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EDITORIAL

This issue has an educational aspect. Each year Reports to Assembly include reports from six schools – Caterham, Eltham College, Silcoates, Taunton, Walthamstow Hall, and Wentworth College (as it is now called). That these are not the sum total of Congregationalism’s contribution to independent education is made clear in Alan Argent’s article. Although links with the United Reformed Church are now slender (they might be described as pleasant but formal), origins cannot be wished away. In the past year Taunton and Wentworth College have produced attractive histories. The current General Secretary of the United Reformed Church is an Old Silcoatian; an investigative journalist noted, in the course of the last election, that the wives of Paddy Ashdown, the late Harold Wilson, and Neil Hamilton, were past pupils of Wentworth Milton Mount. It is clear that social formation and a Free Church education have interacted suggestively.

John S. Whale, who died 17 September 1997, was educated at Caterham and became Headmaster of Mill Hill. He also taught at Mansfield and was President of Cheshunt. His place in the pre-history of the United Reformed Church should be assured because of his role in determining the temper which made that Church possible; hence Clyde Binfield's account. Lesslie Newbiggin, who died 30 January 1998, was far better known, even as a name, to present-day members of the United Reformed Church. His influence, however, is part of its immediate history rather than its prehistory. Consequently assessments must wait. Wilfred Biggs, who died 30 October 1997, ministered successively at Welwyn Garden City, Romford, and Christ Church, Solihull, between 1948 and 1983. From 1957 to 1968 he was Secretary and Treasurer of the Congregational Historical Society, contributing to its *Transactions*, and from 1968 to 1972 he was its Chairman, serving thereafter from 1972 to 1977 as Chairman of this Society. Ian Sellers, who died early in December 1997, was a frequent contributor to this *Journal*.

David Thompson's paper was first delivered as the inaugural lecture for the Reformed Studies Institute at Westminster College, Cambridge. It also provides a pendant to the *Journal's* recent Supplement, *Reformed and Renewed*, and it modulates the debate of which J.S. Whale was a distinguished protagonist.

We welcome as reviewers David Hilborn, who is minister at the City Temple, and Robert Pope, of the University of Wales, Bangor. Brian Louis Pearce, who is an elder at Twickenham, reminds us that poetry might be a proper medium for history, even in this *Journal*.

We are again grateful to E. Alan Rose, editor of the Wesley Historical Society's *Proceedings*, for compiling an index to Volume 5 of the *Journal*.

THE MARQUIS FUND

The Marquis Fund exists to support research into the history of nineteenth-century Nonconformity and is administered jointly by the Society and Westminster College, Cambridge. The size of grant which can be made is limited, but anyone wishing to apply should write for further details to the Treasurer, Dr. D.M. Thompson, Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, CB3 0DG.

THE ASSOCIATION OF DENOMINATIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES AND COGNATE LIBRARIES

The Association exists to foster co-operative research and mutual sharing between its member societies and libraries, and it has established a programme of publications and occasional conferences.

The current major publishing project is a series of four volumes to be published by the University of Keele Press under the title Protestant Nonconformist Texts. The objective is to present students and interested readers with a collection of texts

which will illustrate the philosophical, doctrinal, churchly, socio-political, and pastoral concerns which have exercised English and Welsh Nonconformists from the sixteenth century to the present day. A team of twelve editors is at work, and the first volumes, covering 1559-1700 and the eighteenth century, are due to appear during 1998.

The Association's second conference, "Protestant Nonconformity in England and Wales in the Twentieth Century: A Retrospect", will be held at Westhill College, Birmingham, 26-29 July 2000. It is hoped that this occasion will provide an opportunity for a detailed assessment of the contribution of the several nonconforming traditions during the century fast reaching its close. Speakers and subjects will be: John Tudno Williams (biblical scholarship), R. Tudur Jones (historians of Protestant Nonconformity), Alan P.F. Sell (theology), Norman Wallwork (liturgy and worship), Clyde Binfield (architecture), David Bebbington (evangelism and spirituality), Andrew Walls (mission overseas), Keith Robbins (the peace question), Leonard Smith (politics and society), David Jeremy (business), Hugh Boudin (Huguenot contributions), David Butler (ecumenism). Those wishing to receive a booking form should write to Howard F. Gregg, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA.

The next Annual General Meeting will be held at 2.00 p.m. on 29 October 1998 at Dr. Williams's Library, when a paper will be presented by J.E. Wynne Davis on the Welsh Presbyterian mission to Brittany. All interested persons are cordially invited to attend.

NOTE. CORRECTION: Note 27 to page 49 of Vol. 5 (Supp. No. 2), September 1997, should be deleted. An Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches does not belong to the International Congregational Fellowship. This error is the editor's fault and not the author's.

IAN SELLERS (1931 – 1997)

Ian Sellers died suddenly after a lecture at Luther King House, Manchester. In retirement, if one could use that word of him, he lectured on the Reformation also giving full courses at Manchester University on the Reformation, Church and Secularizing Society, and Roman Catholicism and Nonconformity. He was a demanding, stimulating and popular lecturer and tutor.

Ian Sellers read history at Keble College, Oxford, obtaining later his M. Litt and (from Keele) his PhD. After teaching history, he was for many years a lecturer at Padgate College of Education. He wrote much on Liverpool Nonconformity especially its Unitarianism and Primitive Methodism. In the 1970s there appeared the fine documentary study of *Victorian Nonconformity* (1973) with John Briggs and his own *Nineteenth-Century Nonconformity* (1977) which is still a notable handbook. Just before his death he completed a full-scale *History of Warrington* and the section on *Eighteenth-Century Methodism* in the forthcoming four-volume *Documentary History of Nonconformity*. In addition to his contributions to this

Journal, recent articles elsewhere included the “Hymnody of Primitive Methodism” (1993) and “A.S. Peake Reconsidered” (*Epworth Review*, October 1997) which recalls how as a boy he attended a “Camp Meeting” at which a preacher prayed “Burn the college, burn the college” – Hartley College, where Peake, and later, Sellers taught.

He was, as was his wife Joan, a Methodist local preacher, and then was ordained as a non-stipendiary minister of the United Reformed Church, serving the Cheshire District for ten years from 1983 before returning to his native Methodism when it instituted “Ministry in local appointments”. He was a modern-style Evangelical but never partisan, a genuine Free Churchman, and a fine historian with incredibly wide interests and great energy.

JOHN MUNSEY TURNER

NURSED BY THE CHURCH: THE FOUNDING OF THE CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOLS

Introduction

The growth of religious Nonconformity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the increasing wealth of its adherents resulted in a raising of political and social aspirations. In education the influence of the Church of England was supreme – in village, grammar and public schools. Dissenters feared that at Anglican schools their children would suffer for their principles and either convert to Anglicanism or become indifferent to Christianity. The founding of separate schools for Dissenters’ children revealed the energy of Congregationalists especially, but not exclusively, throughout the nineteenth century. These schools formed part of a wider movement as an hitherto excluded class used its newly acquired power to satisfy its perceived needs.¹

The founding of the Congregational schools is, therefore, a visible sign of Dissenting confidence, extending from 1807 (Mill Hill School) to 1873 (Milton Mount College), and influencing the foundation in 1899 of Wentworth School at Bournemouth. It has been claimed that the foundation of Mill Hill was “an attempt to combine ... many of the [dissenting] academies ... and establish one substantial school”. Dissatisfaction with the “lack of seriousness” in the more liberal Dissenting academies was widespread.² The new schools were to provide an education unavailable in such academies and thus reflect the Dissenters’ ambition.

1. H.H. Oakley, *The First Century of Silcoates* (Cheltenham 1920), 32. I should like to express my thanks to the staffs of the various schools of this study and to Messrs. E. de C. Blomfield, G.V. Hancock, M.G. Mackintosh, P.I. Young, and Dr. G.F. Nuttall.
2. N.G. Brett-James, *The History of Mill Hill School* (Reigate, no date) 6; M. Watts *The Dissenters* (1978), 488-9.

In response to the spread of Unitarianism, the academies concentrated on training candidates for the ministry. The private schools, aiming at a "practical education" for the sons of "merchants and manufacturers", lacked the "control and prestige" of the academies. Indeed the name academy was never used of the Congregational schools and was dropped by the theological colleges.³

The committee members, looking for suitable premises for the Protestant Dissenters' Grammar School (later Mill Hill), reported in 1807 "an unqualified and concurrent" approval of their scheme "together with a loud call from parents ... of Evangelical principles for a sound elementary education of our youth connected with the best moral habits and religious instruction". They admitted that "the illustrious leaders of our Dissent, the Cartwrights, Owens and Howes, were educated in the bosom of the establishment" and stated that the learning of the ejected ministers of 1660-62, "most of whom were graduates of Oxford or Cambridge, ... must have furnished their youth with the rudiments of knowledge", preparing them to shine with the "lustre" of a Watts or a Doddridge. "Let it be remembered that we live in a period ... when the descendants of these great men have forsaken us, having loved the world."⁴ Thus a desire to regain the "lustre" of the "illustrious leaders" of Dissent also motivated the promoters of these schools. Mention of Oxford and Cambridge betrays the desire that educated Dissenters would, in future, gain entry to the universities.

From its founding Mill Hill School hoped to provide "a sound, learned and pious education." The non-sectarian basis of the school was no bar to its taking Anglican boys and, in its first twenty-five years, it educated a future bishop, a dean and two canons. Mill Hill was seen as "a dissenting boarding school upon a large scale in which Independents and Baptists are united. But the sons of ministers are admitted at a reduced rate, and those of peculiar promise are educated gratuitously." The demand for education, on this model, led to several similar ventures.⁵

The sons of Dissenting ministers were especially deserving. Mill Hill and its closer imitators aimed at Dissenting boys in general, providing for the sons of the well-to-do, with some places for ministers' sons, while the Congregational School (founded in 1811, moved to Lewisham in 1815 and then to Caterham in 1884) aimed "to embrace the educating and boarding (and clothing, if possible)" of the sons of Congregational ministers and to make financial allowance for these aims.

3. H. McLachlan, *English Education Under the Test Acts* (Manchester 1931) 4-5; B. Simon, *Studies in the History of Education 1780-1870* (1960) 67-70; M.E. Bryant, *The London Experience of Secondary Education* (1986) 108-110; G.F. Nuttall *The Significance of Trevecca College, 1768-91* (1969) where it is pointed out that "Academy" was already dropped by the evangelical Trevecca.
4. Brett-James, *op. cit.*, 19-23.
5. *Ibid.*, 4-5; N.G. Brett-James, "The Centenary of Mill Hill School (1807-1907)", *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society* (hereafter *TCHS*), (1907-08) III, 171-3; J. Bennett, *The History of Dissenters* (1839) V, 280; G.E. Colthurst, "Taunton School", *TCHS* (1916-18) VII, 267.

This school's promoters were moved by the poverty of many ministers.⁶ Although the schools experienced financial hardships, they discovered a broad vein of support, including Congregationalists like John Pye Smith and Samuel Favell (the chief founders of Mill Hill), Anglican evangelicals like Henry Thornton and William Wilberforce, and Whig parliamentarians like the Earl of Carlisle.⁷

In the nineteenth century it was deemed important to have had a gentleman's education and the new public schools, like Cheltenham (1841) and Marlborough (1843), produced such gentlemen. The Dissenters were concerned that their schools, like Bishop's Stortford, should secure "to the middle classes ... a liberal education", which was "as cheap as consisted with efficiency, and unsectarian", i.e. neither promoting the Church of England, nor any Dissenting denomination. Thus the Congregational schools differed from the Anglican schools, both ancient and modern, in attracting not only Dissenters. At Bishop's Stortford the bye-laws of the Dissenters' proprietary school (the present school's forerunner), set up in 1850 amid Anglican opposition, stipulated that the headmaster must be an Anglican and the second master a Dissenter. As at Mill Hill, the school's founders were influenced by Borough Road College where the ideas of Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838), the Quaker reformer, were applied, educating children without any sectarian religious teaching. The success of this system, promoted by the Royal Lancasterian Association (founded in 1810 and in 1814 renamed The British and Foreign School Society) alarmed the Anglicans and in 1811 The National Society for promoting the Education of the poor in the principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales was founded. Pupils in National Schools were instructed in the liturgy and catechism of the Church of England and attended the parish church regularly.⁸

In 1833 the Deputies of the Three Denominations included the exclusion of Dissenters from Oxford and Cambridge universities in a list of "practical grievances" which they wanted the newly reformed House of Commons to redress. University College, London (founded 1828), was supported by Dissenters, as it imposed no religious tests, had a non-denominational basis, and excluded theology from its curriculum. The granting of a charter to the University of London in 1836, with the power to confer degrees, was also welcomed. Nevertheless Anglican exclusiveness at Oxford and Cambridge, although dented in the 1850s, continued until 1870, and in some respects for longer.⁹

For many years the boys at the Congregational schools sat London University's

6. H. Stafford, *A History of Caterham School* (Shrewsbury 1945) 12-13.

7. *Ibid.*, 19, 20; Brett-James, *The History of Mill Hill School* 14, 15, 19.

8. G. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (1962) 267; H.C. Barnard, *A History of English Education from 1760* (1947) 55, 56, 79; W. Urwick, *Nonconformity in Hertfordshire* (1884), 706-7; J. Morley and N. Monk-Jones, *Bishop's Stortford College 1868-1968 A Centenary Chronicle* (1969), 1-3.

9. B.L. Manning, *The Protestant Dissenting Deputies* (Cambridge 1952), 175-6.

examinations (giving their educational standards an external validation) and aimed at entry to this university. Indeed the establishment of London University itself encouraged the founding of the Congregational schools as it confirmed the lessening of political and religious disabilities.¹⁰

Thus pressure grew on Oxford and Cambridge to admit Dissenters. The possibility of a university career for able Nonconformists "postulated the need for the prior advantages of a Public School education". Consequently the Congregational schools aimed at such a standard, even if many parents simply expected a good "commercial" grounding for their children. The schoolboy experiences of Robert Forman Horton (1855-1934) at Tettenhall College and at Shrewsbury testified to the difficulties an earnest but able Dissenter might undergo. Oxford allowed Dissenters to matriculate from 1854 and Cambridge admitted them to first degrees from 1856 but they could not proceed to M.A. and membership of Senate until 1870. Theological tests for fellowships were removed in 1871 although the final restriction on theological degrees remained for another forty years.¹¹

Religion was not the sole motive behind the Congregational schools. The location of Mill Hill School, overlooking both London and Harrow, suggests other forces. The schools cast envious eyes at the established public schools, while looking for finance to London, and the upwardly mobile Dissenters. Eton and Harrow became models for Mill Hill which aspired to be "a public school for Free Churchmen".¹²

An essential ambivalence underlay Mill Hill and its fellows. They sprang from a sense of moral outrage at the injustice and exclusiveness of the public schools; yet, once this outrage softened, they were absorbed into the system which originally they had opposed and had sought to overthrow. R.F. Horton remained loyal to his Congregational roots but what if his successors did not share the strength of his principles?

Mill Hill's historian apologised for the "somewhat unfortunate title of Protestant Dissenters' Grammar School", claiming that "no school with so narrow a foundation could have been a public school in reality".¹³ Clearly schools, designed for the children of Dissenters, ministers and missionaries, have broadened their bases in this century. Without doing so, they would not have survived. Yet the snobbery of this denunciation is inexcusable, especially as those schools bearing an archbishop's, or saint's, title are deemed acceptable. Mill Hill and its fellows need no more apologise than any Anglican or Roman Catholic foundation. Now

10. Brett-James, *op. cit.*, 174. S.P. Record, *Proud Century: The First Hundred Years of Taunton School* (Taunton, 1948), 23.

11. F.A.M. Webster, *Our Great Public Schools* (1947) 47; for Horton see *DNB*; R.F. Horton, *An Autobiography* (1917) 17, 21, 23, 292; A. Peel and J.A.R. Marriott, *Robert Forman Horton* (1937), 36-4; Kitson Clark, *op. cit.*, 267.

12. Brett James, *op. cit.*, 6.

13. *Ibid.*, 4, 5.

the Congregational schools no longer serve any denominational interests, as very few pupils are drawn from the groups they were founded to serve, resulting in a decline of the churches' influence in the schools and a similar decline in any awareness of the schools in the churches. The schools to be included in this study are:

Mill Hill	founded	1807
Caterham		1811
Silcoates		1831 (earlier attempts in 1809 and 1820)
Walthamstow Hall		1838
Eltham College		1842
Taunton		1847
Tettenhall		1863
Bishop's Stortford		1868
Milton Mount		1873
Wentworth		1899

The Schools

The schools fall into two broad camps: those for the children of Dissenters in general, and those specifically for the children of ministers and missionaries, Congregational or other Nonconformists. Most were for boys, but Walthamstow Hall, Milton Mount, and Wentworth were founded as girls' schools. Those like Mill Hill were expected to be self-financing. Those like the Congregational School depended on regular contributors to enable grants to be made for ministers' sons. In practice both sets of schools relied on their supporters' generosity.

The two branches of the movement belong together chronologically also. The founding of the Protestant Dissenters' Grammar School at Mill Hill in 1807 was closely followed by the Congregational School in 1811 and by the first attempt to found a school at Silcoates, near Wakefield, in Yorkshire, in 1809. This Yorkshire Protestant Dissenters' Grammar School closed before 1820 when a second unsuccessful attempt began.¹⁴ Therefore early in the nineteenth century a basis for educational progress among Dissenters had been laid. Silcoates began as an imitator of Mill Hill, with a more restricted geographical catchment area, yet, despite set-backs, its supporters confidently wrote in 1838, "the spirit of the times" requires "numerous free grammar-schools on the voluntary principle like those which are supported by ancient endowments".¹⁵

In that same year, thirty years after Mill Hill's founding, Walthamstow Hall was

14. *Ibid.*, 5; H.H. Oakley, *op. cit.* 3-6; Stafford, *op. cit.* 7.

15. *The Evangelical Magazine* (1838), 339.

opened for the daughters of missionaries, and in 1842 the School for the Sons of Missionaries (now Eltham College) was established, also at Walthamstow. In 1847 the West of England Dissenters' Proprietary School was set up in Taunton. "Reform and progress were in the air: the removal of religious and political disabilities, ... the new outlook that resulted in the widespread political revolutions of 1848 and also led to the Great Exhibition of 1851." Such disparate factors suggested a new order to which the Dissenters felt they belonged.¹⁶

The foundation of Tettenhall College at Wolverhampton in 1863 and Bishop's Stortford College in 1868 completed a network of Dissenters' schools for boys serving the various regions of England. Milton Mount College opened in 1873 for the previously neglected daughters of Congregational ministers and in 1899 Wentworth was founded to be "a Mill Hill for girls." Some informal links were maintained between the schools, as they provided teachers and headmasters for each other, as well as proving a training ground for ministers and missionaries.¹⁷

Mill Hill originated at a meeting held in 1806 at the New London Tavern, Cheapside, with Samuel Favell in the chair. A resolution was adopted that a school should be set up "in some healthy part of the Metropolis." Favell was a man of "education, wealth, and social standing" and became the school's first treasurer, retaining that office until his death in 1830. Prominent also on the school's first committee was John Pye Smith, the principal of Homerton College. Smith (1774-1851) is probably the source of the idea of the Dissenters' school and with men like Favell, Alexander Waugh, and Robert Winter, took great pains to ensure Mill Hill's success.¹⁸ In 1806 the committee chose one of their members, John Atkinson, to be the first principal and chaplain. He was formerly a tutor at Hoxton Academy and only reluctantly accepted. He resigned as principal in 1810, becoming chief tutor at Wymondley Academy in Hertfordshire where he remained until his death in 1821. His appointment testifies to the close relation at this time between Mill Hill and the evangelical academies.¹⁹

On the recommendation of Edward Williams of Rotherham Academy, Maurice Phillips (1767-1822), classics tutor there, was appointed to replace Atkinson in January 1811. Both Williams and Phillips had taught John Pye Smith at

16. S.P. Record, *op. cit.* 14; J. Brown, *Independent Witness, One Hundred and Fifty Years of Taunton School* (Taunton 1997) 2.
17. G.V. Hancock, *History of Tettenhall College* (Wolverhampton 1963). 10, Morley and Monk-Jones, *op. cit.* 1; H. Harwood, *The History of Milton Mount College* (1959) 10-11; A. Porritt, *J.D. Jones of Bournemouth* (1942) 126.
18. Brett-James, *op. cit.* 14, 15, 104; D. Bogue, *The Nature and Importance of a Good Education* (1808) 37; J. Hinton, *The Union of Piety and Literature* (1809) 44, 46; A. Peel, *These Hundred Years* (1931) 21; R.W. Davis, *Dissent in Politics 1780-1930* (1971) 232-3; for John Pye Smith see *DNB*; A. Peel, *The Congregational Two Hundred* (1948) 120; J. Medway, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of John Pye Smith* (1853) 61-63; J. Bennett, *The History of Dissenters* (1812) IV 261; M.E. Bryant, *op. cit.* 108.
19. Brett-James, *op. cit.* 15; H. McLachlan, *op. cit.* 172, 174, 238-9.

Rotherham and Smith wrote to Phillips, urging him to accept the Mill Hill post.²⁰ Simultaneously Phillips had been “frequently mentioned as ... suitable” to take charge of the new Dissenters’ grammar school in Yorkshire. In April 1810 Phillips also received a letter from Robert Spear, on behalf of several “ministers and gentlemen in Lancashire”, hoping to secure his services for an academy at Leaf Square, Pendleton, near Manchester, where in 1811 it was “combined with a small grammar school”.²¹ Phillips, at Mill Hill, reported in 1816 that the school continued to prosper. However he resigned in 1818 and moved to Harpenden in Hertfordshire, establishing there his own school for Dissenters’ children. His reasons for leaving Mill Hill remain obscure but he understood the need for schools for Dissenting children.²²

A financial contributor to Mill Hill and a committee member almost from the start was John Townsend (1757-1826), who is chiefly noted for founding in 1807 the London Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb. Townsend, moved by the poverty of his fellow ministers and their sons’ educational needs, wrote a letter in 1810, “To the ministers, officers, and all other members and friends of the Congregational churches in England”, proposing a scheme for an institution to educate eighty or a hundred sons of Congregational ministers and “to provide a comfortable retreat for 10 or 12 aged ministers.” This latter idea came to nothing but Townsend formed a committee and awaited subscriptions for the school. He had described specific cases – a minister for example, with six children, all under eleven, with a salary of £50 per annum – yet the money only gradually flowed in.²³

The school resulted from a meeting, held in 1811 at the King’s Head Tavern in the Poultry, City of London, with Joseph Bunnell as chairman and William Alers as treasurer. Parents would benefit from the school’s charity, according to a sliding scale of minister’s income and children. In June 1811, the *Evangelical Magazine* contained an advertisement about the school and in October six boys became the first pupils. Until the school purchased its own premises the boys were placed in an existing school – that of John Thomas being chosen. This was first at Enfield,

20. Brett-James, *ibid.*, 40-42.

21. J.G. Miall, *Congregationalism in Yorkshire* (1868) 249-250; C.E. Surman, “Leaf Square Academy, Pendleton, 1811-13”, *TCHS* (1937-39) XIII, 110-111, W.G. Robinson, *William Roby (1766-1830) and the Revival of Independency in the North* (1954) 104, 114-5, 120-1, 153.

22. *The London Christian Instructor or Congregational Magazine* (August 1823) VI, no. 68, 397; (September 1823) VI, no. 69, 451-2; Brett-James, *op. cit.* 40-2, 49, 57; H. McLachlan, *op. cit.* 200; W. Urwick, *op. cit.* 345; *Album Aberhonddu* (Merthyr Tydvil 1898), ed. T. Stephens, 35-6; W.T. Owen, *Edward Williams, DD 1750-1813 His Life, Thought and Influence*, (Cardiff 1963) 70-71; for Phillips’s work at Harpenden see M. Skinner, *Gathered Together: A History of Harpenden United Reformed Church*, (Harpenden 1990), 7-10.

23. D. Bogue, *op. cit.* 38-9; Brett-James, *op. cit.* 63, 64, 66; Brett-James, “The Centenary...”, *op. cit.* 173; *DNB*; Stafford, *op. cit.* 11.

then in West Square, Newington, south London, and later at Clapham. The boys began with Thomas in January 1812 but in October 1814 he stated that he could not keep the Congregational boys beyond Christmas. Townsend then found premises at Lewisham.²⁴

The school opened there in July 1815 with Josiah J. Richards as headmaster but at Christmas 1816 he was dismissed for not running the school economically. In 1817 John Simper was appointed on the recommendation of John Angell James and Mark Wilks, yet the running expenses still proved high, prompting Townsend to write, "This institution appears every day more important and useful and yet it is in a languishing and dying state. This second child of mine (the School) will never reach the healthy state of the first (the Deaf and Dumb institute) yet that was nursed by the World, this by the Church." In 1823 Simper, in great debt, resigned and William Johnstone Hope became headmaster. Hope was from Annan and had been educated at Selkirk Academy with Edward Irving (later to found the Catholic Apostolic Church) and Thomas Carlyle, and at Edinburgh University. He came to Lewisham from a position at Blackburn Academy and remained as head (giving oversight to Deptford Congregational Church) until 1852.²⁵

A visitor to the Congregational School attended two committee meetings in September 1811, just five months after the committee's inauguration. This was William Eccles (1784-1861), minister of White Chapel, Leeds 1806-1818. Eccles probably represented the first Silcoates where in 1831 he was a noted supporter of the remodelled school.²⁶ The first Yorkshire Protestant Dissenters' Grammar School was intended to benefit Yorkshire Dissenters' sons while the sons of Dissenting ministers were admitted at a lower rate. This resemblance to Mill Hill demonstrates the influence of the earlier foundation. The school's revival in 1820 was with almost the same title and with Joseph France as principal. He remained at Silcoates until 1822.²⁷

In 1820 the Silcoates promoters elected both a committee and lessees for the premises, among whom were James Bennett of Rotherham Academy, George

24. Stafford, *ibid.* 19-20.

25. J.G. Miall, *op. cit.* 293; G. Clayton, *A Sermonon the Occasion of the Death of the Rev. John Townsend* (1826) 26, 27; Stafford, *ibid.* 23-29.

26. Congregational School Minute Book no. 1811-15, f5; Congregational School Building Fund Cash Book 1815; *List of the Officers and Governors of the Congregational School* (1816) 50, (1851) 23, (1823) 4, (1824) 29, (1825) 30, (1826) 25, (1827) 25, (1928) 49, *The Congregational Year Book*, (1862) 228-9; J.G. Miall, *ibid.* 281.

