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CONTENTS

Editorial	514
Military Crises and Evangelical Opportunity in the Ministry of Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) by <i>Robert Strivens</i>	515
The Blackheath Group and the New Genevans by <i>Martin Camroux</i>	530
<i>The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society</i> through the Lens of Building by <i>Michael Powell</i>	547
Reviews by <i>Michael Hopkins, Donald W. Norwood, Stephen Orchard</i> and <i>Michael Powell</i>	563

EDITORIAL

The year 2022 is replete with jubilee. Remarkably, Queen Elizabeth II has already passed the seventieth anniversary of her accession to the throne, with official celebrations organised for later this year. In the context of my day job, the Cambridge Theological Federation celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, although Westminster College was not a founding member. Wesley House celebrates its centenary, while the 90th anniversary of the union of Wesleyan, Primitive and United Methodists will be marked. Furthermore, Westfield House (Lutheran) is celebrating its diamond jubilee. Further away, this year might be considered to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Zürich because on 9 March 1522 a group, including Ulrich Zwingli (who did not partake), met at the printer Christoph Froschauer's house and broke the Lenten fast. Significant as the rebellious, but intricately and deliberately planned "affair of the sausages" was, it is more likely that the Reformation in Zürich should be dated from 1525 when the Mass was replaced by a more simple celebration of the Lord's Supper. In many ways these events are formative for what became the Reformed tradition, and our own United Reformed Church will mark its fiftieth anniversary in 2022, though not without some reservation.

Hidden beneath the constancy and consistency that anniversaries display on their surface is the constant change that life presents, often disturbingly quick and frequently in ways beyond our control. As I write, we are into the second month of the cruel, reckless and indefensible attack by Russia on Ukraine (which, though shocking, could have been predicted). The talk is of escalation into conflict which, previously, we had only ever considered to be possible but unlikely (though it is not the first time that a world leader has strutted on the world stage and threatened nuclear attack). While COVID-19 continues to mutate and is currently spreading at an alarming rate, concern about the pestilence has given way to concern about war. In such days, the apocryphal tale that Martin Luther would plant a tree if he knew the world were to end tomorrow reminds us at least that life goes on even while everything around might be descending into chaos.

Our articles in this *Journal* point us to a variety of different, and possibly hopeful, vistas. Robert Strivens describes a Philip Doddridge who in some ways could not differentiate between providence and what he believed good for Britain. The ironies are highlighted and might say something to our own day. Martin Camroux evaluates debates between "ultra liberals" and the "neo Orthodox" in Congregationalism and concludes that they had more in common than they thought. This is a surprising but salutary message. Michael Powell offers an analysis of articles published in the *Journal* and what they say about the built environment. It reveals some fresh insights.

With this issue of the *Journal* Margaret Thompson steps down from an unnamed but crucial role. Alongside administrative assistance, she has provided invaluable copy-editing and proof-reading skills. I am grateful for all she has done, quietly and behind the scenes, to ensure the highest standards possible. We all wish her well as she steps back from this particular service.

We welcome Michael Powell as reviewer.

MILITARY CRISES AND EVANGELICAL OPPORTUNITY IN THE MINISTRY OF PHILIP DODDRIDGE (1702-51)¹

The various military crises through which Britain passed in the eighteenth century were often marked by ministers and preachers in sermons delivered on national days of thanksgiving or of prayer and fasting.² The themes addressed in these sermons possess a remarkable consistency: Warren Johnston's analysis of the subjects so covered over the long eighteenth century shows that ministers regularly spoke of God's providence and the blessings that it had brought the nation, the Protestant character of Britain and the need for its inhabitants to turn from national and personal sins, among other matters.³ Themes such as these have fed into more recent debates about the nature of, and the factors contributing to, British national identity in the eighteenth century, whether these be divine providence and a Protestant establishment, antagonism toward France and Roman Catholicism fuelled by war and commerce, or the interplay of the various forms of Protestantism represented in Britain during this period, as well as other, non-religious factors which went to shape notions of British identity at that time.⁴ Studies focusing on war sermons of the period have found similar themes regularly rehearsed. The role of divine providence, the significance of Protestantism and the importance of virtue were the themes that dominated the churches' responses to military crises in eighteenth-century Britain.⁵

In their discussions of these sermons, historians have sought to analyse the elements of what it meant to be British in the eighteenth century and the means by which a British identity was established, perpetuated or forged. Their

- 1 A shorter form of this paper was delivered at the Christianity and History Forum conference at All Nations Christian College, Ware, on 10 September 2021.
- 2 A detailed study of such days can be found in Philip Williamson et al. (eds), *National Prayers: Special Worship Since the Reformation. Volume 2: General Fasts, Thanksgivings and Special Prayers in the British Isles, 1689-1870* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017).
- 3 Warren Johnston, *National Thanksgivings and Ideas of Britain, 1689-1816* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020).
- 4 See J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics During the Ancien Regime* (2nd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); J. C. D. Clark, "Protestantism, Nationalism and National Identity, 1660-1832", in *Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), pp. 249-76; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (rev. edn., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Tony Claydon and Ian McBride (eds), *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c.1650-c.1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Andrew C. Thompson, "Early Eighteenth-Century Britain as a Confessional State", in H. Scott and B. Simms (eds), *Cultures of Power in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 86-109.
- 5 Gilles Teulié and Laurence Lux-Sterritt (eds), *War Sermons* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009); James J. Caudle, "The Defence of Georgian Britain: The Anti-Jacobite Sermon, 1715-46", in Keith A. Francis et al. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon, 1689-1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 245-57.

concerns have, accordingly, been primarily political, rather than theological or spiritual. While religious themes have played a significant part in these analyses, the religious purposes motivating the sermons and other works in which such themes were expressed have not been the main focus of attention. A closer attention to the manner in which Christian ministers responded to these crises will contribute to a clearer understanding of how they saw their role in relation to military events in the Britain of their day. As they addressed themes of divine providence, the Protestant character of Britain and the reformation of manners, how did preachers understand and handle the relationship between these various subjects and did they prioritise one or more over the others? Was their overall aim to further religious piety or devotion, or was it to bolster patriotic fervour in a time of national crisis? These questions may be fruitfully examined from the viewpoint of Dissenting ministers through the published work, correspondence and activity of Philip Doddridge, a leading evangelical Independent of the first half of the eighteenth century.

Philip Doddridge was the minister of Castle Street church in Northampton from 1730 to his death in 1751 and ran a Dissenting Academy there during that period. His published works include a regular stream of sermons, as well as his major, six-volume devotional aid to the entire New Testament, the *Family Expositor*, the well-known *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, some polemical work aimed at the Deist, Henry Dodwell, and the theological lectures that he delivered to the ministerial students at his academy. The last decade or so of Doddridge's life saw Britain pass through a number of military crises, which drew from Doddridge a variety of responses. He published the sermon that he preached on 9 January 1740, the day fixed by royal proclamation for public humiliation during the War of Jenkins' Ear. Just over nine years later, on 25 April 1749, Doddridge preached a sermon, which he also published, celebrating the ending of the War of the Austrian Succession by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. In 1747 and 1748, he published two tracts in Dutch, addressed to the Protestant inhabitants of the Netherlands, at the time of the French siege of the important town of Bergen-op-Zoom. But the most significant event of this nature with which Doddridge engaged was the Jacobite uprising of 1745 which brought forth from him a considerable amount of correspondence, two sermons of thanksgiving for victory, an open letter to soldiers involved in the conflict, some intense practical activity for the defence of Northampton from the rebels, a funeral sermon for his friend Colonel James Gardiner, killed in the battle of Prestonpans outside Edinburgh, and his famous account of Gardiner's extraordinary conversion to Christ. Doddridge's responses to these various military crises in Britain in the 1740s may usefully be examined under the headings of patriotism, Protestantism, providence and piety.

I: Patriotism

Patriotism, according to J. C. D. Clark, was a term coined in the 1720s to express a nexus of ideas focused on English law, English religion, Protestant liberty and prosperity, together with a willingness to defend these, in war and peace, against

those European powers that might threaten them.⁶ Doddridge's patriotism is undeniable: he loved his country and wanted to see it prosper under the divine blessing. In common with many Dissenters of his day, he was a strong supporter of the Hanoverian dynasty. The Jacobite rebellion of 1745 represented a "Danger to our Country which is indeed in the most awful Crisis which has ever been known in the memory of Man", as he wrote to his wife Mercy from London in August of that year, as military preparations began.⁷ On 25 September, following the Jacobite victory at Prestonpans four days earlier, the Earl of Halifax held an assembly at *The George* in Northampton, to raise a local force of a thousand men to defend the town against the advancing rebels.⁸ Doddridge lost no time in supporting this endeavour, enlisting the help of some of the "leading Persons" in his own congregation and writing to "all the Dissenting Ministers in the Neighbourhood to engage them to do the like".⁹ Doddridge reported the fruit of this activity a fortnight later to his friend and mentor, Samuel Clark, in St Albans: he had delivered "24 brave Soldiers" to Lord Halifax and the church had joined in a "weekly Contribution for supporting them", holding regular days of fasting and prayer.¹⁰ In November, the town celebrated the anniversaries of the Gunpowder Plot and of the Glorious Revolution with bonfires and fireworks, with a particularly substantial effort at "the Rev. Dr. Doddridge's, in which the Effigy of the Pretender was burnt; the Doctor's house was finely illuminated, the Candles, by their Position, forming these Words, KING GEORGE, NO PRETENDER".¹¹ In these various ways, Doddridge's patriotism found a very practical and energetic outlet.

As events turned out, Northampton was safe: on 26 November, Doddridge wrote, "The rebels are it seems coming by way of Leeds and we expect them here in a few days"; on 7 December, he was warning that they had "entered Derby" three days previously and that they had been expected in Northampton the following night. All valuables had been "pack'd up and buried or carried off" and the terror of what was coming had spread, he wrote, even to London. The Jacobite force had, however, turned back and were now at Leek (about ten miles north-east of Stoke-on-Trent). In a letter dated 8 December, Doddridge wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, then Secretary of State in Pelham's ministry, with five proposals for hunting down the rebels. In February 1746, he was writing (and preaching) in somewhat premature celebration of the Jacobite defeat, but on 26 April he sent congratulations on the Duke of Cumberland's victory at

6 Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics During the Ancien Regime*, p. 237.

7 Philip Doddridge to Mercy Doddridge, 10 August 1745, in Geoffrey F. Nuttall (ed.), *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge DD (1702-51)* (London: HMSO, 1979), Letter no. 1088.

8 *Northampton Mercury* (7 October 1745).

9 Philip Doddridge, "To Whomsoever It May Concern", 26 September 1745, in Nuttall (ed.), *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge DD (1702-51)*, Letter no. 1096.

10 Doddridge to Samuel Clark, 13 October 1745, in Nuttall (ed.), *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge DD (1702-51)*, Letter no. 1099.

11 *Northampton Mercury* (11 November 1745).

Culloden ten days earlier.¹² A national day of thanksgiving was set for 9 October, but if Doddridge preached a sermon that day it was not published: he may have considered sufficient the two that he had preached in February that year, already mentioned.¹³

Doddridge's patriotism is evident in the intensity of his interest in these stirring events, his energy in seeking to raise troops for the defence of his home town, his exuberance with bonfires and candles and the content of his sermons on the subject. These aid an understanding of the nature of his patriotism. The Jacobite rebels were clearly not patriotic (even though they were British). This was not because they were Scottish rather than English: Doddridge expressed his patriotism consistently in terms of Britain rather than England. It was, rather, that their rebellion was "unnatural", as he put it in his thanksgiving sermon in February 1746.¹⁴ Doddridge dedicated his published funeral sermon for Colonel Gardiner to his friend's widow, Lady Gardiner. In the dedication, Doddridge praised his subject for having died in the most "noble and important" cause: "the Cause of our Laws, our Liberty, and Religion", of which the rebels were "the fiercest Enemies".¹⁵ The wisdom inherent in the laws governing Britain, coupled with the principle of the rule of law itself, underpinned the blessings of the liberties that the country enjoyed. These blessings had been practically driven out from the continent of Europe, but were enjoyed in Britain under the rule of the Hanoverians. This liberty was to be contrasted with the slavery which the leader of the rebels, Charles Edward Stuart, would have brought to the nation, "trained up", as the preacher put it, "in the oppressive Maxims of *French and Roman Courts*".¹⁶ Closely allied to this were the blessings of biblical religion, so long established in this country at great cost, over against the imposition of popery, which was essentially persecutory and barbarous. It would have been better that "our whole Island should sink into the Ocean", than for the nation to have fallen into the Pretender's hands.¹⁷

Familiar themes thus emerge from Doddridge's perspective on the uprising. The rebellion would have overthrown British laws, liberties and religion, matters that in Doddridge's view inhered in what it meant to be British. They were underpinned by Hanoverian rule and Protestant religion, which were in turn contrasted with

12 Doddridge to John Fergusson, 26 November 1745; Lord Kilkerran, 7 December 1745; Duke of Newcastle, 8 December 1745; Lord Kilkerran, 18 February 1746; Lord Kilkerran, 26 April 1746; in Nuttall (ed.), *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge DD (1702-51)*, Letters nos. 1108, 1111, 1113, 1129, 1148.

13 Philip Doddridge, *Deliverance Out of the Hands of Our Enemies, Urged as a Motive to Obedience: In the Substance of Two Sermons, Preached at Northampton, February 9, 1745-6. On Occasion of the Precipitate Flight of the Rebels from Stirling a Few Days Before* (London: Waugh, 1746).

14 Doddridge, *Deliverance Out of the Hands of Our Enemies*, p. 7.

15 Philip Doddridge, *The Christian Warrior Animated and Crowned: A Sermon Occasioned by the Heroick Death of the Honourable Col. James Gardiner, Who Was Slain in the Battle at Preston-Pans, September 21. 1745. Preached at Northampton, October 13* (London: J. Waugh, 1745), pp. xi, 28.

16 Doddridge, *Deliverance Out of the Hands of Our Enemies*, p. 14.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18, 21, 23, 25.

continental, especially French, and Roman Catholic principles of oppression and slavery, of which the Pretender himself was the leading exemplar. To be British, for Doddridge, was, then, to champion principles of the rule of law, liberty and Protestantism and to oppose those – whether British rebels or the French – who sought to overthrow them. Doddridge composed hymns for his congregation to sing in celebration and thanksgiving for the divine preservation from such enemies:

SALVATION does to God belong
His Power and Grace shall be our Song:
His Hand hath dealt a secret Blow,
And Terror strikes the haughty Foe.

The LORD's avenging Sword is nigh;
In Uproar wild their Legions fly:
And Stores, so late their Boast and Joy,
Their own despairing Hands destroy.

Praise to the LORD, who bows his Ear,
Propitious to his People's Prayer;
And, tho' Deliverance long delay,
Answers in his well-chosen Day.¹⁸

In his various responses to the military crises that he addressed, Philip Doddridge wanted to impress upon his audiences the significance of the benefits that Britain enjoyed as a nation. The regular reminder of the ordered nature of its society and of the freedoms that it enjoyed as a nation, together with the stark warnings of what would come upon the British people were the enemy to gain ascendancy over them, were intended to stimulate in Doddridge's audience that love for their country which the preacher himself felt. The composition of a hymn to be sung by the congregation, following the preacher's exhortations, was a deliberate strategy aimed at reproducing in others the patriotic sentiments of Doddridge himself. He wanted his audiences to be strongly aware in their thinking of the privileges that Britain enjoyed and deeply stirred in their affections to love their nation.

II: Protestantism

Protestantism has been routinely identified by historians as an integral part of what it meant to be British in the eighteenth century. Doddridge expressed his Protestantism and his consequent opposition to Roman Catholicism in the strongest of terms. Protestantism – “our Religion” – represented

That pure, holy, and perfect *Religion*, which CHRIST and his Apostles planted upon earth; and which our pious *Forefathers* have delivered down to us, in all its Evidence, with such faithful Care, sealed with the Blood of so many *Martyrs* and *Confessors*!

18 Ibid., p. 49.

Roman Catholicism, or “Popery” as Doddridge tended to call it, was, by way of contrast, “erroneous and superstitious ... absurd and idolatrous”; where Protestant worship was “rational and devout, scriptural and acceptable”, the Roman Catholic sort was “unintelligible” and as bad as “the most stupid *Heathenism*”, with its adoration of “*a Piece of Bread, as the Saviour of the World!*” And while the Stuart family may be “ever so gentle” and many adherents of their faith most tolerant, nevertheless the restoration of Roman Catholicism in Britain would inevitably bring with it persecution, which “is grown into the very Vitals of their Religion, and become not only *an Appendix* to it, but *an essential Part* of it”, as its history demonstrated.¹⁹ Doddridge attacked Roman Catholicism and defended Protestantism by means of absolute contrasts, denouncing the one and praising the other at both the religious and the intellectual level. His language was intensely pointed and forceful and, in its attacks on popery, almost abusive. It was designed, again, to address the mind and also to shape the emotions. Doddridge wanted his audiences not only to understand how Protestantism differed from its opposite, but also to cling to the one and flee the other.

Tony Claydon and Ian McBride have argued that the varied and often disunited nature of British Protestantism needs to be given greater recognition in the debate over what it meant to be British in the eighteenth century.²⁰ Church of England cleric and Dissenting preacher would indulge in mutual denunciation even (or perhaps especially) in thanksgiving sermons at times of national celebration. Doddridge, by contrast, tended in the other direction. The Protestantism that he sought to promote was inclusive, rather than divisive. This is seen most clearly in his 1749 sermon celebrating the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, in which the Dissenter prayed for the promotion of “our *Civil and Ecclesiastical Union*”, by which he appears to mean the Church of England, from which he and others were separated only, he said, by “an unwilling Necessity” – “and may growing Experience more fully teach *Protestants* of every Denomination, *how good and pleasant it is for Brethren*, tho’ perhaps in different Habits and Assemblies, *to dwell together in Unity*”.²¹ For Doddridge, Protestantism was not the preserve of one denomination or grouping over against others. Despite his principled dissent from the Church of England, Doddridge did not argue that he was more truly Protestant than his establishment peers, still less did he seek to portray them as purveyors of the hated popery. For Doddridge Protestantism was genuinely the preserve of the entire nation and, further, should be understood to be the established religion of Britain.

