

THE JOURNAL
of the
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HISTORY SOCIETY
(incorporating the Congregational Historical Society,
founded in 1899, and the Presbyterian Historical Society
of England, founded in 1913).

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Volume 6 No 3 December 1998

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EDITORIAL

History and commemoration march frequently together. This issue commemorates the 250th anniversary of the death of Isaac Watts, in Dr. Orchard's paper on Watts's hymns, and it commemorates the centenary of the birth of a very different Dissenter, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in Dr. Brencher's paper on Lloyd-Jones's Welshness. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was not a Congregationalist; he belonged to the Presbyterian Church of Wales, and the famous London Congregational church to which he ministered left Congregationalism for Independency during his ministry. Indeed Lloyd-Jones's influence on Congregationalism, as opposed to his influence on individual Congregationalists, was considerably less than might have been anticipated. Some of the reasons for this may be discerned in Dr. Brencher's paper. Dr. Binfield's paper, by contrast, although also commemorative (it was delivered in Rome, at the Venerable English College, during a conference on

Rome and the English Church, 597-1997), describes the evolution of a Congregational temper with which Lloyd-Jones could have had no sympathy; and Mr. Tomes describes a stage in the formation of Dissent's social conscience which Lloyd-Jones would have regarded as of secondary importance. Dissent and its priorities are thus not to be pigeon-holed, even in commemoration, and this scholarly variety is further expressed in Dr. Mayor's appreciation of Edwin Welch (1927-1998), archivist and biographer; it is hoped that a future issue will contain an appreciation of R. Tudur Jones (1921-1998), Welshman, theologian, college principal, and historian, whose *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962* (1962) must rank among the finest of denominational histories of the older school, and remains indispensable to any serious library of British Church History.

We welcome as reviewers Martin Conway, formerly President of the Selly Oak Colleges, and Eugenio Biagini, Fellow of Robinson College, Cambridge.

EDWIN WELCH (1927 – 1998)

Those who knew him personally, and those who knew him only by repute and by his writings, will be saddened by the death of Edwin Welch. Those with the privilege of personal acquaintance will miss his gentle voice, ready smile, and patient courtesy. The wider company will regret a scholar of distinction and meticulous accuracy.

Edwin was born in Leicester on 18 June 1927 and died in British Columbia on 9 April 1998. He trained as an archivist and served in various record offices before becoming City Archivist of Plymouth in 1958, of Southampton in 1962 and then of Churchill College, Cambridge, in 1966, where he was custodian of the Churchill papers.

It was while he was at Churchill that he came to know of the priceless letters and papers of the Countess of Huntingdon which were in process of moving from Cheshunt College to Westminster on the removal of Cheshunt to that location. Over the next few years he catalogued the whole collection and was able to find resources for its proper housing and preservation.

In 1971 he moved to the University of Ottawa, becoming City archivist there in 1974. In 1981 he moved to Yellowknife as archivist of the North-West Territories, a pioneering job indeed. Astonishingly he continued to visit Cambridge at least once a year, keeping an eye on the Cheshunt archives. In 1995 he added the Westminster archives to his responsibilities. All his work for Cheshunt and Westminster was honorary; he charged no expenses, and indeed had to be told not to pay for his board and lodging.

Edwin's publications are extensive, but for members of this Society two are of exceptional importance: *Cheshunt College : The Early Years* (Hertford 1991) and above all *Spiritual Pilgrim : A Re-Assessment of the Life of the Countess of Huntingdon* (University of Wales Press 1995).

Re-reading the latter following Edwin's death has brought home to me afresh why so many previous scholars have planned, even started, a new biography, and abandoned what seemed a hopeless attempt, dependent on a variety of source material scattered around the world. Having taken up the task Edwin completed it remarkably quickly; he drew on familiar material and on sources which seemed to have been lost, and achieved the Church Historian's equivalent of deciphering Linear B: interpreting Selina's near-illegible writing and wholly eccentric spelling. He transformed the popular image of her and brought her personality vividly before the reader. He understood the legal complexities which surrounded her life and followed her death, so far at least as they are capable of being understood. He disposed once and for all of the wildly inaccurate *Life and Times* of 1844, a work which concealed rather than revealed her and misled almost all those who have written about her since.

Many of us will miss Edwin; many more will be grateful for the enrichment he has brought to our understanding of eighteenth-century Church History.

STEPHEN MAYOR

THE HYMNS OF ISAAC WATTS

During the twentieth century three writers have made significant contributions to our appreciation of the hymns of Isaac Watts. Donald Davie has emphasised his poetic gifts and his influence on popular culture;¹ Bernard Lord Manning has shown us how Watts kept the Reformed tradition alive through his hymnody;² and Erik Routley has helped us see how Watts moved Christian hymnody from the metrical psalm to the expression of religious insight and feeling.³ It is strange, then, that as we approach the twenty-first century, his hymns are less sung in public than ever before. Most British Christians join in surveying the wondrous Cross with Watts every Passiontide but fewer praise their Maker while they've breath in Watts's company or pray for the wings of faith to see the saints above. While all kinds of repetitive vacuities around the names of Jesus and the Holy Spirit claim ever larger copyright fees the devotional verses of Isaac Watts seem to have a diminishing and eclectic public.