27. Miall, *ibid.* 190-2, 193-4; Oakley, *op. cit.* 3, 4, 5; *The Evangelical Magazine* (1925) 156, (1854) 652. Miall and Oakley, following his lead, state that France was principal of the 1809 school also. At twenty years of age he would have been a young headmaster and this may be a misreading of earlier records, now lost. If not, then, as C.E. Surman suggests, "the failure of the first school is understandable." C.E. Surman's notes in "Silcoates Scrap Book", deposited in West Yorkshire Archive Search Office, Wakefield.

Rawson, John Clapham of Leeds and Dr. Benjamin Boothroyd (1768-1836), a noted Hebrew scholar. Silcoates was served by the Revd. M.H. Williamson as principal from 1823 until 1826 when George Legge (1802-1861) succeeded him. An unbroken list of pupils from 1820 onwards reveals that the school had very few boys in the 1820s. Beginning with eight in 1820 (five from Yorkshire, two from London and one from Lincolnshire), it had only three in 1822 when France left, while in 1823 the number had fallen to two. In 1824 and in 1826 there were four pupils, but by 1830 only one remained. It is not difficult to understand why many lost faith in this cause.²⁸

The 1829 Silcoates committee added to its numbers Thomas Scales of Leeds (1786-1861) who remained associated with the school until his death. Rawson, Scales and Clapham refused to share the general despair about Silcoates and, concerned especially for the poor country ministers, in 1831 promoted a scheme for the sons of ministers exclusively. A public meeting was held in 1831 at Horton Lane Chapel, Bradford, to consider forming a Congregational school "for the sons of Independent ministers in Yorkshire and Lancashire" and the proposal was passed unanimously. The schoolboys were promised on "economical terms,... a Religious, Classical and Commercial Education."²⁹

Those at Bradford resolved to lease the Yorkshire Protestant Dissenters' Grammar School buildings. The two schools offered a form of continuity (premises, individual committee members) but were quite distinct. It was intended "to extend the benefits of the Institution beyond Yorkshire and Lancashire in favour of the sons of ministers in the adjoining counties"; and Ebenezer Miller was appointed principal. Instead of being a Mill Hill of the north, Silcoates became a more circumscribed entity, a Lewisham, and was renamed in 1832 The Northern Congregational School. In 1830 only one pupil was resident, but in 1832 there were seventeen and in 1835 twenty-one. In 1838 the number fell to six, but in 1843 was twenty-seven, in 1845 thirty-seven and in 1846 fifty-six.³⁰

By the 1830s a school for the sons of Dissenters in general had been established north of London. It had not thriven but had survived and had spawned imitations. A school for the sons of Congregational ministers in particular, those unlikely to benefit from Mill Hill, had been set up also near London, but to the south. It too had known financial difficulties but had survived. Those "more or less courageous imitations" of Mill Hill, at Leaf Square and the early ventures at Silcoates, had failed to gain the necessary support. Silcoates eventually succeeded by aiming at a more

28 Miall, *ibid*; Oakley, *ibid*. 5-7; for Bennett and Boothroyd see *DNB*; Silcoates School: Register of Pupils – typescript held at school; *Congregational Year Book* (1862) 247-9.

29. J.G. Miall dedicated his *Congregationalism in Yorkshire* (1886) "To the honoured memory of the late Rev. T. Scales"; Silcoates: Congregational School Minute Book 1831-1862, 1, held in West Yorkshire Archive Search Office; *Congregational Year Book* (1861) 235-8.

30. Silcoates Cong. School Min. Book 1831-1862, 10, 11, 17; Oakley, *op. cit.* 5-7,

defined grouping. Therefore the researcher uncovers an intertwined network, with the same named supporters recurring, mostly Congregationalists, offering commitment and finance to the different schools, but, behind this, a broad spectrum of support among evangelicals at large. How sustained this support was remained to be seen.

In 1838 the School and Home for Missionaries' Daughters opened in Marsh Street, Walthamstow, with five girls. In July 1837 a notice in the *Evangelical Magazine* had announced the proposal "to provide for the daughters of Christian missionaries a thoroughly good and liberal education adapted to their talents and future prospects. The establishment is to assume an entirely paternal character and it should be the home of the children while under its care." A meeting, held in Hackney, chaired by Henry Forster Burder, set up a committee of several ladies and John Joseph Freeman (formerly serving the London Missionary Society in Madagascar), the minister of the Congregational Church in Walthamstow. The prime mover was Mrs. John Foulger, a Walthamstow resident whose husband traded with the Cape Colony. He was a director of the LMS and had joined the committee of the Congregational School at Lewisham in 1823. The girls' school was the first of its kind, welcoming the daughters of all evangelical missionaries (including Church Missionary Society girls until the CMS opened its own school).³¹ Among those at the school's opening in 1838 were the Congregational benefactor Joshua Wilson, Dr. Francis Augustus Cox, a Baptist minister, William Ellis, secretary of the LMS, Dr. Andrew Reed, and James Legge, later professor of Chinese at Oxford University.³²

A letter in the *Evangelical Magazine*, following the announcement of the school for missionaries' daughters, identified a similar need. Feelings of "delight... would be greatly enhanced" if the school were to include sons as well. In November 1841 a meeting, held at LMS headquarters, approved the setting up of a school for LMS missionaries' sons. J.J. Freeman became secretary of the boys' school and among its supporters was the new LMS foreign secretary, Arthur Tidman.³³

The first tutor was Evan Davies (1805-1864) who had served the LMS in Penang. A house in Walthamstow was furnished by Mrs. Foulger and others and the school committee came to include John Foulger and John Campbell (1795-1867), minister of Whitefield's Tabernacle, Moorfields. In 1843 two Baptist missionaries applied for their sons to be admitted while some Baptist Missionary Society missionaries in Jamaica urged the BMS to found a boys' school, like that at Walthamstow. The BMS secretary, Joseph Angus (1816-1902), suggested that

31. *The Evangelical Magazine* (1838) XVI 652-3; for Burder see DNB; *List of the Officers and Governors of the Congregational School* (1823) 15; E. Pike and C. Curryer *The Story of Walthamstow Hall* (1973) 14-15; for a general context see J.C.G. Binfield, *Belmont's Portias: Victorian Nonconformists and Middle-Class Education for Girls*, Friends of Dr. Williams's Library Lecture (1981).

32. *The Evangelical Magazine*, *ibid.* 600-1, 652-3; for Wilson, Cox, Ellis, Reed, and Legge, see DNB.

33. *The Evangelical Magazine*, *ibid.* 31-2; see Witting, ed. *The Glory of The Sons* (1952) 3-4.

the missionary societies should co-operate and, after 1843, the school was opened to admit the sons of all missionaries, irrespective of denomination, like the girls' school.³⁴ Davies left the school in 1844 to be replaced briefly by John Hossack, an inexperienced young Scot. By 1846 the headmaster was Edward Stallybrass who had served the LMS in Siberia and Mongolia, after studying at Homerton under John Pye Smith. He resigned in 1847, as the Walthamstow house was too small and unhealthy, thus forcing the committee to confront uncomfortable facts. Although the school's debt took several years to repay, in 1857 the school moved into new buildings at Blackheath (remaining there until 1912 when it moved to the former Royal Naval School at Mottingham and became Eltham College).³⁵

The West of England Dissenters' Proprietary School at Taunton resulted from a meeting of the ministers and deacons of three Congregational churches (Paul's Meeting, North Street, and Fulwood Chapel). They agreed unanimously in October 1846 that "the establishment of a proprietary school in the West of England in connection with the Independent Denomination is ... necessary", and appointed Henry Addiscott, minister of Paul's Meeting, and Henry Quick, minister of North Street, as joint secretaries. The choice of Addiscott and Quick was significant as the North Street church had recently been gathered from a group of dissident members of Paul's Meeting. The third minister was James Taylor of Fulwood Chapel and, among other deacons, were the treasurer of Paul's Meeting, James Bunter, a banker, who chaired the initial meeting, and Thomas Fisher of North Street. However, in 1847 W.D. Wills, the tobacco merchant of Bristol, became the chairman and in 1848 his brother, H.O. Wills, joined the committee.³⁶

The teaching staff and all school officers were to belong to "the Independent Denomination." In 1847 Dr. James Bewglass, a northern Irishman, became the first headmaster, serving until 1854 when he accepted the headship of Silcoates. In July 1848 the Wills brothers were confirmed as vice-presidents of the school and in 1853 W.D. Wills became the school president. In 1860 the annual report quoted glowing comments from the local press. "The education imparted in this Institution is of the highest order, second only to our first-class Universities."³⁷

34. For Davis, Campbell, and Angus see *DNB*, Eltham College – Minute Book of Boys' Mission School.
35. Witting, *op. cit.* 6-19, 29; R. Lovett *History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895* (1899) II, 586-9, 596; Eltham College – Minute Book *ibid.*
36. T.G. Crippen, "The Story of Paul's Meeting, Taunton" (no date) 34, 35, 44 – typescript in Taunton Local History Library; "Origin and History of the Church of Christ Assembling in the Independent Chapel, North Street, Taunton" – ms at Somerset County Records Office; *Congregational Year Book* (1861) 197, (1883) 316-7; Minutes of Proceedings Relative to the West of England Dissenters' Proprietary School – held at Taunton School.
37. S.P. Record, *op. cit.* 41; *The First Annual Meeting of the Shareholders of the West of England Dissenters' Proprietary School* (1848), *Sixth Meeting* (1853), *Thirteenth Meeting* (1860) copies held at Taunton School.

James Bewglass was educated at Belfast Academy and had a facility for languages. "An able teacher and genial man", he had a "hatred of shams", and encouraged the school's links with London University. His successor, Thomas Clark, had been mathematics and classical tutor at Rotherham Academy, before moving to Taunton in 1854. During his headship the school lost boys through mounting expenses and rising fees. An outbreak of smallpox at the school precipitated his resignation in 1856.³⁸

In 1857 William Henry Griffith, formerly tutor at Western College, Plymouth, and one of the earliest shareholders of the school, became headmaster. A second master was also appointed, Thomas Storrar, who had taught for ten years at Mill Hill. By 1858 the school numbers had risen to 100 boys and, during Griffith's headship, the school moved to a new site in 1870. Ten years later Griffith resigned through ill health to be replaced by Frederick Wilkins Aveling (1851-1937), an old boy of the school.³⁹

Tettenhall College arose from a sense of exasperation with the Anglican monopoly of education felt by the leading members of Queen Street Congregational Church, Wolverhampton, who, in 1862, considering the bicentenary of the ejection of nonconforming clergymen in 1662, felt called to establish a school for the children of those still disadvantaged for their religious principles. The founders included Thomas Wilkinson Shaw, the first chairman, his brother Edward Dethick Shaw, the first treasurer – both local merchants and bankers, Samuel Small Mander, of the paint firm of Manders, and Thomas Galland Horton, father of R.F. Horton and the minister of Queen Street. Supporters of the venture included R.W. Dale and Samuel Morley.⁴⁰

The resultant Midland Counties Proprietary School Company Limited announced its objects as "the furnishing on moderate terms of a sound and liberal education, both Classical and Commercial, in connection with a religious training in accordance with the principles held by Evangelical Nonconformists." Thus the pupils would be prepared for careers in commerce but also study the classics, as in the public schools.⁴¹ The first headmaster was Robert Halley (1827-1885), formerly principal of Doveton Protestant College, Madras, and son of his namesake, then principal of New College, London. The school opened in 1863 with fifteen pupils, including the headmaster's two sons.

38. S.P. Record, *ibid.* 15, 16, 23, 28, 29, 30, 31, 40.

39. *Ibid.* 46, 47, 59, 61, 69; Brett-James, *op. cit.* 130, 171; *Congregational Year Book* (1939) 691; J. Brown, *op. cit.* 10.

40. G.V. Hancock, *op. cit.* 10, 11; A.G. Matthews, *The Congregational Churches of Staffordshire* (1924) 235; J. Thompson, *Lancashire Independent College* (Manchester 1893).

41. Hancock, *ibid.* 12, 13, 41, *Memorandum of Association of the Midland Counties Proprietary School Company Ltd.* – held at Tettenhall College; Report of the Directors of Midland Counties Proprietary School Company (ms), May 1864.

In 1870 Halley resigned and in his stead was appointed Alexander Waugh Young who established a tradition of truth-telling and secured excellent academic results.⁴²

In 1891 Young resigned, retiring to Edinburgh where he died in 1915. In his place John Hampden Haydon was appointed. He had studied at both Cambridge and London universities and had taught at The Leys School, a Wesleyan foundation, at Cambridge. The number of boys in Haydon's early years fell, but by 1897 a record total of 120 was reached. Also in 1897 the directors explored the possibility of changing the school from a joint stock company to a charitable trust, following Taunton's lead (a process completed in 1916). In 1902 this phrase in the school's bye-laws, "in accordance with the principles held by Congregational Independent churches", was modified to read "in accordance with the spirit of the Congregational churches whether Independent or Baptist." Parents were now to choose whether their boys received religious instruction. Co-opted school governors were to come from both the Baptist and Congregational Unions. The Baptists explained that "they were unfortunately deficient in Public Schools in the Northern Counties."⁴³ Financial difficulties in the 1900s prompted the Congregational Union's suggestion that Silcoates and Tettenhall, should unite. Haydon resigned to become a schools' inspector, and later classics master at Mill Hill. Richard Lester Ager, then a master at Bishop's Stortford, became the new headmaster at Tettenhall in 1905.⁴⁴

The Nonconformist Grammar School, at Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire, later Bishop's Stortford College, was founded in 1868 to secure "to the middle classes ... a liberal education, which should be as cheap as consisted with efficiency, and unsectarian." An earlier attempt had been made to establish a non-sectarian proprietary school there by William A. Hurndall who had solicited the aid of the local vicar in 1850. The vicar refused to co-operate, founding a rival "High School" which survived until the 1930s.⁴⁵

Despite this rebuff the proprietary school began in the manse of Water Lane Congregational Chapel. In 1852 it moved to the college's present site and its buildings were bought in 1868 by the East of England Nonconformist School Company Limited as the earlier school was in difficulties. Anglican opposition had rendered its position untenable. The East of England School Company itself rose out of a meeting held in 1866 when a resolution was moved in favour of "establishing a Public School for the Eastern Counties in which Evangelical Nonconformists might secure for their boys an effective and Christian education,

42. A. Peel, *The Congregational Two Hundred* (1948) 150-1; Hancock, *ibid.* 13-14, 18-19m 23-25; *Congregational Year Book* (1886), 175-7; Matthews, *op. cit.* 234.

43. Hancock, *ibid.* 43-48, 65-66; By this time Baptists were participating at Taunton, Eltham, and Walthamstow Hall and from the first attended Mill Hill.

44. Hancock, *ibid.* 68-70, 71-72; Brett-James, *op. cit.* 315.

45. J.C.G. Binfield, *So Down to Prayers* (1977) 150; W. Urwick, *op. cit.* 706; Morley and Monk-Jones, *op. cit.* 1-3.

on terms which should not be beyond the reach of the middle class." Support came from Samuel Morley, John Crossley, and Edward Grimwade.⁴⁶

The headmaster, Richard Alliott, assumed his duties in September 1868 when, at the opening, an address was given by Thomas Binney (1798-1874), the minister of the King's Weigh House Church, London. Binney stated, "Not dissent is to be taught, but Christ's religion separated from what the Nonconformist deems... objectionable in the... teaching of the Church of England." They were not opening "a mere day school nor a small private boarding school, but a public school."⁴⁷

Binney's words breathe defiance and rivalry. If co-operation was to be spurned, and smaller educational efforts dismissed, then the Nonconformists of East Anglia would aim at outright competition, egged on by their merchant princes. William Cuthbertson, minister of the Congregational church in Bishop's Stortford, said that the founders were keen to engage in the public debate about higher education, and to benefit the Nonconformist ministers of the eastern counties. "Many parents... by nature and feeling ladies and gentlemen..., were in fact unable... to give their children anything higher" than a very elementary education. Cuthbertson advocated that scholarships be made available and that ministers' sons be admitted at a reduced rate. The school was intended to be a "Nonconformist Rugby."⁴⁸

Alliott declared "the real way... to carry on their fight was by cultivating the best boys and sending them on to the higher seats of learning, and there to show the country that they were as good as the rest of the world." This opportunity would soon come. Neither Alliott nor Cuthbertson set the school's sights on a commercial education, although in 1874 Bishop's Stortford advertised its teaching as qualifying the pupils "to proceed either to the universities, the learned professions, or the various pursuits of commerce." As in Binney's rhetoric, reserve was cast aside and ambition given free rein. Alliott was pleased to have among his pupils some Anglicans and would have liked more. He found that at Cambridge those who went astray had not attended a public school. Bishop's Stortford was to be just such a public school.⁴⁹

Its founding, three years before the chief disabilities under which Nonconformists laboured at Oxford and Cambridge were removed, should be seen as adding to the pressure on those universities to open their doors. Alliott remained at Bishop's Stortford over thirty years, dying in 1899. Numbers of pupils grew, from forty in 1868, to 103 in 1873, to 131 in 1877, and to 279 in 1919. On the staff from 1885 to 1889 was Charles David Whittaker, who was to become headmaster of Taunton School. The incoming headmaster, F.S. Young, was an old boy of the

46. Urwick, *ibid.* 707-8; Morley and Monk-Jones, *ibid.* 3-5.

47. W. Urwick, *ibid.* 708; *Nonconformity in Cheshire* (1864) 450; J. Thompson, *op. cit.* 204; R. Tudur Jones *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962* (1962) 238; Morley and Monk-Jones, *ibid.* 6; for Binney see *DNB*.

48. Morley and Monk-Jones, *ibid.* 7; A. Sell, *Saints: Visible, Orderly and Catholic* (1986) 87, 166.

49. Morley and Monk-Jones, *ibid.* 8-9; *Congregational Year Book* (1874) 40-3.

school who had taught for five years at Mill Hill after leaving Oxford.⁵⁰ Increasingly the schools proved to be fertile ground for the training of each other's teachers although such inter-breeding raises other issues.

In 1870 William Guest, the minister of Prince's Street Congregational Church, Gravesend, began to plan a school for girls based on the work of the American educationalist, Fidelia Fiske. He found a site on a hill at Milton, near Gravesend, and thus the name Milton Mount College was chosen for the school for the daughters of Congregational ministers. In 1871 Samuel Morley, learning that applications to the school exceeded expectations, doubled his donation, promising to give £200 each year for the next three years, an example followed by Sir Titus Salt and others.⁵¹

The first headmistress, styled "Lady Principal", was Selina Hadland who remained until retirement. This pioneer of education for women proved awkward and determined, as her quarrel with William Guest showed, requiring Alexander Hannay, the secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, to pacify the protagonists. The aim of this "superior school" was outlined in 1870, "The curriculum would be... the opposite of that of a fashionable boarding school; ... the pupils would be prepared to pass the University Examinations for women...; [and] fitted to take high positions as teachers; ... a truly religious culture would be the chief care; ... provision would be made for domestic training..."⁵² Milton Mount's opening in May 1873 was attended by 600 guests, including Frances Mary Buss of the North London Collegiate School for Ladies, and Emily Davies of Girton College, which in that year removed to Cambridge. Buss and Davies were among the foremost promoters of women's education and their presence indicates the school's ambition. Thomas Binney took part in the opening ceremonies and remained a lifelong supporter. Thomas Scrutton, an old Mill Hillian and treasurer of Mill Hill school 1866-95, served as treasurer of Milton Mount 1871-99. By 1875 the school had 126 pupils, with over seventy waiting for vacancies, yet conditions were austere, with water only available for a weekly bath and no heat in the dormitories. In 1875 however Milton Mount gained some notable successes in public examinations.⁵⁴

Sharing the same benefactors as the other schools – Samuel Morley who

50. Morley and Monk-Jones, *ibid.* 18-40.

51. H. Harwood, *The History of Milton Mount College* (1959) 9; S. Hadland, *Annals of Milton Mount College* (no date) 3; J.C.G. Binfield, *op. cit.* 175. Fidelia Fiske (1816-64) was born in New England. In 1839 she entered Mount Holyoke Seminary and volunteered for missionary work. From 1858 to her death she was a type of chaplain to the seminary. *Dictionary of American Biography* VI 41718.

52. R.T. Jones, *op. cit.* 306, A. Peel, *These Hundred Years* (1931) 260; S. Hadland, *ibid.* 14; J. Waddington, *Congregational History* (1880) V 575-6.

53. S. Hadland, *ibid.* 1, 2, 6, 7.

54. *Ibid.* 8-13; for Davies and Buss see *DNB*, and M.E. Bryant, *op. cit.* 347; Harwood, *op. cit.* 13, 14.

“erected benevolence into a business”, the Crossleys of Halifax, E.D. Shaw, Joshua Wilson – Milton Mount provides an additional response to the Nonconformist appetite for education. It was to be a Lewisham for girls but, unlike the boys’ school, it did not oppose the public schools for girls in general. They were allies in the greater cause of women’s education. Selina Hadland retired in 1889 to be succeeded by Ethel Mary Conder who was headmistress (preferring that title) 1889-1905. She had herself been educated at Cheltenham Ladies College, under Dorothea Beale, and at Girton where she had read classics. Resigning in 1905, she travelled abroad, later starting her own school in Hampstead.⁵⁵

The last of the schools to be considered is Wentworth at Bournemouth, since 1962 united with Milton Mount. The principal founder of Wentworth was John Daniel Jones (1865-1942), minister of Richmond Hill Congregational Church, Bournemouth, who was school chairman from 1899. He wrote, “In the year after I settled at Bournemouth the then existing High School for Girls... which... had been non-sectarian – was handed over to the Diocesan Trustees and became a definitely Anglican School. Some... leading Free Churchmen ... determined to establish a school for girls [to] provide a first class education which should be definitely Christian but... free from sectarian bias.”⁵⁶

Other factors were involved. The 1870 Education Act stipulated that school boards should be set up in each locality to complete the gaps left by the voluntary system of education. In 1896-7 the Conservative government indicated that financial support for denominational schools would increase without additional public control. Alarmed by this bias towards Anglican schools, some Free Churchmen, like James Hirst Hollowell (1851-1909), organised passive resistance by withholding taxes and rates. This was the background to the founding of the later Wentworth school. Hollowell saw the school as misguided, believing it would leave education for the masses in Anglican hands.⁵⁷ The founders’ declared aim was to be “a first-class education... free from... sectarianism”, though religious instruction held “a prominent place in the curriculum.”⁵⁸

After the foundation of the Secondary School for Girls in Bournemouth in 1918, “Wentworth’s usefulness to the town as a day school began to lessen. The boarding side, accordingly, was developed.” Jones hoped “to make it a Girls’ Mill Hill”, with a national, not merely a local appeal.⁵⁹ Miss Parker Gray, the first

55. *Ibid.* 17, 19, 22, 23, 27; for Beale see *DNB*.

56. J. Thompson, *op. cit.* 210; *DNB*, M.L. Farrell, *The History of Milton Mount College 1946-1962* (1963) 40-48; J.D. Jones, *Three Score Years and Ten* (1940) 269-70. See also T. Carlyle, *Wentworth College: A History* (Bournemouth 1997).

57. For Hollowell see *DNB*; R.T. Jones, *op. cit.* 337.

58. J.T. Davies, *Richmond Hill Story* (1956) 52-53; A. Porritt, *J.D. Jones of Bournemouth* (1942) 100, 126; J.D. Jones, *op. cit.* 270.

59. Porritt, *ibid.*; J.D. Jones, *ibid.*

headmistress, began with twelve pupils but numbers steadily grew. Several directors of Bournemouth Collegiate Schools Ltd. (managing the school's affairs) were deacons of Richmond Hill and in 1922 Myfanwy, J.D. Jones's daughter, and the then headmistress, Minnie Davie, joined the board. Miss Parker Gray had left in 1911 and Miss Davie, from Ripon High School, was appointed. By 1922 the school needed extra accommodation and the directors acquired the former home of the late Lord Portman, Wentworth Lodge, close to the Boscombe cliffs. This was formally opened in 1923 by John Henry Whitley, a Congregationalist, Liberal M.P., and Speaker of the House of Commons.⁶⁰

J.D. Jones described his diaconate as "a picture gallery of good and great men" whose support for the girls' school was vital. Every Friday evening Jones presided at a Bible class for the girls – a "sacred engagement."⁶¹ Although Jones dreamed gladly of a Mill Hill for girls, in practice Wentworth was of immediate use to Bournemouth with its large, comfortable Nonconformist congregations at the beginning of the twentieth century. The growth of state education forced Wentworth in time into the standard, minor public school role of having to seek where it may for its pupils. If outrage at the Anglican monopoly of education impelled the founders of Mill Hill in 1807, this was not the case in 1899 with the founding of Wentworth when that monopoly had been broken. The need for separate Nonconformist schools was no longer apparent. In the twentieth century the schools were to face new questions. Whom were they to serve? What was their purpose?

The Founders and Supporters of the Schools

A recurring feature of these schools is the support given to them by specific individuals and their families. John Townsend, founder of the Congregational School (now Caterham) was also for many years on the Mill Hill committee. Thomas Scrutton was treasurer of Mill Hill and of Milton Mount. Samuel Morley rescued Mill Hill from financial ruin, was treasurer of the Congregational School 1869-86, gave generously to Milton Mount and less so to Tettenhall. The Wills family supported both Mill Hill and Taunton schools. Yet over all towers the influence of John Pye Smith and his descendants. Robert Halley, Smith's former student, wrote in 1874; "I regard Dr. Pye Smith as the ablest and the best theological tutor... [ever] connected with the English Congregationalists." In 1843

60. H. Trace, "Wentworth School" – a typescript in the possession of Mr. F.W. Brown at the school; J.D. Jones, *ibid.* 62, 77, 78, 266, 271; *Richmond Hill Congregational Church, Bournemouth: Jubilee 1856-1906* (Bournemouth 1906), Porritt, *ibid.* 46, 71, 97; for Whitley see *DNB* and A. Peel, *Congregational Two Hundred* 283.