19 Ibid., pp. 17-19.

20 Tony Claydon and Ian McBride, “The Trials of the Chosen Peoples: Recent Interpretations of Protestantism and National Identity in Britain and Ireland”, in Claydon and McBride (eds), *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c.1650–c.1850*, pp. 3-29 [p. 14].

21 Philip Doddridge, *Reflections on Divine Providence in the Series and Conclusion of the Late War: A Sermon Preached at Northampton, April 25, 1749. Being the Day Appointed by His Majesty for a General Thanksgiving on Account of the Peace Concluded with France and Spain* (London: J. Waugh, 1749), pp. 24, 25.

Sympathy for a cause can be stirred up by directing attention to its heroes. For Doddridge, his friend Colonel James Gardiner was a Protestant hero. He died at Prestonpans “in the Cause of Religion and Liberty” and out of love for the Protestant cause and a desire to protect it against the “Errors of *Popery*”, the “cruel Ravages of *Arbitrary Power*” and the “bloody and relentless Rage of *Popish Superstition*”. The extent to which Doddridge saw Gardiner’s death in religious terms is apparent from his assertion that it amounted to a “*Martyrdom*”, for, he argued, “what is *Martyrdom*, but voluntarily to meet Death, for the Honour of GOD, and the Testimony of a good Conscience?”²² Indeed, in his memoir of Gardiner’s life, Doddridge goes even further, presenting his hero’s death almost in terms of an atonement, writing of how

the last Ebb of his generous Blood should be poured out, as a Kind of *Sacred Libation*, to the Liberties of his Country, and the Honour of his God; that all the other Virtues of his Character, embalmed as it were by that most precious Stream, might diffuse around a more extensive Fragrancy, and be transmitted to the most remote Posterity with that peculiar Charm, which they cannot but derive from their Connection with *so gallant a Fall*.²³

While Doddridge did not expressly compare his hero’s death to that of Christ, for that would have been blasphemy, it is remarkable that he used the language of the pouring out of blood, of offering that blood to God and of a resultant extensive diffusion of fragrance, all of which to a biblically educated audience could hardly fail to bring to mind their Saviour’s offering of himself to God for the sake of the world. Gardiner, for Doddridge, was not only a Protestant hero, but a Protestant martyr – even a saviour. The portrayal of his death in such terms would link him in his readers’ minds not only with Protestant martyrs of former generations, but even with Christ himself. The intended effect was, once again, to intensify affections as well as shape the mind to embrace the Protestant nature of Britain.

III: Providence

British sermons on military themes at this time usually devoted considerable space to the subject of divine providence. Doddridge’s works are no exception. The flight of the Jacobite rebels from Stirling, celebrated in Doddridge’s preaching in February 1746, was to be attributed to God, who had struck with “Panick ... the Leaders and Abettors of that unnatural Rebellion, which He hath permitted to arise amongst us”.²⁴ (It is to be noted that divine providence had allowed the rebellion as well as later enabling it to be quashed). The defeat of the Jacobite forces at Culloden was “a memorable instance ... of the gracious Care of Divine Providence over the

22 Doddridge, *The Christian Warrior Animated and Crowned*, pp. 28, 29-30.

23 Philip Doddridge, *Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of the Honourable Col. James Gardiner, Who Was Slain at the Battle of Preston-Pans, September 21, 1745* (London: James Buckland & James Waugh, 1747), pp. 192-93.

24 Doddridge, *Deliverance Out of the Hands of Our Enemies*, p. 7.

House of *Hanover*, and the British liberties",²⁵ God's providence was observable at the level of the interplay of international politics – "that the Politicks of *France* and *Spain* were so infatuated, that they did not attempt to invade our Coasts" – as well as in the minutiae of the particular battle –

And to His powerful Influence ... we may piously ascribe that sudden *Panick* which seized the Host of our Enemies, so that ... they did not dare to look our Army in the face: but *fled* with the utmost Precipitation, destroying their Artillery, and blowing up their own Ammunition.²⁶

Indeed, as he concluded in his earlier sermon at the time of the War of Jenkins' Ear, the "*Prosperity of our Arms* entirely depends upon the *Divine Favour*".²⁷ God's providence in these events should, argued Doddridge, teach us "to submit ourselves most constantly to the Government of GOD" and to "act more worthy the signal Blessings we continue to enjoy, and the gracious Providence by which we are re-established in them".²⁸ In all this, Doddridge's sentiments were entirely conventional.

Also typical were Doddridge's views of the role of Britain's climate and island status in his understanding of the workings of divine providence in relation to the nation. If the delay to the French and Spanish fleets' attempts to cross the Channel in 1746 were due to "the Damage which their Ships sustained in the late Tempests, we owe it to the Great Sovereign of the Winds and Seas".²⁹ Battles can be determined by the weather, Doddridge argued, particularly at sea, where success depends so much "on the most uncertain Elements, the Winds and the Waves".³⁰ The British, asserted Doddridge, should be especially conscious of this, as they have "in so many Instances, within the Memory of Man, owed the Preservation of our domestic Peace, and probably it may be added, even that of our Religion and Liberty, to the Interposition of *the Wind* in our Favour".³¹ In agricultural matters, too, Britain must acknowledge the good hand of providence upon her: "we have great Reason to reflect on the *Scarcity of Provisions in France*, while we were enriched with Plenty, for many successive Years"; Britain suffered less from distemper in her cattle than did "some neighbouring Countries", during which time British sheep proved to be particularly fertile, which had "not only moderated the Price of our Food, but furnished us abundantly for those Manufactures, the Trade of which has been carried on extensively abroad, so much to our national Advantage", as a result of which Britain was better funded for the purposes of

25 Doddridge, *Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of the Honourable Col. James Gardiner*, p. 18.

26 Doddridge, *Deliverance Out of the Hands of Our Enemies*, p. 29.

27 Philip Doddridge, *The Necessity of a General Reformation, in Order to a Well-Grounded Hope of Success in War* (London: R. Hett & J. Buckland, 1740), p. 16.

28 Doddridge, *Deliverance Out of the Hands of Our Enemies*, p. 46.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

30 Doddridge, *The Necessity of a General Reformation*, p. 15.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

war.³² In commerce, then, as well as in agriculture and weather, divine providence had favoured the British nation.

In their discussion of divine providence, preachers of thanksgiving and similar sermons in the eighteenth century frequently drew comparisons between Britain and ancient Israel as the covenant people of God, often identifying Britain as a chosen nation, just as Israel had been under the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. Doddridge sounds this theme, though with some nuance. Britain, according to Doddridge, had experienced great blessings from God over its history, possessing God's Word and enjoying long periods of peace and prosperity. The preacher could even refer to God as "our ally and our general".³³ In Doddridge's view, however, Britain should not be regarded as an elect nation in the same sense that Israel had been. The principles on which God acts in relation to all nations – not only Britain – may be deduced from his covenant relationship with Israel, but Britain cannot claim to have the same interest, "in the very same Manner and Degree", as did Israel in their national covenant with God.³⁴ Doddridge here follows the mid-century trend noted by Pasi Ihalainen away from the use of Israel as a metaphor for England or Britain, in favour of the view that any nation could qualify for a covenantal relationship such as Israel had enjoyed; Israel was still referred to, but as an example of how the principles of God's providence operated in relation to nations, of which Britain should seek to take advantage.³⁵

Nevertheless, Doddridge found it difficult to throw off older ways of thinking and his patriotism could lead him to draw clear lines of comparison between God's favour towards Israel of old and Britain's position under the divine providence. He recalled the recent Jacobite rising, when "Battalions of desperate and infatuated Men, having consecrated their Swords to our Destruction in Blood ever to be lamented, bent on completing the Ruin of their Country, came pouring upon us with such savage Fury and unrestrained Impetuosity". These hordes he compares to the ancient enemy of Israel, the "proud Assyrian", since God had been pleased, said the preacher with an allusion to the prophecy of Isaiah, to "put a Hook into their Nose, and a Bridle into their Jaws, to turn them back by the Way which they came" (see Isaiah 37:29).³⁶ Returning to the happier theme of the peace achieved following the War of the Austrian Succession, Doddridge reflected, as he drew towards the close of his address, on the "glorious Hopes" that might be formed for "our dear Country": "Oh Britain, thou Nation saved and favoured of the Lord!", he exclaimed, and in the hymn that he wrote to be sung after the sermon he exhorted "Britain" to "adore the Guardian of thy State":

32 Doddridge, *Reflections on Divine Providence in the Series and Conclusion of the Late War*, p. 19.

33 Doddridge, *The Necessity of a General Reformation*, p. v.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 10-13, 11.

35 Pasi Ihalainen, "Patriotism in Mid-Eighteenth Century English and Prussian War Sermons", in Teulie and Lux-Steritt (eds), *War Sermons*, pp. 107-29 [pp. 112-14].

36 Doddridge, *Reflections on Divine Providence in the Series and Conclusion of the Late War*, pp. 10, 11.

Who high on his Celestial Throne elate,
Still watchful o'er thy Safety and Repose.

The poet warmed to his theme, writing of how God drove back the "Rebel-Bands with desp'rate Madness join'd" and "Taught those audacious Sinners their Delusion". God "gave our Fleets to triumph o'er the Main" and as a result:

Opposing Leaders trembled at the Sight,
Nor found their Safety in th' attempted Flight:
Taught by their Bonds, how vainly they pretended
Those to distress whom *Isr'el's* God defended.³⁷

The Old Testament allusion is reinforced in the final verse of the hymn, which pictures Britons sitting beneath their vines and fig-trees and meeting to worship their God within his sacred temples. In the end, Doddridge's patriotic love for his Protestant country combined with his views of God's providential favour towards her, overcame the nuances of his theology and found him unable to resist casting Britain in the role of another elect nation.

IV: Piety

The themes considered so far – patriotism, Protestantism and providence – are consistent staples of English sermons in times of military crisis, at least until the middle of the eighteenth century. Piety is also noted by historians as an aspect of these themes, but it has not been studied in its own right to any great extent. Interest has tended to focus, instead, on ideas of British identity and the use of religious themes to uphold, define or forge – and sometimes to question – that identity. Such an approach does not do justice to the significant place that piety held in the sermons and other writings of Philip Doddridge. It is worth examining how, as an evangelical Dissenting minister, he addressed this aspect of his subject, the use to which he put the theme in his overall argument and the manner in which it related to the other topics that he addressed in these works.

Doddridge argued for *The Necessity of a General Reformation in Order for a Well-grounded Hope of Success in War*, as he put it in the title of his 1740 sermon for a day of humiliation in the War of Jenkins' Ear. Although, he said, there is not a precise correlation between a nation's righteousness and success in every battle fought, nevertheless for a continued success in military affairs there is needed a zealous concern for the reformation of manners, for national piety and for virtue. Only by refraining from moral evil, then, can the divine favour be expected and that favour is necessary to military success. Accordingly, a nation must guard against particular evils, including a contempt for the gospel, especially from those who despise revealed religion; the luxurious abuse of prosperity; self-confidence in military preparation and past success; and any resentment or hatred of the enemy

37 Ibid., pp. 30, 38, 39.

– the war with Spain was a matter of strict justice, but military action needs to be tempered with regret and pity. Everyone must play their own part in the work of reformation, according to their position in society, but prayer should particularly be made for those in public office who are able to do more for national reformation, above all for the King; for judges and lawmakers; for the military; for ministers of religion; and for those involved in education. Prayer should be made for enemies also, that their eyes might be opened to see the “delusions of *Popery*”.³⁸ Doddridge, then, argued strongly for a reformation of manners at a national level, that the country might benefit from the divine favour in her military efforts.

Two of Philip Doddridge’s more unusual publications consisted of addresses to the Protestant inhabitants of the Netherlands, in which he urged his readers in the United Provinces to give themselves urgently to a thorough-going reformation in order to stave off the threat of the French advance on Bergen-op-Zoom in 1747. The strong connection that Doddridge drew in the first of these tracts – between national reformation and divine favour – was challenged, as Geoffrey Nuttall and J. van den Berg have shown, by his Dutch readers. Doddridge had articulated the view, referred to earlier, that the principles on which God dealt with covenantal Israel could also be seen to govern his dealings with nations generally. The minister of the Walloon church in Amsterdam, Pierre Courtonne, who translated Doddridge’s first Dutch address into French, informed Doddridge of the objections with which this assertion had been met. In his second address, therefore, Doddridge expressed a moderated view, asserting that “he did not think it proven that God’s way of acting with the ‘Old Israel’ should be regarded as a general rule”.³⁹ This was, however, no more than a sop to his disgruntled Dutch audience. He was still able to assert that “where vice openly dominates, national plagues are to be feared”. In his sermon of the following year on the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, addressed to an English audience, he threw nuance to the winds: a “general Reformation” would surely bring to the nation prosperity and felicity, if true piety, including Sabbath observance and family worship, were observed. Then, surely, “Our Neighbours would revere us; our God would protect us, and shower down his Blessings upon us”.⁴⁰ National reformation, for Doddridge, would surely bring in its wake divine blessing.

The content of this reformation, as Doddridge saw it, can be seen in more detail from two works that he published in connection with the Jacobite uprising. The title of the published version of the sermons that he preached following the Jacobite departure from Stirling is significant: *Deliverance out of the hands of our Enemies, urged as a motive to Obedience*. The sense of thanksgiving to God for his providential deliverance of Britain from Roman Catholic enemies should lead to obedience to him. As the published sermon draws to a close, the preacher launches

38 Doddridge, *The Necessity of a General Reformation*, pp. 12-13, 19, 26, 37.

39 J. Van Den Berg and G. F. Nuttall, *Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) and the Netherlands* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), pp. 48, 52.

40 Doddridge, *Reflections on Divine Providence in the Series and Conclusion of the Late War*, p. 32.

an impassioned appeal for reformation: "that [God] would reform us *as a Nation!*", which must lead, if hypocrisy is to be avoided, to personal reformation: our prayers must be heart-felt, not merely an external performance.⁴¹ In his "Friendly Letter" to the soldiers who fought at Culloden, this personal reformation was to take the form, especially, of refraining from swearing and drunkenness, in the light of divine judgement to come. The soldiers were urged to seek God's mercy in Christ and to that end to attend on the means of grace and give themselves to prayer.⁴² There is, then, a strong personal element to the reformation that Doddridge was seeking, which affected not only moral reform but personal piety and godliness.

These elements of reformation can be seen too in Doddridge's Dutch tracts, in which he expressed his fears for the fate of that Protestant nation were it to fall into Roman Catholic hands. He paints a lurid picture of "children [being] dragged to idolatrous altars", should the country forget the blessings of their deliverance from Roman Catholic enemies in the previous century and allow themselves to be overtaken by the French.⁴³ When, as Doddridge saw it, liberty had been "almost entirely banished from the *Continent*",⁴⁴ it was vital that Britain's Dutch neighbours should stand firm in their Protestantism. According to Nuttall and van den Berg, Doddridge expressed in the tracts his concern for the lack of piety among Dutch Protestants of the day, which led him to fear God's consequent wrath and Dutch defeat by the French. As a result, wrote Doddridge, "THE UNITED NETHERLANDS MUST BE CONVERTED, OR PERISH". Faded zeal, immoral behaviour and neglect of religion were symptoms of the problem, but the English pastor expressed concern about two particular areas of life where he believed the Dutch Protestants were falling short: family prayer and Sabbath observance. He accordingly exhorted his readers in the United Provinces to a change of attitude and behaviour on these vital points. Nuttall and van den Berg argue, however, that the two aspects of piety so emphasised by Doddridge did not have the same central place in Dutch Protestant life that they held in Britain since strict Sabbath observance and regular worship in the family were not regarded as a necessary and integral component of biblical godliness there.⁴⁵ The piety that Doddridge wanted to inculcate was not only Protestant, Reformed and evangelical; it was peculiarly British.

The memoir that Doddridge wrote of the life and death of Colonel Gardiner was dedicated to Gardiner's son, whose life, at that time at least, was not one of godliness. In his dedication of the work, Doddridge urges him to consider eternity in the light of his father's godly life and death. As he came to narrate the unusual events of Gardiner's conversion, the author pleaded with the reader "seriously to

41 Doddridge, *Deliverance Out of the Hands of Our Enemies*, p. 40.

42 [Philip Doddridge], *A Friendly Letter to the Private Soldiers, in a Regiment of Foot, Which Was One of Those Engaged in the Important and Glorious Battle of Culloden (1747)*, in E. Williams and E. Parsons (eds), *The Works of the Rev. P. Doddridge, D. D.*, IV (Leeds: Edward Baines, 1802-1805), pp. 147-52.

43 Van Den Berg and Nuttall, *Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) and the Netherlands*, pp. 39-41.

44 Doddridge, *Deliverance Out of the Hands of Our Enemies*, p. 13.

45 Van Den Berg and Nuttall, *Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) and the Netherlands*, pp. 41, 43-47.

reflect" on what took place, "that his own Heart may be suitably affected". He defended his subject's experiences against the charge of enthusiasm, and wrote that his design in writing the memoir was "to spread *this glorious and blessed Enthusiasm*; which I know to be the Anticipation of Heaven, as well as the most certain way to it". Doddridge then described the elements which, in his view, made up Gardiner's piety: as well as the more obvious aspects of this – giving to the poor, concern for the piety of his men, acceptance of the will of God – Doddridge gave considerable space to Gardiner's doctrinal views, lauding the soldier's defence of the orthodox view of the deity of the Son and of the Spirit, the freedom of divine grace and the need for its real operation in the salvation of sinners, as well as his view of the dangers of Arian, Socinian and Pelagian doctrines. He recounted Gardiner's expressions of joy at the revivals that had taken place in Kilsyth in February 1742, when "in little more than a Fortnight *a Hundred and Thirty Souls ... were awakened on a sudden*" to give serious attention to the preaching of the gospel, the effects then spreading to the surrounding districts. He rejoiced at news of similar events in England, whether the preachers concerned were of the established church or were Dissenters, or even "foreigners", commenting that

an high Regard to the Atonement and Righteousness of CHRIST, and to the Free Grace of GOD in him, exerted by the Operation of the Divine SPIRIT, was generally *common to all* who had been peculiarly successful in the Conversion and Reformation of Men.