It was not always so. Watts did for Evangelical Calvinism what Charles Wesley

1. D. Davie, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*.
2. B. L. Manning, "The Hymns of Dr. Isaac Watts", in *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts*, 1942. A manuscript copy of this paper is in the Cheshunt Archives at Westminster College, Cambridge. It was originally delivered at a tea meeting of the Cambridge University Congregational Society. Cf. C. Binfield, "Hymns and an Orthodox Dissenter", *JURCHS*, Vol. 13, No. 2.
3. In various articles but especially the introductory article to Watts in *A Panorama of Christian Hymnody*, Chicago: 1979.

did for Arminian Methodism. Manning and Routley both believed that Watts pioneered the way for Wesley. Both writers offered expressions of devotion for people of all classes. Though, as Davie asserted, Isaac Watts deserves recognition as a major English poet, he has also been accessible to unsophisticated people. In 1731 Philip Doddridge wrote to Isaac Watts as follows:

When preaching in a barn to a pretty large assembly of plain country people, at a village a few miles off ... we sung one of your Hymns ... these were most of them poor people who work for their living. On the mention of your name, I found they had read several of your books with great delight and that your Hymns and Psalms were almost their daily entertainment. And when one of the company said, "What if Dr Watts should come down to Northampton?", another replied with a remarkable warmth "The very sight of him would be like an ordinance to me".⁴

Watts was thirty-one when his first volume of hymns and poems was published in 1705. He had been writing verse since his teens and had first written a hymn at the suggestion of his father, a Southampton Dissenter. He had received his education in a Dissenting Academy, that of Thomas Rowe at Newington Green.⁵ Watts had the facility to write in both Latin and Greek but his Christian verse is studiously Anglo-Saxon in its vocabulary. Later in the eighteenth century Charles Wesley knew how to incorporate a Latin word in his verse to great effect, but he was writing after the great change in English style which we associate with the so-called Augustan writers, such as the essayist Addison. Isaac Watts was educated in the closing years of the seventeenth century and is nearer in spirit to Milton than Wesley. So far as his hymns were concerned Watts recognised that he was writing for congregational use. This meant that some singers would be barely literate. What was needed was a simple and telling vocabulary, easily memorised. Watts drew a distinction between this kind of writing, which included his work for children, and the more obviously scholarly books which he wrote on theological and philosophical topics. The genius of Watts was that his simple writing enabled congregations to share and express profound truth. In the hands of a lesser writer this slips easily into the banal; with a few exceptions Watts avoided this temptation.

We are so used to a catholic collection of hymns in a book, not to mention the ephemeral photocopy or overhead projector, that it is difficult to imagine the Christian context into which Watts's hymns were first published. Today, even in hymnody, the medium is in danger of becoming the message. The idea that

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4. *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge, DD. 1705-1751* ed. Geoffrey F. Nuttall p.62. This passage was first brought to my notice by Dr. Margaret Spufford in her paper on the Lord's Supper, *JURCHS*, vol. 5, no. 2, p.62.
 5. See J.W. Ashley-Smith *The Birth of Modern Education*, 1954, p.87. There is also a discussion of Watts's contribution to educational theory p.144f.

accessibility is all has become the orthodoxy and the high aesthetic relegated to the margins. We are assured that people under thirty are incapable of appreciating verse and music written before they were born, or anything which makes intellectual demands. We shuffle a variety of unoriginal religious sentiments and monotonous melodic lines and pretend we have a new hymn. We have more hymns than we know how to use. By contrast, Isaac Watts was dissatisfied with a contemporary hymnody which consisted entirely of metrical psalms, which were usually read out for the congregation to sing responsively. He did not shift to other forms of poetry and music. What he wrote still fitted the strait-jacket of the old psalm tunes. He took the principle of metrical psalmody, to make scripture memorable in a verse form, and made three significant changes. First of all, he simply did it better. Watts wrote verse superior by far to the convoluted sense of the old metrical psalms. The second thing he did, which he explained in his preface to the hymn book was to give the psalms a Christian gloss. This is particularly noticeable in his transposition of Israel into the Church. This was not only a reflection of New Testament theology, which often represents the Church as the new Israel, born of the Spirit rather than descended from Abraham by blood, but of British Protestant self-consciousness in the early eighteenth century. Dissenters such as Watts went out of their way to identify themselves with the Protestant doctrines of the Church of England, even when they could not accept its order. They would join with any Protestant Nehemiah to build the wall against what they saw as marauding Popery. This explains what seems to modern taste over-patriotic in Watts. The third change Watts made to the old psalmody was to bring it home to the singers. When he paraphrased the twenty-third psalm he did not content himself with a simple rendering of the final phrase "and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." He transforms it into a prayer and an aspiration.