61. Porritt, *ibid.* 48, 100, 126, 137, 147.

Smith, a widower, married the widow of William Clayton, chaplain of Mill Hill 1831-1838.⁶²

Associated with Silcoates from the 1830s was Edward Baines (1800-1890) of Leeds. His father was the proprietor of the newspaper, *The Leeds Mercury*, and he himself became its editor in 1818. His mother was a cousin of John Pye Smith and Edward was educated partly at the Protestant Dissenters Grammar School at Leaf Square. He advocated a public system of education independent of the state and, when state education became government policy, favoured removing religious teaching from state control. He was a Leeds M.P. 1859-74.⁶³

Baines was the brother-in-law of Charles Reed, the son of Andrew Reed, a Congregational minister. Charles Reed became an M.P. and was later knighted. Also on the Silcoates committee in the 1830s was Dr. Thomas Raffles (1788-1863) of Liverpool. He had studied at Homerton under John Pye Smith, being called in 1812 to Great George Street, Liverpool, where he remained almost fifty years.⁶⁴

Among the life governors of Silcoates were Andrew Reed, and members of the Baines family, while Baines and Sons printed the school's annual reports. The Foulgers, who supported Walthamstow Hall and its counterpart for boys, also contributed to the Congregational School, John Foulger joining the committee in 1823. His daughter married Ebenezer, John Pye Smith's son, and this Mrs. Pye Smith was honorary secretary of Walthamstow Hall for forty-five years while her daughter, Emma, was honorary secretary and president of the governors for nearly twenty years, resigning as secretary in 1914. Mrs. Foulger, Mrs. Ebenezer Pye Smith and her sister-in-law, John Pye Smith's daughter, were all members of Walthamstow Hall's first committee. In 1873 the Pye Smiths moved to Sevenoaks, followed a few years later by the school. Emma's death in 1933 marked almost a century of service by one family to this school. The Pye Smiths embodied dedicated Christian service and cultivated Congregationalism. Ebenezer's friends included David Livingstone, Robert Moffat, and William Lockhart, the first medical missionary to China.⁶⁵

62. Brett-James, *op. cit.* 15, 16, 19, 63-66, 205, 210-214, 271, 299, 308, 314, 352-4; Harwood, *op. cit.* 13-14; R. Halley, "Recollections", *The Congregationalist* (1874) 403; W.T. Owen, *Edward Williams DD* (Cardiff 1963) 70-71, 130-1; *Congregational Year Book* (1851) 233-6.

63. Silcoates Congregational School Minute Book 1831-62; Binfield, *op. cit.* 56; *DNB*; A. Peel, *op. cit.* 155-6; C.E. Surman, *op. cit.*

64. *DNB*; Silcoates Register of Pupils; A. Peel, *ibid.* 134.

65. *Annual Report of the Northern Congregational School* (Leeds 1849) 12-17; Pike and Curryer, *op. cit.* 138-143; *Annual Report of the Congregational School* (1821) 24, (1823) 15; J. Medway, *Memoirs of John Pye Smith* (1853) 113; E.E. Leader, *Emma Fletcher Pye-Smith* (no date) – a pamphlet in possession of Walthamstow Hall, Sevenoaks; for Livingstone and Moffat see *DNB*; for Lockhart (1811-96) see R. Lovett, *op. cit.* 1442, 564, 567.

Andrew Reed attended the opening of Walthamstow Hall although John Pye Smith was absent but expressed "much affectionate interest." John Foulger sat on the first committee of the Boys' Mission School and in 1850 Charles Reed joined that committee. Reed became a member of the London School Board in 1870, and its chairman in 1873. In 1844 he married Margaret Baines and his son's name, Eliot Pye Smith Reed, betrays another family connection. The treasurer of the Boys Mission School from 1851 was Thomas Spalding (1805-1889) who married Elizabeth Reed, Andrew's daughter and Charles's sister.⁶⁶

Among John Pye Smith's admirers were John and Samuel Morley, Joshua Wilson, Titus Salt, the Earl of Carlisle, John Alers Hankey, Arthur Tidman, T.W. Davids, Thomas Raffles, Thomas Binney, John Campbell, and John Angell James who all supported schools included in this study. Ethel Mary Conder, headmistress of Milton Mount College, was the grand-daughter of Josiah Conder, the hymn-writer, and also of Sir Edward Baines. The foundations laid by Smith, Reed, Baines, and Morley were not just in buildings but, they hoped, in the hearts of those who benefitted from their generosity.⁶⁷

As early as 1848 William Day Wills (1797-1865) and his brother, Henry Overton Wills (1800-1871), were supporters of Taunton school. The family provided finance, not only for Taunton and Mill Hill schools, but for Bristol and Congregationalism in general. Of the brothers, William Day's commitment was more consistent. By 1860 H.O. Wills no longer sat on the school committee but W.D. was president. W.D. Wills's son, William Henry (1830-1911), was educated at Mill Hill and became chairman of the governors there, providing both a library and a chapel. In 1905 he paid for and equipped a chapel at Taunton in memory of his late wife, stipulating that the order of service followed at Mill Hill be used at Taunton. Frank Wills of Bristol was the architect. The library at Taunton, named after Sir William Henry Wills, first Baron Winterstoke, and two boarding houses testify to the family's generosity. W.H. Wills also helped in the foundation of Mansfield College at Oxford.⁶⁸

The Finances

The Congregational schools, lacking endowments, depended entirely on their supporters. Samuel Favell, a man of "education, wealth, and social standing", the

66. *The Evangelical Magazine* (1838) XVI 600-1, 652-3; Walthamstow Hall Committee Minute Book 1838-1844, March 16 1840, 3rd May 1842 – held at the school; *DNB*; C. Witting, *op. cit.* 8-12.

67. *The Pye Smith Testimonial* (1851) 4-9. John and Samuel Morley were successive treasurers of Pye Smith's college at Homerton, John from 1841 and Samuel from 1855, T.H. Simms, *Homerton College 1695-1978* (Cambridge 1979) 14-15.

68. W.F. Ayres, *The Highbury Story: Highbury Chapel, Bristol* (1963) 7-9, 16-18, 29-30, 49; *DNB*; Brett-James, *op. cit.* 350; S.P. Record, *op. cit.* 182-183.

first treasurer of Mill Hill, made the largest single donations of £50 in 1808 and £100 in 1809. However familiar names contributed – William Alers (later treasurer of the Congregational School who was to add the surname Hankey to his name), John Pye Smith, John Townsend, and others. The Congregational School did not attract the anticipated finances, prompting Townsend to write of its “languishing and dying state” in 1815, although among the subscribers was William Wilberforce, revealing a wide sympathy for the school. Townsend hoped to draw on the same support as Mill Hill. His committee’s chairman, Joseph Bunnell, like Alers and Townsend, sat on the Mill Hill committee. Bunnell had given £20 to Mill Hill on its founding and Alers ten guineas.⁶⁹

Among the records of Caterham School are lists of its officers and governors from 1816 onwards. A subscription of one guinea conferred the status of governor and ten guineas that of life governor. Similar schemes were followed at Mill Hill, Walthamstow Hall and the Boys’ Mission School. The governors of the Congregational School in 1816 included James Bennett of Rotherham academy who helped Silcoates also, the Claphams of Leeds (John, Samuel and John junior – keen Silcoates supporters), the Claytons (John and his sons, George, William and John), Thomas Raffles of Liverpool, John Pye Smith, George Rawson, William Wilberforce, and an “unnamed sailor” from Hackney among others. Collections for the school’s funds were made in several churches by John Clayton junior (also on the first Mill Hill committee), Raffles and Townsend. Despite such brave efforts, inadequate finances frustrated all the schools in this study.⁷⁰

Support for the Congregational School from these sources continued throughout the 1820s. In 1821 John Foulger appeared as a subscriber and by 1823 sat on the committee. William Alers Hankey was treasurer of the Congregational School until his death in 1859, making several generous donations (£50 in 1815, £31.10s. in 1816, and ten guineas in 1836, among others) and Hankey and Co. of Fenchurch Street were among the bankers prepared to receive subscriptions for Mill Hill. He served on Mill Hill’s committee from 1806 without break also.⁷¹ Rawson and the

69. D. Bogue, *The Nature and Importance of a Good Education* (1808) 37; J. Hinton, *The Union of Piety and Literature* (1809) 44; Brett-James, *ibid.* 36, 49, 63-66. William Alers Hankey (1771-1859) was a deacon for fifty years at Stepney Meeting House and a generous supporter of many Congregational enterprises. A. Peel, *These Hundred Years* (1931) 47. His father was Thomas Hankey of Fetcham Park in Surrey and his mother Miss Alers who may have been a German governess in the Hankey household. Almost certainly they were not married and on 16 December 1816 the Prince Regent “mitigated the stain of illegitimacy by authorizing William Alers by Royal warrant ‘to assume the surname of Hankey in addition to Alers and to bear the arms of Hankey only with difference.’” S.W. Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets, The Man and his Making* (1970) 27; H. Stafford, *op. cit.* 23-29.

70. *Annual Report of the Congregational School* (1816). 17, 20, 21, 22, 27, 31, 33.

71. *Annual Report of the Congregational School* (1821) 24 (1823) 15, (1816) 27, (1836) 47; Congregational School Minute Book no 1 1811-1815 ff73, 75; Brett-James, *op. cit.* 192.

Claphams had from 1816 also supported the Congregational School. In that year Rawson gave ten guineas and John, Samuel, and John Clapham junior gave £42 in all to the school.⁷²

The second attempt to found Silcoates was saddled with debt from the outset. By 1829 the fees, originally below those of “respectable seminaries”, had been reduced drastically. The school became the Protestant Dissenters Grammar School, and Commercial Academy, a change designed to attract parents concerned for their children’s future professions.⁷³ George Rawson, treasurer of Silcoates from 1830, was thanked in 1831 for “the indefatigable zeal of labours he has devoted” to Silcoates’s survival. In that year donations were noted from the north of England, but also from Glasgow and London (notably gifts of £50 from Thomas Wilson, John Clapham and Rawson). In 1833 Rawson collected more than £200 “to relieve the funds” from the Midlands and London but financial crises recurred. In the 1840s contributions came from the Crossleys of Halifax and Sir Culling Eardley, founder of the Evangelical Alliance and president of the London Missionary Society.⁷⁴

In 1839 the Institution for the Daughters of Missionaries listed the donation of Mrs. John Angell James, accompanied by £28.18s.8d., “collected after a sacramental service, held in Carr’s Lane Chapel”. Gifts came from Guernsey, Londonderry, Saffron Walden and Southampton. In addition to support from the Foulgers, Hankey, Reed, Pye Smith, and other stalwarts, Baron Dubois de Ferrures of Brussels, Lord Fitzwilliam, and Lady Buxton of Cromer (wife of the anti-slavery campaigner, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton) also contributed.⁷⁵

The resignation of Edward Stallybrass in 1847 as headmaster of the Boys’ Mission School, highlighted the need for finance there. Makeshift arrangements were followed while discussions about uniting with other schools were held. Between 1847 and 1851 the boys were farmed out to schools in Peckham, Woolwich, Windsor, and Stockwell as a “temporary expedient”. Unwilling to purchase premises the school committee excused its giving “this method of educating missionary sons a trial”.⁷⁶ In the 1840s several committee members agreed to clear the school’s debt – Tidman, Freeman, and Angus raised £50 each and Foulger £10. In 1846 the possibility of uniting with the Congregational School at Lewisham was dismissed as “impracticable”. “Vigorous efforts” were needed to

72. *Annual Report of the Congregational School* (1816) 22, 33, 45; J.C.G. Binfield, *op. cit.* 73.

73. Silcoates promotional material held at West Yorkshire Archive Search Office.

74. Silcoates: Congregational School Minute Book 1831-1862 6-9, 21, 25, 33, 34, 81; Silcoates Register of Pupils; *Annual Report of the Northern Congregational School* (Leeds 1849) 12-17; for Eardley see *DNB*.

75. *Report of the Institution for the Daughters of Missionaries* (1839) 11-20, (1840) 13-24; for Buxton and Fitzwilliam see *DNB*.

76. C. Witting, *op. cit.* 9-12; Eltham College Committee Minute Book I *passim*.

inspire “the Christian Public” to support the school financially and in the 1850s decisive action did secure the school’s future.⁷⁷

As late as 1846 the Congregational School reported a lack of support from those churches whose own ministers’ children had benefitted from the school. “There are several counties... which do not furnish a single annual subscriber, and several others which have not more than four or five. It cannot be conceived that such an institution, ... is supported ... with the spirit and liberality befitting a large and wealthy denomination, which glories in... the voluntary principle.” In 1847 the report complained: “It is deplorable, that hundreds of our churches... neglect to render the slightest assistance... But a crisis is now arrived, and unless the churches come... to our aid ... the number of children admitted to receive gratuitous board and education, must be speedily diminished.”⁷⁸ In 1848 an improvement was reported as the “pecuniary claims” were met. The committee had repeatedly obtained “loans from their friends.” However admissions were reduced and the classical master’s salary of £50 was due but likely to be unpaid. The schools met a need yet their supporters could not supply all the necessary finances.⁷⁹

At Taunton the exclusive position enjoyed by the Congregationalists with regard to teachers and governors survived until the 1890s. Financial needs dictated reorganization “on a broader basis” and a charitable trust was established. From the outset in 1847 the pupils had worshipped in town on Sundays (at Congregational services and, later, at Baptist and Anglican ones also). F.W. Aveling, as headmaster, had attempted to hold Sunday services at the school but had been overridden by the committee. The erection of a school chapel in the 1900s marked a significant step in the separation of the school from the life of the Taunton churches.⁸⁰

The Midland Counties Proprietary School Company, later Tettenhall College, met difficulties in selling its shares so that in 1869, six years after the school’s opening, only four fifths of the shares had been taken up. Most shareholders were from the “merchant classes” (carriers, shoe manufacturers, tanners, drapers, cotton spinners and iron masters) of the west Midlands although John Crossley of Halifax was the largest investor, with £1,000, while S.S. Mander and the Shaw brothers each invested £750. Tettenhall’s founders, like Taunton’s, set up a joint stock company to encourage investors with a financial return. However for many years no profits were forthcoming because of the “inadequacy of the subscribed capital.”⁸¹ Albert Baldwin Bantock (1862-1938) was the most generous of Tettenhall’s directors who, following Taunton, changed the school into a charitable trust. In 1905 appeals to wealthy Congregationalists produced sympathy

77. *Ibid.* 31-32, 37.

78. *Annual Report of the Congregational School* (1846) 7-8 (1847) 6.

79. *Ibid.* (1848) 5-7.

80. S.P. Record, *op. cit.* 60, 81, 92-97, 104, 107, 182-3; J. Brown, *op. cit.* 10-12.

81. Hancock, *op. cit.* 11-13; Midland Counties Proprietary School Company Ltd. – Members Address Book; Allotment Book.

and eventually £1,000 from William Hesketh Lever while Silcoates decided at this time against amalgamation. In further crises only Bantock's personal reputation enabled Tettenhall to survive.⁸²

By the late 1860s Mill Hill had accumulated considerable debt, suffering closure from January to October 1869. A new trust was formed and the school reopened only because Samuel Morley's generosity made it possible. On his death in 1886, he had been a vice-president of Mill Hill for seventeen years. Although the Congregational churches produced several outstanding businessmen, like Morley, they lacked support in depth to match their ambition. After 1871 also the state's increased involvement in education meant that Congregationalists saw less reason to support middle-class forays into Anglican public school territory.⁸³

These financial struggles show that the schools' promoters underestimated the sums needed and overestimated the extent of their support at large. The schools suffered "for the dissent which created them defined their constitution." The Anglican public schools were "over-protected and shackled by their endowments" while the Congregational schools were to be "proprietary schools, unendowed, relying on the success bred by success reflecting the free trade spirit." Here they failed. Eventually their hard-won survival led to absorption into the public school system which they had originally rivalled. Thus their dissidence declined into conformity.⁸⁴

Conclusion

If Eton and Harrow were models for Mill Hill then Mill Hill itself was the model for the other schools in this study. Yet each school influenced its fellows. Leaf Square was modelled "upon the plan of a grammar school in Yorkshire" (the first Silcoates). John Clunie, tutor at Leaf Square, wrote in August 1814, praising Mill Hill "where the interests of both religion and learning are happily combined." The work of its founders has "produced some correspondent emotions" in others who "aimed to emulate their example." Contacts between the school at Lewisham and the first Silcoates were evident from 1811 and the influence of Lewisham was felt when in 1832 it was renamed the Northern Congregational School.⁸⁵

Although the schools for the children of missionaries owe their origins to immediate demands, the prominence of the Foulgers and Pye Smiths reveals the same family's concern for Dissenters' education as at Mill Hill. Again the appointments of William Henry Griffith, as headmaster at Taunton in 1857, and of

82. Hancock, *ibid.* 37, 43-48, 65-72.

83. Brett-James, *op. cit.* 210-211, 256; for Morley see *DNB*, and A. Peel *The Congregational Two Hundred* (1948) 173-4.

84. J.C.C. Binfield, "Et Virtutem Et Musas: Mill Hill School and The Great War." in W.J. Sheils ed., *The Church and War: Studies in Church History*, 20, 1983, p. 356 *et passim*.

85. C.E. Surman, "Leaf Square Academy, Pendleton, 1811-1813", *art. cit.* 110-117.

Thomas Storrar, as his assistant, reveal continuing links with Mill Hill and the theological colleges.⁸⁶

In 1880 Tettenhall's directors included among the school's aims that "by the ... use of a ... gymnasium and a ... swimming bath and manly games, it is thought to secure... robust health which is so essential" for success. Rugby School's influence is evident. Bishop's Stortford Grammar School was intended to be a "Nonconformist Rugby" and, after 1869, Mill Hill itself directly imitated Rugby. Thus the Congregational schools increasingly modelled themselves on the public schools. Milton Mount saw itself as much a part of the growing realization of female ambition as of the Congregational concern for middle-class education. Thus the schools lost confidence in their own traditions. Mill Hill's historian claimed it reproduced most of the features of the eighteenth-century academies but became dissatisfied with these. By emulating the Anglican schools to gain acceptance Mill Hill relinquished the modesty and excellence of the academies.⁸⁷

In 1871 T.G. Horton withdrew his son, Robert, from Tettenhall where he was head boy and sent him to Shrewsbury School, "with a view to Oxford or Cambridge, just opened to Dissenters." Horton, a Tettenhall director, was severely criticized for this, although some saw it as "far-seeing." R.F. Horton described life at Shrewsbury as "a sore battle" for there he met "the antagonisms, open or concealed," which brought out all his "powers of resistance", making him realize that he "must stand alone, and never expect to float down the easy current of things." Shrewsbury School had recently been reformed on the Rugby pattern.⁸⁸ T.G. Horton's sending his son to "so very Churchy" a school gave "great offence to his congregation." Robert would probably have won a scholarship at Oxford if he had stayed at Tettenhall but his removal to Shrewsbury made it "certain."⁸⁹

This issue raised questions about the confidence of Tettenhall's principal supporters and about the purposes of the Congregational schools. In the eighteenth century Watts and Doddridge studied at the dissenting academies rather than sacrifice religious principle to attend Oxford or Cambridge. The Congregational schools of the nineteenth century, deriving in part from the academies, educated their pupils for entrance to the universities. Horton left Tettenhall to increase his chances of a university career. Why then should the Congregational schools remain apart from the establishment? Were they simply to provide the establishment with brilliant pupils, having educated them to a level acceptable to the

86. (Silcoates) Congregational School Minute Book 1831-1862 10-17; E. Pike and C. Curryer, *The Story of Walthamstow Hall* (Sevenoaks 1938) 14,19; S.P. Record, *op. cit.* 46-47.

87. Hancock, *op. cit.* 36, Morley and Monk-Jones, *op. cit.* 7; J.D. Jones, *op. cit.* 270; Brett-James, 173-4.

88. R.F. Horton, *An Autobiography* (1917) 17, 21, 23, 292; *DNB*; A. Peel and J.R. Marriott, *Robert Forman Horton* (1937) 36-41; H.C. Barnard, *A History of English Education from 1760* (1661) 73-74.

89. A. Peel and Marriott, *ibid.* 41, 48-49.

Anglican public schools? R.F. Horton's Congregationalism was assured but his successors might not have his tenacity. If these schools were to provide recruits for the establishment then they would be drawn closer to it themselves. Such unattractive thoughts may have occurred to the outraged Tettenhall directors, if not to the Hortons.

The background to the founding of the Congregational schools includes not only the exclusion of the growing religious body, and its resentment at that exclusion, but also a wider philanthropic zeal. This zeal manifested itself, among other causes, in the founding of the London Missionary Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and slavery emancipation which the founders of these schools also supported. Their reforming evangelicalism led them to oppose the public schools although this opposition involved much emulation. In contrast to such defiance, the later assumption of conventional educational attitudes (aping Rugby, building school chapels and appointing chaplains) suggests that the emulation of the Anglican schools had come to dominate.⁹⁰

In 1809 William Roby, proposing the later Leaf Square school, recognized that Lancashire's historic academies "were no longer available for training Orthodox ministers... when the need for an educated and zealous ministry was clamant." Roby's suggestion of a further motive for the founding of these schools, to provide educated ministers, prompts the question: did the leaders of Congregationalism attend these schools?⁹¹

Of the fifteen secretaries of the Congregational Union of England and Wales between 1832 and 1923 none was educated at the Congregational schools. Sidney Berry, secretary of the CUEW 1923-48 and 1955-6, was a pupil at Tettenhall College before going to Clare College, Cambridge and Mansfield College, Oxford. Of Albert Peel's *The Congregational Two Hundred* (1948) one studied at Tettenhall (Horton), one at Leaf Square (Baines), three at Silcoates (Gerard Ford, J. Guinness Rogers, and W.T. Stead), and five at Mill Hill (Albert and Evan Spicer, H. Arnold Thomas, Edward White, and T. Mackinnon Wood), making ten in all, of whom five did not appear in the earlier *A Hundred Eminent Congregationalists 1530-1924* (1927).⁹² Of the three principals of Mansfield College to 1954 Fairbairn was educated in Scotland, Selbie attended Manchester Grammar School and Micklem was at Rugby. However the Congregational schools produced outstanding men. Sir Charles Reed attended Silcoates, Eric Liddell studied at Eltham, and John Whale was head boy at Caterham. Melbourn Evans Aubrey (1885-1957) was head boy at Taunton before studying at Cardiff Baptist College. He was secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland

90. Brett-James, *op. cit.* 41; R. Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895* (1889) vol. I, 91-2, 394; R.T. Jones, *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962* (1962) 159, 170-4, 193.

91. C.E. Surman, *op. cit.* 110-111.

92. A. Peel, *These Hundred Years 1831-1931* (1931) 411; A. Peel, *A Hundred Eminent Congregationalists* (1927); *The Congregational Two Hundred* (1948); for Berry see *DNB*.

from 1925 to 1951. In 1908 among the old boys of Caterham were fifty-five Congregational ministers, one Wesleyan minister, nine Anglican clergymen, six missionaries, as well as ministers overseas in the United States and British colonies and many deacons in local churches.⁹³

Thus the schools produced educated ministers, as Roby had hoped, and a middle-class leadership, both male and female, for the churches. Yet the search for self-respect and survival led to an eventual acceptance of Anglican practices. As the ties with Congregationalism lessened, the Congregational schools conformed to a pattern, laid down by those unsympathetic to the principles on which these schools were founded. Erik Routley in 1960 stated that the Congregational schools "have become more and more assimilated to the public-school style associated with the Anglican tradition of Thomas Arnold" due to "the paradoxical accidents of history." The history of these schools is in truth paradoxical but not accidental.⁹⁴

ALAN ARGENT

**A LEARNED AND GIFTED PROTESTANT MINISTER:
JOHN SELDON WHALE,
19 DECEMBER 1896 – 17 SEPTEMBER 1997¹**

Casual readers of *Reform* and of the *United Reformed Church Year Book* – though that is not a volume designed for casual reading – are unlikely to gather from his obituary notices that J.S. Whale was one of the twentieth century's most notable Congregationalists, and they will find no assessment of his contribution in shaping the temper which made possible the United Reformed Church.

Reform's policy has been to avoid all obituaries. The *Year Book* finds room for ministerial obituaries, but its space is rationed. Distinction has so far been

93. R.T. Jones, *op. cit.* 266-7; A. Peel, *The Congregational Two Hundred* (1948) 271; N. Micklem, *The Box and the Puppets* (1957) 23-31; for Reed and the Willises see *DNB*; C. Witting, ed. *The Story of the Sons* (1952) 76-77, H. Stafford, *op. cit.* 83; E. de C. Blomfield, *A Century at Caterham 1884-1984* (1984) 44; W.M.S. West "The Young Mr. Aubrey", *The Baptist Quarterly* XXXIII no. 8 (October 1990) 352-3.
94. E. Routley, *The Story of Congregationalism* (1961) 127.

1. I am indebted for help in assembling material for this article to Mr. Roderick Braithwaite, Mr. Alan Cass, the Revd. Richard Collins, the late Revd. J.E. Farrar, Mrs. M. Green, the late Sir Geoffrey Haworth Bt., Mr. Arthur Humphrey, the Revd. Dr. Daniel Jenkins, the Revd. Dr. Peter Jupp, the Revd. Dr. Stephen Mayor, the Revd. Dr. G.F. Nuttall, the late Miss B.L. Preston, the late Dr. Myrtle Radley, Dr. Ian Randall, Professor J.P.C. Roach, the late Mr. Andrew Smith, Dr. D.M. Thompson, Mr. J.H. Whale, the late Revd. Dr. J.S. Whale, and the Headmaster's Secretary at Caterham School.

insufficient reason for breaking the rules. Nonetheless, for sheer Reformed grandeur Whale himself could not have bettered the *Year Book's* opening: "John Whale, the theologian, died in Edinburgh on Wednesday, 17th September 1997. He was 100."² And one can always read between even the shortest lines. Thus, *Reform's* summary note outlines a career which none could now replicate and whose significance is inconceivable in the terms in which it was constructed: "John Seldon Whale, whose ministries were with Bowdon, as Professor at Mansfield College, as President of Cheshunt College, as Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council and as Headmaster of Mill Hill School..."³ The church at Bowdon closed a quarter of a century ago; Mansfield College is so differently constituted as to be almost a new creation; Cheshunt College has been transmuted into a foundation; Moderators of the Free Church Federal Council are seldom now in their forties; and the governors of an ambitious and competitive independent school are as little likely to appoint as headmaster the principal of a theological college as a theological college principal is likely to apply for such a post in the first place. Whale's career belongs to a past age. Its distinction has faded, though at the time that distinction was never for a moment in doubt.