Similar sentiments can be seen in the history of the Munro family of Fowlis, which Doddridge appended to his account of Gardiner's life. This concerned three brothers, one of whom had been a friend of the colonel and had died a similar death at Falkirk, some months after Gardiner. Marks of piety in the family included the early embrace of the Reformation by their forebears, their loyalty to the Protestant cause and their concern for the preaching of the gospel in places where it had not been preached since the Reformation.⁴⁶ The piety that Doddridge admired in Gardiner and his friends and which he was seeking to inculcate in his audience was Protestant and Reformed in doctrine, as well as intensely personal in its piety.

In the dedication of his memorial sermon for Colonel Gardiner, Doddridge wrote of the comfort gained from considering the "*Religious Improvement*" that the soldier's death may occasion. In the sermon itself, he argued that the Christian faith may be rightly represented as warfare. There is need for "*martial Bravery*" in the face of death, and Christ charged his disciples to follow him even to death, in order to gain the reward, a crown of life. Even deathly wounds "appear *beautiful*, when earned by distinguished Virtue, by Piety to their Country, and their God".⁴⁷ Doddridge's overall aim in the sermon is to exhort his hearers and readers, through Gardiner's example, as well as from the biblical text, to follow, trust in and adore Christ, even through the hardest of trials.

46 Doddridge, *Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of the Honourable Col. James Gardiner*, pp. 37, 81, 129-30, 131, 157-59, 161, 222, 235.

47 Doddridge, *The Christian Warrior Animated and Crowned*, pp. vii, 3, 6, 7-8, 9, 21.

Admittedly, the last two works considered, relating to the life and death of James Gardiner, do not fall into the category of sermons that historians of national identity and related subjects have generally examined. The military context of those writings is, however, evident from the manner in which they highlight the death in battle of their subject and draw lessons from the character and circumstances of his demise. They form an integral part of Doddridge's response to military crises of the period under review. They demonstrate that Doddridge's pleas for reformation, in response to the various critical points where Britain found itself between 1740 and 1750, were not limited to the reformation of manners at national level, nor to a conformity to external standards of religious behaviour at a personal level, but extended to an internal, spiritual transformation demonstrated by a regular attendance on the means of grace, a commitment to orthodox doctrine and evangelism, heartfelt prayer, Christian fortitude and a godly life.

V: Conclusion

The various military crises that affected Philip Doddridge in the last decade of his life drew from him responses which focused on his patriotic love for his country and its Protestant character, his strong belief in the providence of God and his desire to see a national reformation of manners and a renewal of personal, evangelical piety, in Britain and beyond. At the intellectual level, Doddridge wanted to shape the ways his hearers and readers thought about their country. He wanted to drive home the idea that Britain was and should remain a Protestant country, supported as such by both established and dissenting religion. Protestantism brought material prosperity and the blessings of liberty. If Roman Catholicism were allowed to triumph, the nation would be reduced to slavery and the persecution of true religion would inevitably follow. Divine providence had established and preserved the Protestant character of the nation. Indeed, God's favour toward the country meant that close comparisons could be drawn between the position of Britain in the divine purposes and that of ancient Israel. Even if God's relationship with Doddridge's own land could not technically be regarded in quite the same way, as that between the deity and the people of Abraham and Moses, Doddridge was prepared to speak of Britain as, to all intents and purposes, an elect nation.

Doddridge sought to strengthen his intellectual case by appealing strongly to the affections. He wanted others to love his Protestant country as he did. To this end, he made use of the rhetorical tools of the preacher to address the emotions as well as the minds of his various audiences. James Gardiner was a Protestant hero and martyr who had given his life for the sake of his country, almost as an atoning sacrifice for the nation. Reminders were given of how God had providentially preserved Britain in the past in order to stir up Protestant fervour towards the nation in the present. Highly coloured language was used to describe the blessings of Protestant rule in the shape of the Hanoverians and the disaster that would come upon the nation were the Stuarts to regain control. Hymns were written to be sung at the end of services to ensure that these messages were firmly embedded in the affections, as well as the intellect, of the hearers.

Throughout these works, the theme of reformation is prominent. While godliness did not guarantee the favour of God's providence at every turn, it was necessary for the overall prosperity of the nation. At the national level, those in authority must encourage and practise moral behaviour. There needed to be a reformation of manners, with a particular focus on the suppression of swearing and drunkenness, sins to which soldiers were especially prone. And a more evangelical, personal piety must be engendered. This included the inculcation and defence of Protestant, Reformed doctrine against the errors of the day. The piety to be encouraged was peculiarly British in its conception, with its emphasis on careful Sabbath observance and family worship. It valued evangelical conversion to a living faith in Jesus Christ and so was enthusiastic for revivals where such conversions occurred in large numbers. It focused on the heart, not merely on outward behaviour, to encourage sincere prayer and a genuine love for Christ. Through these means, it was to be hoped that the Protestant character of Britain would be preserved through divine providence.

Doddridge's responses show that the themes of patriotism, Protestantism, providence and piety were closely intertwined in his thinking. Which came first: Britain or Protestantism, patriotism or piety? Was the nation to be reformed along Protestant lines in order that it might enjoy the favour of God in its military and other affairs? Or was the reformation for which Doddridge so eloquently argued an end in itself? One might well assume that, as he was a minister of the gospel, piety would have a clear priority over all other considerations in his thinking. Yet that is not how he expressed it as he addressed these varying military crises. He pleaded with the Dutch for moral reformation, but the occasion of that plea was the French military threat and its objective was the preservation of the Protestant nature of the nation. Again, which came first, in his thinking? Did he want to see the nation preserved because it was Protestant, or did he want it to remain firmly Protestant so that it would continue as a nation? The two considerations are difficult to disentangle.

This is all the more complex in the case of Doddridge's addresses to his own people. Reformation was necessary for success in war; piety would bring down divine blessing on the nation; Britain was a providentially favoured country and a devotion to Protestant doctrine and morals would ensure that this continued. The manner in which these themes are weighted in Doddridge's presentation of them makes it difficult to conclude that piety was unequivocally his foremost objective. Although there can be little doubt that, if asked to choose between his faith and his country, Doddridge would have chosen his faith, it would nevertheless have broken his heart to have had to have made any such choice. He was a Protestant, but he was a British Protestant and, in his thinking, to defend Britain was to defend the Protestant faith and *vice versa*. The responses that Doddridge made to military crises between 1740 and 1750 suggest that the strength of his desire to see a Protestant, evangelical piety flourish in Britain cannot, in the end, be disentangled from the intensity of his patriotic love for his country.

THE BLACKHEATH GROUP AND THE NEW GENEVANS: MORE HEAT THAN LIGHT?

Of all the mainline denominations Congregationalism was the most theologically liberal.¹ The decisive moment was the Leicester Conference of 1877, which marked the increasing dominance of a new generation of more liberal-minded ministers. Typical of the new liberalism was the first Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, Andrew Fairbairn, “the father of Liberal Evangelicalism among Congregationalists”.² In March 1893 he published *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology* claiming the most distinctive feature of modern theology was “a new feeling for Christ” which could be attributed to the liberal quest for the Jesus of history. It was Fairbairn who in 1898, anticipating a sabbatical leave in India, asked Alfred Garvie to lecture in his place at Mansfield and suggested he address issues raised by the German theologian Albrecht Ritschl who, following the lead of Kant, argued for Christianity as essentially a moral system, non-metaphysical in character, centring on the kingdom of God. Garvie was not himself a Ritschlian, but he believed there were positive elements in his work and his *The Ritschlian Theology* (1899) was the first work in English to make a positive case for his views. The twentieth century continued the liberal ascendancy in Congregationalism. R. J. Campbell’s “New Theology” was a spectacular, if effervescent example of this, but more substantively much Congregational theology was influenced by the liberal agenda for renewal. The first major study of Schleiermacher in England came from Fairbairn’s successor at Mansfield, W. B. Selbie. “If the work of theological reconstruction is to be well-done, it must be rooted and grounded in history. For this purpose, Schleiermacher is all important”.³

Mansfield was central both to Congregational liberalism and the storm which broke on it. In 1930 another Mansfield man, Frank Lenwood published *Jesus: Lord or Leader?* advocating drastic doctrinal change. He and his supporters such as Thomas Wigley, Minister of Blackheath Congregational Church, came to be called the Blackheath group, or if you were being uncharitable, “the Blackheathens”. The deeply critical response to this, led by Nathaniel Micklem and John Seldon Whale, helped create a group that came to be known as the “New Genevans”. This controversy came to be seen as the decisive moment when Congregationalism replaced an insipid empty liberalism with a new reliance on dogma and the objective word of God. Congregational liberalism, it was argued, had been essentially something negative, a surrender to rationalism and secularism. By contrast we

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- 1 No theological categorization is without ambiguity. This is particularly true of liberalism which is more a way of doing theology than a particular set of conclusions. My own definition is that liberal theology is “a contextual relating of the gospel to contemporary culture and knowledge which reflects intellectual criticality and the liberal values of tolerance, openness and inclusion”.
 - 2 R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England: 1662-1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962), p. 269.
 - 3 W. B. Selbie, *Schleiermacher: A Critical and Historical Study* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1913), p. 111.

were now into what John Grant, in his *Free Churchmanship in England, 1870-1940*, saw as the post-liberal era. "Orthodoxy and an articulated doctrine of the Church prevailed at the beginning and end of the period studied, heterodoxy and carelessness about church order in the years between".⁴ Micklem felt able to say, "The 'Blackheath controversy' was like the bursting of a boil; the patient began from that time to improve; a new spirit or a better understanding began to permeate the churches".⁵ Micklem's optimism was not unqualified but, "When I look back at the quarter of a century since I returned from Canada, I observe so great a change in respect of theology, liturgy and churchmanship in many of our congregations as to amount almost to a revolution".⁶ From within the liberal camp, C. J. Cadoux in 1938 felt beleaguered. "I am only too painfully aware that, in undertaking to defend Modernism in any form, I am championing an unpopular cause – one against which the main current of present-day theology is strongly set".⁷ The New Genevans went on to dominate the ecclesial and theological agenda of Congregationalism for decades while, if Lenwood is remembered at all, it is as a "Blackheathen" who was, as the name implied, hardly Christian at all. Tony Tucker could say, half seriously, of Lenwood's book "in my time at Mansfield in the early 1950s it tended to be referred to with some suspicion, as if one might catch a nasty and possibly terminal theological illness from even touching it".⁸

Things are not always as they seem. Liberalism was the default theological position of Congregationalism and not so easily eradicated. When, for example, Keith Forecast went as a theological student to Western College, Bristol, he was told by the principal, Lovell Cocks, that they were the great-grandchildren of Ritschl, because Ritschl had taught Forsyth, Forsyth had taught Cocks, and now he was teaching them!⁹ Micklem and Whale, may, in the heat of battle, have lashed out at liberalism but both were deeply influenced by it. As for the customary nomenclature neither "Blackheathen" nor "New Genevan" adequately describes those involved. The whole debate shed more heat than light.

I: Frank Lenwood and the Person of Christ

Frank Lenwood was born in Sheffield in 1874, a son of the manse. His father, Walter, was a Congregational minister at Nether Chapel in Sheffield and had married Charlotte Pye-Smith, daughter of a mayor of Sheffield and niece to Sir Edward Baines MP, one of the great families of Victorian Dissent, sometimes

4 John Grant, *Free Churchmanship in England: 1870-1940* (London: Independent Press, 1955), p. 192.

5 Nathaniel Micklem, *The Box and the Puppets* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1957), p. 82.

6 Micklem, *Ibid.*, p. 136.

7 C. J. Cadoux, *The Case for Evangelical Modernism* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), p. 8.

8 Tony Tucker, email to Martin Camroux, 12 June 2020. Tony was both a student at Mansfield under Micklem and his last minister at Summertown URC, Oxford.

9 C. Keith Forecast, *Pastor's Pilgrimage: The Story of a Twentieth Century Christian Minister* (Leicester: Matador, 2008), pp. 57-58.

referred to as the "Bainesocracy". This put Frank securely in the Congregational elite and he was educated at Rugby School and Corpus Christi College, Oxford. If contemporary accounts are to be believed he was a hugely likable and impressive young man. He was awarded a first-class degree and was elected President of the Oxford Union, where, unsurprisingly with his background, he was known for his strongly anti-militarist and teetotal views. He became a member of the British College Christian Union (later the Student Christian Movement, "SCM") and explained that "I got my first in Greats because I insisted in all my papers on the centrality of the fact of God".¹⁰ He trained for the Congregational ministry at Mansfield College where he drew Mansfield into the life of the SCM and in 1889 was elected chairman of the SCM theological committee. Aware of the increasing number of Nonconformist students at Oxford he argued for the need to support them pastorally, a task to which Mansfield appointed him as well as being tutor in New Testament Greek.

What followed was an influential period in his life both in Oxford and nationally. He started the Free Church Boys' Camps which were very important to many as Nathaniel Micklem testifies. "I do not know how I should have come through the difficult experiences of boyhood had it not been for the annual visit, after 1904, to the Free Church Boys' camp ... which were started a year or two earlier by Frank Lenwood".¹¹ Lenwood also awakened C. H. Dodd's interest in both the Boys' Camps and foreign missions and as Dodd's biographer says "came to admire him with admiration and affection".¹² Their friendship endured. When Lenwood wrote *Jesus: Lord or Leader?* Dodd proofread it, despite disagreeing with its contents, always a sign of a real friend. Another Mansfield man, H. C. Carter, later minister at Emmanuel, Cambridge, saw Lenwood as his closest friend, and said he pushed him "into almost everything good I have ever done in my life".¹³ In the SCM Lenwood chaired the conference at Matlock in 1909, which William Temple looked back on as the primary source of the COPEC conference of 1924, and was an advocate of a permanent base for the SCM which led in 1910 to the purchase of Swanwick. In 1903 he married the formidable Gertrude Wilson, educated at Girton College, Cambridge, and daughter of Henry Wilson, Liberal MP, prominent Nonconformist, and owner of the Sheffield Smelting Company. As Brian Stanley puts it: "It was a marriage of obvious spiritual and intellectual affinity, and moreover one that sealed Lenwood's existing maternal connections with Yorkshire Nonconformist wealth".¹⁴

At this point there were many opportunities possible in England but instead Lenwood chose to go as a missionary to India with the London Missionary Society

10 CWM Archive (hereafter CWMA), Home Odds Box 14, Folder No 5.

11 Micklem. *The Box and the Puppets*, p. 29.

12 F. W. Dillistone, *C. H. Dodd: Interpreter of The New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), p. 50.

13 CWMA, Home Odd Box 14, Folder 5.

14 Brian Stanley, "Manliness and Mission: Frank Lenwood and the London Missionary Society", in *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, Vol. 5, No. 8 (1996), p. 462. (Hereafter *JURCHS*).

(LMS) and Brian Stanley has written an account of this impressive period of his life in his article "Manliness and Mission: Frank Lenwood and the London Missionary Society".¹⁵ He was forward looking with a commitment to developing the indigenous church and also an openness to Hindu culture. When typhoid, together with his wife's need to see her father, led to a return to England, he was appointed in 1912 as one of the two LMS foreign secretaries.

Then came a dramatic theological change. From Mansfield onwards he had been liberal in his theology but one day in August 1922 he confided to his wife, while cycling along a Welsh lane, that "he had rather suddenly realized that he could no longer recognise the lordship of Jesus Christ".¹⁶ The divinity of Jesus could no longer be believed with integrity, in which case he must say so. None of this diminished his trust in God or his passion for the gospel. From India, three months later he wrote to Gertrude

I am absolutely clear that the thing that lies behind ordinary Christian preaching is a terrific and life-giving reality. The message of Xianity [sic] mayn't be what we thought it was in the past, but there's no doubt that it's the power of God unto salvation. I believe in Foreign Missions more than ever, though it may be impossible for me to keep on serving them in this form.¹⁷

After resigning from the LMS he accepted a call to Greengate Congregational Church, Plaistow, in East London, where he could express his evangelistic and social passion in East End ministry. In honesty, he explained his theological position to them. They called him with only one vote against and he remained minister there until his death.

