, a salutary reminder of the sectarianism of early Congregationalists in both parts of the world, a point which serves to demonstrate how much Congregationalism developed in subsequent years.

As always, the reader is more than aware that to study Puritanism is to enter foreign territory. Events were interpreted as expressions of God’s anger or pleasure and human action could influence both – although it was helpless to effect one’s

eternal salvation, decided, it seems, in an eternal covenant between the Father and the Son. Violence was considered inevitable and could be employed to godly ends, leading those who wielded power into unedifying, but often effective collaboration, with the magistrate. While aimed at establishing the godly commonwealth, it often descended into scapegoating, into demonstration of power and authority and, as the close of this book shows, the truly remarkable, tragic and sinister (on both sides) Salem witch trials, and other similar events.

Whereas England, its secular leaders and its church, had all conspired to frustrate the Puritans' reforming zeal, self-governing colonies in New England became places where "unified Christian" communities could be established, or so they believed. How Old England continued to prevent progress in the New is expertly recounted in this book, seen often through the eyes of particular characters, not always those who played significant roles, but who nevertheless exemplify Puritan endeavour.

The author sees the "1689 settlement" – the so-called "Act of Toleration" – as marking the end of "Puritanism". This is the result of his argument that Puritanism – even in its Congregational form – sought reform of the Church of England. The 1689 Act, Winship argues, demonstrated that there would be no comprehensive settlement which acknowledged the insights of the various groups of Puritans and, as a result, it excluded them in their moderate as well as in their extreme forms. After 1689, they gradually mutated into denominations, broadly conceived. But the Act itself constituted a grudging acknowledgement that there would not be one Church *in* England.

It might be that "Puritan" should be understood more widely than this, but the author is persuasive. He outlines the differences which emerged in subsequent generations, demonstrating that there had been considerable developments between first, second and third generation Puritans. After 1689 it was not so much a re-definition of Puritanism as a re-definition of Congregationalism (through Revivalism and then a more liberal theology) and of Presbyterianism (in England through Arminian and then Arian tendencies) that occurred.

This is an excellent introduction to Puritanism. It also has a useful glossary and index.

ROBERT POPE

***The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions Volume IV: The Twentieth Century: Traditions in a Global Context.* Edited by Jehu J. Hanciles. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. xx + 449. £95.00. ISBN 978-0-19-968404-5.**

"By the later decades of the twentieth century the key events in world Christianity were increasingly taking place in Africa, Asia, and Latin America" (p. 287). So conclude Toivo Pilli and Ian M. Randall in their chapter on the "Free Church Traditions in Twentieth Century Europe". The conclusion is undeniable, and it

appears to be axiomatic to the framework and content of this fourth volume in Oxford University Press's five-volume history of Protestant Dissenting Traditions.

The starting point for the volume, as is made clear in the title, is global Christianity rather than any specific tradition of religious dissent. As a result, the definition of dissent is somewhat broad and perhaps only loosely associated with its emergence in history. For while "'Protestant Dissent' is understood and applied on the basis of lineage" (p. 10), "By the end of the [twentieth] century, Protestant Dissent had achieved not only its widest geographical reach but also the greatest genealogical distance from its point of origin" (p. 1). The point justifies the book's contents but it is not quite so clear that "Dissent" is the correct way to describe the movements described there. At the very least, "Dissent" is used in a different way to its use in English church history.

The book contains eighteen chapters divided into five parts. Each part is listed alphabetically, but placing "Africa" first reminds the reader of the shifts in global significance which occurred by the end of the twentieth century. "Asia and the Middle East" includes chapters about Korea, China and Protestants in Ottoman Syria. "America and Europe", gives most attention to United States and includes chapters on Southern Baptists and their relationship with Evangelicalism as well as one on the Twentieth-Century Black Church. Europe is considered in one chapter and secularization in England in another. The final two parts discuss Latin America and the Pacific, both of which give much space to discussion of Methodism.

Perhaps most striking of all is the prominence given to Pentecostalism as the primary expression of Protestant Dissent in twentieth-century global Christianity. Chapters discuss Pentecostalism in Africa, in Asia, in North America and Latin America, though not in Europe. Nevertheless, it is possible that more could have been made of historical Dissent's self-definition as "Free Church".

Fascinating as the volume is – and its insights into world Christianity are undeniable – it cannot be read without concluding that the part of British Christianity whose roots lie in this history of dissent now holds very little global significance. Whether it possesses sufficient strength and, indeed, desire to change such a situation is perhaps not important. How it continues to offer a distinctive witness in its own context, and whether it can do so, are far more pressing questions.

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