Yet its ultimate trajectory called for comment even then, and the perceptive (and full) obituaries in the national press hinted at Whale's own doubts.⁴ Was he a generation too late? His gifts of pen and voice would have made him a household name in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, marking him out as a Nonconformist who not so much represented as transcended the Nonconformist Conscience. But his intellect pressed forward. It was a twentieth-century, even a late twentieth-century intellect. And, for a while, he was almost a household name, at least in Protestant church-going households.

Something of this to be seen in the portrait by P.K.C. Jackson which hangs at Mill Hill School and which was reproduced in both *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. It is a superbly expressive essay in the grand manner, the handsome, mobile face younger than its years, yet of such mature youthfulness, good mouth and nose, a piercing gaze with a sparkle to it, directed just over the onlooker's right shoulder. The face, the gaze, the sparkle, the finger-tips in equipoise, suggest a nervous strength. Is he reflecting on Reformed ecclesiology? Or mentally rehearsing a commemorative sermon for imminent delivery? Or acknowledging praise for one just delivered? Is he listening to a boy, or a colleague, or a governor? Is he about to give judgment, or advice? Certainly he is sure of the answer. Here is a portrait in a great tradition, coloured and shaped by its sitter's academic gown, his Geneva bands as prominent as his white cuffs, although it is less the picture's texture than the fabric which catches the eye – the doctoral silk, the signet ring too,

2. *The United Reformed Church Year Book*, 1998, p.300.

3. *Reform*, December 1997, p.39. *Reform's* policy has perhaps changed; or an exception has been made for Leslie Newbigin (1909-98). See *Reform*, March 1998, pp. 3, 12-16.

4. *The Times*, 19 September 1997; *The Guardian*, 19 September 1997; *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 September 1997; *The Church Times*, September 1997.

and the cuff-links, and the chair barely glimpsed but clearly defined (late Regency? early Victorian?) on which he sits, his elbows resting lightly on its arms. It is a painting to place alongside portraits of Heads of Houses, divines, bishops indeed, taking its place as of right in its own right. It has a striking precedent: Frank Salisbury's dashing state portrait of Campbell Morgan, Whale's predecessor-but-one as President of Cheshunt College, which used to command Cheshunt's dining hall from its apparently humble place to the left of the door.⁵ The excellence of right tradition meant much to Whale.

His Congregationalism was inherited, for he was a son of the manse, but like the Congregationalism of that other son of the manse, his near contemporary Bernard Lord Manning, it was shaped in Methodism, West Country United to Manning's Lincolnshire Wesleyan.

He was born in Mevagissey, 19 December 1896, the son of John Whale (1865-1916) and Alice Emily Seldon. His father had emigrated to Canada and had there begun to train for the Methodist ministry, but the ill health which punctuated his life precipitated his return to Cornwall where he served "as a hired local preacher with the United Methodists."⁶ John Whale's service as a Congregational minister began at Emma Place, Stonehouse, in 1901. It lasted for just under sixteen years. In that time he had three pastorates. The *Year Book's* obituarist, who knew the terrain, chose his words carefully.⁷ Emma Place gave Whale "his opportunity and tested his sincerity. Stonehouse never had been an easy place of service. For long years it had been the problem of the local Union." At Buckfastleigh, where "a good work was done" and Whale gained his preaching spurs, he came across as "a man of judgment" who "did not hesitate to speak his mind as occasion arose." The statistics confirm this.⁸ Emma Place had forty-six members in Whale's time (but only twelve a dozen years later) and a Sunday School of 179 (Whale's lads' class was "gathered and held with difficulty"), and Whale doubled as church secretary. Buckfastleigh had fifty members and a Sunday School of 182. Both churches dated from 1787, but Buckfastleigh held 400 to Stonehouse's 500. Then Whale struck out for the Bunyan and Cromwell country. He was fifty, and at St. Neots he seemed to come into his own. Although its membership was not large, and had suffered from a two-year vacancy (seventy-six in 1916, with 125 in the Sunday school, compared with ninety in 1903, with 150 in the Sunday School), it was an established community of seventeenth-century origins firmly placed in a market town, its old meeting house fronted by a late-Victorian gentrification with

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5. That portrait is now at Westminster College, Cambridge.
 6. The details of John Whale's life are taken from *Congregational Year Book*, 1917, pp. 211-21.
 7. The obituary is signed "F.E.H.", presumably Frank Edward Harker (1872-1942), a Cheshunt-trained man whose pastorates included St. Neots (1899-1904), Prince's Street, Devonport (1907-10), and Ashburton (1910-17), and who clearly knew both Whale and his churches well.
 8. These are taken from *CYB*, 1904, pp. 226, 227, 254; 1917, pp. 241, 270.

an inescapable tower. "It was a happy settlement", and the arrival of a Welsh regiment with numbers of United Army Board men provided an apt focus for wartime mission. Whale's health thwarted that promise. At Buckfastleigh illness had taken him out of active ministry for a year. St. Neots killed him. He died 28 April 1916. There was no irony in his obituary's conclusion: "A man never died under happier circumstances. He went in the height of successful ministry, when all was going well."

John Whale's ministry defined John Seldon Whale's life and determined his education. From 1908 to 1914 – coinciding with the move to Buckfastleigh – J.S. Whale was a pupil at what was still known as the Congregational School, Caterham. He had two headmasters, Horace Edward Hall and Allan Percival Mottram, both sons of the manse, both old boys of the school, both fine educationists, formed in the developing tradition of Free-Church accented English middle-class secondary education. Both found their school's chronic financial crisis too great a burden to bear, but one of them was a great as well as (save in his own eyes) a successful headmaster, under whom the school flowered.⁹

Hall (1854-1938, Headmaster 1894-1910), was a cultivated strategist, who lacked force. Mottram (1875-1934, Headmaster 1910-34) was a man for the moment. Hall had prepared for that moment. Mottram made it significant. Their school, founded in London in 1811 for the sons of Congregational ministers but since 1884 felicitously situated in Caterham's Harestone Valley, where it was for long the only secondary school in the immediate neighbourhood, had been open to the sons of laymen since 1879 and to day boys since 1897. Its potential, which Horace Hall saw more clearly than most, was considerable.

In 1910, the point of crisis at which Hall gave way to Mottram, the school's constitution was altered and its leaving age was raised from sixteen to seventeen. In effect, its whole balance had been altered. The way was now clear for the admission of an increasing number of boys from varied, though relatively assured, backgrounds, and for the development of a sixth form. At once school activities proliferated: debating, discussion, literary, dramatic, scientific, photographic. The food improved. Scouting was introduced in 1910. There was a change of name in 1912: the Congregational School was now simply Caterham School. An embryonic house system was introduced. The "mortar-boards with yellow tassels, terrible survivals of Victorian gentility, always getting dog-eared and broken,"¹⁰ were replaced by straw hats in 1913.

All this was Mottram's doing. Hall's doing had been the appointment of outstanding teachers, two of whom, J. Hugh Stafford and Mottram himself, were to be formative influences for the next thirty years. Stafford (d.1951) who taught Classics and History from 1899 to 1937 and was Second Master from 1910, had

9. This section relies chiefly on H. Stafford, *A History of Caterham School*, Shrewsbury, 1945, and E. de C. Blomfield, *A Century at Caterham 1884-1984*, 1983.

10. Stafford, *op. cit.* p.103.

Cambridge degrees in Classics and Law, which he capped with a doctorate from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1914. Mottram, who taught Science and Games from 1902, had a London degree in Science. Stafford was a whimsically self-deprecating man with a Whig interpretation of History ("George III – an unpleasant gentleman – used to drink his own bath-water").¹¹ He became a Quaker. Mottram was cast in a faster mould. He had spent two months in the United States, studying educational methods.

Mottram's origins, like Whale's, were Methodist, in his case Midland farming Primitive Methodist. For his father, William Mottram (1836-1921), that had meant service as a Primitive Methodist minister from 1861 to 1868, followed by twenty-seven years in Congregational pastorates and twenty-four as Secretary of the Congregational Total Abstinence Association. If temperance was one of William Mottram's passions, his family connexion with George Eliot was another. His lectures on her raised £1,400 for temperance causes.¹² These drives were continued in his sons, of whom Allan, who had been his school's head prefect, became a teacher and Vernon, who had been President of the Cambridge Fabian Society, became an expert on diet and physiology. The future author of *Healthy Eating* (1940) and *Social Catering* proved to be an invaluable connection for a financially hounded headmaster.¹³

Under Mottram Caterham remained a firmly Free Church school. Stafford recalled Saturdays "enlivened by a lantern lecture, usually by a minister, on the Pilgrim Fathers or Wandering in Jerusalem."¹⁴ and Sunday morning and evening in all weathers, at Caterham's Congregational Church where the headmaster was a deacon;¹⁵ and then there was Mottram's alarming if touching tendency to ask a boy about the state of his soul. "But somehow we knew... that he really wanted to know."¹⁶ Nonetheless it was Mottram who turned this very private denominational school, with its eleven teachers, 109 pupils (ninety-two of them ministerial sons), and no sixth form, into a public school (the transition was marked by his election in 1924 to the Headmasters' Conference) with a staff of twenty-five, over 300 pupils, and a sixth form of forty.

For boys from country or small-town manses, Buckfastleigh's for example, Mottram's Caterham offered almost boundless horizons. J.S. Whale seized his. By 1913, the year in which boaters replaced mortar-boards, he was Senior Prefect,

11. Blomfield, *op. cit.*, p.51.

12. William Mottram was George Eliot's first cousin twice removed; he was the great-grandson of her uncle George Evans, and the author of *The True Story of George Eliot: in Relation to 'Adam Bede', giving the real life history of the more prominent characters*, 1905. For Mottram see *CYB*, 1922, p.109.

13. For Vernon Henry Mottram (1882-1976), Professor of Physiology, University of London, see *Who Was Who*.

14. Stafford, *op. cit.*, p.104.

15. He became President of the Surrey Congregational Union in 1926. *Who's Who in Congregationalism*, n.d.c. 1933, p. 173.

16. Blomfield, *op. cit.*, p.52.

addressing his school's old boys' association, of which he in turn would become president in 1931, gravely assuring that body's incumbent president (who happened to be A.P. Mottram) that the school owed everything to its present headmaster (who was of course Mottram). That was in November, the Guy Fawkes month, when the Senior Prefect traditionally organized the construction of the school's hill-top bonfire, each better than the preceding year's.

J.S. Whale made no bones about his debt to Caterham. On 13 February 1934 Mottram, in a fit of depression after a long illness, took his own life at Eastbourne. Whale, then at the height of his pulpit power, preached the funeral sermon in Caterham Congregational Church. He enfolded his old headmaster into the great tradition and, for those who knew the circumstances of his death, he reaffirmed the Christian hope, the classicist, historian and Reformed churchman affirming the scientist through whom "the breath of life blew through the place."¹⁷

Never was there a headmaster more serious-minded than this; Puritan blood ran in his veins; his charming flippancy barely concealed a deep-grained, dogged, puritan sobriety. A deliberate robustness tempered and disciplined all his idealism... He could be critical to the point of cynicism of anything that savoured of sentimentality. He felt deeply and hungered ever for an answering depth of feeling in others, but he had all our phlegmatic English dread of anything like religious exhibitionism. It was because he was a man of faith, who used playfully, yet very seriously, to warn visiting speakers and preachers not to take away the faith of the boys, that he suspected glib talk thereon, and loathed mere religiosity. Yet he was cynically critical of shams and all that is pompous and complacent in a world which he very well knew is a world of suffering, folly, and sin.

...Of that illness of the spirit which caused him so much suffering in these latter days, and which led finally to his death, I shall say little...

But I shall lift my eyes above the mystery and pathos of our mortality to those external certainties brought nigh unto us men for our salvation in our holy religion. And in the name of Him who has brought life and immortality to light, I shall recall, for the comfort and joy of all who mourn here to-day what a Greek singer long ago set down in two beautiful verses, when his friend passed beyond his reach in death:

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead:
 They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.
 I wept as I remembered how often you and I
 Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

17. *Ibid.*, p.62.

And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,
 A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,
 Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales awake;
 For Death he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.¹⁸

W hale left Caterham in 1914. He had a “good war.” So, in many ways, did Caterham: sixty-nine of its old boys were killed. While the father ministered to Welshmen stationed at St. Neots, the son served, faithful to one firm tradition of radical Dissent, with the YMCA, the Friends Ambulance Unit, and the Serbian Relief Fund, working as an orderly on a hospital ship in the Mediterranean and at Suez.¹⁹ Critics struck later by Whale’s apparently effortless superiority and what they took to be Oxford conceit seldom allowed for the broadening range of experience encompassed by the financial constraints of a market-town manse, the possibilities suggested by a school which had just begun to break bounds, and the facts of non-combatant life on a hospital ship. In conventional terms, Whale’s development, however sparkling, had been neither sheltered nor gilded and, in that regard at least, “Oxford” was a smokescreen.

In 1919 J.S. Whale went up to St. Catherine’s Society (now College) and in 1922 he came down with a first in Modern History. At such a time the world is a man’s oyster. Whale’s path, however, was mapped out; he was in Oxford to prepare for Christian ministry. That still made it a moment for the world to be his oyster, since there were enticingly influential Congregational churches – and colleges – which would regard an Oxford degree and a Mansfield College training as marks of due standing in a transforming world. Fifty years later, however, and with the corresponding benefit of hindsight, Whale reflected on this:

that world of nonconformity now seems astonishingly remote.

Congregationalism was not only losing its élite when I went up to Oxford in 1919: as the ecclesiological counterpart of political Liberalism it, too, was already in decline. And I think that we were aware of this, though we probably failed to see the full implications of what hindsight now makes plain. But this awareness neither discouraged us nor made us hesitate, if the Ministry was already our chosen career.

We knew that dissenters don’t ride on the successful band-wagon: they have the temper, and mentality proper to a minority movement, which presupposes second-class rather than established status and endures hardness (Toynbee’s ‘stimulus of penalization’), and takes the day of small things as a matter of course. Does this sound smug? I hope not. I myself –

18. The sermon is largely reproduced in Stafford, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-8.

19. *Daily Telegraph*, 22 September 1997; *Church Times*, September 1997.

though invited to apply for a demyship at Magdalen after my Schools in 1922 – proceeded according to plan to Mansfield: as a son of a country manse in Devon it never occurred to me that I could be anything else than a minister in the churches of the Congregational order; and in 1925 I was ordained to that ministry.²⁰

Mansfield was Congregationalism's only fully postgraduate theological college. Its most recent historian has written of how in the 1920s it conveyed "an impression of settled and confident routine,"²¹ securely established denominationally and recognised, even respected, in Oxford's theological circles. Its principal, W.B. Selbie (1862-1944), bridged both worlds. Selbie was a man of substantial scholarship, deftly up-to-date, and he was an incomparable preacher both by Free Church and Oxford standards. No other Mansfield principal has had such full pastoral experience (Highgate and Emmanuel Church, Cambridge, were deceptively demanding charges, which he served for nineteen years) and none has had a firmer finger on the denominational pulse. His colleagues – the long legendary Vernon Bartlet (Early Church History), whose mannerisms and learning were allowed by the discerning to compensate for his remarkable incapacity as a teacher, the Quaker, J.P. Naish (Old Testament), and C.H. Dodd (New Testament) – together presented an object lesson in academic balance.

Glimpses survive of other facets of what inevitably shines in retrospect as Oxford's charmed life. Early in 1922, halfway through his final years as an undergraduate, J.S. Whale wrote to a very young cousin of his future wife's:

How would you like to be a rowing man? Here is a picture of 8 of them rowing in the Oxford boat. I am afraid they are not very stylish yet, but they are working very hard to be ready for the great race with Cambridge on April 1st. The little man with the black coat sitting in the stern is the 'cox' – he steers the boat by pulling the two little strings, and he calls out to the oarsmen to keep time! He wears a big muffler because it is very cold sitting still all the time. Besides there is snow on the ground – can you see it on the opposite bank?

Races begin here tomorrow between all the colleges. They are called 'Toggers' because the boats do not have little sliding seats and so the boat goes 'slow' or 'torpid.' 'Togger' means 'torpid' – get John to explain it to you!

I hope you will be able to read this. I may see you one day before the end of term because I may be going to Westminster Abbey with a friend of mine here to listen to an organ recital.

20. Letter to writer, 19 November 1973.

21. Elaine Kaye, *Mansfield College, Oxford. Its Origins, History, and Significance*, O.U.P., p.180, and *passim*.

22. Letter to Andrew A. Smith, 22 February [1922].

Give my love to everybody...²²

Nearly three years later, in his final Mansfield year, Whale took part in the College smoking concert. He was disguised as Harold Nikon, a young professor with a passion for old manuscripts. That passion had set him on the trail of Mrs. Weed, a widow who had in her possession her late husband's priceless "Mansfield Magical Papyrus". Clearly Nikon must wed the widow Weed; and he does so just before a policeman arrives to arrest him for fraud.

Such was the staple diet of countless college concerts, but this one had a double-edged if entirely accidental immediacy. Not only had C.H. Dodd recently enthused to his pupils about the newly-discovered Leyden Magical Papyrus, but he was within three months of announcing his engagement to a widow.²³

By this time Whale's name had come to the attention of Bowdon Downs, a secluded church in quite the grandest of far-flung Manchester's established suburbs. He visited the place twice, "made a great impression", and received a unanimous call in January 1925, eight months before he could be in a position to take up his duties.²⁴

Bowdon Downs was quite unlike any church with which Whale had so far been associated. It was an extraordinary church for a first pastorate. It presented a formidable challenge to any minister, yet in worldly terms it was a feather in any cap. The fact that Whale's name had been mentioned at all was a sign of the confidence in which he was held in well-placed Congregational circles. It was also an encouraging sign of the openness and spiritual maturity of the Downs itself.

It is hard to think of any comparable English Congregational Church, other perhaps than Highbury, Bristol, which was of a similar age, and Lyndhurst Road, Hampstead, which was newer, larger, and London. It was not, on the face of it, the sort of church to confirm a man of spirit in the temper and mentality of a minority movement. For over eighty years it had gathered a congregation of thoughtful, active, and manifestly well-circumstanced people who were a force in Manchester life and therefore forceful throughout the still inter-locking worlds of commerce, industry, Liberal politics, and Free Church religion. If Manchester had made them – to adapt the title which an Alderley Edge member of one of Bowdon's more complicated networks gave to a marvellously perceptive family memoir²⁵ – they had long moulded Manchester. They were also equally influential in the affairs of both Lancashire Independent and Mansfield Colleges. Bowdon's outstanding minister, Alexander Mackennal (1835-1904), Chairman of the Congregational Union in 1887, had been Chairman of the College Council from 1892 to 1904 and of its Board of Education from 1894. His name was perpetuated in a window in

23. F.W. Dillistone, *C.H. Dodd: Interpreter of the New Testament*, 1977, p. 96.

24. *Centenary of the Church of Christ Bowdon Downs of the Congregational Order, Meeting at Bowdon, Cheshire, 1839-1939*, 1939, p.23.

25. Katharine Chorley, *Manchester Made Them*, 1950.

the college chapel and in the title of its post in Church History. Mackennal was a guardian, practitioner, and interpreter of the Congregational tradition. Bowdon's best-known layman, Sir Arthur Haworth (1865-1944), baronet, cotton merchant, former Liberal M.P., Chairman of the Manchester Royal Exchange and Treasurer of its Grammar School, had been Chairman of the Congregational Union in 1915, the year after Selbie, and had become Mansfield's Treasurer in 1921. Members of his family had contributed generously and imaginatively to the college's fabric. His uncle, Jesse Haworth (1835-1920), had given stained glass for the college and his brother-in-law, George Faulkner Armitage (1849-1937), had been responsible for much of the more decorative furnishing. Since Selbie had himself been reared in a Salford Congregational manse, and his wife's family were the sort who could look the Haworths firmly in the eye, Whale's introduction to Bowdon was no coincidence.

The Downs had a large, but not impossibly, large membership: 255 in 1925, with a Sunday School of 215. There were also three branch churches served by two ministers and a lay pastor; their total membership was 234, with 486 children. The four churches claimed to have eighty-one Sunday-school teachers, but no lay preachers.²⁶ In the light of retrospect it is clear that Bowdon's membership was gently but steadily declining: 357 in 1903, 335 in 1905, 280 in 1916.²⁷ By the same token, Broadheath, the largest branch, had grown from eighty-four to 175. But there was less reason to feel in 1925 that the trend was inexorable, particularly in view of the church's recent history. From 1914 to 1916 and from 1919 to 1923, its minister had been Leyton Richards (1879-1948), a man whose preaching and pastoral gifts placed him four-square in the denominational mainstream but whose combative pacifism brought a civic-minded and instinctively patriotic, and to that extent conventional, church almost to breaking point. That total breaking point was not reached and that a stimulating pastoral relationship was resumed were tributes to the personalities and Congregational churchmanship of all concerned.²⁸

Whale's settlement was a moment of reconciliation. His wartime service, at once non-combatant and courageous, expressed this and at his ordination, 30 September 1925, Haworth presided and Selbie, of course, took part, but so did those two uncompromising pacifists, Whale's predecessor, Leyton Richards, and H.C. Carter of Cambridge, who had earlier turned down a call to the Downs and whose daughter, Mary, was to marry Whale in the following year.²⁹

Bowdon Downs was J.S. Whale's only pastorate and it was a short one. It was also a successful one. Congregations were large and appreciative. The

26. *CYB*, 1926, p.198.

27. *CYB*, 1904, p.214; 1909, p.208; 1917, p.223.

28. See Edith R. Richards, *Private View of a Public Man: The Life of Leyton Richards*, 1950, pp.58, 68 and *passim*; and C. Binfield, *So Down to Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity 1780-1920*, 1977, pp.242-6.

29. *Centenary*, *op. cit.*, pp.33, 25.

membership stayed level.³⁰ The organ was expensively restored and reopened with the choral panache to be expected from the Hallé Concert-going classes. The Haworths were staunchly on side. Lily Haworth was by universal consent a likeably useful citizen. She conducted a Monday afternoon inner-city women's meeting, sat on the Bench and was a visitor to Strangeways Gaol: "Oh, Mr. Davies", she sighed to Whale's successor, "you do make the Gospel difficult". "Lady Haworth, I did not make the Gospel", Mr. Davies replied.³¹ Her husband, dashed by electoral misfortune from the chance of consolidating his minor government office, resembled the choleric colonel of a Bateman drawing, such that as "a piece of private naughtiness", a "waggishness" on a "wet day in the summer holidays", Whale and his father-in-law composed a limerick ("we knew very well that it wasn't true"):

The temper of Arthur (Sir) Haworth
 Resembles now heaven and now earth;
 But we say, when it's worst,
 Left alone bubbles burst.
 Let him blaze away, – what is a row worth?

In fact Whale found in Haworth, for all his tiresome habit of calling him "Padre", a rock solid church member, deacon, and senior friend, whose heritage mattered to him, who worshipped twice each Sunday at the Downs, and who "was no worse than the rest of us".³²

Whale's abilities as a preacher were now widely admired for their combination of scholarship and intensity. It was at this time that they engaged the admiration of a visiting Lloyd George.³³ Not all who heard were equally admiring. One shrewdly sceptical local critic in conversation irresistibly cut the young Whale down to size as "the minnow",³⁴ and another, recalling him as "a quite *superb* preacher", whom his older members lionised (she used the revealing phrase, "he was made much of"), felt in retrospect that Bowdon was the wrong church for a man whose corners had still to be rubbed off.³⁵ Bowdon was too civilised and tolerant, too sophisticated perhaps for that, yet there was much to be learned from

30. In 1929 it stood at 258, but the Sunday School was down to 165. Broadheath's membership was now 221, with a Sunday School of 292. *CYB*, 1930, p.254.

31. Personal information. George Knoyle Davies (1888-1971) ministered at Bowdon Downs 1929-1964. He too had been educated at Caterham (*CYB*, 1971-2, pp.429-30); In 1964 Bowdon Downs's membership was 72; by 1971 it was 35 and Broadheath's was 88 (*CYB*, 1971-2, p.132).

32. Letter to writer, 19 November 1973.

33. Thus *The Times*, 19 September 1997; *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 September 1997, under the heading "Minister whose preaching earned Lloyd George's admiration".

34. Personal information.

35. Personal information.

such a people and years later Whale reflected on his first church as a nursery for ministry:

Bowdon Downs educated my understanding of the meaning of Christian fellowship. Here were *good* people. They were not conventionally pious, but they were civilized and tolerant because they were Christian... Bowdon Downs was one of the churches which tried to face the inescapable implications of truly Christian fellowship: it engendered a little group – an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* – which made and maintained that witness. It was a witness to sensitivity and awareness.³⁶

And none could deny the aptness of Whale's words in pastoral season. In September 1928 he preached in memory of the secretary to Bowdon's diaconate, Charles Woodward Pidduck, thinker, lover of wild life and local flora, and lawyer. Hence Whale's text ("His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law doth he meditate day and night." *Psalm* 1 v.2), and hence his characteristic emphasis that there is nothing woolly, flabby, or spoonfed about the devotional life: "Meditation is intelligent or it is unspiritual... The blessed life brings every faculty into play."³⁷

Two months earlier there had been a specially called Church Meeting. Whale had been invited to return to Oxford, lecturing in Church History in succession to Vernon Bartlet. It is hard to imagine a more speaking contrast in style. Expressing "its sense of profound loss at the early cessation of a Pastorate which held so much promise", and grateful "that a personality so rich in spiritual grace and intellectual power had been given to it, even for a short time",³⁸ Bowdon bowed to the inevitable. Whale's formal farewell was on 31 January 1929.

J.S. Whale's second term in Oxford was brief. From April 1929 to 1933 he was Mackennal Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Mansfield and Tutor in Modern History at St. Catherine's. He had slipped from Mackennal's Church to Mackennal's Chair. At Mansfield he dutifully taught early Church history but it was increasingly hard to escape his enthusiasm for the Reformation which he regarded "as the defining element of and justification for Congregationalism",³⁹ and on which he intended to focus his writing. A significant shift was gathering force in the denomination's perceptions of history and Mansfield's mediation of it. He collected material for a life of Calvin which never came to anything, dismissing it years later as "scissors and paste" work.⁴⁰ Whale was being unduly hard on himself in saying that, and some at least of his scissors and paste would

36. Letter to writer, 19 November 1973.

37. J.S. Whale, *In Memoriam Charles Woodward Pidduck: A Sermon Preached in the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church on Sunday Morning, September 9th, 1928*, Altrincham, 1928, 10pp.