He set out his views in *Jesus: Lord or Leader?* Modern science, biblical criticism, and very significantly for him, the experience of other faiths, had undermined traditional beliefs. As a result, "doubt has laid hold increasingly upon many Christian minds".¹⁸ The gospel must therefore be restated for a changed world. This was no more than stating the obvious and his conclusion was optimistic. "In an honest effort at restatement today nothing is likely to be lost of the essential power of the Christian faith to bring men to God".¹⁹ Where he broke with most Congregationalists, and most liberals, was the conclusion to which this led him. This restatement must include rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity which belief was coming between people and a living faith in God. It was insecurely based in the New Testament, being based primarily on the discourses in John's Gospel. But it was a commonplace of biblical criticism that these were composed by John and not the authentic words of Jesus. "Of one thing I am sure; Jesus would have been shocked and saddened if he had dreamed that men would worship him in the

15 Ibid., p. 462.

16 Roger Wilson, *Frank Lenwood*, (London: SCM Press, 1936), p. 161.

17 CWMA, Home Personal Box, Box 8, Folder 4, Lenwood to his wife, 27 November 1922.

18 Frank Lenwood, *Jesus: Lord or Leader?* (London: Constable, 1930), p. 17.

19 Ibid., p. 30.

Father's stead".²⁰ Johannine Christology was damaging to Christian faith because John's Jesus was not the Jesus of History. "In the Fourth Gospel Jesus is not a human figure, that is to say he falls short of humanity".²¹ The effect of so deifying Jesus had been to make God a distant figure. If we would only go back to the real human Jesus, he could make God real to us again. "If we take God for Father, and depend on him with the faith of Jesus, we shall find in the simple, fatherly communion which he offers everything that our spirits need".²²

It was a truly bad book. Lenwood was aware that contemporary culture was breaking away from its Christian past. He saw that the Church had obscured the humanity of Jesus to its own great loss, and that a good number of Christian doctrines looked implausible or even offensive. He tried to face this with total honesty. But he had little understanding of the real depth of secularization, of the indifference, dismissal, and disdain of a sceptical culture. If to some religion was untrue, to many others it was not so much untrue as irrelevant because it no longer related to what seemed most important in life. It answered questions which many people no longer felt they needed to ask. People could live busy lives, working and loving and enjoying themselves, without concerning themselves too much with what W. H. Auden called "the baffle of being". The problem was not Johannine Christology but the credibility, relevance and moral authority of religious belief as such. There was no possible way that a Unitarian Christology could solve that problem.

Lenwood offered no way forward, no compelling account of the positive relevance of Christian faith. His "Back to Jesus" theology was naive in the extreme. He had little concept of the problems involved in appealing to a historical Jesus who, wherever we meet him, is never free of interpretation. His account of traditional Christology is crude and literalistic, failing to do justice to the way its poetic symbols speak of inexpressible divine realities. Worst of all he gives no credit to the way the person of Jesus in Christian theology becomes the focus and inspiration for a rich tradition of theological interpretation, myth, preaching, theology and culture. It is not simply the bare historical facts, as we imperfectly know them, but in the story as told and explored (including by John), we meet a vision of life and death which has the ability to redeem us. Adrian Hastings, a hugely perceptive commentator on twentieth century Christianity, said, that if people found their way back to the Church, "it was less due to the fact that they might ... feel free to believe less than before (though that could be true), but rather that they were encouraged ... to believe more than before and to worship more profoundly".²³ Lenwood failed that test. Brian Stanley says "Lenwood was better at climbing mountains than at theology",²⁴ which considering he died in a climbing accident is quite a claim. He was a good man out of his depth.

20 Ibid., p. 295.

21 Ibid., p. 48.

22 Ibid., p. 295.

23 Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1990* (London: SCM Press, 1991), p. 269.

24 Stanley, "Manliness and Mission: Frank Lenwood and the London Missionary Society", p. 474.

II: Nathaniel Micklem and the Rise of Neo-Orthodoxy

On the other side Nathaniel Micklem was even better connected socially than Lenwood. His father was an eminent Q. C. and member of Parliament. Like Lenwood he went to Rugby School and then to New College, his father's old college. Like them he was elected President of the Oxford Union, in his case unopposed. Micklem was not always popular among his fellow Congregationalists. Adrian Hastings reflects that perhaps socially he had moved too far up the scale always to fit in. "One would have expected him to become an Anglican in such circumstances".²⁵ But Lenwood and Micklem are a reminder that this was the Congregational "Gilded Age" in which there were a significant number of people of position and wealth within the denomination. It can be seen in Mansfield's gracious neo-Gothic architecture with its self-confident belief that Congregationalists could claim a place at the top table, or the fact that of the 154 students admitted by its first principal Andrew Fairbairn, fifty-four were graduates of Oxford or Cambridge.²⁶ Micklem was one of them, training for the ministry at Mansfield where, like Lenwood, he became theologically liberal. In his autobiography, *The Box and the Puppets*, he writes: "We were rejoicing in our relatively recent deliverance from subjection to old Calvinist dogma and were less interested in dogmatic theology than in the discovery of how little one might believe without ceasing to be a Christian".²⁷ This is probably not how he saw it at the time.

After working in two local churches Micklem returned to academia including professorships at Selly Oak, Birmingham and Kingston, Ontario and culminating in a profoundly significant time as Principal of Mansfield from 1932-1953. But whereas Lenwood moved to a more extreme liberalism, Micklem drew on Genevan and Catholic themes. To the consternation of many Congregationalists he lectured on Thomas Aquinas and began to stress the value of Christian dogma.

His character was very different from Lenwood. He was self-confident, fluent in speech, intellectually serious and wrote superbly, but whereas everyone who knew Lenwood warmed to him, this was not always true with Micklem. He says of C. J. Cadoux, Mansfield's Vice-Principal, that his presence in the College caused, "Painful differences and almost intolerable tensions . . . He was a man of very decided opinions who did not find it easy to appreciate the point of view of those who differed from him".²⁸ But perhaps Micklem too could be awkward? Norman Goodall observes that "The chapter in *The Box and the Puppets* headed 'Historia Calamitatum' in which he recalls this troubled period in painful detail is, sadly, less than fair to some good people who, while differing from him, were equally distressed and hurt by the conflict".²⁹ When Micklem writes, "There is no doubt that most of the opposition to

25 Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1990*, p. 271.

26 Elaine Kaye, *Mansfield College, Oxford*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 114.

27 Micklem, *The Box and the Puppets*, p. 45.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

29 Norman Goodall, "Nathaniel Micklem, C.H., 10 April 1888-26 December 1976", *JURCHS*, Vol. 1, No. 10 (1977), p. 290.

me was just silly: it was often virulent ... The experience was bad for me, since I have always been liable to an uncharitable contempt of pettiness and intrigue",³⁰ one cannot but feel some sympathy for those on the other side.

Micklem's argumentative zest was much in evidence in what followed. The publication of *Jesus: Lord or Leader?* led to considerable controversy. From the liberal side C. J. Cadoux indicated he agreed with Lenwood's methods, but disagreed with his conclusions. Others, such as J. S. Whale, went further. A man of formidable intellect he was scathing about the book. "About Mr. Lenwood's theology as set forth, there can be only one verdict. If he is right, the great classical Christian tradition has been wrong and much of the New Testament is a grievous illusion".³¹ At the Congregational Union Centenary meeting in October 1931, Micklem declared "It has never been our freedom to proclaim what we like or to invent a gospel".³² In response about seventy-five delegates to the Congregational May Meeting in 1932 attended a meeting in Lenwood's support and commissioned Thomas Wigley to issue a statement of their belief. It had a strongly immanent doctrine of God. "We believe that in all the goodness of men, he makes himself known, and supremely in Jesus".³³ In a letter to the *Christian World* they defined the essential issue in question as,

Whether Christianity consists in the acceptance of doctrinal formulae, or whether the essentials are to be found in adopting Jesus's attitude to God and men aided by the same Spirit of God, and in discovering His will by loyalty to the highest so far made known.³⁴

In reply Micklem went straight for the jugular. "They have not made it sufficiently plain to those who do not know their intellectual capacity and integrity that by 'Christian thought' and 'the essential values of the Christian heritage' they do not mean the Christian faith or the Christian gospel".³⁵ Micklem maintained the critique. In 1936 he published *What is the Faith?* which, while it makes no explicit reference to Lenwood, clearly has him in view. "It is not surprising that modernism has been defined as 'the abandonment of the Christian Faith coupled with an unwillingness to take the consequences'".³⁶ By contrast, for him the Christian faith was an objective truth, centred on the Incarnation, which could be defined from the Bible and the creeds. Of course he has moments when his faith flickered "but in all moods I can see clearly the difference between the historic faith of the Church and this modern parody of it".³⁷

30 Micklem, *The Box and the Puppets*, p. 85.

31 J. S. Whale, "Jesus - Lord or Leader?", *Congregational Quarterly*, Vol. IX, No. 1 (1931), p. 54.

32 *Christian World* (15 October 1931), p. 5.

33 The Blackheath Group, "A Restatement of Christian Thought", *The Christian World* (9 February 1933), p. 5.

34 The Blackheath Group, "A Restatement of Christian Thought", p. 26.

35 Grant, *Free Churchmanship in England*, p. 329.

36 Nathaniel Micklem, *What is the Faith?* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936), p. 106.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 81.

The controversy widened and Alan Argent says reached “unpleasant heights”.³⁸ The liberal Albert Peel, while not endorsing Lenwood, became concerned that there was a danger of this becoming an un-Congregational witch-hunt. But he himself drew deeply unfortunate comparisons between Micklem and Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. “Are those who would tell us what is the faith – as if the faith was a static thing ... not unconsciously moved by the same spirit as the dictators”.³⁹ Micklem hit back hard, accusing Peel of opening the way to total relativism, “an unqualified liberty of belief and a rejection of all standards”. He, on the other hand, naturally stood for the great truths of the Gospel. With some confidence he declared, “On the great subjects our mind is made up. The facts we know, and under God we have to assert and defend them”.⁴⁰ As a debate it was neither gracious nor edifying.

III: Liberals on liberalism

Apart from Micklem, Lenwood's most significant critic was J. S. Whale. Educated at Caterham School, Whale was awarded a first class degree at St Catherine's, Oxford, and trained for the ministry at Mansfield. After a ministry at Bowden Downs he came back to Mansfield to teach before becoming President of Cheshunt College Cambridge. Micklem and Whale, together with the Cambridge historian Bernard Lord Manning constituted the core of what came to be known as “the New Genevans”. They were part of a wider context. Whereas the 1920s were very much a liberal decade theologically, in the 1930s the mood changed as the times darkened. After the Congregational Union's Centenary meetings in Autumn 1931 Albert Peel noted the changing mood.

One ingenious commentator discovered a “sharp turn to the right” in Congregational theology, and snapshotted Dr. J. D. Jones, Dr. N. Micklem and Professor J. S. Whale all stepping to the right together. We cannot help wondering which of the three was most surprised to find himself in the company of the other two. Nor could we keep out of our minds a naughty sequence of pictures in which we saw the “dauntless three” drilling for a long period in the awkward squad until at last they could step to the right together. We shall follow the future of the platoon with discriminating benevolence.⁴¹

In 1937 Manning wrote the draft of a *Call to Reformation* which Micklem and Whale edited and was also signed by Sydney Cave, J. D. Jones and H. Lovell Cocks, E. J. Price and John Short. It was, rather quaintly, called “To the Ministers of Christ's Holy Gospel in the Churches of the Congregational Order”.

38 Alan Argent, *The Transformation of Congregationalism* (Nottingham: Congregational Federation, 2013), p. 313.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 313.

40 Nathaniel Micklem, *Congregationalism Today* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), pp. 16-17.

41 Albert Peel, “Editorial”, *Congregational Quarterly*, Vol. X, No. 1 (1932), p. 2.

Erik Routley in his *The Story of Congregationalism* included the full text as an appendix, the only document in the whole history of Congregationalism so honoured. It was blunt:

The depressing and alarming thing about our churches is not their tiny congregations, their shabby buildings, their social insignificance, their political impotence ... If our churches are in peril, it is because they have forgotten who they are.⁴²

The evidence for sweeping judgement was found in "Our anaemic life and unsatisfying worship". The solution was to return to the "great truths of our holy religion". Above all this meant believing in the resurrection of Jesus and taking the gathered church more seriously as the Body of Christ. It warned "Only the Church stands between the Western world and utter misery and degradation". It is difficult to see in what sense this latter judgement could be true. Did not, for example, traditions of parliamentary government, English law, and the patriotism of Winston Churchill offer some hope? Sometimes with the New Genevans the sounds of the words promised more than they actually delivered.

Deeply influential in the theological colleges, the New Genevans set the tone for generations of Congregational ministers. Their hope that "in these days when men's hearts fail them and vain is the hope of man our message may be heard with a new attention"⁴³ turned out to be illusory. Congregations got tinier still and even less socially significant. But within Congregationalism they were influential, or at least for a while seemed to be so. As Clyde Binfield says

For the next forty years innumerable churches would be affected by the turns of phrase, modes of dress, mannerisms of worship, as the young men and women whom they trained or influenced sought ordination and grew into their pastorates.⁴⁴

Their influence continued through the Church Order Group whose younger members included John Huxtable, John Marsh, Daniel Jenkins, Erik Routley and Caryl Micklem. They dominated the theological agenda of Congregationalism, promoted order and dignity in worship, tried to nurture love for synods, and helped create the United Reformed Church.

A similar critique of liberalism was seen in the United States where Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* in 1932 devastated the old-style liberal Social Gospel. Liberals, argued Niebuhr, sentimentalize political reality, not taking seriously the predatory nature of the world. "I hold it to be the chief sin of

42 Erik Routley, *The Story of Congregationalism* (London: Independent Press, 1961), pp. 164-171.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

44 Clyde Binfield, "A Learned and Gifted Protestant Minister: John Seldon Whale, 17 September 1896-17 September 1997", *JURCHS*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1998), p. 125.

liberalism that it has given selfish man an entirely too good opinion of himself".⁴⁵ Liberals were appalled at what to some seemed betrayal. Charles Gilkey, Dean of Chapel at Chicago University, declared to his family "Reinie's gone crazy".⁴⁶ His next book, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, developed this critique in new ways. It was Niebuhr who in 1933 had made the phone call inviting Paul Tillich to America to teach at Union Seminary. They became close friends, taking long walks together on Riverside Drive, and when Niebuhr wrote *An Interpretation*, as Richard Fox says, "Tillich's vocabulary shone from virtually every page".⁴⁷ Tillich too had become critical of liberal theology "because it lacked insight into the 'demonic' character of human existence".⁴⁸ It was above all from Tillich that Niebuhr took the idea of myth as central to the Christian story. Niebuhr argued that myth is the real language of God. "It is the genius of true myth to suggest the dimension of depth in reality and to point to a realm of essence which transcends the surface of history".⁴⁹ Traditional orthodoxy made the mistake of taking Christian myths literally, liberals made the mistake of not taking them seriously. In seeking to separate the historical from the mythical, they thus ended with little by which one could live. "In adjusting itself to the characteristic credos and prejudices of modernity, the liberal church has been in constant danger of obscuring what is distinctive in the Christian message and creative in Christian morality".⁵⁰ This was indeed exactly the problem with the Blackheath Group. By excising the myth as if it was bad science or inaccurate history, they were in danger of losing the essence of the story. As Emily Dickinson says,

Surgeons must be very careful
When they take the knife!
Underneath their fine incisions
Stirs the Culprit – Life!⁵¹

IV: Common ground?

All this is a very long time ago. By the time I arrived at Mansfield in 1969 the radicalism of the 1960s had already made it seem a long past era. I never read Micklem, or indeed Calvin. Without being aware of it, however, I was still in the slip-stream of the New Genevans, committed to formality and order in worship, to the centrality of the Eucharist, to liturgical renewal and longing for the unity of the Church. It never occurred to me as a minister ever to conduct public worship

45 *Christian Century* (18 January 1933), pp. 91-92.

46 Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology 1900-1950: Idealism, Realism and Modernity* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2003), p. 450.

47 R. Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), p. 161.

48 Letter Tillich to Thomas Mann, printed in Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, p. 161.

49 Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York: Seabury, 1979), p. 7.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

51 Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 108.

in other than cassock, gown and bands. When I was ordained at Freemantle, Southampton, I was disturbed to find one of the Elders had a Quaker view of the sacraments and had never been baptised. Today the New Genevan legacy is very much a minority one. In the end much of it neither lasted nor led where they hoped it would. Who could have imagined, for example, that their emphasis on synods would lead to a quasi-diocesan structure of authority for the United Reformed Church which few Congregationalists could have imagined? With the passage of time it is now possible to see that the original controversy generated more heat than light and in at least four ways left misleading impressions.

First, it is deeply unfortunate that, if Frank Lenwood is remembered at all, it is for writing a very bad book, and for being a “Blackheathen”, and therefore by implication a bad Christian, if a Christian at all. As we have seen, this obscures the depths of his Christian faith, his service as a pastoral minister, and to the LMS, the SCM and Mansfield College. When Micklem alleges that his was a faith without revelation this is patently untrue. Roger Wilson tells us that written on the back of Lenwood’s membership ticket for his last Congregational Assembly in 1934 were the words.

For 47 years I have followed him, and he has changed to me, but he dominates me more completely, and when I am doubtful of God, I can say There is Jesus. That he could stand there, that he could live the life he did, is my guarantee of God.⁵²

For Lenwood Jesus reveals the loving nature of God. “God is like Jesus ... remains one of central certainties of the Christian Gospel”.⁵³ He lives his life in communion with God and makes God’s love credible to us. “In his life Jesus was, more than any other, the revelation of God”.⁵⁴

At the personal level too, the sincerity of his faith and the way it expressed itself in his life was found inspirational by those who knew him. Doctrinal correctness is not the measure of a Christian life. Micklem was undoubtedly a better theologian, but not necessarily a better Christian. Whale is perceptive here. He excoriates the theology but respects the man.

Many people in different parts of the world thank God for Mr. Lenwood’s Christianity. His Christian character and life must have been a priestly means of grace to many – to undergraduates, missionary colleagues, South Sea Islanders, dwellers in the mean streets of East London, and a host of others. And this book, in spite of its denial of the deepest things by which Christian men have lived for nineteen hundred years, is essentially Christian in its temper. We shall need no reminder that its noble honesty, its fine passion for truth, are part of the heritage of God’s freemen.⁵⁵

52 Wilson, *Frank Lenwood*, p. 161.

53 Lenwood, *Jesus: Lord or Leader?*, p. 191.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

55 Whale, “Jesus – Lord or Leader?”, p. 54.

Thomas Wigley is a less significant figure but was minister of Blackheath Congregational Church from 1927 until his death in 1961. Like Lenwood he married a formidable wife, Ethel Duthie, who had read Classics and History at Girton. A passionate liberal, he was President of the Union of Modern Free Churchmen and also a respected pastoral minister. Michael Hopkins says he was remembered as having “a kind and tender heart”.⁵⁶ As a memorial to him his congregation published a selection of the short articles, he had written from 1939 to 1961 in magazines sent out to distant members and friends. These, they hoped, would recall, “A lively well-stocked mind, a devout Christian, and a diligent and faithful pastor”.⁵⁷ They are thoughtful, gentle, non-controversial, and possibly a little dull, certainly nothing like as radical as the 1960s theological upsurge. Wigley wrote:

We go forward inspired by the faith in the creative spirit of God as incarnated in Jesus Christ, giving the past its due regard and awake to present needs of thought and action ... We possess no monopoly of truth or grace and welcome all who seek the truth and follow the light. We demand no uniformity of belief, no conformity of ritual, nor any blind obedience to external authority ... We are a company of seekers bound together by a common loyalty to one master, Jesus.⁵⁸

This is someone rooted in classic Congregationalism. Whatever you make of him, “Blackheathen” he was not.

Secondly, the term “New Genevans” oversimplifies to the point of being obfuscatory. Certainly Whale could say in a sermon at Emmanuel, Cambridge (to a mixed sex congregation!) “Fathers and Brethren, we who are the sons of Geneva are slow enough in these days to appeal to the great Pauline doctrine of Election, and to evaluate rightly the great truths of Predestination”,⁵⁹ but Micklem was as much Thomist as Genevan and their passion for ecumenism did not come from Calvin. Predestination largely remained a forgotten truth. Later, as David Cornick points out, when Erik Routley wrote *The Story of Congregationalism* Calvin does not even appear in the index.⁶⁰ Bill Sewell, a younger member of the Church Order Group recalls of his time at Mansfield: “As you say of Erik and yourself, for us

56 J. Taylor and C. Binfield (eds), *Who They Were in the Reformed Churches of England and Wales, 1901-2000* (Donnington: Shaun Tyas/United Reformed Church History Society, 2007), p. 243.

57 *Thomas Wigley M.A. (Cantab.) 1891-1961* (London: James Clarke, 1961), Introduction.

58 *Thomas Wigley M.A. (Cantab.) 1891-1961*, pp. 59-60.

59 J. S. Whale, “Commemoration Sermon”, in *Congregationalism Through the Ages, 1937*, p. 119. This was a publication of Emmanuel Church Cambridge celebrating its 250th Anniversary. Binfield says of the sermon, “It could not be preached now. It is remarkable that it was preached then, but there is no escaping its audacity and intellectual excitement”. Binfield, “A Learned and Gifted Protestant Minister: John Seldon Whale”, p. 119.

60 David Cornick, *Through Erik Routley's Eyes* (London: Congregational Memorial Hall Trust, 2018), p. 21.

Calvin was simply not on our radar".⁶¹ Some like Daniel Jenkins were Barthian, but others like Micklem never were or had moved on. Micklem *et al* were not just rediscovering Geneva but the catholicity of the church, and the catholicity of Congregationalism.

Thirdly, the fact that the Blackheath Group was highlighted in the dazzle of New Genevan rhetoric gives its members a theological significance they really did not have. They were neither central to liberal Congregationalism, nor typical of it. As Alan Argent says: "It is possible that Micklem, in particular, overstated his case ... Micklem exaggerated the possibilities of Congregationalism as a whole slipping into a modernist theological quagmire".⁶² The mainstream Mansfield College tradition represented by Fairbairn, Selbie, Cadoux, Dodd and Nuttall was much more influential and very different. So was the liberalism of a Presbyterian like Oman (who significantly influenced Dodd and Micklem), or the most really significant liberal preachers like Leslie Weatherhead or H. E. Fosdick. Albert Peel was right when he said: "So far as I see most Congregationalists are not disposed to wander with the wizards on the Blackheath, nor do they propose to fall down and worship the dogmatic image which Nathaniel the Principal has set up".⁶³ In all honesty, how many people were going to be corrupted by reading *Jesus: Lord or Leader?*

Fourthly, there is a real irony in the way that the Blackheath controversy was interpreted, as for example Grant does, as the end of Congregational liberalism. Theological categories are often imprecise, and not hermetically sealed from each other, but many of the New Genevans were themselves liberals, though you might have been forgiven for not realising it. As the years passed, Micklem mellowed and his theology changed again. His enthusiasm for dogma cooled, and he explicitly drew back from his earlier rhetoric. "I lifted up my strident voice or dipped my pen in some corrosive ink, and no doubt said and wrote many words that I should wish to qualify now".⁶⁴ He told John Huxtable: "I hope you will not make the same mistake I made ... I took it for granted that the battle against fundamentalism had been won; it hasn't, and you may have to fight it again".⁶⁵ Throughout his theology mediated between traditional authority systems and the modern world, as he himself acknowledged: "Through all these intellectually tempestuous years, I have been both liberal and evangelical".⁶⁶ In part the different emphasis may have depended on with whom he was arguing at the time.

A comparison might be made with Reinhold Niebuhr who similarly lambasted liberalism, but later admitted that he had never been anything else himself. "I find I am a liberal at heart, and that many of my broadsides against liberalism

61 Email to Martin Camroux.

62 Alan Argent, "Writing the History of Congregationalism", in *Congregational History Society Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (2008), p. 244.

63 Albert Peel, *Inevitable Congregationalism* (London: Independent Press, 1937), pp. 112–113.

64 Nathaniel Micklem, *The Religion of a Sceptic* (London: Acton Society, 1975), p. 53.

65 John Huxtable, *As it Seemed to Me* (London: United Reformed Church, 1990), p. 30.

66 Micklem, *The Religion of a Sceptic*, p. 54.

were indiscriminate".⁶⁷ Being critical of the more naïve forms of social gospel liberalism did not mean he had become a Barthian, which he saw as a form of dogmatism subject to no historical, rational or experimental validation. Nor was he sympathetic to the evangelical revivalism of Billy Graham. This lacked a commitment to justice, offering instead bland pietistic individualism. In retrospect he now regretted his earlier anti-liberal polemics. "There is no need for polemics today, and there was no need for them when I wrote. My polemics were of an impatient young man".⁶⁸ Quite a few New Genevans might have said something similar.

J. S. Whale may or may not have said, "If much of our modernism is true, then St Paul was a blockhead",⁶⁹ but in later life he certainly did say,

I, for instance, am a Protestant, yet my sense of kinship with a Duchesne or a Von Hügel is much keener than it is with a member of the Sovereign Grace Union or a Billy Graham ... I have more in common too with Morna Hooker and J. A. T. Robinson than I have with the British and Foreign Bible Society; and it would seem certain that the Lutheran Paul Tillich, to whom I owe much, was closer to the Catholic Leslie Dewart than he was to the Missouri Synod.⁷⁰

Even in his more strident early days his was never an insular Calvinism. "Calvin in his High Churchmanship verily joins hands with Pope Gregory VII, and Fairbairn across the chances and changes of seventeen centuries salutes the great figure of Origen".⁷¹ Later he was still fascinated by the Reformers but he recognised that culturally the past no longer had the same power. "Much, if not all, of this discussion is remote and unreal to the impatient secularism of our post-Christian era".⁷² Trying to bridge that gap he commends John Robinson's de-literalising of the Ascension in *But That I Can't Believe* which he calls a "stimulating example of what modern bible-study could and should be".⁷³ Typically, he finds a precedent for this in Calvin. As with Niebuhr the influence of Tillich is strongly seen in his "treasuring the mythological symbolism of the New Testament while disavowing the crude distortions to which it can give rise".⁷⁴

V: Changing times, changing moods

The anti-liberal tone of the New Genevans was part of the darkening mood of the 1930s. By the 1960s the mood had changed, and the Church Order Group's

67 Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology 1900-1950*, p. 479.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 480.

69 Binfield, "A Learned and Gifted Protestant Minister: John Seldon Whale", p. 121.

70 J. S. Whale, *Christian Reunion* (Grand Rapids, MN: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 121.

71 Whale, "Commemoration Sermon", p. 105.

72 Whale, *Christian Reunion*, p. 88.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 128.

fundamental liberalism reasserted itself. As Bill Sewell said of his time at Mansfield:

I suppose, insofar as we thought about it at all, we saw Nat's spat with the liberals as best noted and then forgotten. We, in our early post-war period, wanted to go in precisely the opposite direction, towards reconciliation and consensus. And with the elevation of John XXIII the time seemed ripe.⁷⁵

No-one reflected the change more dramatically than Erik Routley. In 1961 in *The Story of Congregationalism* he could confidently assert that liberal theology was "an abrupt recession from the traditional Biblical ethos of the churches",⁷⁶ but its influence was now over. Two years later John Robinson's *Honest to God* was published. Routley exploded with excitement. Neo-orthodoxy was dead. "I cannot write objectively or dispassionately about this. I can only record that the reading of it gave me more comfort, more encouragement, and more sense that life is worth living, and the ministry worth exercising than any book I have read for years".⁷⁷ Two months later "he had calmed down" as David Cornick rather delightfully puts it. But he still held to the substance of the judgement.⁷⁸ Younger members of the Church Order Group, such as Caryl Micklem, Roger Tomes and Brian Wren, also saw it as liberating. Bill Sewell was drawn into the Group at Mansfield: "I think it was the combination on the one hand of going back to the basics of liturgy – Gregory Dix and all that – with the need on the other hand to seek renewal, bringing the past into the present: those were the days of *aggiornamento* ... The mood of the Sixties when *Honest to God* came out was 'This is old hat' but praise be that it has found someone who can communicate it ... I warmed to the way Robinson went on to talk about the *New Reformation*".⁷⁹ Caryl Micklem became a regular at meetings of Free to Believe, the URC Liberal network, and his daughter Alison a committee member. Nat Micklem's later books such as *A Religion for Agnostics* (1965) and *The Religion of a Sceptic* (1975) read very differently from *What is the Faith?*

In fact, Micklem had rather more in common with Frank Lenwood than one might imagine. He was never tempted by Lenwood's simplistic and reductionist Unitarianism, but to compare Micklem's *A Religion for Agnostics* with *Jesus: Lord or Leader?* is to discover unexpected symmetries. When you come across, "There will be those Christians who will think ill of me for my critical or destructive criticism of traditional theology" it may come as a surprise to some that this is Micklem not Lenwood. Or what of, "If traditional Christians like to say that this religion is not Christianity, I am unconcerned",⁸⁰ which is exactly the criticism

75 Email to Martin Camroux,

76 Routley, *The Story of Congregationalism*, p. 90.

77 John Robinson and David Edwards, *The Honest to God Debate* (London: SCM, 1963), p. 81.

78 Cornick, *Through Erik Routley's Eyes*, p. 17.

79 B. Sewell, interview with Martin Camroux.

80 Nathaniel Micklem, *A Religion for Agnostics* (London: SCM, 1965), p. 119.

Micklem made of Lenwood. As for being unconcerned about criticism, because his theology “rests upon the simple facts of Jesus”,⁸¹ surely such naivety can only be Lenwood? But once again it is Micklem.

They shared a fundamental core of belief. Both were in the Mansfield tradition of critical biblical scholarship. Even at his most conservative Micklem regarded neither belief in the Virgin Birth nor the Empty Tomb as necessary for faith.⁸² Indeed much of the Resurrection story is “Largely mythological in form. It cannot be literally true in any scientific or purely historical sense”.⁸³ Both sought to address the same fundamental problem, the general loss of credibility of Christian belief. Micklem as well as Lenwood insisted on the humanity of Jesus. “Legendary, dogmatic and pious accretions have distorted the historical portrait given in the gospels”.⁸⁴ Unlike Lenwood he still finds credible the insights behind the doctrine of the Trinity but the language of the creeds “is today incredible or meaningless ... If we continue to speak of the divinity of Christ (as we well may) our thought must not be inconsistent with the plain fact that he was a man who lived in faith, in prayer and in obedience”.⁸⁵ When Lenwood argued that it did not make sense to call Jesus perfect, Micklem agreed with the assessment, though not the conclusion. As to the traditional doctrine of the Atonement which caused such problems for Lenwood, “We cannot think in those terms now”.⁸⁶ On the other hand “the real value of Jesus is his communication of God”⁸⁷ is of course Lenwood, though Micklem would surely have agreed. The point is not that the two are interchangeable. No-one reading the two books would confuse the two authors. Micklem is so much better expressed, there is a wider cultural interaction, apt poetic quotations and a belief that Christian belief is a living tradition that can be lived out if radically revised. Fundamentally Micklem is much more positive. In this he is more central to mainstream liberalism than Lenwood, but both are within the same theological genre.

VI: Conclusion

Liberal theology is a dialectic between faith and modernity, tradition and innovation. It is reformist in spirit and substance, shaped by modern science, humanism, and historical criticism, and committed to contextualizing the gospel in the modern world.

We cannot restore old policies,
Or follow an antique drum⁸⁸

81 Micklem, *A Religion for Agnostics*, p. 119.

82 Micklem, *What is the Faith?*, pp. 182, 184.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

84 Micklem, *A Religion for Agnostics*, p. 75.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

87 Lenwood, *Jesus: Lord or Leader?*, p. 335.

88 T. S. Elliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 196.

Inevitably therefore it walks a knife-edge, with the dangers of, on the one hand, over-absorption in a secular, essentially atheistic culture or, on the other lingering too long with discredited notions of truth. It needs therefore both its explorers and its stabilisers. Lenwood was an explorer. Micklem at different times in his life was both. They each had distinct voices, but they were in the same choir.

MARTIN CAMROUX

THE JOURNAL OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HISTORY SOCIETY THROUGH THE LENS OF BUILDING

An important feature of the United Reformed Church History Society's *Journal* (*JURCHS*) is that it says much about buildings and built environments, sometimes as a paper's main theme, but often as background or supporting detail. For those of us for whom building is, (or was, or might one day be), a major element of our working lives, this is good news. We can affirm that *JURCHS* is about our community, our identity, our purposes, our sector of the economy and society, and furthermore it is where vital parts of our Christianity and churchmanship concretely happen. The first part of this paper is an overview of some of what is said in *JURCHS* about actual buildings, their environments and the details and issues which are part and parcel of the building process. The second part reflects on apposite theological themes, where again *JURCHS* proves itself to be a rich resource. While it is recognised that most materials found in *JURCHS* relate to specific times, places or other contexts, nevertheless it becomes evident that the lens of building reveals an overall mosaic which has a value of its own. Finally the suggestion is made that both the building and theological facets of the study can be viewed as arts or languages.¹

I: Overview of Building

(a) Projects and purposes

At the heart of the world of building are projects aimed at serving particular purposes and needs. A difficult first question can sometimes be whether a building project is in fact needed. For example, while for church communities meeting places may be necessary, they do not always have to be purpose-made. It is interesting to learn that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries City livery halls often rented out accommodation to Dissenting groups. Among the halls known to have been used in this manner are those of some building crafts, including the Plaisterers, Plumbers, Carpenters, Glaziers and Joiners.²

A building project may begin with someone seeing a vision or dreaming creatively. In Titus Salt's speech of 20 September 1853 in which he inaugurated the town of Saltaire, he recalled that although he had reached his fiftieth year, he had not retired to country life as he had once thought he might, but instead "he had remained an industrialist and the result was Saltaire". He said:

Far be it from me to pollute the air and water of the place ... I hope to draw around me a population that will enjoy the beauties of the neighbourhood.

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- 1 The nature of the paper is such that I owe much to many authors whose work I acknowledge gratefully. Any misconceptions or misinterpretations are entirely my responsibility.
 - 2 Margaret Hine, "Dissenting Meeting Places in the City of London". *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society* (hereafter *JURCHS*), Vol. 2, No.1 (1978), p. 18.

and who will be well-fed, contented and happy. I have given instructions to my architect ... that nothing should be spared to render the dwellings of the operatives a pattern for the country. If my life should be spared by providence, I hope to see satisfaction, happiness and comfort around me³

On other occasions the momentum for a project may come from social need in a particular locality. In the 1920s the Baptist and Congregational Churches of Northampton created Bethany Homestead “to make provision for the welfare, comfort, treatment and relief in sickness and old age of poor persons belonging to, or connected with” their two denominations. Plans for the Homestead were announced to the public in 1924. It was reported that between £5,000 and £6,000 was already in hand and detailed planning was well advanced. The scheme provided for the buildings to be constructed in a quadrangle so that each stage could be built separately as funds permitted. On 16 July 1925 twelve foundation stones were laid and gradually small numbers of cottages and flats were added. Later facilities included a Nursing Home and a dual purpose hall which could be used by the residents both as a chapel and for social gatherings. There were further additions to the scheme, before and after the Second World War. In 1969 individuals were invited to build bungalows within Bethany for their own occupation.⁴ This is an excellent example of a project paced steadily, balancing need with resources.

Some buildings become ripe for renewal. In such cases an essential question is who the real client is, ideally including the end user. An excellent example of this is the College Archivist’s account of the renovation of the URC’s Westminster College in Cambridge. Designed by Henry Hare (1860-1921) and having an idyllic beginning in 1899, it was “a beautiful new building on the corner of the lane leading to the village of Madingley. An Arts and Crafts jewel with tiled fireplaces, stained glass windows and oak panelling, it was also fitted with the modern desirables: electric lights, an impressive kitchen, and a state-of-the-art ventilation system”. Over the next 110 years, while the roof was replaced and central heating installed, little else was done until 2014 when there was “a full renovation and refurbishment of every aspect of its facilities, from overhauling the heating and wiring to updating the accommodation, offices and kitchens”. A key feature of this project was the upgrading and extending of facilities for Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, including “a secure room with climate control and a fire suppression system, fitted with rolling racking” – a poignant interface between history and contemporary building technology. Surprise finds included “signed wooden laths from the ceiling and 1930s ‘At Home’ cards, found down the back of an old fireplace, from the Site Foreman”. The architect Mr Hare included his monogram, a hare, in one of the stained glass

3 Clyde Binfield, “Industry, Philanthropy and Christian Citizenship: The Great Paternalists”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 9, No. 5 (2014), p. 278.