38. *Centenary, op.cit.*, pp.25-6.

39. Elaine Kaye, *op. cit.*, 187.

40. Personal information.

be incorporated into *The Protestant Tradition*, twenty-five years later. The trouble was that everything came to Whale with deceptive ease. *The Times* was to write of his genuine mastery of the pulpit: "great dramatic gifts, a lucid mind and the authentic accent of authority".⁴¹ One Oxford undergraduate who heard him preach at Mansfield commented to another that there were two Whales, one preaching and the other admiring the preacher.⁴² He was too able, too fine-looking, too convincing, too clever indeed by half; and critical observers felt that he knew it. They might also have reflected that such self-knowledge can be a painfully limiting condition, cripplingly so at points of crisis.

It was to be at Cambridge, not Oxford, that Whale best fulfilled his early promise. In 1933 he succeeded Sydney Cave as President of Cheshunt College, becoming a member of Magdalene College and of Emmanuel Church.⁴³

Congregationalism now had three sorts of bishop. The newest and most suspect sort for Congregationalists of independent mind were the provincial moderators, a breed invented in 1919. The truest sort were those brothers beloved, an Alexander Mackennal perhaps, or a Henry Child Carter, rather than a Leyton Richards, whose personal and professional authority was welded into that of their churches and whose service might be recognised by their election to their churches' one representative national honour, the chair of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. There were also, however, the college principals, seven of them in England and three in Wales, around whom too could gather a representative authority. As President of Cheshunt Whale was in training for such an episcopate. He was now automatically a man of note in Congregationalism.

The note which Whale most consciously struck was that of Calvin's Reformation. In February 1940 he gave a charge at the induction to a Cardiff pastorate of that preternaturally wandering Welshman, D.R. Davies, who found him "altogether delightful and charming" in personality, and in message strong. Here was a man who had strayed from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, speaking "of things which his generation did not want to hear – sin and hell, repentance and faith, death and redemption."⁴⁴

That message began in fact neither in Cambridge nor Oxford. It had already been sounded at Bowdon. In 1928 Whale began to review for *The Congregational Quarterly*, then in its sixth year of publication. *The Quarterly* was contemporary Congregationalism's most sustained published tribute to the intellect, a faculty which Whale displayed with almost indecent exposure. In January he reviewed an

41. *The Times*, 19 September 1997.

42. Personal information.

43. For Sydney Cave (1883-1953, President of Cheshunt College 1920-33, Principal of Hackney and New College 1933-53) see *CYB* 1954 pp. 406-7. A.S. Ramsey (1867-1954), deacon and past secretary of Emmanuel Church, was President of Magdalene College.

44. D.R. Davies, *In Search of Myself*, 1961, p. 200. The following year Davies wandered into the Church of England, and was ordained by the Archbishop of York.

edition of *De imperatorium et pontificum potestate*, William of Ockham's *Tractatus*. In its "striking freedom of outlook" he discerned a foretaste of Wyclif and Hus and its reluctant rebelliousness he compared with Baxter.⁴⁵ In April he savaged a Chicago Episcopalian's book on *The Cult of Santiago*. It was "not a very valuable work".⁴⁶ In July he played delightedly with Coulton's *Art and the Reformation*, then demolished it as less unsatisfactory than unsatisfying.⁴⁷ His true voice, however, came with three contrasting and deceptively brisk pieces published between 1929 and 1935. The first, "What Do Our Churches Stand For?", might be regarded as Bowdon's experience distilled into a manifesto for Mansfield's Mackennal Chair.

Can we state clearly and convincingly what is the aim, the objective, the living function of Christ's Church in the world, and of our own congregations within it? Do we know what is the first and the permanent charge upon our enthusiasm, what is our real business and quest?⁴⁸

Aim, objective, function, charge, business, quest, enthusiasm: that sounded like modern Manchester School Congregationalism but it encompassed an affirmation of Protestant Free Churchmanship, a warning for latter-day liberalism, and a demonstration (which for historians must seem bold, hazardous, even traitorous) of History's subordinate place in the court of the Queen of the Sciences:

It is not true that the implicit logic of Protestant Free Churchmanship has been recognised and obeyed with unanimity by those who have stood within the tradition. And the reason is not far to seek... In all its Protestant manifestations, the Protestantism of the Reformation, like so much else in the stuff of history, is significant and precious not because of what it actually was, but because of what it has come to be and to mean.⁴⁹

Thus the way is paved for a consideration of four prime marks of Protestantism, each of them contributing to his later writing. The first is "intellectual honesty, the scientific temper, the historical sense", characterised in a sharp echo of his memorial sermon for Bowdon's C.W. Pidduck: "The obligation to be intelligent is always a moral obligation".⁵⁰ The second is the idea of toleration: what Troeltsch had seminally identified as the "sect-type", that "persecuted step-child of the Reformation", had "come to mark the true line of our Protestant development, mainly because of a pacific and tolerant emphasis which the Reformers rarely

45. *Congregational Quarterly*, Vol. VI, No. 1, January 1928, p. 115.

46. *Ibid.*, 2, April 1928, p.253.

47. *Ibid.*, 3, July 1928, p.387.

48. *Ibid.*, VII, 2 April 1929, p.180.

49. *Ibid.*, p.181.

50. *Ibid.*

made".⁵¹ Thirdly, there is a distinctive understanding of authority: "when Protestantism understands itself, it holds that there is no infallible authority, save in a transcendental revelation, rooted in history, and interpreted by the inward constraint of reason and conscience... the noblest hypothesis under heaven, tested and vindicated in the lonely human heart."⁵² And fourthly, Protestantism was grounded in social reality; Whale deprecated modish phrases like "the social gospel" and "the social functions of the Church", but he recognised their basis.⁵³

From this Reformed quadrilateral Whale moved to his greater theme: to "protest a true and living theology which is no Cinderella of the sciences, but still Queen of them all, because she alone is their unifier and their guarantee".⁵⁴ That theology "turns about three moments – the Son of God Incarnate, and Crucified, and Risen". In emphasising this Whale made a careful distinction: incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection were none of them sufficient, however profoundly interpreted, unless personalised in "the glorious gospel of the blessed God", the supreme, simple, fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, "the incarnate, crucified, vindicated Word of God".⁵⁵

The direction in which Whale's views tended became unambiguously clear in January 1931 with his review article, "Jesus – Lord or Leader".⁵⁶

Although the *Quarterly* catered for a wonderfully broad church (its Editorial Board at this time included B.L. Manning, W.B. Selbie, and that grand example of Surrey-suburban modernism, Arthur Pringle of Purley), its bias, reflecting its creator, Albert Peel, bishop among ministers and inevitable Congregationalist, was liberal and *Jesus – Lord or Leader*, the newly-published book by Frank Lenwood, was such a trumpet-blast of liberalism as had not been heard since R.J. Campbell's *The New Theology* in 1907.⁵⁷ It was this which Whale took on in four pages of him at his best, his most powerful, and his most suspect for instinctively plain Congregationalists. Here was the clearest proof yet that this young man was indeed too clever by half. There was an epigraph in Greek (Porphyry on Origen in Eusebius). The opening phrase is "Readers of Origen..." (Marcion pops up later). There are throwaway touches of Latin, scattered instances of German – *Formgeschichtliche methode, Gemeintheologie, Ur-Evangelium*. There are

51. *Ibid.*, p.182.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*, pp.184-5.

55. *Ibid.*, pp.185, 186.

56. *Ibid.*, IX, 1 January 1931, pp.54-7.

57. For Arthur Pringle see G.M. Pinnell, *Pringle of Purley: 10 May 1866 – 22 January 1933* (Purley, 1966) and *CYB*, 1934, pp. 273-4; for Albert Peel (1887-1949) see A. Argent, "Albert Peel: The Restless Labourer", *JURCHS*, Vol. 4, No. 5, 1989, pp.319-36; for Frank Lenwood (1875-1934) see B. Stanley, "Manliness and Mission: Frank Lenwood and the London Missionary Society", *JURCHS*, Vol. 5, No. 8, 1996, p. 458-77.

names – Bousset, Knopff, Kittel, Bultmann, Weiss, Jülicher, Hoskyns – as if each reader has read if not discussed them all for breakfast. It is unpardonably Oxford.

But it cannot be dismissed quite so easily. The memorably phrased intensity lingers in the mind: “Mr. Lenwood is no sentimentalist, and he knows that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living love.”⁵⁸ There can be no escaping the powerful conclusion hammered out (yet is it a sledgehammer to crack a nut?) early on:

But about Mr. Lenwood’s theology as here set forth, there can be only one verdict. If he is right, the great central classical Christian tradition has been wrong, and much of the *New Testament* is a grievous illusion. If this up-to-date Socinianism, with its unambiguously human Jesus and its denial of Incarnation and Atonement, is the true answer to the question “What think you of Christ?”, then the religion of Irenaeus and Athanasius, of Augustine and Anselm, of Luther and Bossuet, of Wesley and von Hügel, has been founded on a myth, and the faith of Christendom is at last exposed as a glorious dream, if not shattered as a pathetic superstition⁵⁹

Except that it was not just a nut which this sledgehammer was cracking. Lenwood was a brother specially loved, an honoured minister, as Oxford a man as Whale himself; and Whale’s criticism, for all its debating mode, has become the accepted orthodoxy. Its gist is that Lenwood did not know what he was talking about; or, rather, that Lenwood the man disproved Lenwood the writer. The fact of the matter could not be what it seemed. Here, on the face of it, “lucidly and vividly written”, was a “brave and disturbing book about the central mystery of our religion, the Incarnation”, from a man who must know what he was writing about because he has so clearly lived it:

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 mean streets in East London, and a host of others. Indeed 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.⁶⁰

Of course, the book might properly be criticised solely on scholarly grounds as old hat and out-dated, but the nub of Whale’s criticism was generously personal:

58. *CQ*, IX, 1, p.55. Was this a conscious echo of D.H. Lawrence?

59. *Ibid.*, p.54.

60. *Ibid.*

here was a work whose author's life did not and could not bear out its main aim and contention, "the rationalization of the Christian mystery":

I, for one, do not believe that Frank Lenwood will always be content to deny to his tongue what is in fact the glad and humble confession of his life, 'that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'.⁶¹

Whale had now emerged as a doughty fighter, to be measured alongside two other youngish Congregationalists who came into their own in the 1930s, B.L. Manning and Nathaniel Micklem.⁶³ At his best Whale was more trenchant, more restrainedly passionate, than either though he lacked Micklem's crystalline elegance and Manning's deceptively bluff (he was the idol of the Jesus rowing and rugger men) but beautifully turned clarity. Whale was still too often too allusively bejewelled.

He next appeared in the *Quarterly*, President Whale now, for October 1935. It was his last appearance as a contributor. He figured as one of the lecturers at the Congregational Theological Conference held the previous July at Westminster College, Cambridge. His theme was "Sin and Forgiveness". This was not an occasion for glittering debating speak. Instead Whale's densely argued piece, buttressed by due authorities, carefully commended (A.E. Garvie, H.R. Mackintosh, Rudolph Otto, H. Wheeler Robinson, A.E. Taylor, F.R. Tennant), came closer to full notes than to a rounded paper. It unfolds insistently: plain, memorable sentences, few epigrams. "Sin is possible just because it is God's holy purpose of love that men should be free personalities, not pieces of inerrant clockwork".⁶³ "When we speak of sin we mean sinners, free agents who are individually responsible to God".⁶⁴ "The supreme wonder of the Gospel is that while its revelation of holiness judges us, its amazing grace saves us and restores the fellowship which sin has broken".⁶⁵ Though "the self is always more than its previously formed character", nonetheless "social inheritance is a demonstrably potent factor in the development of an individual... Indeed, what Ritschl called a 'Kingdom of Evil' is part of the social inheritance into which all men are born. Your failure matches mine and our lives, interlocking, form an organized system of evil". And the last word?

61. *Ibid.*, p.57.

62. For B.L. Manning, see J.C.G. Binfield, "Bernard Lord Manning 1892-1941", *Reformed Quarterly* New Series, Vol. I, No. 3, winter 1993-1994, pp.5-11; for Nathaniel Micklem (1887-1976) who had become Vice Principal of Mansfield College in 1931 and who was to succeed Selbie as Principal in 1932 see Kaye, *op. cit.*; N. Goodall, "Nathaniel Micklem CH 1888-1976" *JURCHS*, Vol. I, No.10, October 1977, p.289; N. Micklem, *The Box and the Puppets* (1957), and *The Times*, 29 September 1976.

63. *CQ*, Vol. XIII, No. 4, October 1935, p.547.

64. *Ibid.*, p.548.

65. *Ibid.*, p.549.

the sting of death is sin, because here life says its last irrevocable word. It is in death... that a man's life is seen for what it is, final and unalterable. Here conscience speaks with stinging clearness; life's fashion here confronts us as fixed and irremediable. Death is... the sacrament of sin if only because it is the outward sign of opportunities gone for ever.⁶⁶

But the *last* word?

The good news of the Gospel is that death, which seals a man's irrevocable past, also seals the endless mercies of God; that the Father of mercies reckons our guilt not according to the measurement of the punishment we deserve (which is legalism) but according to the measure of our need (which is grace)... Love takes the initiative.⁶⁷

Closely argued, bare of fireworks, innocent of palpable hits, this has ceased to be a debater's theology, but it remains a preacher's ideology. It has all the movements of an evangelical sermon. In such a context the intellectual completeness, rationally yet emotionally so, of Calvinism was bound to appeal. When Mansfield College celebrated its jubilee in 1936 with a book of essays on Christian Worship, Whale's contribution was on Calvin.⁶⁸

Whale's Calvin was "the Ecclesiastical Statesman of Protestantism", a true Prince of the Church, his essence conveyed in a clear, carefully developed, shapely short apology, in which care was taken where necessary to distinguish between Calvinism and the Calvin who needed to be extracted from it. Here was a practical demonstration of a historian's acknowledgement that his history was subservient to his theology.

All the Whaleian hallmarks are on display: the deftly dismissive aside ("Anglicanism appealing to life rather than logic"); the pride in Calvin as Rome's antithesis. ("Calvin has been Rome's one really dangerous opponent"); the celebration of the Calvinist distinctive ("His dominant thought is... election as the fact of the absolute sovereignty of grace"). Election means a "task for the will rather than a conundrum for the intellect"; the emphasis on adoration, obedience, the law.⁶⁹ But now there is an intenser emphasis on the Church, almost disconcertingly expressed: "Calvin's thinking is collectivist throughout... Its accent falls not so much on the individual as on the company of the Predestined,

66. *Ibid.*, p.550-1.

67. *Ibid.*, p.551. Other religions may demand "human righteousness as the price of divine friendship" but Christianity "gives the friendship, without money and without price, in order to evoke righteousness".

68. N. Micklem ed., *Christian Worship, Studies in its History and Meaning by Members of Mansfield College*, O.U.P., 1936, 3rd reprint 1959. There were fifteen contributors. Whale's essay came directly after that of his successor in the Mackennal Chair, the strikingly different C.J. Cadoux (1883-1947), who wrote on Zwingli.

69. *Ibid.*, pp.154, 156, 159.

the holy people of God which is the Church; its architectonic principle is High Churchmanship... Calvinism is, above all, Churchmanship, but only that faith in the Church is worth anything which includes faith in one's personal membership of it".⁷⁰ Then, with a daring which takes time to dawn, comes a reconsideration of Calvin on Word and Sacraments.

The primacy, or rather the all-embracingness, of the Word is plain. The Sacraments minister to our weakness in apprehending the Word; they strengthen for us, in our weakness, "the divine Word of promise". The logic is clear. "Baptism and the Supper are the needed 'Monstrance of the Evangel', visible words speaking to the heart by the inward working of the Holy Spirit".⁷¹ But the Sacraments are not crutches. They are integral to the Word. Here Whale's explication takes what would have been a novel turn for many readers, and for some a contentious one. The sacraments' enfolding in the Word requires a liturgical unity. "The complete Sunday liturgy service is to be a preaching service which shall include Communion at the Lord's Table".⁷² It is here that Calvin is extracted from his 'ism. Whale's concern is with Calvin's "life long desire to restore the ancient practice of weekly communion for all the people" in a form ("it is a true Eucharist") which preserves liturgical community with the Mass but which combines the prophetic and the priestly. As W.D. Maxwell put it in the quotation with which Whale ended his essay: "The Holy Table, not the pulpit nor the prayer-desk, is the centre of the Christian fellowship with God and in God".⁷³

It was not to be wondered at that Whale, with Manning, Micklem, C.H. Dodd, men fairly regarded as the most notable of Congregationalism's first post-liberal generation, joined in the next decade by W.A. Whitehouse, Daniel Jenkins and Erik Routley, were neatly labelled as "New Genevans", diminished by some into a party with its own dialect ("Fathers and Brethren", "God's holy purpose", "Our most holy religion").⁷⁴ What might in retrospect be seen as their first notable public airing came in Autumn 1931 at the Congregational Union's Centenary Meetings in Manchester, when Whale called for fidelity to the faith as classically defined.⁷⁵

70. *Ibid.*, pp.157-8.

71. *Ibid.*, p.160.

72. *Ibid.*, p.168.

73. *Ibid.*, pp.169, 170-1, 171.

74. Their varied nuances and differences are well outlined in R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962*, 1962, pp.450-6, and their influence in E. Routley, *The Story of Congregationalism*, 1961, pp.93-7. For Dodd (1884-1973) see Dillistone *op. cit.*, for W.A. Whitehouse (b.1915) see *Who's Who*; he and D.T. Jenkins began their pastoral ministry, in Elland and Richmond respectively, in 1940. In 1947 they were among the contributors to W.F. Camfield's *Reformation Old and New*. Erik Routley (1917-82) began his pastoral ministry at Wednesbury in 1943.

75. *Christian World* 15 October 1931. I owe this reference and the next to Dr. Ian Randall, to whom I am also indebted for allowing me to read in draft "Austere Ritual: The Reformation of Worship in Inter-War English Congregationalism" (forthcoming) and a revised chapter of his doctoral dissertation on this period.

W hale's words on such occasions could be made to run away with him. "If much of our modernism is true, then St. Paul was a blockhead" he is supposed to have said at this time.⁷⁶ Whale denied the words, but theological liberalism's unco tolerant were not convinced.

The New Genevan Whale was not a Congregational exotic. He was growing from ground prepared by R.W. Dale and P.T. Forsyth. Indeed he contributed to one of the first of the periodic rediscoveries of Forsyth which have punctuated the twentieth century to their proponents' quite unnecessary surprise.⁷⁷ Nonetheless Congregationalism's *gens moyens sensuels* were right to be uneasy. After the Centenary Autumnals Albert Peel pinpointed the unease with a verbal cartoon wickedly worthy of David Low:

One ingenious commentator discovered a 'sharp turn to the right' in Congregational theology, and snapshotted Dr. J.D. Jones,⁷⁸ Dr. N. Micklem, and Professor J.S. Whale all stepping to the right together. We could not 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'.⁷⁹

That "benevolence" was to the fore in July 1938. Whale's exposition of the Reformed understanding of Word and Sacrament, adumbrated in *Christian Worship*, was enlarged in *What is a Living Church?*:

In the full service of public worship in any Christian Church there are two permanent elements which together constitute a living, liturgical unity – a Word Service and a Communion Service. Whatever the rich variety of its forms, Christian worship has always made this twofold witness to the Gospel: first, in praise, prayer, and in the reading, preaching and hearing of the Word; second, in the sacrament of Holy Communion where all the

76. *Christian World*, 26 November 1931.

77. Whale contributed the Foreword to P.T. Forsyth, *The Work of Christ*, (1910) reprinted, with memoir and list of Forsyth's books by Independent Press, London 1938. Thanks to the Coward Trust one copy was presented to each student in the seven English Congregational colleges: 130 of them.

78. Peel was right to feel uneasy at that snapshot of Jones, the proven strategist whose influence in C.U.E.W. circles was equalled only by his shrewd sense of where the wind was blowing. See A. Argent, "The Pilot on the Bridge: John Daniel Jones (1865-1942)", *JURCHS*, Vol. 5, No. 10, 1997, pp. 592-622.

79. "We belauded our fathers even while we belaboured the principles for which they stood. We spoke of the need of the world, but we seemed more concerned for the machinery of the church". *CQ*, X, 1, January 1932, p.2.

foregoing come to a climax and alike show forth the Christian Evangel of God's purpose in creation, of His grace in redemption and of His real presence with His people unto life eternal. Christian worship of whatever tradition – Byzantine or Roman, Lutheran or Reformed – publishes this Word, in all its majesty and power.⁸⁰

The implication that, rather than a new realization of the “one act, the ‘old, old story’ of the love of God in Christ Jesus”, something new was added to the Lord's Supper, was more than Peel could bear. Properly taking alarm at the rhetoric rather than the logic, and at the universal application of such an understanding (“necessarily vital for Christian men everywhere”), Peel identified their own type of modernist heresy in such views:

Apparently it has been determined by some Congregationalists what things are necessary and vital for membership of the Church at all times and places. How powerful is the *Zeitgeist*, reflected so strongly in this demand, that there must be a dogma, authority, dictatorship, regimentation, in religion, a totalitarian Church!... Is there not here again a definite approach to [the]... mechanical idea of religion and the Church...? Why is not the insistence on the continuity of the fellowship, with its worship, its proclamation of the Gospel, its call to declare the good news?⁸¹

It was in his Cheshunt years that Whale became widely read, indeed in the best sense popular: *The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil* (1936)⁸², *What is a Living Church?* (1937), *This Christian Faith* (1938), *Facing the Facts* (1940), *Christian Doctrine* (1941). The public awareness of such distinction was confirmed by an honorary doctorate from Glasgow in 1938. Its domestic context, moreover, was precisely that continuity of fellowship, worship, and proclamation of the Gospel which Peel believed that Whale overlooked.

From 3 May 1933 to 31 July 1946 J.S. Whale was a member of Emmanuel Congregational Church, Cambridge.⁸³ He was not, of course, new to Emmanuel since his father-in-law was its minister and he himself had been on its roll of members from July 1918 to 1925, in a suggestive interplay of educational and

80. J.S. Whale, *What is a Living Church?* 1937, p.44, quoted in J.W. Grant, *Free Churchmanship in England 1870-1940*, nd. c.1955, p.340.

81. *CQ*, XVI, 3, July 1938, p.260.

82. As one obituaryist observed, Whale's belief that the preacher's duty “was to proclaim the Divine word and acts, rather than simply to take a text and talk about problems”, did not inhibit him from writing about the problem of evil. *Daily Telegraph*, 22 September 1997.

83. Whale transferred from George St. Oxford, then on the brink of closure. I am indebted to the Revd. Dr. S.H. Mayor for confirming this, from the records of Emmanuel United Reformed Church, Cambridge.

ecclesiological conformity and dissent.⁸⁴ Emmanuel's was a quite different fellowship from Bowdon's. It was quite as distinctive. It was also, in its own way, quite as representatively Congregational.⁸⁵ P.T. Forsyth and W.B. Selbie had ministered at Emmanuel before moving to Hackney and Mansfield Colleges respectively, and both of them had retained more than sentimental links with their last pastorate. R.W. Dale's son and biographer, A.W.W. Dale, was a member and deacon at Emmanuel before leaving Trinity Hall for the University of Liverpool. Whale's fellow members included C.H. Dodd from 1935 (when he came to Cambridge as Norris Hulse Professor), B.L. Manning of Jesus College, Ebenezer Cunningham of St. John's College (notable as an English pioneer of Einstein's theory of relativity), A.S. Ramsey of Magdalene, and more besides.⁸⁶ Maynard Keynes's mother was still in membership, as were her sister and brother-in-law. They were, however, no more than a choice veneer, for the church's essence remained that of a county town, proud of its well-documented continuity from 1687. It was a flesh and blood fellowship, almost perversely plain, bracingly sceptical of brilliance. One young woman, who first heard Whale preach in Emmanuel, and found him very good, overheard the comment of an older woman: "what a *precious* young man..."⁸⁷

In due course Whale became a deacon, and there survives a lively memory of one meeting when Henry Carter, who was by then all but idolised by his people, was stopped in his tracks by his son-in-law. No progress was being made, and Carter "began to rise slowly from his chair, saying 'I think we ought to pray about this', at which John Whale said 'No you don't! As soon as we come to something we must really think through, you say 'Let us pray'; so discussion was resumed, but still no progress was made, and at last the chairman, who had been getting more and more restless, said 'I'm going to pray now' – and pronounced the Benediction".⁸⁸

The friendship with Manning flowered. For a start (one of those cosmetic

84. His transfer from Doddridge Church, Northampton (29 July 1918: between Caterham and war service he had taught for some two terms at a Northampton preparatory school, Waynelete House), marked his work with the Serbian Relief Fund which was using Westminster College, Cambridge. Whale retained his Cambridge church membership throughout his Oxford undergraduate and postgraduate years, until his removal to Bowdon. I am indebted to Mr. J.H. Whale and Dr. S.H. Mayor for this information.

85. In 1933 Emmanuel and The Downs were similar in size. Bowdon's membership was 280, Emmanuel's 291. But by 1944 Bowdon's was down to 180 and Emmanuel's was up to 324. The last recorded membership of George Street, Oxford, was 143; *CYB*, 1933, p.267; 1934, pp.298, 300; 1945, pp.72, 74.

86. For a study of Emmanuel nearly twenty years earlier see A.C. Thompson, "Logical Nonconformity? Conscientious Objection in the Cambridge Free Churches After 1914", *JURCHS*, Vol. 5, No. 9, November 1996, pp.548-561.