4 Nigel Appleton, “Bethany Homestead, Northampton: A Case Study in Christian Social Concern”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1973), pp. 61-65.

windows and it is good that the names of some of the artisans have not been permanently lost.⁵

Other projects are civically and commercially prestigious. At the centre of the new town of Halifax was St George's Square, "at the top end of which was to stand the new railway station" for the Lancashire and Yorkshire and the Huddersfield and Manchester railways. This station, now a grade 2 listed building, is generally regarded as one of Congregational deacon and architect James Piggott Pritchett's finest works. "With its dominant central portico, side colonnades and outer trianion-like temples (actually booking offices for the two railway companies) it is a remarkable building. A further Pritchett touch was the installation of a gas cooker in the refreshment room kitchen instead of an open fire, to provide more rapidly-cooked meals for travellers. On the side of the square opposite the station, Pritchett designed in 1853 the Lion Arcade, built in the Italianate style, 180 feet long with a lion over the central pediment. The roof was of cast iron and glass, materials made popular by Paxton for the Great Exhibition building in 1851".⁶

Staircases can be both a specialised element of crafted joinery and a focus for the visual and psychological experiences provided by a building. For example, in *JURCHS* we come upon a picture showing the front elevation of the home of Daniel West, 6 Church Street, Spitalfields. The splendid staircase had "delightfully turned and twisted balustrades with fluted ionic columns with carved tread ends and handrails down which grandson Daniel Wilson would slide". Earlier Wilson family distinctions included trusteeship of George Whitefield's London Tabernacle and, in one case, burial under the communion table in the Tottenham Court Road tabernacle. The grandson who allegedly slid down the banisters was later to become Bishop of Calcutta in the Church of South India.⁷

Another illustration in *JURCHS* shows the meeting between the Polish Reformer John à Lasco and the young King Edward VI and his courtiers. We learn that the wall of the grand staircase at Lindsey House, Chelsea, was the location chosen by Count Zinzendorf as the pride-of-place setting for this painting. On a wall of pictures it was the largest and held the premier position flanked by others. But, we are further informed, Lindsey House was all show. "Zinzendorf knew even as his carpenters and painters worked on it in 1752 that he could not afford it". After sale in 1774 the "house was split into a terrace of dwellings by speculative builders who took out the grand staircase" as part of their work.⁸

Sometimes, however successful the design and construction may have been, the aspiration for a building proves to be unachievable or misconceived. One such was

5 Helen Weller, "A Moving Tale: Archives and Special Collections at Westminster College, Cambridge", *JURCHS*, Vol. 9, No. 7 (2015), pp. 437, 440.

6 Edward Royle, "James Piggott Pritchett, Congregational Deacon and Architect", *JURCHS*, Vol. 6, No. 10 (2002), p. 751.

7 Malcolm J. Harrison, "Daniel West: George Whitefield's Forgotten Trustee", *JURCHS*, Vol. 7, No. 8 (2006), pp. 461-462, 465.

8 Stephen Orchard, "What Does the Picture Tell Us?", *JURCHS*, Vol. 7, No. 6 (2005), pp. 347-350.

The Milton Hall and Club, a London centre for Nonconformists set up to provide dining, coffee and drawing rooms, news and pamphlet rooms, rooms for private parties and committees, sleeping accommodation for members and a basement containing strong rooms, to say nothing of an enticing wine cellar. It met with apathy. Perhaps it was “too rich for the average Nonconformist gentleman but not exclusive enough for the aspiring business man”. Sadly the contents of the cellar were disposed of and the property sold.⁹ On reflection, “This was Nonconformity at its most strident, its most indulgent, asserting for itself the privileges of other social and religious groups”.¹⁰

The *JURCHS* reader’s eye is drawn to illustrations of the one-time Presbyterian Meeting Houses at Macclesfield, Knutsford and Dean Row in East Cheshire. These show a conjectural plan of Knutsford, indicating possible dispositions of pulpit, table and pews, and external photographs of all three buildings detailing walls, windows, porches, roofs, and external stairs integral with main structures.¹¹ These simple structures embodying the work of masons and brickmakers, carpenters and glaziers, speak hauntingly of the vernacular and are, as the photographs suggest, a delight to see.

Wisdom, experience and congeniality are good for many projects, especially when sound advice is wisely sought and sensibly heeded. Charles Edward Conder served the English Chapel Building Society as architectural consultant and later secretary. A civil engineer by profession, “This unflappably retiring fellow was the safest pair of hands imaginable. For forty-three years [his] practical good sense alerted countless chapel-building committees to pitfalls and elephant traps”. At his retirement tribute was paid to his “cheerfulness and urbanity”.¹²

Adverse natural events are inevitable, sometimes causing a structure to come to a premature end. Thomas Gibbons preached at a Haberdashers’ Hall meeting in Cheapside, 15 July 1773, on Job 37:5 “God thundereth marvellously with his voice: great things doeth he which we cannot comprehend”. The day before, there had been a severe thunderstorm with “many lives lost by lightning and destruction of buildings”. Previously in March 1750 Gibbons had experienced what was “generally believed to be an earthquake” with damage to buildings most severe in the East End. In an aftershock he had awoken to “windows clattering about me” and reflected, “How awful are these Munitions of the Divine anger”.¹³

On other occasions the cause of destruction may be human action. The URC Mission and Other Faiths Committee recorded that on a visit to Israel/Palestine in 1987 its members “attempted to meet people who brought a variety of perspectives”

9 Matthew Prevett, “The Milton Club”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 10, No. 5 (2019), pp. 246, 255.

10 “Editorial”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 10, No. 5 (2019), p. 234.

11 Malcolm Lovibond, “‘A Matter of Indifference’: A Commentary on the Cheshire Classis Meetings of 1691”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2009), pp. 206-209.

12 Clyde Binfield, “Nonconformist Architecture: A Congregational Focus, Part 1”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 10, No. 6 (2020), p. 308.

13 John Handby Thompson, “‘The Dear Author’: Thomas Gibbons and his Diary”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2019), p. 213.

and “learned to read the geography of the land. A pile of stones was more than it seemed, it was the rubble you get when you knock down a home”.¹⁴

Buildings, or parts of them, can sometimes become an aid to remembering people who have suffered or been harmed. In 1957 there was an Act of Parliament to drown the Tryweryn Valley in north Merionethshire in order to create a reservoir for Liverpool. Although there were many protestations, no authority had the power to stop the work so “it was built just the same”. Anti-reservoir slogans, *Remember Tryweryn*, were daubed on walls throughout Wales. One such, in a layby near Aberystwyth, became subject to a preservation order ensuring that Tryweryn will never be forgotten.¹⁵

(b) Processes and issues

A characteristic of some building projects is that they involve a varied and sometimes large group of specialists as well as basic suppliers and trades. Two Congregational-linked individuals who combined building industry roles with building townships in which employees could live, were Sir Halley Stewart (1838-1937), brickmaker and founder of Stewartby in Bedfordshire, and F. H. Crittall (1860-1935), metal window manufacturer and founder of the township of Silver End in Essex.¹⁶ Many houses, we recall, consist of bricks or an equivalent and windows of some kind, their raw materials originating in or from the given earth.

At St James’s Park tube station passers-by can look up and recall Congregational family member Allan Wyon, a sculptor whose “best known work is part of the frieze on the London Underground Headquarters at 55 Broadway in collaboration with Epstein, Gill and Henry Moore”. In passing we can note that Allan also designed a reredos for the King’s Weigh House, “that extraordinary fusion of Congregationalism and Catholicism”, a reminder that his family belonged “to that part of English Congregationalism caught in the tension between the Catholic and the Reformed”. Later he became an Anglican priest and, importantly, continued with his work as a sculptor.¹⁷

The novelist Thomas Hardy first trained as an architect in Dorchester, his office window overlooking the site where a “large and important new building”, the Congregational Church, was being erected. “Watching this building go up so conveniently near must have contributed something of practical value to [his] architectural education”.¹⁸ Also on the theme of watching, in a study of Staffordshire-born business man and philanthropist, William Copeland Astbury

14 John M. Parry, “Working with People of Other Faiths within the United Reformed Church: An Assessment of the Mission and Other Faiths Committee”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 9, No. 7 (2015), p. 415.

15 Robert Pope, “Wales and the World: A Journey Through the Nonconformist Mind”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2008), p. 14.

16 Binfield, “Industry, Philanthropy and Christian Citizenship: The Great Paternalists”, pp. 325-326.

17 David Cornick, “‘So Practical a Mystic’: Olive Wyon (1881-1966)”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 7 (2010), pp. 403-404.

18 John Travell, “The Casterbridge Congregationalists”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 5 (2009), p. 292.

(1783-1868). it is suggested that “for the early Victorians, especially the middle classes, machinery and commerce could be beautiful things”. *JURCHS* includes a print of the opening of the Chalk Farm cutting on the Birmingham railway which shows a rural scene with an admiring crowd of spectators. Astbury watched the building of this railway with interest.¹⁹

Among the projects of schoolmaster and hymn writer Geoffrey Hoyland was “the innovative construction and operation of the Downs School Light Railway which involved friendship and teamwork and ... facilitated a grasp of essential physics, geography and mathematics”.²⁰ Doubtless both civil and mechanical aspects of engineering were involved. Anthony Ashton tells how the activities at Albion Congregational chapel included an “Organised Science School that took pupils up to university entrance with well-endowed scholarships”, as well as much charitable work.²¹ It is a logical step from school science to advanced engineering design. *JURCHS* includes a picture of the Derbyshire farmhouse of Congregationalist Joshua Wilson drawn by Harriet Moore who, through various family networks, is connected to the modern civil engineering firm of Freeman Fox and Partners, notable for bridge designs worldwide.²²

We read of several interesting carpenters and joiners. William Creed, after training as a minister and serving two pastorates, adopted a more independent lifestyle, including working as a “Superintendent of Carpentry Advertising”, a description changed by a census enumerator to “Newspaper Agent”.²³ At Westminster Abbey there is a Muniment of the 1650s known as “The carpenter’s plan” showing a conjectural layout with pews and pulpit. This is likely to have been prepared or commissioned by Adam Browne, a former joiner, who was the Abbey Surveyor from 1649 to 1655.²⁴ At Salem Church, Bradford, the twenty-one trustees comprised two joiners, seven wool-staplers, five worsted spinners, three drapers, a dyer, a book-keeper, a bookseller and a grocer.²⁵

Education and training always matter. The missionary, W. C. Willoughby, was appointed Principal of the Tiger Kloof institution and enrolled young men as apprentices to work on its construction. The Industrial Department later gave vocational training in building, carpentry, tailoring, leatherwork and other crafts. There was also a teacher training department.²⁶ Back in England at Egremont

19 Stephen Orchard, “Christian Philanthropy in London 1830-1850”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 7, No. 8 (2006) p. 472.

20 Nigel Lemon, “Geoffrey Hoyland’s Congregational Links”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 10 (2012), p. 616.

21 Anthony Ashton, “An Ashton Background”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (2004), pp. 318-9.

22 Malcolm Harrison, “Revisiting the Wilsons of Derbyshire: A Note”, *JURCHS* (2008), Vol. 8, No. 1 (2008), p. 47.

23 Nigel Lemon, “A Congregational Soap: Some Products of a Nineteenth Century Black Country Manse”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 7, No. 9 (2006), p. 549.

24 Malcolm Lovibond, “The Setting for Puritan Worship in Westminster Abbey, 1650-1660”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2013), pp. 191-193.

25 Binfield, “Industry, Philanthropy and Christian Citizenship: The Great Paternalists”, p. 274.

26 Kenneth Maltus Smith, “Tigers from the Fountain: The Tiger Kloof Institution and the Moeding College”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 6 (2010), pp. 341, 343.

Presbyterian Church we encounter Thomas Samuel (1868-1940) who became secretary of the local Technical and Manual Instruction Committee and later Director of Education for Wallasey.²⁷

A thought-provoking comment for all who work with trainees, apprentices and students comes from Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, who “was, by the standards of her time an enlightened educator”, who observed that “youth are always so wise else, they seldom think they want anything and if you hurt that kind of self-love in them too soon, all your influence will soon have an end. Good humoured patience is the surest way with tolerable sense”.²⁸

(c) Change

“Change” is a perennial theme among the pages of *JURCHS*. Change of location is sometimes appropriate for an individual. In 1950, Arnold Legg, bishop in the Church of South India, while on furlough in England, addressed Rotary Clubs in Derby and Bristol, mentioning that in changing times “missionaries moved to modest houses, turning over any pretentious mission bungalows to other purposes”.²⁹

Sometimes change is within people. James Blackburn (1803-1854) was linked to Congregational networks. A London architect and engineer, his “transportation to Van Dieman’s Land for forgery in 1833 preceded a distinguished career in Melbourne and Hobart where his engineering usefulness with roads, bridges and water supplies marched with church building in Greek, Gothic and Norman styles” including the Congregational Chapel at Bagdad (close to the Tasmanian Jordan River!).³⁰ Another example of human change occurs in comments on the Welsh Revival of the early 1900s and consequent reduction in drunkenness, where we read that “Thousands of husbands and wives now find pleasure in their homes for the first time in their lives. Their children are clothed and fed and brought up as they never were before”.³¹

Some people’s work changes over time. Thomas Huxley, “a wheelwright turned contractor ... designed chapels for Gwersyllt and Rhosrobin colliery villages near Wrexham, and both planned and erected that at rural Lavister (all in Denbigh); these were among at least fourteen chapels which he built in the border counties between 1868 and 1891”.³²

Other workers have to move with their jobs. For seven years from 1881 the North Wales English Congregational Union financed evangelical work “among workmen constructing Liverpool Corporation’s Lake Vyrnwy reservoir and aqueduct. New wooden buildings were put up at the sole expense of the Union:

27 Peter S. Richards, “A Century of Worship at Egremont”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 10 (2012), p. 608.

28 Stephen Orchard, “Selina, Countess of Huntingdon”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2008), pp. 78-79.

29 Stephen Orchard, “Our Other Bishop: Arnold Henry Legg (1899-1980)”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2018), p. 152.

30 Binfield, “Nonconformist Architecture: A Congregational Focus Part 1”, p. 318 and note 124.

31 J. Gwynfor Jones, “Reflections on the Religious Revival in Wales 1904-5”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 7, No. 7 (2006), p. 443.

32 Nigel Lemon, “North Wales English Congregational Union”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 7, No. 8 (2006), p. 487.

Liverpool Congregationalists made generous donations”.³³ Most of the North Wales congregations included migrating workers, such as “the immigrant quarrymen from Leicestershire who lost their jobs when cities found alternatives to granite setts for paving their streets”. Similarly, “More quarries closed, as did the brickworks near Cefn Mawr and Johnstown (Denbigh)”.³⁴ A more dubious matter might be the sacking of quarrymen for leaving their employers’ churches for doctrinal reasons but that is what happened among some Independents in Lowland Scotland in the early 1800s.³⁵

Change is not always easy or welcome. For Michael D. Jones (1822-98) a Welsh Nationalist and Nonconformist, “the Welsh were a nation of farmers and this was quite simply the divine order of things”. He was unwilling to recognise the realities of growing industrialisation under king coal and steel in the south, and the slate industry in Snowdonia. Furthermore he lacked an awareness of the wider world, making the contention that “Wales could be located anywhere on God’s earth”.³⁶

Change can come in the form of innovation. For example the Congregational Dawsons of Lancashire had wide business and financial interests, Edward Dawson (1793-1876) being “one of the most spirited agriculturalists of the century”. The family had interests in modern developments in industry and communication including canals, shipbuilding, cotton and railways. More specifically, Edward Bousfield Dawson (1830-1916) was innovative in techniques such as concrete for farm building structures.³⁷

In Hampshire Howard Butler Lankester (1872-1944) had “an impeccable Congregational pedigree” and in his family business, dating back to 1799, were engineers, ironmongers and electricians.³⁸ They were innovators. Stepping outside *JURCHS* for a moment, we learn that “In another portion of the premises the hot water apparatus, for which the firm are celebrated, is made. The hot water apparatus manufactured here is alike suitable for the church, the shop, the mansion, and the residence of the professional man and the tradesman”.³⁹

A flagship for architectural innovation in the nineteenth century was the Crystal Palace, welcomed in Congregational and other Nonconformist quarters for its iron and glass technology, aesthetic attraction, workmanship, speed of erection and other features. While secular in its purpose and scientific in context, the theology of the day saw the divine hand at work.⁴⁰

33 Ibid., pp. 488-489.

34 Ibid., pp. 491-492.

35 Alan P. F. Sell, “Review of *Early Congregational Independency in Lowland Scotland Volume II*, by William D. McNaughton”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2008), p. 121.

36 Pope, “Wales and the World: A Journey Through the Nonconformist Mind”, pp. 18-19.

37 Nigel Lemon, “Missionaries to Lancashire and Beyond; the Dawsons of Aldcliffe”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 5 (2009), pp. 259-260.

38 Roger Ottewill, “The Avenue Quartet: Exemplars of Edwardian Congregationalism”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2014), p. 244.

39 <http://sotonopedia.wikidot.com/page-browse:lankester-and-son-iron-foundry-and-shop>, accessed 16 March 2022.

40 Michael Powell, “Review Article: Views on the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Crystal Palace Building”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 10, No. 5 (2019), pp. 271-276.