87. Personal information.

88. Personal information.

matters which can unite men in fellowship) they both saw an importance in ministerial dress which their minister could never be brought to recognise, and yet they shared a keen sense of the power of a plain aesthetic. Whale, referring in his chapter on Calvin to the habitually bare context of Reformed worship, quoted Manning: “to call on the name of God, to claim the presence of the Son of God, if men truly know and mean what they are doing, is in itself an act so tremendous and so full of comfort that any sensuous or artistic heightening of the effect is not so much a painting of the lily as a varnishing of... sunlight”.⁸⁹

Emmanuel’s big-boned Francophone Gothic, its interior browned and dignified with large pews, large pulpit, and large arches, and coloured by puritan saints in good painted glass gathered in permanent session about and above the table, met those elusive criteria of order, plainness, and propriety. It expressed the equipoise of Word and Sacrament. It testified to continuity of fellowship. The year after Mansfield’s *Christian Worship*, Emmanuel produced *Congregationalism Through the Centuries*, a celebration of the 250th anniversary of the church’s founding in Downing Place by Joseph Hussey. Whale contributed to this too, with the great High Church Calvinist sermon preached in May 1937 on II *Timothy* 1, v.9: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”. This was a New Genevan call to arms, deftly, allusively, commandingly combining Oxford and Cambridge, Emmanuel and Mansfield, pulpit and pew. It could not be preached now. It is remarkable that it was preached then, but there is no escaping its audacity and intellectual excitement.

It began with the Faith once delivered to the Saints, as R.W. Dale had begun his great sermon at Mansfield’s opening, less than fifty years before, though it was an age away.⁹⁰

We may not tamper with its distinctive context, subtly changing the Gospel of God with some religiosity of our own. We deliver that which we have received... The glorious gospel of the blessed God has the massive objectivity of that which is given to men from the foundation of the world.⁹¹

So what is the significance of the church’s first foundation – 1687 – and its present habitation – Emmanuel? The former

in no sense dates the faith of the Church of God in this place... It is not only our joy but our almost truculent boast: that as Congregationalists we have

89. *Christian Worship*, *op. cit.*, p.162.

90. *Mansfield College, Oxford: Its Origin and Opening, October 14-16, 1889*, 1889, pp.53-78, esp. pp.53-4.

91. J.S. Whale, “Commemoration Sermon”, *Congregationalism Through the Centuries*, 1937, pp. 102-3.

no peculiar beliefs of our own. Independency has no distinctively independent theology. Our Doctrine, like our High Churchmanship, belongs to the ages. We are glad and proud that we stand in the central, classical tradition of Christendom... The faith which we commemorate this day is the Christian faith, not a denominational nostrum; it begins neither with Joseph Hussey, nor with Downing Place, but with the faith of Abraham. Nay, not even there, but in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of Him who saith, Before Abraham was, I am... You, therefore, who have come together here to-day are fellow-citizens with all saints... The Church worshipping in this chapel is what the Church Apostolic and Catholic has ever been, the creation of the redeeming Word of God in all its majesty and comfort.⁹²

And the present situation?

Our very local habitation and our name – Emmanuel – signifies God with us: and we give God thanks today that the whole heritage of the Israel of God is ours, its life, its faith, its order. It is a heritage wherein Peter Taylor Forsyth is not to be cast off from St. Athanasius, nor Robert William Dale from St. Augustine, where 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.⁹³

And, unsaid, but surely hanging in Emmanuel's air, John Seldon Whale announces and extends this line of prophecy. "You cannot put a sectarian ring-fence round the certainty of God's redeeming grace in Christ."⁹⁴

The high ground thus claimed there were still distinctive principles to be defended and stances to be taken.⁹⁵ Since history cannot define this Christian people, neither can geography:

Here the map is as irrelevant as the calendar. To us a State Church is a contradiction in terms....[We are] asserting the Free Churchmanship which is High Churchmanship, as though the faith were like the English language or English Common Law – an aspect or function of our common life... The Church which God loved, which Christ purchased and which the Holy

92. *Ibid.*, pp.103-4.

93. *Ibid.*, p.105.

94. *Ibid.*

95. Hence the dismissive reference to "the historic perversion known as Roman Catholicism", and the contesting of the episcopalian theory of apostolic succession, *Ibid.*, pp.110, 111.

Ghost sanctifies cannot be a department of state... When Christianity becomes tribal religion it ceases to be Christianity.⁹⁶

Edward Miall could not have bettered that in the Victorian hey-day of the Liberation Society. Here was Whale's cue for a prophetic word in season (would Albert Peel read this?). With such a classical reference as no preacher could have resisted when faced by such a congregation (that "tragic tension in the heart of Antigone, forced to decide between the laws of the State which she reveres as sacred and binding, and those unwritten laws eternal in the heavens which she must die rather than disobey"), he turned to the choice faced, and made, by successive saints, Martin Luther, Henry Barrow (standing in one of Emmanuel's stained-glass windows), Richard Baxter, Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich ("Geneva and Rome speak with the same accent of High Churchmanship here"), Karl Barth. "The problem is notoriously real for all sensitive souls, and it is not yet solved".⁹⁷

And there was a doctrine to be announced, implicit in the text, resonating in the preacher's language, ungrateful to contemporary Congregational ears:

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. Too often we are afraid of it... we ought to rediscover and make our own the great and positive truth to which it bears witness for ever, namely, that our salvation is the sovereign act of the living God, untouchable by human activity or weakness and unshakeable in its finality.⁹⁸

No grander sermon can ever have echoed in Emmanuel. It was not, however, a grandeur which travelled easily. In 1938 Whale was the star preacher at a great Northern Nonconformist occasion, the Waterbarn Sermons. The invitation had come from Robert Walton, whom Whale had taught in Oxford and who was now minister at Waterbarn Baptist Church, in Rossendale.

Alas, that year's sermons did not go to plan. Waterbarn's Baptists disliked robes: "a businessman's pinstripe suit was acceptable, a gown was Popery!" Consequently when, as Dorothy Walton recalled years later, their minister was seen to be helping the preacher into his doctoral gown, "some wry smiles crossed the deacons' faces and had not passed off when I arrived some fifteen minutes later. 'Ee, Mrs. Walton', said Albert Newell, grinning all over his face as he showed me to my pew, 'art' come t'dress t'parson up?' " The sermon confirmed the germinating fears.

In every way, as instructed, Dr. Whale was determined to 'Do them proud'.

96. *Ibid.*, p.106.

97. *Ibid.*, pp.107-8.

98. *Ibid.*, p.111.

In the early thirties the theology of Karl Barth, the German professor, was the 'in-talk' in religious student circles at Oxford and Cambridge. Here was his big chance to expound its meaning to the laity and, in this mood, he began his afternoon sermon, *The Sermon of the Day!*

'I come from Cambridge', he began, 'in Cambridge we gather together to discuss important things, not least amongst them being the words of the great German theologian Karl Barth. Karl Barth likens this world to a vale of tears etc.etc'. (Loud gasps, and head shaking all around. Life a vale of tears! What talk on Sermons Sunday, the one day of the year when everyone tries to forget some of the hardships of daily living. Even the sun does its best to shine for t'Sermons). Such chilling words now made it grow dim, flowers on the ladies' hats began to shrivel, coughs grew louder, and before long George Firth was swinging his legs over the organ stool all agog to strike up the last hymn. Amen – Amen. Enough – Enough.

George was a true Lancastrian character, well known for his antics on the organ stool during boring sermons, also for keeping a watchful eye on the congregation below.⁹⁹

Waterbarn was neither The Downs nor Emmanuel but its Baptists were not indifferent sermontasters. Without benefit of gown and hood, and without specific reference to Cambridge, Germany, theologians, or even their theology, Dr. Whale might have gone a long way with Karl Barth in Waterbarn. But then, Whale was after all the President of a theological college in Cambridge, quite consciously at the intellectual cutting edge of Congregationalism,¹⁰⁰ and therefore of all the Free Churches. He might not convert Cheshunt into another Mansfield but he could ensure that its ordinands should be either graduates or prepared to take part of the Cambridge degree in other subjects before completing in theology and he certainly encouraged them to play their part in university activities. Disliking the "seminarist mind", Whale invited a succession of distinguished visitors to Cheshunt: one former student recalls J.H. Oldham, Reinhold Niebuhr, and William Paton of the International Missionary Council.¹⁰¹ In Autumn 1939, D.R. Davies, basking in the notoriety provoked by *On to Orthodoxy*, preached at Cheshunt, and then relaxed in the college's post-prandial fizz: "Dr. Whale told the

99. *Waterbarn Baptist Church 150th Anniversary Reminiscences 1933-1988*, Rossendale 1988, pp.2-3, 5-6. Mrs. Walton's reminiscence is undated, but assuming that her memory of the doctoral robe is not over-coloured, it must be placed in 1938, the year of Whale's doctorate: before then his hood would have been an Oxford or a Cambridge M.A. Robert Walton (1906-86) ministered at Waterbarn 1932-8.

100. The phrase is in *The Times* obituary, 19 September 1997.

101. Thus R.J. M. Collins, *The Guardian*, 4 October 1997, recalling the period before he went down from Cambridge in 1942.

men they could take me to their studies and stay up all night if they wanted to. We nearly did."¹⁰²

It followed fairly swiftly that Whale, unlike any of his Cheshunt predecessors and to a greater degree than his successors, cut a figure in the University. These were the heroic years of Cong. Soc., the denominational society which had stepped into the appropriate toes of the old Cambridge University Nonconformist Union's boots. Congregational undergraduates discovered in Whale, as they had already found in Manning, a man who was more than a match for the established University names. Whale met those contradictory but deep twin student needs for flair and seriousness. He

led us privately into a study of the Bible which illuminated for us its perspective and progression, or in public sessions delivered eloquent and indeed dramatic expositions of basic Christian theology. Some of these happened at the big United Free Church Societies' meetings, with interesting fringe benefits. Back row members sitting on the cupboards to listen to John Whale counted quotations in six different foreign languages (to increasingly thunderous applause).¹⁰³

The *Quarterly's* reviewer of William of Ockham had found his *métier*. E. Gordon Rupp, then a student at Wesley House, linked Whale with Manning and the Baptist T.R. Glover, as men teaching a *known* Christ, with Whale "interpreting wrestling Jacob in terms of Wesley's poem – 'tis love, 'tis love, thou diedst for me'"¹⁰⁴ An Anglican undergraduate at Corpus, who worshipped at St. Bene't's during the brief incumbency of Michael Ramsey, A.R. Ramsey's bewilderingly brilliant Anglican son, recalls hearing Whale preach after mattins. The younger Ramsey's conversion did not inhibit him from inviting well-known Free Churchmen, like Whale of Cheshunt or Newton Flew of Wesley House, to preach at St. Bene't's; indeed the reverse was probably true. Such occasions, however, were still relatively unusual and they had to be carefully choreographed. At St. Bene't's, Ramsey would pronounce the blessing at the end of choral mattins, retire to his vestry where he took off his surplice, and then would return, unsurpliced but in cassock, gown and hood, with his Free Church guest who preached the sermon. Thus liturgy and sermon were separated, Protestant and Catholic honour were satisfied, the Offa's Dyke of Establishment

102. Davies preached "a little ill-at-ease, because I spoke from the manuscript for the first time for many years", but, after dinner, "I was as happy as a sandboy. I made Dr. Whale green with envy when I told him that my average sleep was four to five hours a night!" D.R. Davies, *op.cit.*, p.199.

103. M.P. Smith, "What Emmanuel Meant to Me", *Emmanuel Church Cambridge 1874-1974, Centenary Celebration May 18th-19th, 1974*, p.7.

104. E. Gordon Rupp, "Reformations and Renewals", *Free Church Chronicle*, Summer 1976, Vol. XXXI, No. 2, p.30.

survived unbreached; and Whale, of course, preached extremely well.¹⁰⁵

The most memorable of Whale's Cambridge occasions, however, occurred in 1940 when he gave the open lectures later published as *Christian Doctrine*. Whale was in a famous succession. Those who followed him included Charles Raven in 1943 and C.H. Dodd in 1945. But Whale in 1940 was electrifying. The Mill Lane lecture room was so full at noon, of all times, on a Saturday, of all days, that a larger room had to be found. One Peterhouse Methodist recalls Whale *prancing* down the desk tops as if to battle, so packed were the gangways.¹⁰⁶ "The Holy Catholic Church, whether Greek, Roman or Reformed, has never thought of Churchmanship as an 'extra' to personal faith... A true and saving knowledge of the Redeemer is impossible without it".¹⁰⁷ No wonder *Christian Doctrine*, the better-known of Whale's two best-known books, became mandatory in theological colleges of all colourings, and remained in print for half a century.¹⁰⁸

The Waterbarn Sermons notwithstanding, few have so successfully combined the skills of lecturer and preacher and, at a time when some preachers still drew great crowds, Whale was now numbered among them, alongside the Methodists Soper, Sangster, and Weatherhead, and the Baptist Townley Lord. His careful preparation, his memory, and his ear for cadence and rhythm, were enviable assets.¹⁰⁹ For a start they made a formidable broadcaster of him: one series of broadcast sermons was announced by a cover photograph on the *Radio Times*.¹¹⁰ Consequently there were many who hoped that J.S. Whale would be called to one of what were still regarded as great national pulpits. Such a call came in 1936, when F.M. Norwood resigned from the City Temple. Whale declined but not, it is said, before telephoning W.B. Selbie for advice. That wise man's word was decisive: "My dear boy, it would kill you". Selbie was right. The City Temple's call was heard by Leslie Weatherhead, who restored that pulpit to its international fame, but at severe cost to his health.¹¹¹

With or without a metropolitan pulpit, Whale was now firmly on the national ecclesiastical scene. His attendance at the Oxford Life and Work and Edinburgh

105. Personal information. Ramsey was at St. Bene't's in 1939.

106. Personal information.

107. J.S. Whale, *Christian Doctrine*, Cambridge 1941, p.124.

108. *Daily Telegraph*, 22 September 1997.

109. *Ibid.*

110. D. Jenkins, "A Presence in the pulpit", *The Guardian*, 19 September 1997. Gordon Stowell (1898-1972), Deputy Editor of the *Radio Times* from 1933 and Editor 1941-46, was a son of the Congregational manse and a great-grandson of W.H. Stowell (1800-58), President of Cheshunt College 1850-6.

111. K. Slack, *The City Temple: A Hundred Years* 1974, pp. 30-1; *Daily Telegraph*, 22 September 1997. I am indebted to Mr. J.H. Whale for confirmation of this story. Some may regret that when Campbell Morgan at last retired from Westminster Chapel in 1943 his successor was already assured in Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Whale of Westminster would have been a name to conjure with. Had no-one thought of it?

Faith and Order Conferences in July and August 1937, from which grew the World Council of Churches (with corresponding impetus for what became the British Council of Churches) introduced a new Congregational note to that already sounding in ecumenical circles.¹¹² That note became a trumpet blast in 1939 when the New Genevans came of age with an open letter, or Call to Reformation, "To the Ministers of Christ's Holy Gospel in the Churches of the Congregational Order", drafted by Manning, revised by Whale and Micklem, and signed by Sydney Cave, J.D. Jones, H.F. Lovell Cocks, E.J. Price, and John Short. Though the letter's most distinctive accents were quite clearly those of Manning and Whale, their collaborators showed how far beyond Oxford and Cambridge the New Genevan revolution had spread. Cave, Whale's predecessor at Cheshunt, was now Principal of New College, London; Lovell Cocks, proud of having sat, like Cave, at the feet of Forsyth, was Principal of the Scottish Congregational College and within two years would become Principal of Western College, Bristol; Price, immediate past Chairman of the Congregational Union, was Principal of Yorkshire United College, Bradford; Jones, until lately his denomination's ranking wire-puller, with a sharp nose for the way things should go, had sustained a famous pastorate at Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, where Short, recently of Lyndhurst Road, Hampstead, had now succeeded him. Their signatures were the more influential because their views were not identical; and 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 had trained or influenced sought ordination and grew into their pastorates. Only Lancashire, Paton (Nottingham), and Wales seemed to remain outside the collegiate Genevan spell.

The letter was published in March 1939. Already it placed the faith on a war footing. It seized, of course, the high ground: "Only the Church stands between the Western world and utter misery and degradation". It announced the faith: "In the Church we receive, as we receive nowhere else, a knowledge of the sovereignty of God, the Creator and Ruler of all things..." It confronted reality: "If our churches are in peril it is because they have forgotten what they are". It addressed "to those of our brethren in Christ who are nearest to us in the fellowship of his Church" what Whale had tried to tell Waterbarn.¹¹³

The Second World War was a watershed for Whale. It saw the London Missionary Society, the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and the War Office, move into Cheshunt. It saw *Christian Doctrine* preceded by *Facing the Facts* (1940). It also saw his Moderatorship of the Free Church Federal Council, giving him for the first and only time a truly representative Free Church role. At

112. R. Tudur Jones, *op. cit.*, p.427.

113. The palpable hits are surely Manning's, the emphasis on churchmanship and the biblical apprehension of present peril must be Whale's, the civil and political sense must be Micklem's. The Call is reprinted in Routley, *op. cit.* pp.164-171. See also D.M. Thompson, "The Older Free Churches", R. Davies ed., *The Testing of the Churches 1932-1982: A Symposium*, 1982, p.101.

such a moment that office could not be purely honorific, not with such an Archbishop as Temple, nor (as he had told Emmanuel back in 1937) with such ethical problems as now crowded the world's stage; and in November 1942 he protested with some effect against the manacling of German prisoners-of-war.¹¹⁴ His life in Cambridge, however, was coming to an end. Emmanuel was a busier church than ever, but Cheshunt's students dwindled almost away. In November 1943 it was announced that the President of Cheshunt College had been appointed Headmaster of Mill Hill School. He would take up his duties at the beginning of the summer term, 1944.¹¹⁵

It was, on the face of it, an extraordinary move to take. Whale seems to have felt in retrospect that it was the wrong move. Given Whale's formation and abilities it was much less extraordinary than might appear. He was responding at once to challenge and to call.

Mill Hill could be regarded as the premier Free Church public school. It was certainly the premier school of largely Congregational foundation. Under Sir John McClure (Headmaster 1891-1922) its preeminence was unquestioned, and no other Headmaster of Mill Hill had been so widely known among Congregationalists. Neither was there much question about the educational eminence of McClure's successor, Maurice Jacks (Headmaster 1922-37), a man from an undoubtedly distinguished intellectual (and Unitarian) stable, who had been appointed while still in his twenties.¹¹⁶ Mill Hill expanded physically under Jacks, and its horizons widened internationally. Nonetheless, it could be argued that it was becoming a safe rather than an intellectually, let alone spiritually, adventurous school and its philistine tendencies, perhaps as inseparable from its enviable proximity to north London's newest suburbs as from the depressing effect of economic recession on middle-class incomes, were almost disastrously confirmed by Jacks's two successors. T.K. Derry (Headmaster 1938-40) and A.J. Rooker-Roberts (Headmaster 1940-43) were studies in contrast. Derry was a son of the Wesleyan manse, physically short, academically high-flying, educated at

114. *The Times*, 19 September 1997.

115. For information about Mill Hill I am greatly indebted to Mr. Roderick Braithwaite, who has been commissioned to write the school's bicentenary history. Judgements expressed here are, of course, mine and not his, or the school's.

116. Maurice Leonard Jacks (1894-1964) was the son of L.P. Jacks (1860-1955), Principal of Manchester College, Oxford, 1915-31, and grandson of that notable convert from Anglicanism to Unitarianism, Stopford Brooke. Related to the Holts and the Greggs, a Balliol First and Fellow of Wadham, he belonged to the cream of rational Dissent. His brother, H.B. Jacks (b. 1903), became Headmaster of Bedales in 1946. M.L. Jacks returned to Oxford in 1939 as Director of the University's Department of Education. For Sir John McClure (1860-1922) see T.H. Darlow, *McClure of Mill Hill*, 1927, and N.G. Brett-James, 1938, esp. Ch. IX.

117. For a critical assessment of Mill Hill in the late 1920s see P. Rowntree Clifford, *An Ecumenical Pilgrimage*, 1994, pp. 21-8, and, by implication, Carol Thatcher, *Below The Parapet: The Biography of Denis Thatcher*, 1977 paperback edition, pp.29-32.

Kingswood, and in his early thirties when appointed. His career before and after Mill Hill was productive, but at Mill Hill his methods caused uproar.¹¹⁸ That uproar, moreover, coincided with the school's wartime evacuation to St. Bees, in Cumberland, where life was a Spartan idyll for boys bred on Arthur Ransome but lacked intellectual content for those with futures to make. Derry left rapidly for war work in intelligence and the fifty-eight year old Rooker-Roberts took over. Rooker-Roberts was a son of the Congregational manse, a denominationally well-connected west-country man, more rugged than intellect (he had been a Cambridge blue).¹¹⁹ He was also a Millhillian of purest essence; he and his elder brother had been boys at the school in McClure's first decade, a younger brother had followed him, and his son had experienced the transition from McClure to Jacks. He himself had been Headmaster of Belmont, Mill Hill's Junior School from 1919 to 1937. Belmont indeed was his creation, for he was one of nature's prep. school masters, a quintessentially safe pair of hands regarded with universal affection, who now emerged from retirement to hold the school together in its Cumbrian exile; but he died suddenly in August 1943 and Maurice Jacks came back from Oxford to stand guard while the search was on for a new Headmaster.

W hale did not apply for the post; it was brought to his attention.¹²⁰ How could he resist such a challenge, given his *rappor*t with undergraduates, increasing numbers of them from such schools as Mill Hill, given too his own liberating formation at Caterham (as felicitously placed to the south of London as Mill Hill was to its north), not to mention the fact that he had now five children of his own? Mill Hill was an apt repayment of his debt to A.P. Mottram, whose style had been at Caterham what Mill Hill now needed. It was, moreover, a peculiarly testing time in which to become Headmaster of a potentially great school. It was not so much St. Bees as Beveridge that was in the air; his report was already making waves, William Temple had given his imprimatur to the "Welfare State", the Butler Education Act was in gestation and Labour's election victory was under two years

118. See Clifford, *op. cit.*, p.26. For T.K. Derry (b. 1905) see *Who's Who*. Derry, who had been a noted disciplinarian as a prefect at Kingswood, is best known as the Derry of "Derry and Jarman", textbooks valued by several generations of A level historians. He came to Mill Hill from Repton. His brother, Warren Derry, had been Headmaster of Wolverhampton Grammar School from 1929.

119. Arthur James Rooker-Roberts (1882-1943) counted five Ejected Ministers among his maternal ancestors (*CYB* 1915, p.176). For his family's links with Mill Hill see E. Hampden-Cook, *Mill Hill School Register 1807-1926*, priv. 1926, pp. 217, 271, 349, 468, 472.

120. Although the current Chairman of Governors was the Anglican Classic A.W. Pickard-Cambridge (who was also Chairman of Stowe and Trent and on the governing bodies of Rugby, Harrow, and Trinity College, Glenalmond), his predecessor was Nathaniel Micklem QC., the Principal of Mansfield's father. Given that link and the tentacular Millhillian connections of Mary Whale's family, an approach may not have been completely unexpected. There is, however, no real evidence for such benevolent collusion and no family recollection of any.

away. What in retrospect might seem a last-ditch sort of moment in which to take charge of a boarding school with management problems, at the time must have seemed throbbing with possibility.

Whale was Headmaster from 1944 to 1951. It is said that when the governors called him in to offer the post, his first response was "Let us pray".¹²¹ His father-in-law's ways were, after all, catching; and on this occasion the prayer had followed decision.

The story of J.S. Whale's headmastership has yet to be told. It was not an easy period. Finances were frustrating for Whale as they had been for Horace Hall, A.P. Mottram, M.L. Jacks, and every other Free Church School headmaster. Governors, staff, and parents too, were set in their ways and although the sixth form responded to their demanding new headmaster, it took time for this to be translated into the academic success on which Whale had set his sights. Nonetheless, the school was back on course. Its Headmaster was a member of the Athenaeum and a Governor of Royal Holloway College. The challenge of the 1944 Education Act was seized when Mill Hill became the first major independent school to open its gates to boys from state schools, by implementing a scheme which had been under consideration from Middlesex County Council since 1940. The first cohort of these boys entered the school in 1945. And one Old Millhillian, now an elder in a Yorkshire United Reformed Church, who entered the school in the same term as his new Headmaster, recalls Whale's sermons in chapel (which the fanciful might regard as a Puritan variant of the Laudian age) as considerable occasions as was his reception into Church membership at a service in which both Whale and Nathaniel Micklem took part.¹²²

Yet to many it seemed that J.S. Whale had turned into a cul-de-sac. He seemed, when once asked at this time about the proportion of Nonconformists still to be found at the school, to regard the question as an irrelevance, colouring the conviction, which grew stronger in successive years, that the Free Churches were in irreversible decline. In 1951 he left Mill Hill. His departure's apparent suddenness was underlined by the fact that he left with no great pulpit or demanding academic post in view. With hindsight his obituaryists have noted that "increasingly his pulpit certainties came to contrast with his private doubts."¹²³ Certainly effective public speakers need to know how they will be misheard with more precision than most writers need to know how they will be misread; and Whale was now in his fifties, midway between the ages at which his father and Mottram had died.

J.S. Whale's long retirement was as intellectually and academically active as it was denominationally inactive (was there really no public place for him in British church life?). For nearly twenty years he held posts at well-known North

121. Personal information.

122. Personal information.

123. *The Times*, 19 September 1997.

American universities, Drew, Andover, Austin, Toronto, Chicago, Princeton, but these were all of them visiting or special. He became, indeed, quite as widely known in mainstream American Protestant circles as he had been in Britain. And he published steadily, with scholarly verve undimmed. *The Protestant Tradition* (1955) ranked with *Christian Doctrine* in public esteem.¹²⁴ *Victor and Victim: The Christian Doctrine of Redemption* (1960) explored themes which had concerned him since he first began to publish. In 1971 there appeared *Christian Reunion: Historic Divisions Reconsidered*. He still took a high Protestant ground, but in these days either side of *Honest to God* there was a significant mellowing from the pugnacities of “Jesus – Lord or Leader”:

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. Though I am a convinced Free Churchman, conscious of differing in no way that matters from Ernest Payne, I am nevertheless nearer in mind and heart to Bishop Huddleston than I am to the (white) Baptists of Arkansas. 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.¹²⁵

By 1971 Whale’s visits to American universities had diminished. His seventies coincided with uproar in the western student world, and he had now returned to the English south-west whence the Whales had been hewn. From the earlier 1950s he lived, when in England, at Wild Goose, Widecombe-in-the-Moor, foraying out for significant occasions. In September 1975, the jubilee of his ordination, the year of a daughter’s silver wedding and within a year of their own golden wedding, John and Mary Whale revisited Bowdon Downs. The church had closed a year or so before, the building was shut, its key could not be found, and they peered through a broken window.¹²⁶ The following June, John Whale preached morning and evening for Daniel Jenkins at Regent Square United Reformed Church, and lunched next day with his host at the Athenaeum, speaking and eating alike with impressive vitality.¹²⁷ And on 25 October 1980 he gave the Commemorative Address at Caterham’s Founder’s Day, celebrating the occasion in 1811 when the

124. When the present writer was an undergraduate, reading History in the late 1950s, his supervisor instructed him to read *The Protestant Tradition*. The realization that this bracingly authoritative work was by a fellow Congregationalist was a tonic: Free Churchmanship could hold its head seriously high.

125. J.S. Whale, *Christian Reunion: Historic Divisions Reconsidered*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A., 1971, p.121. Nathaniel Micklem too was mellowing at this time.

126. Personal information.

127. Personal information, *Reform*, June 1976, p.22.

school's subscribers had elected the first six boys to start their education. Whale's speech wove long-dead personalities whose names held meaning only for the school into a longer, older theme, his personal gratitude for formative mercies shining through his distinctive view of History as handmaid to Theology as he leapt across the years:

The Past is always inaccessible, but the Present can make it contemporary. Our unknowable founder has always been known in his fulfilment. For us, sixty-nine years ago, that was Mottram: in 1911 he was making 1811 alive and luminous. Townsend was being fulfilled, too, in the integrity and rare originality of a Pallister, in the versatile witness of a Stafford to the civilising humanities (not to mention his glorious flippancy which was an education in itself). So it has been for the successive generations: so it is still. The long-ago is mediated only through the here-and-now. So watch it Caterham.¹²⁸

In 1995 John and Mary Whale left Dartmoor for Edinburgh, where a daughter lived. There John Whale celebrated his centenary and a notice appeared in *The Times* under "School News": "Mill Hill School foundation: The Court of Governors, the School and the Old Millhillian Club join in offering their warmest wishes and congratulations to Dr. J.S. Whale, Headmaster 1944-51, on the occasion of his 100th birthday."¹²⁹ That year too, David Thompson, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, who was an elder of Emmanuel Church, Cambridge, and an ecclesiastical historian drawn from what Whale had once described as the step-children of the Reformation, contacted the Whales while attending the Church of Scotland's General Assembly, to bring them the greetings of Emmanuel and of the wider church.

John Seldon Whale died 17 September 1997. In Daniel Jenkins's words, he "exemplified the classic tradition of the learned and gifted Protestant ministry",¹³⁰ and a tablet commemorates him in Mansfield College Chapel. But he is also to be found duly humbled in the inscription, attributed to him, on A.P. Mottram's tombstone:

He taught as a learner
 He led as a leader
 And set the feet of many
 Upon the way of life.¹³¹

128. John Townsend was Caterham's main founder, C.F. Pallister taught Junior School Subjects 1894-1934. See Blomfield, *op. cit.*, p.139.

129. *The Times*, 19 December 1996.

130. *The Guardian*, 19 September 1997.

131. Blomfield, *op. cit.*, p.63.

To those words, expressive of the tension in all true teaching, should be added the text with which F.E. Harker had closed his father's obituary. "He calleth whom He will, the work is His".¹³² For this minister of Word and Sacrament the great election was complete.

CLYDE BINFIELD

REFORMED OR UNITED? TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

The Context

The United Reformed Church was formed in 1972, only a few months after the second failure of the Church of England to endorse by a sufficient majority the proposals for Anglican-Methodist union. The two events were completely unrelated, yet the disappointment in ecumenical circles about the Anglican-Methodist failure seemed to place a particular obligation on the United Reformed Church to do what it had committed itself to do in its Basis of Union: to "take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people".¹ Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was deeply disappointed by the Anglican-Methodist failure, urged the United Reformed Church in this direction. Owen Chadwick described the "tumultuous welcome" given to Archbishop Ramsey when he spoke in the Westminster Central Hall at the Uniting Assembly of the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches. "He made plain to them," Chadwick wrote, "his conviction that while nobody wanted uniformity in way of worship, somehow or other the heirs of the Prayer Book, and the heirs of the old Congregationalists and Presbyterians who parted from the Church of England at the end of the English Civil War, and the Methodists, were meant in time to be one body of Christians."² Of course, Michael Ramsey's father was a Congregationalist and a Deacon of Emmanuel Church, Cambridge, and a variety of warm personal relationships made it natural for John Huxtable, the Moderator of the Uniting Assembly, to refer to him as "our Archbishop", when introducing him to the Assembly, somewhat to the surprise of the German visitors present.³

This expectation of the United Reformed Church partly explains the prominence given to its leaders in the Churches' Unity Commission and the Churches' Council

132. *CYB*, 1917, p.212.

1. United Reformed Church, *Basis of Union*, para. 8.
 2. O. Chadwick, *Michael Ramsey*, Oxford 1990, p. 342.
 3. J. Huxtable, *As it seemed to me*, London 1990, p. 45.

for Covenanting in the later 1970s. Ultimately, however, those ventures also failed; and one result was an intensifying anxiety about identity within the United Reformed Church itself. Several of its leaders suggested that the Church ought to find its identity in the "Reformed" part of its title, rather than the "United" part. Yet do the words "United" and "Reformed" lead in opposite directions? Does emphasis on "United" in any way threaten the "Reformed" nature of the Church?

The Name

To begin with the name. The Assemblies of the Congregational Union in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England set up a Joint Committee for Conversations in 1963, which had its first meeting in November of that year. In 1965 this committee published *A statement of convictions on which a united Church, both catholic and reformed, might be built*. At that stage, both in the title and in the main text, the words used were "united Church". By the time the committee published *A Proposed Basis for Union* in 1967 it was proposed that the title should be "THE REFORMED CHURCH" with the addition for purposes of legal and international definition of the words IN ENGLAND AND WALES.⁴

The Revd. Alec Neil, Presbyterian Co-Chairman of the Joint Committee, explained the choice when presenting the Report to the Presbyterian General Assembly in May 1967:

We suggest that the united body be called "The Reformed Church". No name is ideal, and quite a few were canvassed in the committee, but we think that the title Reformed best expresses what we shall be in fact, that branch of the Church in England which represents the insights into the Church historically called Reformed. We shall contain that side of English churchmanship which is linked historically, theologically, and in order with the Churches in Europe which are called Reformed. We shall not be the United Church of England; we shall not even be the United Free Church of England; that would be pretentious and premature. The name Reformed displays both the extent and the limitation of our achievement, acknowledging its incompleteness and that there is still much to do.⁵

The reason for the choice would seem to lie in the text of the Covenant Relationship affirmed at a joint session of the two Assemblies in 1951, following the lack of local support for the scheme of union proposed in 1947. The common statement approved in 1951 referred to "sharing the Christian faith and inheriting

4. *A Proposed Basis for Union*, London 1965, p. 7.

5. *Congregational-Presbyterian Union: Speeches in support of the Report to the Presbyterian General Assembly, Manchester, May 1967*, p. (4).

together the Reformed tradition".⁶ It is clear, however, that the proposed title was not popular. This led the Group concerned with reviewing the text of the Basis to propose the title "United Church of Christ" in January 1968. There was an obvious North American parallel here in that this title had been used for the union of the Congregational and Evangelical and Reformed Churches in the U.S.A. in 1957.

However, the Joint Committee in February 1968, on the motion of Kenneth Slack, decided to opt for the title "United Church", with the use of the words "Congregational-Presbyterian" in brackets when necessary. My notes of the meeting say that this was carried by eleven votes to five with three abstentions (hardly reflecting overwhelming enthusiasm), but the Minutes simply record that the revised text of the Basis was approved with various amendments. The new title was therefore used in the Committee's Interim Report for 1968, with the significant comment that the suggested change was made "so that support for such an alternative can be more accurately judged".⁷ When the full revision of the Proposed Basis was considered by the Assemblies of 1969, both Assemblies recommended that the title be "The United Reformed Church"; this was accepted by the Joint Committee at their meeting on 2-3 July 1969, and was not subsequently challenged thereafter. My notes of the debate at the Congregational Church Assembly on 20 May 1969 indicate that the suggestion there was made by the Revd. C.A.L. Price of Redcar, who argued that the adjective "United" alone was exclusive; the use of "Reformed" would indicate that sitting around the Lord's Table at Holy Communion was the central act of worship, and therefore the term "United Reformed" would be a better way forward: this clearly found the support of a considerable majority of those present.

Although in his examination of the formation of the United Reformed Church Hubert Smith, perhaps exaggeratedly, referred to "overwhelming dislike" of the name "Reformed Church", precise reasons, apart from a general unfamiliarity with the term in the English context, do not seem to have been given. Seven churches were worried about the similarity to the Dutch Reformed Church (presumably in South Africa rather than the Netherlands) and four thought that there would be confusion with Rome if the initials for "Reformed Church" were used alone.⁸

6. *Congregational Year Book*, 1952, pp. 98-99. The Introduction to *A Proposed Basis for Union* (p. 5) quoted the text proposed in 1949 – "sharing a common faith and inheriting together the traditions of Reformed Churchmanship" (*Congregational Year Book*, 1950, p. 96) – which was evidently amended subsequently. The reasons for that are not clear, but it may have reflected a reaction to the concept of reformed *churchmanship*, which had been associated with a particular school of thought in Congregationalism. That text is also quoted as though it were the final version in R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962*, London 1962, p. 433. H.J. Jones, "The Formation of the United Reformed Church" (unpublished London M. Phil. thesis. 1977), pp. 69-70, quotes the correct text.
7. *An Interim Report on the revision of 'A Proposed Basis of Union' submitted to the Assemblies of 1968*, p. 4.
8. H.J. Smith, "The Formation of the United Reformed Church", pp. 85-86.

Ronald Bocking has suggested that the combined title, though inelegant, was adopted in the hope that it would be short-lived, because of future unions; but he also affirms that the key word is "Reformed", "for at that time we were becoming more aware as a nation that we were part of Europe and saw the united church as part of a scene in which there were many Reformed Churches whose members would need to know where to worship in this country".⁹

Reformed

It is important, therefore, to note the significance of the word "Reformed". Why is it so unfamiliar in the English-speaking world in this particular sense? Perhaps the most obvious reason is the tendency for the fragmentation among English protestants to be described in terms of polity rather than theology. The words "Presbyterian", "Independent" and even "Episcopalian", refer to the government of the Church rather than its theology: and the distinctive feature of the English reformation, that it was defined in terms of liturgy rather than theology, is also relevant. This has had significant consequences for the perception of these matters in the English-speaking world. The term "Reformed" is generally used theologically to speak of the heirs of Calvin, Knox and Zwingli, or alternatively in the words of Martin Cressy in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*: "Main emphases of Reformed teaching have been the sovereignty of God, the lordship of Jesus Christ as the divine Saviour, and the centrality of scripture as the rule of faith and life".¹⁰

The reason for these emphases in their historical context is clear: the purpose was to affirm the power of God over against any usurped human power, whether in church or state. But in seeking to find a basis for denying usurped human power, the reformers, both Luther and Calvin, went further than necessary in denying human freedom. As Neville Figgis put it: the fault of the Calvinist theology was "that its one governing principle on which all else lies is the absolute sovereignty of God; instead of starting from the love of God and working on the notions of His government and the self limitation involved alike in the incarnation and the creating of free beings, Calvin starts from the notion of God as a *princeps legibus solutus*" [a prince not bound by laws.]¹¹ The problem with the sovereignty of grace is not the emphasis on grace, but the understanding of sovereignty; and it has been in this area that traditional Reformed theology has been most modified in the last two centuries, not least in the college where the author of *Grace and Personality*

9. R. Bocking, "The United Reformed Church: Background, Formation and After", *Reformed and Renewed, 1972-1997*, Supplement to *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, v (Supp no 2), (September 1997), p. 13.

10. "Reformed Churches", *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., Oxford 1997, p. 1375; "Reformed/Presbyterian Churches", *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva, 1991, p. 851.

11. J.N. Figgis, *Churches in the Modern State*, London, 1913, 142.

was Principal for so long.¹² But another work by John Oman can illustrate this point. In *Vision and Authority*, Oman wrote, “The truly marvellous thing in God’s revelation of Himself is not that it subdues man to His Obedience, which were easy, but that it makes man free with the liberty of God’s children, which is a difficulty only omniscience could overcome”.¹³

The free response of created human beings to God reaches its climax in the words of the Sanctus in the setting of Holy Communion (and the context is important):

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
 God of power and might,
 heaven and earth are full of your glory.
 Hosanna in the highest.
 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
 Hosanna in the highest.

These words, included in the first liturgy for the United Reformed Church in *New Church Praise* in 1975, were included in the Service Books of 1980 and 1989, and in the Church’s new hymnbook, *Rejoice and Sing* (1991); by then they were probably more often said regularly in United Reformed Churches than twenty years earlier.

“The lordship of Jesus Christ as Divine Saviour” has similar political connotations to those of sovereignty; but the Christocentric emphasis has a broader significance. If a comparison is made between the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church and the Faith and Order Commission’s statement *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, it becomes apparent that the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church is uniformly Christocentric whereas *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* is strongly trinitarian. This undoubtedly reflects something of the theological atmosphere in which the main authors of the Basis of Union were raised – its main sources, after all, were the Presbyterian Church of England’s *Statement of Faith* of 1956 and the Congregational Church’s *Declaration of Faith* of 1967.¹⁴ It also sheds light on some of the comments made on the Alternative Statement of Faith which the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee presented to the 1996 and 1997 Assemblies of the Church. That Statement was structured in a much more directly trinitarian way than the Statement in paragraph 17 of the Basis of Union. One critical comment made at the time was that the Alternative Statement presumed the doctrine of the Trinity

12. Oman was Principal of Westminster from 1922 to 1935, having been appointed Barbour Professor of Systematic Theology in 1907. In *Grace and Personality* (3rd ed., Cambridge 1925), Part I, entitled “A Gracious Personal Relation”, is essentially a critique of the understanding of God as irresistible might – see especially pp. 31-33.

13. J. Oman, *Vision and Authority*, 2nd ed., London 1928, p. 97.

14. See D.M. Thompson, *Stating the Gospel*, Edinburgh 1990, pp. 184-247.

from the outset. This might seem puzzling until one remembers that a whole generation, and perhaps two, of ministers in the Congregational and Presbyterian traditions have been taught to see the doctrine of the Trinity evolving from the Statement of Faith as one proceeded from God the Father, to the Son, and then to the Holy Spirit. This may be why the Holy Spirit has often received short shrift in the Reformed tradition, and why some have even been inclined to regard the doctrine of the Trinity as an optional conclusion at the end.

The third principle mentioned by Martin Cressey is "the centrality of scripture as the rule of faith and life". The Basis of Union was deliberately designed to be inclusive of a wide range of views. Paragraph 12 of the Basis of Union is a carefully balanced statement which moves through three closely linked sentences:

The United Reformed Church confesses the faith of the Church Catholic in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It acknowledges that the life of faith to which it is called is a gift of the Holy Spirit continually received in Word and Sacrament and in the common life of God's people. It acknowledges the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people.

It is significant that the statement about the authority of scripture is set in the context of a statement about trinitarian faith and one about the gift of the Holy Spirit continually received in Word and Sacrament and in the common life of God's people.

Its evolution in the work of the Committee is interesting. In the *Statement of convictions* of 1965, the first paragraph in Section III on The Faith of the Church read,

By the Holy Spirit the Church is enabled to make a continually renewed response of faith to the Gospel of God's grace declared in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God made known in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people.¹⁵

In the *Proposed Basis* of 1967 these two sentences were separated into successive clauses: paragraph 12 both expanded and condensed the first sentence, referring to Word and Sacrament and the common life which God's people share, but losing the specific reference to the response of faith to the Gospel of God's grace in 1965; paragraph 13 simply became "The Reformed Church acknowledges the Word of God in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the supreme authority for the faith

15. *A Statement of convictions*, p. 4.

and conduct of all God's people".¹⁶ This lost some of the subtlety of the 1965 statement, and was also separated from its context in "the continually renewed response of faith".

Not surprisingly these paragraphs in their successive versions attracted much comment from the churches in the process of revision. So in the revision of 1968, the two paragraphs were conflated, and preceded by a sentence confessing the trinitarian faith; whilst the words "under the illumination of the Holy Spirit" were inserted after "supreme authority".¹⁷ There was some doubt about the precise means of "illumination", so this underwent further changes in the following year, when the additional phrase was amended to the words: "discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit".¹⁸ This final phraseology made it clear that the Word of God needs to be discerned: it cannot simply be identified directly with the literal words of Scripture.

Most people looking for the United Reformed Church's understanding of scripture would go straight to this paragraph, which is now paragraph 12. But they might miss the significance of the new paragraph 13 which was inserted in 1968: "The United Reformed Church believes that, in the ministry of the Word, through preaching and the study of the Scriptures, God makes known *in each age* his saving love, his will for his people and his purpose for the world."¹⁹ That is the paragraph which picks up the element of the "continually renewed response" in the 1965 Statement; and the emphasis on interpreting scripture in each age is characteristically Reformed. This is how the Reformed Churches' approach to confessing the faith differs from that of the Lutherans, for whom the single standard is the Augsburg Confession. It is also why Martin Cressey describes the United Reformed Church as holding "a liberal Reformed theological position."²⁰

Confessions of Faith

The United Reformed Church included a statement of faith in its Basis of Union, but it affirmed its right to make new declarations of faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This went back to the original *Statement of convictions* of 1965.²¹ In doing so, it was doing what many Reformed Churches throughout the world had been doing in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1981 a Consultation on "Confessions and Confessing in the Reformed Tradition Today" was held in Switzerland, and a short report was published as part of the preparatory material for the Ottawa General Council meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in August 1982. Edmond Perret, the General Secretary, noted in the Foreword that "The Reformed

16. *A Proposed Basis for Union*, p. 8.

17. *Interim Report*, p. 7.

18. *Report to the Assemblies of 1969*, p.7.

19. *Interim Report*, p. 7 (emphasis added).

20. M. Cressey, "Notes on the Theology of Union", *Reformed and Renewed*, pp.17-18.

21. *A Statement of convictions*, III, 5, pp. 4-5.

heritage has not found expression once for all in one confession of faith. The Church as the wandering people is called in each generation to give account anew of the faith transmitted through the centuries.²²

This dynamic emphasis on confessing the faith, rather than simply repeating the words of the past, means that Reformed Studies can never be simply historical. They will be concerned with the present as much as the past, and also with the world outside Europe as much as within it. Hence the Report of the 1981 Consultation referred to the need for mutual accountability among the Churches of the Reformed family.

That Report also noted some interesting trends in the recent confessions of the Reformed family. A stronger emphasis was placed on the link between the Bible and the Church. Although the principle of the sole authority of the Bible was maintained, the way in which it was understood had changed.

The Scriptures are regarded as the early, authentic and written form of this living tradition which extends from Jesus Christ to our own time. Consequently, the recent statements also underline the historical nature of the biblical witness, stressing that the canonical books are themselves the result of a process of confessing. In particular, these statements represent a criticism of a biblicist approach which could easily develop on the basis of the early Reformed affirmations.²³

In 1986 another consultation was held in Geneva. Using some of the materials gathered in 1981, that consultation attempted to take further some of the tasks which had previously been identified. Its Report concluded with an Affirmation:

We praise you, O Christ!

- You are God with us, Word made Flesh.
- Your grace frees us from the burden of sin.
- In your humanity we know what it is to be human.
- You reconcile to God those turned against God and one another.
- You liberate the oppressed.

We confess our guilt

- when churches teach the inferiority of brothers and sisters,
- when confessors of faith are persecuted,
- when advocates of human freedom are silenced,
- when we are silent while men, women and children are tortured.

22. *Confessions and Confessing in the Reformed Tradition Today*, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1982, p. 1.

23. *Ibid.*, 10-11.

In gratitude for your liberating grace we pledge to become

- reconcilers in church and world,
- witnesses to the beauty and dignity of all your children,
- healers of the wounds of the oppressed,
- creators of just structures in church and society.

We praise you, O God!

- who in your love created the world to mirror your glory,
- who in your image gifted woman and man with reason and creativity,
- who in your wisdom endowed nature with its delicate balance,
- who in your providence gave resources sufficient for all.

We confess our guilt

- when we are silent while the arms race threatens to destroy the planet,
- when we plunder the earth depriving future generations,
- when we live greedily at the expense of others.

In gratitude for your providential love we pledge

- to oppose making and using nuclear weapons,
- to stand against uses of technology which endanger life,
- to adopt lifestyles which guard resources for future generations.

We praise you, O Holy Spirit!

- You sustain and renew all life.
- You assure us that we belong to Christ.
- You call us into a community of obedient service.
- You open our ears and hearts to the Word.
- You nourish us to fullness of life through the sacraments.
- You empower us to declare the Gospel against all oppressive forces in church and world.

We confess our guilt

- when we fail to read the signs of the new age,
- when we despair in the face of overwhelming evil,
- when the powerless are stripped of human dignity,
- when our sisters are denied their equality in the body of Christ,
- when we stand divided at the table of the Lord.

In gratitude for your sustaining presence we boldly pray:

‘Fill us Holy Spirit!

Teach us to walk in your freedom rather than our certainties,
 that we may be in your light rather than our darkness,
 that we may live in hope rather than despair,
 that we may embrace life rather than death.’

Amen and Amen.²⁴

24. Manuscript report, “Towards a Common Testimony”; Report of Consultation, “Confessing the Faith Today”, p. 16.

This illustrates the particularities of such confessions, especially in the references to nuclear weapons, life-endangering technologies, and the concern for the equality of women. But do we see so quickly the same historical particularities in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Reformed Confessions, the preoccupation with the Civil Magistrate, for example, or the readiness to identify the Pope with Antichrist? Do we see the same historical particularities in the New Testament itself? The readiness to engage with historical particularity as to what may be required as an appropriate interpretation of and response to God's Word in one generation, but not necessarily in the next, is a much more complex operation than many realise.

The 1981 Report also recognised that, whilst the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds were still used in worship in the Reformed Churches, they did not have the centrality which they had for the Reformers in the sixteenth century. Yet they were gaining new importance in ecumenical dialogue. But for Reformed Churches outside Europe, the older creeds and confessions could seem equally foreign. For them the primary task was "to explore afresh the biblical witness in their own historical, cultural and sociopolitical context and add their voice to the voices of the older Reformed Churches". Even so, mutual accountability of the Churches required "a constructive dialogue with the generations which have preceded us".²⁵ What had all this to do with the United Reformed Church? Simply this: some of those who argued that it should emphasise its Reformed heritage more may have done so in the belief that it would solve a perceived identity crisis, by giving a clear historical reference point. To a certain extent this was true. But what emerged clearly from subsequent thinking within the World Alliance of Reformed Churches was precisely the point that its members had to be concerned with the present as much as, if not more than, with the past.

"Reformed" is not an off-the-peg suit of clothes that one can buy and put on, without having to do the hard theological work involved in interpreting what the "Gospel of God's grace declared in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ" means. The responses of some to the work of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee in revising Schedule C (the affirmations made by ministers at ordination and induction) and in producing an Alternative Statement of Faith in inclusive language showed that living up to being a Reformed Church was a much more risky enterprise than was sometimes supposed.

United

So was it less risky to be United? The first issue which the World Alliance of Reformed Churches meeting on "Confessions and Confessing" in 1981 raised for further consideration was the ecumenical question. "Is there enough clarity in the

25. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

contemporary statements", it asked, "on the relationship of the Reformed Churches to the *Una Sancta*? (the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church)"²⁶ Just as the goal of the sixteenth-century Reformers was to renew the whole church rather than to create a new one, so in the late twentieth century the Reformed Churches should not be primarily concerned with building up the Reformed tradition, but with serving the renewal of the whole Church in the unity of faith and commitment. What were the implications of this? "Does it not mean," they asked, "that they need to deepen the awareness of the common tradition of all churches? More precisely, does it not mean that they need to take up much more consistently the great themes of the Creeds and develop more fully their understanding of the Church?"²⁷ (Other issues which were identified were the commitment to justice and change, the meaning of work, and the approach to the Jewish people.)

Ecumenism in the United Kingdom

How was the United Reformed Church able since its formation to act on these convictions? We have noted the failure of the Covenant proposals in 1981. That might be regarded as representing the final failure of the sequence of proposals set in train by the Appeal to all Christian People from the Lambeth Conference of 1920.²⁸ The United Reformed Church welcomed into its fellowship those Churches of Christ who wished to join in 1981, after being observers since 1966. It considered and approved proposals for union with the Congregational Union of Scotland in 1988, but they failed to win sufficient support in Scotland:²⁹ however, those conversations were subsequently renewed. The United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church also considered whether they should seek a closer relationship, in view of the fact that ten per cent of the congregations of the United Reformed Church were joint congregations with the Methodist Church; there was little enthusiasm for a bilateral union, but more systematic procedures for cooperation between the two Churches nationally were introduced.

Probably more significant was the continuing involvement in Local Ecumenical Partnerships and in the new ecumenical bodies, national and regional, established since 1991. The last General Secretary of the British Council of Churches and the first General Secretary of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland were both ministers of the United Reformed Church. Also significant was the way in which the Councils of the United Reformed Church at national, provincial and district level, were enlarged to including voting representatives from other churches.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

28. See D.M. Thompson, "Proposals for Covenanting: The End of an Era?" *Epworth Review*, vol. x, no. 1, January 1983, pp. 4-11.

29. *United Reformed Church General Assembly Reports*, 1989, pp. 81-82.

Leuenberg

But perhaps of greater significance than any of these initiatives within the British Isles was the United Reformed Church's involvement in the Leuenberg Agreement. The Agreement between the Lutheran and Reformed Churches of Europe found its final form in the years when the United Reformed Church was being formed. It was finally adopted in 1973 and the participating churches were invited to indicate their assent in writing by 30 September 1974, which the United Reformed Church did. The effect of this Agreement was to declare and realise church fellowship among the signatory churches. This involved the acceptance of a common understanding of the Gospel, the recognition that the earlier mutual condemnations relating to the Lord's Supper, Christology and predestination no longer applied, and the accordance of mutual table and pulpit fellowship, including the mutual recognition of ordination and the freedom to provide for inter-celebration.

Of course, much work remained to be done in the areas of theology, witness and service, and order and practice; and this has proceeded in the years since 1973. But there were three significant implications of this development. First, there was the theological recognition of the "distinction between the fundamental witness of the Reformation confessions of faith and their historically-conditioned thought forms".³⁰ From the vantage point of the study or the lecture room this was tame enough; but the significant point was the willingness to draw practical conclusions from this recognition. The common understanding of the Gospel which was reached became the basis for declaring that the doctrinal condemnations of the Reformation no longer applied to the contemporary situation.