(d) Health, well-being and recreation

Key facets of building and built environment regulation by local authorities and public agencies, include water supply, drainage and health generally. James Lemon (1833-1923) had minor connections with Congregational churches in Southampton, possibly as a seat-holder but certainly through involvement in building and financial matters. The son of a builder, his early career was with Sir Joseph Bazalgette in the design and construction of the Thames Embankment and London's main drainage. Later he was Borough Engineer and Surveyor of Southampton, after which he was elected a Liberal Councillor and served as Mayor. His professional work was involved with public health, sanitation, water supply, electricity and tramways and during his mayoralty the foundation stones of a new post office and the town's first public library were laid. He claimed that his knighthood was mainly in recognition of his services to the civil engineering and surveying professions.⁴¹

Behind every drainage installation is a supply chain of people such as the Leggs, a Derbyshire Congregational family, who ran an iron foundry which "prospered and supplied Derby's manhole and drain covers by the hundred".⁴² One hopes they put their firm's name on their products even if those of individual foundry-men and labourers are lost for all time. Even more lost in obscurity must be the names and work of those producing mass products such as Portland Cement - not completely lost however, as lapsed Congregationalist cement manufacturers, the Bazley Whites, engaged Congregationalist architect Richard Norman Shaw in 1908 to design their new headquarters at Portland House, Lloyd's Avenue in London.⁴³

With regard to health it can be argued that an associated industry of building is soap manufacture. While the Congregational Cooks of Essex had involvements in farming, law and school-teaching "the staple of their prosperity ... was soap". For his home, Edward Cook (1810-1886) took out a lease on a country house, (Crix) at Hatfield Peverel, Essex, and forged links with the nearby Congregational churches at Witham and Little Baddow. For a decade in the 2000s the present writer stood outside the Little Baddow Chapel most weeks, greeting the congregation right beside the grave of Edward Cook and his wife. There was a powerful sense that chapel, grave, an extended landscape view, and the Cooks themselves, coalesced to make a spiritually meaningful "place". Also we note that Edward Rider Cook (1836-1898) was linked by marriage to Thomas Piper (1800-1870), "author of *Digest of Building Acts* (1856)".⁴⁴

Another "soap" story is that of Robert Spear Hudson (1812-1884) of West Bromwich whose innovation was to produce "dry soap" or soap powder. The story runs thus, "Production in 1854 involved only a small workshop industry employing ten former ... Sunday School scholars whose hymn-singing was found

41 Ottewill, "The Avenue Quartet: Exemplars of Edwardian Congregationalism", pp. 236-237.

42 Stephen Orchard, "James Gawthorn and Derbyshire Congregationalism", *JURCHS*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2018), p. 145.

43 Clyde Binfield, "Richard Norman Shaw: A Further Note", *JURCHS*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1979), p. 79.

44 Clyde Binfield, "Tadeo Yanaihara and Mrs Cook. III. The Cooks", *JURCHS*, Vol. 7, No. 6 (2005), pp. 390-391.

to aid productivity". Growth included factories in Bootle and Liverpool employing over a thousand. Hudson's Soaps' advertising was on "the curved ends of electric tramcars as far apart as Rotherham and Devonport".⁴⁵ Mention of trams links with Richard Westrope (1856-1941), who came from a Hertfordshire family of tenant farmers. As a child he had been told about "the people in this village so hungry that they have been almost ready to eat the dirt off the streets". Later during his ministry to working people in central Leeds, his church provided "lunches for men working on tramlines near the chapel".⁴⁶

The issue of safety on site is one part of a general question posed by Alan Sell: "Might there not be less crime, fewer accidents on the road and at work, fewer days lost at work – with all the attendant costs involved – if the consumption of alcohol became as socially unacceptable as the imbibing of nicotine has become in many quarters?"⁴⁷ Elsewhere Alan Sell noted, "During the opening service of the Glasgow Tabernacle, 'The rails of the staircase giving way, some limbs were broken: but ... no lives were lost'".⁴⁸

Financial health and well-being are bound up with building. Among an array of philanthropic activities, John Crossley (1812-1879) was the founder of the Halifax Building Society, one of his developments being West Hill Park estate. While he expected a financial return from the properties "it was to be five per cent rather than the more normal seven to ten per cent. A five per cent return ensured that mortgages taken out with the Building Society would be redeemed in thirteen years".⁴⁹ Architect-Deacon James Pigott Pritchett was involved with the York Savings Bank, founded in 1816 as a measure to encourage servants not to spend all their money at once. He was given the commission to build a new bank at the corner of Blake Street and St Helen's Square in 1829.⁵⁰

A link with architect Thomas Hardy's work as a dramatist started in 1887 when Dorchester Congregationalists established a drama group, *The Hardy Players*, who from within and beyond the church "were among the solid citizens of the town. They were business, trade and professional people" following a range of occupations, the less common of which included a prison governor and a tax commissioner. A builder was among later members of the group.⁵¹

T. Arthur Leonard (1864-1948) moved from a church-based ministry in Colne, Lancashire, to roles in the field of innovative summer holiday organisation. Recreation of the bodies given by God was vital. Leonard took young mill hands away from the

45 Lemon, "A Congregational Soap: Some Products of a Nineteenth Century Black Country Manse", pp. 549-550.

46 Gerard Charmley, "Richard Westrope and Belgrave Chapel", *JURCHS*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2014), pp. 208, 218.

47 Alan P. F. Sell, "Is Geoffrey also among the Theologians?" Part II, [Sell's comment, not Nuttall's]. *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 10 (2012), p. 638.

48 Sell, "Review of *Early Congregational Independency in Lowland Scotland*", p. 123.

49 Binfield, "Industry, Philanthropy and Christian Citizenship: The Great Paternalists", pp. 292-293.

50 Royle, "James Pigott Pritchett, Congregational Deacon and Architect", p. 747.

51 Travell, "The Casterbridge Congregationalists", pp. 291ff.

narrow streets, choking cotton waste and respiratory illnesses of workdays in the mill towns, away from the temptations of alcohol in fleshpot resorts in any holiday period, to seek out “regions of loveliness”, perhaps sometimes including simple rural built features. He said “The Gospel of Christ must touch every part of a man’s life. If it is good for anything, it is good for everything”.⁵² We can but surmise whether young building workers were able to take holidays with Leonard or whether they had to stay in town to carry out summer maintenance work on the factories.

Although experiencing poor health, the tasks of Arthur Bonsey, missionary in China, included establishing and building schools. Fortunately for him and his family, an entrepreneur had developed a summer retreat at Kuling, away from the overpowering heat of riverside towns, the only access then being by a flight of one thousand steps, up which Europeans were carried by chair. “Bonsey bought one of the plots (no 279) and by 1910 a stone bungalow had been built there”. In this resort his younger daughter Olive and other children were able to “play freely ... and collect mountain flowers”.⁵³ In *JURCHS* we encounter another Olive and another recreation memory. In her 70s Olive Wyon (1881-1966) looked back to when “She was aged two or three, and recalled being on Southsea beach ‘minded’ by a young girl who built sandcastles with her, creating in the top of one of them a little hollow that she filled with wild scarlet poppies”.⁵⁴ Who would dare say that a transient sandcastle is not a proper building and its young makers not real builders?

II: Theological Reflection

While Part I may be regarded as a self-coherent and to some extent representative technical, social and economic overview of what is understood as “building”, *JURCHS* adds a further dimension which points to related aspects of theological meaning.

(a) Reflective practice and vocation

In *JURCHS* we find the point of view expressed that “what we need is a way of cultivating the reflective faith of Christian men and women which is more ‘bottom up’ than ‘top down’” and which nurtures “the ability of church members to give an account of the hope that is in them in word *and* by deed”. Reliance on “trickle down” from theological experts is likely to lead only to a desert.⁵⁵ We have seen that for many people building trades and professions are their work and therefore a key aspect of their “deeds”. Minister William Jay (1769-1853), the son of a Wiltshire stonemason and himself an apprentice to that trade, believed that “work,

52 Rosamund Ridley, “‘Adventures in Holiday Making’ – A Political Approach to Leisure: The Inspiration and Influence of T. Arthur Leonard, 1864-1948”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 7, No. 10 (2007), pp. 609-611, 615.

53 Anthony Bradley, “Arthur Bonsey (1858-1942) and the Missionary Enterprise in Central China”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2018), p. 133.

54 Cornick, “‘So Practical a Mystic’: Olive Wyon (1881-1966)”, p. 414.

55 David R. Peel, “Review of *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century*, by Alan P. F. Sell”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2008), p. 53.

regular habits and a sense of independence are characteristics of the Christian in the secular world. Everyone should be useful". In particular the "poor ... must do more than exist. 'Let them have employment, and food, and clothing. Where this is not the case, a country has retrograded ... and till it be rectified there can be no solid or lasting peace or safety'".⁵⁶

Elsie Chamberlain, in her address from the Chair of the Congregational Union in 1956-7, said, "Today, not only do we see that religion must not be separate from our daily work; we see also the tremendous importance of the layman's witness in his own walk of life".⁵⁷ At Egremont Presbyterian Church it was apparent that "the congregation nurtured many who carried their faith into their working lives".⁵⁸ At Basingstoke men in the PSA (Pleasant Sunday Afternoon) group were re-assured by their minister that "they had striven to put their religion into their daily life and redeem it from being hypocritical".⁵⁹ He knew "many men who have been toned into a better mode of living – in their homes and in their work".⁶⁰ Of John Cook of the London/Essex Congregationalist and soap manufacturing family discussed earlier, it was said that he was "the first to teach me that a man of business can be a true Christian".⁶¹

The URC's Mission and Other Faiths Committee recorded discussions it had had with Sikh colleagues just after the publication of *Faith in the City* in 1985. Ajit Singh had asked "Whose faith?", "Whose city?" The committee reflected that "As engineers, builders and town planners, our Sikh colleagues spoke with authority about urban development, as people of faith they spoke of community cohesion before it became a regular by-word".⁶² This suggests that being truly vocational means combining professional competence with faith-based morality.

(b) Sermon and Kingdom

Various references to the Sermon on the Mount and the Kingdom of God occur in *JURCHS*. In a discussion of the Welsh Revival of the early 1900s mention is made of tension concerning "the love of Christ in a grimly competitive society where the market price was more important than the standards of the Sermon on the Mount".⁶³ Similarly we hear from Bournemouth where J. D. Jones's congregation included businessmen and town councillors. There people raised the question whether the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount was practical. Can

56 John H. Taylor, "William Jay (1769-1853) and his Admirers", *JURCHS*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1974), pp. 71, 75.

57 Anthony Tucker, "'Fathers and Brethren: Addresses by Chairmen of the Congregational Union of England and Wales (1940-1965) and Presidents of the Congregational Church in England and Wales (1966-1972), Part I", *JURCHS*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2012), p. 55.

58 Richards, "A Century of Worship at Egremont", p. 608.

59 Roger Ottehill, "The Brotherhood Movement in Hampshire", *JURCHS*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2018), p. 164.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

61 Binfield, "Tadeo Yanaihara and Mrs Cook. III. The Cooks", p. 391.

62 Parry, "Working with People of Other Faiths within the United Reformed Church: An Assessment of the Mission and Other Faiths Committee", p. 415.

63 Gwynfor Jones, "Reflections on the Religious Revival in Wales 1904-05", p. 431.

anyone, J. D. reflected, “live and work within our competitive society and at the same time fulfil the law of Christ?” He responded: “I do not think he can” and further asked “so do we leave business, leave citizenship?” His answer was a firm “No, we must leaven the lump”.⁶⁴

Turning to the Kingdom of God, we read of Olive Wyon who worked as a translator and editor with a publisher whose intent was to “deal with the world situation viewed from the stand point of the Kingdom of God”,⁶⁵ a generic challenge if ever there was one. In Wales the publication *Y Deyrnas*, first issued in 1916, argued that responding to the carnage and grief of war offered “a new opportunity to extend and deepen Christ’s kingship in the lives of men and in the organisation of society” and further declared that the church’s mission was “to make the Kingdom of God a general fact in the world’s life”. In particular, “the Gospel’s concession to every honest labour is adequate pay, just conditions, reasonable hours of work and leisure hours that will give him a fair opportunity to live a full and blessed life”.⁶⁶ These generic Christian stances can be read to include the specifics of the building sector.

Henry Spencer (1869-1929) born in Colchester and pursuing ministries in Liverpool, Forest Gate [East London], Grimsby and Southampton, took “a wide view of the many ways in which the Kingdom of God can be advanced”, saying “Any man might love his friends but the Christian was to love his enemies ... Anyone might be expected to do good to the benevolent and beneficent, but the Christian was to do good irrespective of their goodness”.⁶⁷ William Ward of London visiting Romsey said he “was going to use the word political in the New Testament sense” speaking for those who “stood for a Christianised democracy. They would never settle the housing and other questions till they brought into it the teaching of Jesus Christ”.⁶⁸

Congregationalist Jesse Haworth (1835-1920), a cotton manufacturer and merchant from Bolton, was deeply interested in Egyptology for both cotton trade and biblical association reasons. It was said of him that “He is a religious man” and he “does not want to plunder”.⁶⁹ For everyone the question arises, what does one want to value and respect, and not to plunder, whether archaeologically or in any other way? Archaeology, a major feature of some construction sites, is a reminder of Geoffrey Hoyland’s haunting phrase “in the dust and joy of human life”.⁷⁰

While most comments on Kingdom and Sermon have behavioural ethics in

64 John H. Taylor, “J. D. Jones – The Preacher”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2008), p. 98.

65 Cornick, “‘So Practical a Mystic’: Olive Wyon (1881-1966)”, pp. 400ff.

66 Robert Pope, “Conscription, Conscience and Building God’s Kingdom”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 9, No. 10 (2017), p. 583.

67 Ottewill, “The Avenue Quartet: Exemplars of Edwardian Congregationalism”, pp. 232-234.

68 Roger Ottewill, “The Brotherhood Movement in Hampshire”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2018), p. 166.

69 Brenda E. Moon, “‘A Fearful Outbreak of Egyptology’ in the North-West”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 9 (2011), p. 538.

70 Nigel Lemon, “‘The Dust and Joy of Human Life’: Geoffrey Hoyland and some Congregational Links”, p. 616.

mind, it is important to note that aesthetics, including architectural aspects, in the Sermon on the Mount, is featured in a conversation with the poet Donald Davie. It refers to the

singleness of eye of which the Sermon on the Mount speaks, which enables the whole body to be full of light. Seeing things steady and seeing them whole, we have no need for covering things up, either by deviousness or guile or by elaborate surface decoration which may possibly conceal defects.

And speaking of “the consequences which follow from seeking first God’s kingdom and his righteousness”, the conversation continues, “When that is done the rest of life is seen in the right perspective and all manner of good things will be added unto us”, as we see in “the reference to the beauty of the lilies in the field a hint that aesthetic good things are among them”.⁷¹

(c) Incarnation, humanity, Spirit and creativity

The concept of God incarnate is to some cultures and in some historical periods unbelievable. The idea “that the Son of God came, lived and died so humbly ... was something that baffled those living comfortably in the eighteenth century”. In *The Family Expositor* Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) “displays none of the joy in Christ’s humble birth which we delight in at Christmas. Jesus was a carpenter, but which of us would dare to say, as Doddridge did, that Jesus ‘once wrought that mean employment’”? In his time Doddridge, by doing so, “would have offended nobody”.⁷² In a contrasting period, Henry Alfred Grant Osborne (1895-1992), a minister in Surrey villages, was able to include the following anonymous but still widely known item among his favourite prayers: “O Jesus, Master Carpenter of Nazareth, who on the Cross with wood and nails hast wrought man’s whole salvation, wield well thy tools in this thy workshop, that we who come to thee rough-hewn, may be fashioned to a truer beauty by thy hand; for thy name and glory’s sake. Amen”.⁷³ Following on from that anonymous prayer, we note that the themes of death and resurrection can be depicted artistically and architecturally. In the new (1907) Egremont Presbyterian church the Crucifixion window was made by glaziers Morris & Co while “the Resurrection window was executed by a local man, Gustave Hillier of Liverpool”.⁷⁴ One wonders, were they just carrying out a craft operation however skilled, or were they articulating a faith of their own?

John Clifford, a Baptist minister from London who had once worked seventeen hours a day in Nottingham lace factories, pointed out in a lecture at Belgrave Congregational Chapel in Leeds that: “It was to Jesus Christ whom we owed the

71 Daniel T. Jenkins, “A Conversation with Donald D. Davie”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 3, No. 9 (1986), pp. 369-370.

72 John H. Taylor, “Doddridge’s ‘Most Considerable Work’: The Family Expositor”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (2004), p. 245.

73 Alan P. F. Sell, “The Unsung Ministers of Congregationalism’s List B”, *JURCHS*, Vol. 9, No. 6 (2015), p. 355.

74 Richards, “A Century of Worship at Egremont”, p. 608.

discovery that man was man; that he was no mere 'hand', but a soul, no mere tool – a cog in the great wheel of industry but a living being with a conscience, intellect, nature fashioned after the nature of God and not to be treated as a dog or a slave".⁷⁵ Not so difficult, one thinks, in a gentle, craft-orientated workshop or sheltered academic setting but hard to relate to rough, tough construction sites.

Geoffrey Nuttall, described as "a practical theologian", emphasised the role of the Spirit in relation to moral judgement and decision-making:

When the Spirit of the Risen Christ comes among us ... *He sharpens* our perception of the difference between truth and falsehood, and between right and wrong ... and He insists on our judging: first in the intellectual sense of deciding *what* is true or right and *what* is false or wrong, and then in the moral sense of deciding *where we stand*. He demands, as always, a free decision ... [Always] a decision is called for.⁷⁶

Early in the story recounted throughout *JURCHS* we are introduced to Theophilus Gale (1628-1679) who believed that "all human learning derived from divine and scriptural origins; the original wisdom bestowed by God to man in the creation ... had been passed down through the ages in one form or another".⁷⁷ This "one form or another" includes, one senses, all genres of creativity in building and built environment design, technology and skills.