Secondly, agreement in the Gospel enabled the mutual recognition of table and pulpit fellowship without any intermediate liturgical act. It was recognised that considerable differences remained between the churches in forms of worship, types of spirituality and church order; indeed it was acknowledged that these differences were often more deeply felt in the congregations than the traditional doctrinal differences. Nevertheless, "*in fidelity to the New Testament and Reformation criteria for church fellowship*", these differences were not seen as factors which should divide the Church.³¹ The ecclesiology underlying this approach was one which saw church fellowship as realised by church-to-church agreements, not through liturgical acts focussed on particular ministers. The willingness of the Anglican Church in the British Isles to make the Meissen Agreement with the German Evangelical Churches and the Porvoo Agreement with the Scandinavian and Baltic Lutheran Churches (even though those differed in detail from each other and from Leuenberg), showed a movement in this direction, which further underlined the problems with the approach which

30. *The Leuenberg Agreement*, n.d. p. 5.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 8 (emphasis added).

succeeded in North India but failed in the English Anglican-Methodist scheme.

Thirdly, the interest shown by the Methodists and Anglican Churches in Europe in the Leuenberg Agreement suggested that the route to closer union in Britain might be by way of Europe. It was precisely the link between the Leuenberg and Meissen Agreements, and the prospective agreement between the Anglican Churches in Britain and the Reformed and Lutheran Churches in France, which led to the informal conversations between the United Reformed Church and the Church of England. Each was in communion (in slightly different ways) with the same churches in Europe, whilst not being in communion with each other. This had, of course, been true for fifty years in South India and for over twenty-five years in North India – but India was much further away; and as local links with Europe began to develop after the United Kingdom joined the European Union, often based on towns or counties rather than congregations, the anomalies of the current situation were highlighted.

Conclusion

The United Reformed Church might still act as a catalyst in the evolving ecumenical situation. Despite the depressing signs in Russia, the ecumenical advances in most of Europe could not easily be turned back; but they needed to be encouraged. And the Reformed Churches could generally be said to have a unique contribution to offer. That involved grasping the Reformed tradition, not simply as a modern rendering of Calvin, Knox or Zwingli – that would be untrue to their intentions in their day – but as a dynamic willingness to engage in the interpretation and re-interpretation of the Word of God in Scripture for the contemporary world. In Martin Cressey's words: "It is not enough to be content as the United Reformed Church, holding together first two and now three already close strands of church life. In 1972 the union was open-ended as the United Reformed Church; the theology of union continues to require that openness."³²

The United Reformed Church might still, along with other united churches, be an example for the wider ecumenical world. It is very easy to say "unity but not uniformity" or "unity in diversity" so long as the differences of view are safely out of your way. It is a kind of ecclesiological equivalent to Ivan's remark in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, "I never could understand how one can love one's neighbours. In my view, it is one's neighbours that one can't possibly love, but only perhaps those who live far away."³³ It is easy to unite the like-minded; but that is not what the mission and gospel of Jesus Christ is about. Hence the test for the United Reformed Church in living with differences of conviction, even (in the late 1990s) in relation to homosexuality, is a real test of commitment

32. Cressey, "Theology of Union"; *Reformed and Renewed*, p. 23.

33. F. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Harmondsworth 1982, p. 276.

to the unity or communion which Christ intended for the Church, a unity such that it is compared to the relationship between Jesus and his Father in John's Gospel. The differences first have to be recognised; then their non-dividing character has to be recognised; and the ecclesiastical and ecclesiological consequences of such recognition have to be such as not implicitly or explicitly to deny the recognition which is taking place.

The experience of twenty-five years, even thirty years if I go back to the point when I first became an observer on the Joint Committee, has convinced me that a vital dialectic between theology and congregational life is needed if the unity Christ intended for the church is to come alive for us. On the one hand, we need the congregational commitment to be with other Christians even if we are not like them, for so long as we are content to remain in our boxes we shall die in them. On the other hand, we need the theological reflection which provides the reassurance that ecumenical adventures do not break faith with past generations but rather establish faith with even more generations – and even more places, and thus enable a deeper understanding of what it is to be Reformed.

DAVID M. THOMPSON

REVIEWS

Calvinus: Authentic Calvinism – A Clarification. By Alan C. Clifford. Pp. 94. Norwich: Charenton Reformed Publishing, 1996. £5.99

The doctrine of limited atonement is hardly a big issue in the United Reformed Church. I may be wrong, but I suspect that even among URC ministers, few would be able to expound it adequately. Far from fretting about the extent and efficacy of God's salvation, many would now simply count themselves universalists, believing that He will in fact save everyone. Given such a context, it is easy to forget that things have not always been like this. It is also easy to overlook the fact that the scope of redemption is still a live issue in other circles, the circles in which Alan Clifford moves, for instance. Once a Congregationalist, Clifford now ministers to the Norwich Reformed Church, and here demonstrates an impressive knowledge of his Calvinist heritage.

At various times, theologians in the Reformed churches have divided sharply on the so-called "third point" of "five-point" Calvinism. "High" Calvinists have defended limited atonement on the grounds that since only certain people come to faith, Jesus must logically have died for this "elect" group, rather than for the whole of humanity. On the other side, more moderate figures have stressed that God's *intention* to save all, and Jesus's manifest death "for the sins of the world", are not compromised by the fact that some are finally lost. The greatest pioneer of the latter view was the French Reformed professor Moïse Amyraut (1596-1664), whose detailed study of Calvin led him to conclude that the doctrine of limited atonement was a later scholastic innovation, and not original to Calvin himself.

“Amyraldianism” or “four-point” Calvinism was countered by the Formula Helvetic Consensus of 1675. Nonetheless, it has had significant influence on subsequent Reformed thought, and is the driving force behind this short study.

Clifford makes his intentions quite clear from the outset, declaring that Calvin “would hardly recognise the theory of limited atonement as his offspring”. Rather, he argues that Amyraut was right to detect in Calvin’s writings a mysterious but vital distinction between God’s *revealed* will, which was to save all *sufficiently* through the death of Christ, and his *secret* will, which limited the range of salvation, *efficiently* to the elect alone. Hence for Clifford, “Calvin obviously taught that the elect partake efficaciously of an atonement nonetheless provided for all conditionally”. It is then inferred from this that in the proclamation of the gospel, the revealed conditional will of God should be stressed first, while his secret elective will should only later be introduced to assure existing believers of their salvation. Clifford admits that all this is somewhat inscrutable – but no less so than, say, the doctrine of the trinity. Indeed, he contends that it was precisely the hyper-rationalisation of Theodore Beza on the one hand, and Jakob Arminius on the other, which diminished the true Calvinian position throughout the seventeenth century. This diminution is traced in a close historical analysis which does much support to Clifford’s claims.

Clifford seeks to bolster his case further in the second half of his study by quoting relevant extracts from Calvin’s work. While he claims that this selection is “full though not exhaustive”, many on the more conservative side might question just how objective his choice of material really is. Still, this reviewer was swayed – if only by Clifford’s common-sense argument that classic “five-pointers” must interpret the frequent relation of Christ’s sacrifice to “the world” in Calvin with such consistent eccentricity as to risk serious interpretative distortion.

Clifford includes appendices which take issue more specifically with contemporary scholars who have proposed the opposite view of Calvin – namely Roger Nicole, Jonathan Rainbow and Graham Miller. His responses in each case are robust, and convey a passion which appears to owe as much to a desire for self-justification as a dedication to objective research. These impulses need not be mutually exclusive, however, and *Calvinus* is in many ways a model of “committed” evangelical scholarship.

Amyraldianism is not the most transparent of theologies, and to some its crucial distinction between God’s secret and revealed intent will forever remain a baseless abstraction. No doubt Clifford is an eloquent apologist for it, and for its origins in Calvin. Perhaps, though, the outstanding question concerns how far the division of divine purpose on which it rests can be inferred from *Scripture*. To this extent, Clifford’s monograph addresses an intriguing historical conundrum, while leaving wider and more vital questions of exegesis and hermeneutics to others.

DAVID HILBORN

A Manual of Congregational Principles. By R.W. Dale, edited by Digby L. James. Pp. 248. Quinta Press, 1996. £13 00 + £2.00 p&p. ISBN 1-897856-03-01. Quinta Press, Meadow View, Quinta Crescent, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 7RN.

As the title suggests, R.W. Dale's book primarily concerns the technicalities of Congregational polity. Originally published in 1884, Dale deals with the axioms of Congregational ecclesiology, particularly the principle of the gathered church where Christ's presence is to be found, and the need to confess Christ in order to participate fully as a member of the Christian community over which Christ alone is the supreme head. Yet the book was not simply an attempt to identify and clarify the Congregational position. Instead, Dale attempted to draw out the unique nature of Congregational theology and ecclesiology and then to identify it as "apostolic" in the sense that the believers of the early church formed themselves into communities on an independent and congregational basis. In other words, Dale sought to demonstrate apostolic sanction for the Congregational way. It is this, together with his passionate invective against episcopacy as practised by the Roman and Anglican churches, that tends to date the book. Dale's conviction that Congregationalism authentically mirrored the ecclesiology of the early Christians was born of the confidence of mid-to-late nineteenth-century Nonconformity in general and Congregationalism in particular. His book must be read with this context in mind. This was no attempt to justify a schismatic and peripheral sect, but the presentation of the underlying principles governing a strong and influential part of the British church, and one that at that time could see only great religious, social and political influence ahead. By locating similar principles in the practice of the early church, Dale offered further vindication for Congregationalism's status in Victorian society.

Dale's views on baptism are considered sufficiently heterodox for the editor of this reissue to include a corrective appendix by Gordon Booth. Whichever definition is the more accurate understanding of baptism, this issue hints at the two problems which Dale's book raises for the modern reader. The first concerns the existence of a single Congregational tradition. Dale was well-aware of the need for the widest bounds for interpretation within a tradition based on congregational regulation. Yet he proceeded to speak of Congregationalism as a monolithic tradition. It is difficult to accept doctrinal correction over baptism (or any other issue) in a tradition which prides itself on eschewing credal formulae and finding authority in the local church meeting. Thus, while Dale's book adequately expresses the underlying principles of Congregational polity, it can claim no definitive explanation of a single Congregational tradition. Instead it can only be offered for commendation by local church meetings. Page 11 admits that, while sanctioned by the Congregational Union, Dale alone was responsible for the context of the book. Secondly, the relevance of Dale's work for today is governed by the historical particularity of his writing. His "universalist" or indiscriminate approach to baptism is, in part, the consequence of Nonconformity's status in late

nineteenth-century Britain. This results in a certain tension between the principle that the gathered community of believers constitutes the church, and the need to recognize the arrival of Protestant Nonconformity as a valid alternative to the Established Church in social, as well as strictly religious, circles. Nonconformists too could be relied upon to supply the rites of passage virtually on demand.

This reissue by Quinta Press of Dale's classic is to be welcomed. It provides an erudite and readable account of the principles underlying Congregational ecclesiology by one of the leading minds of nineteenth-century Nonconformity. Furthermore, when read in its context, it also gives an insight into the confident, exuberant and expanding Nonconformity of the late nineteenth century, the decline of which is one of the great mysteries of British church history during the last hundred years.

ROBERT POPE

Disruption to Diversity, Edinburgh Divinity 1846-1996. David F. Wright and Gary D. Badcock, eds. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996. xxi + 333. £25.00

The subtitle of this informative and entertaining collection is to be taken seriously. While the theological contribution of the University of Edinburgh comprises a major theme of the work. New College – Free Church child of the 1843 Disruption, college of the United Free Church from 1900 to 1929, and finally united with the Faculty of Divinity in 1932 – plays an even larger part during the period in question. Nor is this all, for the contribution of the continuing United Free Church College, and local Anglican, Congregational and Roman Catholic institutions and persons is not overlooked, while a full chapter is devoted to the post-1900 Free Church College. The link between Edinburgh and Yorkshire United Independent College, Bradford, receives passing mention. A useful bibliography and an indispensable index are supplied.

While alumni will warm more readily than general readers to some aspects of Edinburgh lore, this volume should not be mistaken for an "in-house", self-congratulatory production. On the contrary, the wider Scottish and European theological context; the historical circumstances of the founding of New College; the development of the several theological disciplines; the increasingly international student body; the growth and significance of the New College Library; church-university relations; the devotional life of New College – all of these are of much more than merely local interest. David F. Wright sets the scene for the whole, while Gary D. Badcock offers concluding reflections on "New College and the Reformed tradition", arguing that far from being an encumbrance, it is precisely the Reformed heritage which has made New College the open, stimulating intellectual institution that it is.

Among many sentences which jump from the page and lodge in the mind are Hugo Gressmann's verdict upon Karl Barth's theology: "not Christian, or at best half-Christian... derived from 4th Ezra, and characteristic of a period of collapse

and inflation"; and John O'Neill's recollection of a case of pre-internet plagiarism: the repetition by his Australian systematics professor of W.P. Paterson's lectures of three decades earlier on "God, Man and Sin". It was especially pleasing to read George Newland's sensitive reference to the late Alan E. Lewis, greatly missed and fondly remembered, and moving to read again Lewis's words that in face of catastrophe, "Christian theology has no principle it can synthesise about survival, only a story to tell about grace".

There are hints that tensions have from time to time surfaced between Barthians and others, and between those who have advocated and those who have queried the development of Religious Studies in a traditionally church-related context. These lend reality to the tale, for (to put it mildly?) not even those in theological circles are immune from the temptation to succumb to the perils of *II Corinthians* 12:20.

There is wisdom – and not merely cleverness – in these pages; not least that of John Fleming, who taught Natural Science c.1850: "First catch your hare and then proceed to make your soup". Theological students (and even some of their mentors) who are inclined to sound off, or to give "definitive" readings in advance of the acquisition of the requisite knowledge and skills, take note.

The roll-call of great names is impressive: Thomas Chalmers, William Cunningham, H.R. Mackintosh, John Baillie. However, readers of this journal will be pleased to see references to W.L. Alexander and Charles Duthie; and they will be puzzled by the index reference to Grieve, Alexander J. There is a conflation of two Grieves here: Dr. Alexander Grieve of Glasgow who died in 1927 (p.90); the Congregational Principal Alexander J. Grieve, who died in 1952, is referred to on p.243.

The abiding impression left by this collection of papers is that the past, though honoured, does not appear to constrain, but rather serves as a stimulus to new initiatives, some of which are here described. As George Newlands says, "For a Faculty which is only 400 years old... New College may be said to be coming along rather nicely".

ALAN P.F. SELL

Mansfield College, Oxford: its origin, history and significance. By Elaine Kaye. Pp. x, 347. Oxford University Press, 1996. £40.00. ISBN 0-19-920180-3.

An ageing alumnus of Mansfield can feel a *frisson* of pride when an article in the *Guardian* is credited to the "Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford" or a review in the *TLS* to a "Fellow" of the same body. But the article will be about politics and the review would (until recently) have been under the heading "Literary Criticism". Mansfield is no longer primarily a theological college of the Congregational denomination or the United Reformed Church but "an ordinary Oxford college" since it received its Royal Charter in 1995.

The transition from the one to the other means that Mansfield has a more interesting story than many of the older Oxford colleges, and Elaine Kaye is eminently fitted to tell it. She has been associated with the college since her

undergraduate days, has been a friend of the families of some of its leading figures, and at present chairs its Ministerial Training Committee. She is of course an accomplished historian and biographer, who carries out her research thoroughly and reports it accurately. Catching her out in an invariably trivial mistake gives one a momentary sense of achievement. What is more, she writes fluently, does not labour any point, moves deftly from one topic to another, and includes many entertaining asides. The book is a labour of love, and presents the history of Mansfield in an essentially positive light, but criticisms of the college's moves and stances are given fair treatment.

The story begins in 1838, with the opening of Spring Hill College in Birmingham. It continues with the dissatisfaction felt in the 1870s at the quality of ministerial training in the Congregational colleges and the growing demand for a college in Oxford which would be able to make use of university teaching for ordinands and be a spiritual home for other students from a Nonconformist background. It was fortunate that Mansfield was able to appoint Fairbairn as its first principal, as he was able to convince many in Oxford that Mansfield had something to contribute as well as to gain. The buildings helped: familiar views of the exterior and of the interior of the chapel and library are reproduced here, as well as photographs of Spring Hill College and of Waterhouse's rejected design for Mansfield.

Fairbairn was principal for twenty-three years, and receives a chapter to himself alongside another about the tradition he built up. The students not only showed their academic ability by winning university prizes but expressed their social conscience by founding Mansfield House Settlement in Canning Town. The teaching staff was probably at its strongest in Selbie's early years as principal, when Bartlet, Gray, and Dodd were his colleagues. But in the 1920s problems began to surface: the quality of those accepted for training fell off, money was short, and the theology of the denomination was becoming cut off from its Reformed roots.

Nathaniel Micklem did much to remind Mansfield of the Reformed tradition, and had able students again in the 1930s and 1940s. But it was left to John Marsh and his successors to grapple with the financial problems. The first step was for Mansfield to become a Permanent Private Hall, so that its students became eligible for local authority grants; the next was to provide accommodation and tuition for a growing number of non-theological students; the ultimate move was to take the measures necessary to become an endowed self-governing college, with ministerial training a subordinate part of its operation. The alternative path of establishing an ecumenical theological college in Oxford was considered but not taken.

These are the bare bones of the story. But there is much more. Elaine Kay tells us a great deal about the careers of the major (and many minor) figures, and in Fairbairn's case analyses his contribution to theology in some detail. We hear about the ecumenical activities of Bartlet, Micklem, Marsh and others: the efforts made to help the German churches and individual Christians during the Nazi period are especially worth recording. A number of Mansfield's overseas students are mentioned (though it was Ernest Payne, rather than anyone on the Mansfield staff, who kept in touch with the two Bulgarians who studied at the college in the

1920s). Particular attention is paid to the way Mansfield treated its women ordinands (better earlier than later).

In passing we hear that in 1891 the Fairbairns had a governess, a cook, a housemaid and a parlourmaid; some of Bartlet's more convoluted sentences are quoted; we are told that the Jesuit college, Campion Hall, was built on the site of Micklem Hall, once the home of a "brewer kinsman" of Nathaniel Micklem. There are affectionate reminiscences of the longsuffering, loyal and generous college servants (though no mention of the well-kept secret that one of them – I do not know which – moonlighted as one of the last hangmen.)

Has anything of significance been omitted? I should have liked to have heard more about teaching methods, past and present. Much is said about lectures: Fairbairn found them the best way of communicating with working men; students flocked to Caird's lectures. But how good and how important were lectures generally? Micklem's course, in which he constructed his lectures on the lines of Aquinas's *Summa theologica*, with questions, and arguments for and against possible answers, sounds like antiquarianism gone mad. You would not gather from this history to what extent Mansfield's reputation depended on its tutors' skill in the time-honoured Oxford method of setting and commenting on students' weekly essays, nor whether changes in teaching methods have accompanied changes in the curriculum.

Nor is there any sustained attempt to assess Mansfield's influence on the life of, first, the Congregational churches and then the United Reformed Church. When Mansfield people became the principals of the other colleges, there must have been a considerable influence, but the nature of it is not investigated here. Nor is there any mention of how Mansfield sees its role in a church whose General Assembly owns and maintains a college with a larger theological faculty. Some of the developments in practical training, such as internship, were pioneered elsewhere, but this again is not acknowledged.

Mansfield may fairly claim to have made a distinctive contribution to the life of Oxford in its relatively brief life so far. But will this be true in the future? As a self-governing college it is competing with its older counterparts fairly successfully, both in academic achievement and in sport. But is it doing anything distinctive? And what special reason is there for Congregationalists and members of the United Reformed Church to take responsibility for any part of its work except its ministerial training? These are the questions which Elaine Kay's history prompts.

ROGER TOMES

A Florentine Procession: A painting by Jane Benham Hay at Homerton College, Cambridge. By Annabel Robinson, John Purkis, and Ann Massing. Pp.24. Cambridge: The Homestead Press, 1997; obtainable from J. Purkis, 41 Highworth Avenue, Cambridge, CB4 2BQ. £7.75 inc. p&p.

This beautifully produced account of a remarkable Victorian painting which has been recently restored, will interest readers of this *Journal* for several reasons.

First, the painting's theme – preparations for a bonfire of the vanities by supporters of Savonarola – was peculiarly attractive to art-loving Dissenters. Secondly, Jane Benham Hay, the artist, had a Congregational background and, thirdly, her painting was acquired by that model for art-loving Free Church educationists, Principal Horobin of Homerton. He acquired it at the turn of the present century. It is here that work remains to be done. The artist flouted convention: she left her husband and England for Florence and an Italian who was mentally unstable. It is not known when she died, and the history of her *Florentine Procession* is unclear between its exhibition in 1867 and its arrival at Homerton, originally on loan, in the 1890s. Was its acquisition serendipitous? Did it owe something to the Morleys? And was the artist's family, the Benhams, who were prosperous Congregational ironmongers in Uxbridge, related to the Benhams who were prosperous Baptist ironmongers in Wigmore Street? Was there, perhaps, some high-minded and cultivated Nonconformist networking to ensure that the wolf was kept from the door of an errant but talented sister?

J.C.G. BINFIELD

SOME CONTEMPORARIES (1996)

The Baptist Quarterly (XXXVI nos. 5-8)

No. 5: M. Haykin, " 'Resisting evil': civil retaliation, non-resistance and the interpretation of Matthew 5: 39a among eighteenth-century Calvinistic Baptists"; M. Goodman, "Numerical decline amongst English Baptists 1930-1939"; T.W. Hearl, "Baptist pioneers of St. Helena: a sesquicentennial survey". No. 6: N.G. Wright, "The 'Sword': an example of Anabaptist diversity"; R. Archer, "Like flowers in the garden: John Bunyan and his concept of the Church"; B.M. Doyle, " 'Through the windows of a Baptist meeting-house': religion, politics and the Nonconformist conscience in the life of Sir George White MP"; No. 7: I. Randall, "Capturing Keswick: Baptists and the changing spirituality of the Keswick Convention in the 1920s"; N.G. Wright, "Baptist and Anabaptist attitudes to the state: a contrast". No. 8: T.S.H. Elwyn, "Particular Baptists of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association as reflected in the Circular Letters 1765-1820"; R. Page/B. and F. Bowers, "Into Africa: life on the mission station"; F. Stainthorpe, "John Carrington: evangelical polymath"; G.T. Rimmington, "L.H. Marshall's ministry in Leicester 1930-1936".

Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester (LXXVII no. 1, Spring 1996).

S. Towell, "Unitarian and/or Anglican: the relationship of Unitarianism to the Church from 1687 to 1698"; K.G.C. Newport, "Methodists and the Millennium: eschatological expectation and the interpretation of biblical prophecy in early British Methodism".

The Congregational History Circle Magazine (II no. 4, Spring 1996)

P.B. Coleman, "Robert Browne: a fair story"; T. Watts, "The story of a Puritan tract by Francis Tallents"; A. Argent, "The tale of an idle fellow: Jerome K. Jerome".

Cylchgrawn Hanes (XX)

R.L. Brown, "The expulsion of Daniel Rowland from his curacies: an oral tradition".

The Expository Times (CVII no. 4, January 1996)

A.H.B. Logan "Peter Taylor Forsyth: review article".

Journal of Ecclesiastical History (XLVII no. 2, April 1996)

P. Ackers, "West End Chapel, back street Bethel: labour and capital in the Wigan Churches of Christ c.1845-1945".

Journal of the Friends' Historical Society (LVII no. 3)

G.F. Nuttall, "A new letter to George Fox"; J.E. Mortimer, "Quaker women in the eighteenth century: opportunities and constraints"; R.S. Harrison, "Samuel Bewley (1764-1837), silk merchant and philanthropist of Dublin"; R. Poole and C. Whistlecroft, "The lost legacy?"; T.C. Kennedy, "What hath Manchester wrought? Change in the Religious Society of Friends, 1895-1920".

Parliamentary History (XV no. 2, 1996)

D. Wiggins, "The Burial Act of 1880, the Liberation Society and George Osborne Morgan".

Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society (L, parts 4-6)

Pt 4: K.G.C. Newport, "Early Methodism and the French prophets"; P. Ellingworth, "The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society". Pt. 5: C-A. C. Bennett, "John Wesley: founder of a missionary Church?" (cont. in pt. 6); J.A. Newton, "J.E. Rattenbury on Charles Wesley's hymns". Pt. 6: D.W. Bebbington, "The holiness movements in British and Canadian Methodism in the late nineteenth century"; J.A. Dolan, "An Independent Methodist bicentenary"; R.F.S. Thorne, "F.W. Bourne's *The Bible Christians*".

Recusant History (XXIII no. 1, May 1996)

J.T. Smith, "The Wesleyans, the 'Romanists' and the Education Act of 1870".

The Strict Baptist Historical Society Bulletin (XXXIII)

R.W. Oliver, "John Gill, orthodox Dissenter"; G.R. Breed, ed., "A plea for the Strict Baptists" (c.1839).

Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society (XXI no. 2, April 1996)

D. Steers, "The origin and development of the Domestic Mission movement especially in Liverpool and Manchester"; A. Griffin, "Sunday Schools in the East Midlands mining district in 1841"; A. Ruston, "London's East End Domestic Mission - Spicer Street, Buxton Street and Mansford Street"; B. Short "The beginnings of Bridport Nonconformity".

ALAN P.F. SELL

Bunhill Fielders

(for Alan Argent and Mary Kohn)

In Bunhill Fields the ground
trembles still to the impact
of Bunyan. Watts surveys
our souls, sings from the ground
of his being. Defoe
shipwrecks and rescues all
Crusoes, confesses the
tinker's tale true; below

this pit's rail sees the print
of man- and good-Friday merge,
damned sinners pilgrim close
to the celestial Mint,
jammed with Moll and a load
of Independent bones
between Artillery
and a plagued City Road.

Blake erupts and claps
vision round our ears
with a seraphic beam,
the gentleness that raps
our complacency more
than exhortation or
blows. Wesley's mother tells
us how she did it, bore

the Wesleys, and survived
to old age. The trees dip
in homage. The tombs lift,
tilt. Ardour swells, revived.
Prayer's heard to consecrate
the history in stone that,
bombed, scorned, flagged, gated, railed,
sleeps to rise. keeps faith's date.

BRIAN LOUIS PEARCE