In the same vein we find reference made to *The First Chapter of Genesis*, a sermon by W. G. Elmslie (1885-1965), in which he pointed out that the text shows symmetry and has a literary rather than a chronological arrangement – "The first three days 'present us with three vast empty tenements or habitations' and the remaining set furnishes them with occupants". Also, "The natural unit and division of human toil is the day", including we might add, the carpenter's day for example. Across space and time we hear echoes of building language, tenements, habitations, occupants. To Elmslie's mind a panorama of pictures of creation is made jointly by Genesis 1 and other creation texts in Genesis 2, the Psalms, Job and Proverbs.⁷⁸ From all these we can gather all manner of resonances with landscapes, built environments, buildings, materials, rivers, trees, gold, silver, iron, copper, glass, majesty, handiwork, city of our God, beauty, towers, ramparts, temple, towns, crossroads, gates, prudence, precepts, intelligence, knowledge, naming of creatures, and, most relevant of all, wisdom.⁷⁹

75 Charmley, "Richard Westrope and Belgrave Chapel", pp. 207ff.

76 Sell, "Is Geoffrey also among the Theologians?", p. 625 (*italics original*).

77 Stephen J. Pigney, "Theophilus Gale (1628-79), Nonconformist Scholar and Intellectual", *JURCHS*, Vol. 7, No. 7 (2005), pp. 407-415.

78 Roger Tomes, "Criticism and the Colleges", *JURCHS*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (2004), p. 30.

79 Considered in detail in Michael Powell, "Making Connections between the Christian Scriptures and Axiological Issues Inherent in the Professional Practice of Building" (Unpublished MPhil Thesis, Anglia Polytechnic University, 1998) and "Built Environment and Biblical Theology: Making Connections, Discerning Relationships" (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Anglia Ruskin University, 2003).

When venturing into theology and doctrine it is important that space is given for the expression of individual views. At the end of his *Reminiscences of Public Life in Southampton*, engineer and surveyor James Lemon (1833-1923) took the view that engineering progress and scientific research suggested "that nature is only another term for God and that nature's laws are his thoughts". There was, he believed, "one fixed and settled design ... And one far off event to which the whole creation moves". This confirms "his belief in a creator God" but leaves "open his views on the person of Jesus Christ".⁸⁰

The life path of the early Puritan Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) had taken him from Suffolk, via Cambridge to Gray's Inn where he served as Lecturer, his audience there including not only "resident readers, benchers, ancients and barristers ... leading statesmen, wealthy business men, civic dignitaries" but "common churchgoers as well". Then, as now, some lawyers would doubtless have been engaged in arguing for legal, if not moral, justice in disputes affecting land, buildings, development or construction, and some of the "common churchgoers" might have spent lifetimes engaged on building work. Sibbes passes down to us a prayer which has a timeless quality, "Gracious and holy Father ... let us find the blessed work of thy Holy Spirit opening our understanding, clearing our judgements, kindling our affections, discovering our corruptions, framing us in every way to be such as thou mayest take pleasure and delight in".⁸¹ "Framing us for delight" is definitely a construction-like image.

III: Integration

There is no set way of drawing together the building and theological streams of thought that have emerged from the pages of *JURCHS*. However, one possibility thrown up within *JURCHS* itself is that both fields can be looked upon as "languages" or "arts". D. Miall Edwards (1873-1941) said "Language is art but it is art which embodies the soul of the artist" and "Every language is the product of long ages of cooperative labour of a host of people and it is the embodiment of the soul, thought, experience, imagination and longing of these people".⁸² It can be argued that the worlds of practical building and theological reflection can each be viewed as a creative cooperative, embodying a soul and having a distinctive wealth of thought, experience, imagination and longing. It is these together that can be viewed through a lens to be a mosaic, embodying a beauty and a pattern, not perfect, but with ragged borders, gaps and long-encrusted patches, needing perceptive and skilled restoration.

MICHAEL POWELL

80 Ottewill, "The Avenue Quartet: Exemplars of Edwardian Congregationalism", p. 238.

81 Michael Playdon, "'The Sweet Dropper': Richard Sibbes, 1577-1635", *JURCHS*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2009), pp. 187-188, 196.

82 Pope. "Wales and the World: A Journey Through the Nonconformist Mind", p. 20.

REVIEWS

***A Life of Purpose: A Biography of John Sulman.* By Zeny Edwards. Haberfield, NSW, Australia: Longueville Media, 2017. Pp. xvi + 372. ISBN 978-0-648170-192-8. Illustrated.**

Zeny Edwards's comprehensive biography of Sir John Sulman (1849-1934) tells how a full, purposeful professional life in architecture and town planning unfolded in England and Australia.

Sulman's individual building designs ranged from an early clutch of over thirty English Congregational churches and schools to a later, more ecumenical mix, of churches in Australia. From "down under" there are examples of attractive house designs and a thought-provoking analysis of the verandah as "the principal defining element of Australian domestic architecture" (p. 146). Hospitals, schools, civic and commercial buildings, all have their place in the formidable List of Works.

Writing and university teaching complemented Sulman's practical work and he played a formative part in developing Australian professional bodies for architecture and town planning. With apt biblical resonance he identified himself "as a sort of John the Baptist, crying in the wilderness, but now the day of redemption is at hand. Town planning has taken hold of the people, its importance is recognised" (p. 265). He served as President of the National Art Gallery of New South Wales and his judgements and opinions were strongly expressed on public built environment issues such as "bridge or tunnel?" for Sydney Harbour and in debates concerning the location and form of the Federal Capital at Canberra.

A valuable aspect of the book is its full complement of photographs, drawings and other illustrations, many chosen from the Sulman collections, which provide firm stepping stones through the story. The text is very readable and the format helpfully "browse-able", as the clearly-titled but unnumbered chapters encourage one to choose one's own interests and order of reading. After a Foreword from Sulman's great-grandson, there are introductory sections from Clyde Binfield and Penelope Seidler commenting from English and Australian standpoints, respectively. Acknowledgements include mention of the United Reformed Church History Society.

MICHAEL POWELL

***The Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism.* Edited by Gary Scott Smith and P. C. Kemeny. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. 640. £110.00. ISBN 978-0-19060-839-2.**

If I were to choose one word to describe this book, that word would be comprehensive. It is an exhaustive survey of all aspects Presbyterian. The book divides itself into a number of sections: History of the Presbyterian Tradition; Ecclesial Forms and Structures; Theology, Worship, and Ethics; Politics; and Education. Within these sections, there are a number of chapters covering each

concept in good detail but keeping to an accessible size and length. The majority of the authors are from North America or Asia, and some were well known names to me, such as Chad van Dixhoorn and Donald McKim. There are women contributors, while some authors are from the global south, and other authors are from what is currently known in the UK as the Black and Minority Ethnic community.

The section on history has ten chapters – three are chronological, and the rest are each devoted to a global geographical region, for example, a chapter on Britain and Ireland and a chapter on the Middle East and so on. This is particularly helpful because it gives a much more representative feel to the global nature of a religious tradition.

The section on theology has eleven chapters, ranging from “The Doctrine of God” through to “Presbyterians, Philosophy, Natural Theology, and Apologetics”, and of course there is a chapter on “Predestination and Election”. These are weighty chapters, with rigorously prepared and meaty content.

Other sections have fewer chapters within them, for example, worship has only three, but they are no less rigorous. Ecclesial Forms and Structures is essentially where history and theology meet, with chapters on polity, confessions, and ecumenism, among others. Ethics, Politics, and Education also includes church-state relations, which is a vexed topic among Presbyterians around the world. Mark Noll, the author of that chapter, sets out to answer the question of whether Presbyterian attempts to “achieve informally what they had once hoped to achieve through formal church-state establishments have rescued positive legacies of Christendom or retained elements that undermine Christian integrity, despite their belief that formal church-state unions undercut that integrity”? (p. 1).

The index seems thorough, as it needs to be for a book of this nature, and runs to some seventy-three pages. I cannot comment upon how the book looks or feels, as the publisher only supplied an electronic copy. At £110, this is not going to find its way onto every bookshelf in the country, nor every coffee table - indeed I presume it is in practice a “library volume”. However, it is clearly an invaluable reference book for scholars and researchers. I certainly would not read from cover to cover, but I would turn to it for research. If I did not have easy access to a copy in a library, I might well buy it. Oxford University Press has certainly produced something very useful for historians, ecclesiologists, and theologians. My only regret is that there are very few contributors from the UK.

MICHAEL HOPKINS

***Church Life: Pastors, Congregations, and the Experience of Dissent in Seventeenth-Century England.* Edited by Michael Davies, Anne Dunan-Page and Joel Halcomb. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. 240. £65.00. ISBN 978-0-19875-319-3.**

The study of seventeenth century Dissent in England continues to be refined, as in this collection of essays by experts in the field. A very full Introduction

sets the scene for a consideration of the contents of local Church Books which, it is argued, have been underused in the study of Dissent. These are where one finds the day to day experiences of being a member of a Dissenting congregation. "Congregation" is the key word. It is claimed that there are many studies of individual religious experience. However, these authors wish to draw attention to the corporate experience of Dissenters, since for them the concept of the Church is rooted in the local covenanted congregation, rather than a hierarchical structure. Joel Halcomb, in a paper on "Godly Order and the Trumpet of Defiance", discusses the discipline exercised among the saints, who were anxious to defend themselves against the charge of disorder. Examples are drawn from Norwich and Bury St Edmunds. "Godly Pastors and the Congregations in Mid Seventeenth-Century London" is a study by Elliot Vernon, which stresses the importance of the pastoral relationship between the minister and the leading parishioners. In the absence of episcopacy, and the patchy adoption of Presbyterian order as determined by parliament, the minister was able to pursue his own views on order and liturgy. Vernon acknowledges that this experience fed the desire to return to the old order, as well as providing a pattern for the future Dissenting congregations. Chad van Dixhoorn draws on his extensive knowledge of the Westminster Assembly to emphasise the powerful influence of the doctrine of original sin on its deliberations. "God's Physicians" brought medicine to the soul rather than the body. If ministers were to visit the sick at all it would be to diagnose and treat their spiritual ills. Contemporary medicine was suspect because it was linked with superstition. If the Assembly had any lasting influence on pastoral practice it was through the extensive examination of ministerial candidates, a work which dominated the time of the Assembly, in comparison with the better-known framing of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

Michael Davies considers "Life After Bunyan", the experience of the Bedford congregation led by Ebenezer Chandler from 1689-1710. By delineating the different attitudes of Bunyan and Chandler, Davies is able to illuminate the changes coming over Dissent in the years after Toleration. He takes up Geoffrey Nuttall's characterisation of a "right wing" Congregationalism, and David Wykes's notion of "establishment" Dissent, showing how they prevailed in Chandler's leadership at Bedford. Anne Dunan-Page draws on a range of church books to look at the question of absenteeism in Dissenting congregations, "Not Keeping One's Place in the Church". We think of these congregations as tightly-knit and earnest groups, but it is evident that some members sat lightly to the disciplines of attendance at the ordinances and church meetings, an issue which has never gone away for their successors. People might regard themselves as Dissenters even when they went to worship in the parish church or stayed at home. The paper is a timely reminder that much of the everyday experience of Dissenters is absent from published studies.

The development of John Owen's ecclesiology is traced by Crawford Gribben in "The Experience of Dissent". Owen's Congregationalism evolved over his life time in ministry, ending with a sense of his failure to influence the future shape of the Church in England. "The Freedom of Association and Ecclesiastical Independence" by Polly Ha returns to a local dispute in John Goodwin's church

to explore concepts of freedom of association, drawing also on the ideas of Henry Jacob. Differing views on the nature of baptism fuelled the abstract discussion of church order and the limits of individual conscience. "Print and Pastoral Identity" by Ann Hughes takes us in another direction, that of publications by Presbyterians after 1662, and their ambivalence about whether to seek a comprehensive Church of England or to strike out along the road to Dissent. From his extensive studies of Richard Baxter, Neil Keeble offers a paper on "The Reformed Pastor as Nonconformist". Baxter is a prime example of one driven into Nonconformity while anxious to retain a stake in a Reformed Church of England. Both Keeble and Hughes remind us that the broad term "Presbyterian" covers a range of opinion after 1662 and that our reading back from later denominationalism often misleads us. "Letting a Room in London-House" is a paper by Kathleen Lynch, speculating about what led to the lease of a room in the former palace of the Bishop of London to a Baptist congregation. No church book is cited here, simply the remains of a pamphlet.

It will be seen that, while this is an excellent collection of papers by authorities in their fields, the proposition in the Introduction, that there is a richness of material in local church books, which is yet to be drawn upon, did not prevail in assembling the final collection where, strictly speaking, only three papers are based on such a source. Where power lies in the Church is as much a question for today as for the seventeenth century. Who best reads the leading of the Holy Spirit and draws on its power? The papers offer us the kaleidoscope of seventeenth century answers to these questions and, as Keeble points out, Baxter had reluctantly to admit that the nearest the country came to an accommodation of differing ecclesial views was under Cromwell. What Charles II promised in 1660 was never delivered. Taken as a whole this volume is evocative of seventeenth-century Dissent in all its rival convictions and points to a range of sources for enthusiasts to pursue.

STEPHEN ORCHARD

***Pilgrim's Process: Essays from a Theological Journey.* By David R. Peel. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2021. Pp. xiv + 203. £16.00. ISBN 978-1-6667-0916-2.**

David Peel and I once competed for the same job in Manchester. This book explains why he won! He is one of our most brilliant ministers in the glorious company of the late Alan Sell, Colin Gunton and Stanley Russell. Even as a student his gifts were quickly recognised. Young Peel engaged with two early assemblies of the World Council of Churches at Uppsala and Nairobi, became tutor, and later Principal, of Northern College, Manchester, Assembly Moderator, and more recently Consultant to the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Like P. T. Forsyth whom he half admires, he also has considerable pastoral experience in different congregations.

The opening chapter explains how he got there and is essential autobiographical background to specific themes that Peel develops in subsequent chapters.

Theologians should explain where they are coming from. Not all do, but Peel does. Peel is pedigree Reformed. He admits it and it shows. He may, as he says, owe much to Methodists like Pailin or Anglicans like Preston but he could never be mistaken as a spokesman for either tradition. He need not apologise for being Reformed. Being true to such roots makes him and myself ecumenical. Calvin after all was a Catholic and went to the same College as Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. Peel in his more mature years is a late convert to "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning" even though unlike myself, David Thompson and Elizabeth Welch, he had not attended their pioneering conferences.

Here are my, sometimes critical, responses to some specific chapters.

Chapter 3 is entitled "Forsyth on Ministry; A Model for our Time?" Forsyth buffs will have read this chapter in the symposium edited by Alan P. F. Sell, *P. T. Forsyth, Theologian for a New Millennium*. Peel responds to his own question as only he would do with a both "No and Yes". Forsyth is dated but still relevant. A century after his last books, he appears sexist, exclusivist as regards other living faiths, and rather elitist in his concept of authority. Yet, today's ministers will still benefit from such works as *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (1907) which gripped Peel and colleagues like Charles Duthie and Tony Burnham and is still in print as a popular paperback. A more positive approach to Forsyth can, I believe, balance any negative assessments and explain why most of Forsyth's major works were reprinted soon after the Second World War.

Chapter 4 discusses "The Theological Legacy of Lesslie Newbigin". This is a brilliant study of Newbigin's paperbacks that only a gifted theologian like Peel could deliver. He has had time to reflect on pamphlets such as *The Other Side of 1984* (1984) which were dashed off in a hurry as well as *Foolishness to the Greeks* (1986) which, as Warfield Lectures at Princeton (1984), clearly took more time and more advice from distinguished theologians like David Ford, Colin Gunton and Arthur Peacocke. I am not competent to challenge Peel's judgements but must point out two glaring omissions. If all readers knew about Newbigin's legacy was what they learn from Peel, they would not know that Newbigin was a pioneering Presbyterian who with great persistence helped the formation of the first major reunion of the twentieth century, the United Church of South India in 1947, and so became one of its first ecumenical bishops. Secondly, as General Secretary of the International Missionary Council from 1959, Newbigin, with my own church member, Norman Goodall, promoted its integration with the World Council of Churches at New Delhi in 1961. That Assembly is also famous for the Unity Statement, "All in each place", written by Newbigin and still regarded as one of the best descriptions of the unity we seek.

Chapters 6 and 7 discuss the authority of the Bible and "The Great Ejectment". Both topics are too complex for short essays. As a good tutor, Peel helps us with suggestions for further reading provided by his detailed footnotes.

Peel in his autobiography urges theologians to attend to the "signs of the times", but Chapter 2, which is entitled "Can you not read 'the signs of the times'", in my view, falls a little short. Based on a sermon first preached in July 1989, he may be forgiven for assuming 1989-1990 was much like any other time. It transpired

as a world shattering turning point for Berlin and Mandela, Romania, East-West relations and much more thereafter. The sermon/essay needs to be updated. Just as the pandemic and climate change are making us conscious of our global interdependence, some of our leaders, (dare I say inspired by the Enlightenment Peel applauds), plead for greater autonomy, with the Brexit urge to take back control of our borders. "Signs" can be elusive. Rome at the Second Vatican Council, in *Gaudium et Spes* ignored the signs of the times' implications for women in the Church.

Chapter 5, "Whatever Happened to Theology?" reveals Peel's driving passion in this and other essays is for an "adequate theology" for the demands of this age. He urges all Christians to think theologically. John Huxtable, one time College Principal and General Secretary of the Congregational Church, said much the same in the 1960s but more sympathetically. It is not that simple! Thinking theologically has now become a tough vocation when even *Guardian* readers like Peel are led to believe that "theology" means abstract theory, unrelated to reality. In John's Gospel, truth (*alitheia*) is reality, real life in Christ, whatever *Guardian* readers may assume. Hence all social and political issues are basically theological, about God and us and God's creation. Most Anglicans who voted Brexit did so because they believe in a *national* Church? Rather than complain about a Doctrine and Worship Committee, Peel should have helped members think more theologically about worship and how we pray. He thinks some hymns do not help. He should give examples, I might suggest "Shine on me" or "on the cross where Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied".

But never despair! Peel's plea for better theology and good writers like himself is what we read in all his books. This is his "pilgrim's process" and our progress.

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