May thy house be mine abode,
and all my work be praise!

There would I find a settled rest,
(while others come and go)
no more a stranger or a guest,
but like a child at home.⁶

It is this opening of scripture to a devotional response which earns Watts his place in the pantheon of great hymn writers. The original image of living in a house is opened and enriched to encompass relationship with God in the Christian tradition by appealing to common experience of the difference between being a visitor and part of a family at home. This fluid use of metaphor and image marks Watts's verse and supports his claim to be a true poet.

6. *Psalms of David together with the Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, 1848 (=PDHSS), p47 Psalm 23. I have used this edition by kind permission of Westminster College, Cambridge. It was published to mark Watts's centenary.

The first great literary critic to write on Watts was Samuel Johnson, in *Lives of the Poets*. Johnson valued Watts's theological writing more than his verse, which was already passing out of fashion. Admiring his secular poetry Johnson went on to say that "his devotional poetry is, like that of others, unsatisfactory. The paucity of its topicks enforces perpetual repetition, and the sanctity of the matter rejects the ornaments of figurative diction. It is sufficient for Watts to have done better than others what no man has done well".⁷ This back-handed compliment conceals within itself a basic question about hymnody. Does a good poem make a good hymn or, put the other way, are good hymns good poetry? Johnson was using the literary canons of his day to judge Watts. Others, with different criteria, have judged Watts to be a great poet. These are the judgements of high culture. Not many churches of any denomination pursue high culture today. The reverse is usually the case. The "I know what I like" view tends to prevail in the choice, not only of hymns, but of furnishings and artefacts. Historically Christianity has taken a very high view of culture, arguing that only the best is good enough for God. When the Puritans rejected much of the Catholic past it was not a rejection of high culture but a call to re-examine it. They called for new symbols and new rituals. They were intoxicated by the possibilities that words offered once printing had been established. No one can accuse such a high Puritan as Milton of being a popularizer, although some populists rode on Puritan coat tails. The metrical psalms were an interesting attempt to make the Bible more accessible to people at large. Isaac Watts, in spite of Johnson's strictures, brought a superior literary culture to bear on this process. Indeed, in the context of Watts's prose Johnson had already recognised this process. "He was one of the first authors that taught the Dissenters to court attention by the graces of language. Whatever they had among them before, whether of learning or acuteness, was continuously obscured and blunted by coarseness and inelegance of style. He shewed them, that zeal and purity might be expressed and enforced by polished diction."⁸

The early Dissenters worshipped in meeting houses. These were barely distinguishable from barns and warehouses. There were no altar pieces commissioned from the finest artists. Sculpture had no place and music was a proper recreation rather than an accompaniment to worship. The high culture of the Authorized Version and Cranmer's Prayer Book was the rich backdrop in these plain places. What we see in our churches now tends to be the fruit of the nineteenth-century neo-Gothic revival, something entirely foreign to Watts, which drastically modified the interior of all churches and introduced more music to services. What is worse, we tend to inherit the nineteenth-century tradition, whether of art or music, in a debased form. It is perhaps not surprising that many people in our congregations lack the ability to enjoy fine religious poetry when they encounter it. There is a confusion between the entirely proper aim of making

7. Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, The World's Classics, OUP, 1952, vol. II, p.367.

8. *Ibid.*, p.363.

the Gospel known to the simplest and sustaining the devotional and intellectual life of the Church. Isaac Watts embraced with equal enthusiasm the task of academic and that of writer of children's verse.

Tastes vary, not only between people, but also over time. In the early nineteenth century if Independent chapels had a hymn book at all it was likely to be a collection of Watts's. In the early twentieth century the *Congregational Hymnary* included only twenty-five hymns by Watts. After Manning's advocacy the climate changed and *Congregational Praise* increased the count to forty-seven, including some that never did re-establish themselves in use. *Rejoice and Sing*, unlike the earlier books, which testify to editorial taste, was put together by a representative committee. Watts emerged well from popular lists and committee voting. Thirty-four of the *Congregational Praise* selection survived into the new book, together with four new to Congregationalists, though found in other books familiar to Presbyterians and the Churches of Christ. The inspired inclusion of "My God, my King, thy various praise" in *New Church Praise* gave the verses a new popularity in the 1980s. This made its way into the new book along with "Joy to the world", which surprisingly was not in the earlier Congregational books.

It is interesting to see what has happened to these hymns editorially. "Begin, my tongue, some heavenly theme",⁹ is shortened by all the editors. The verse omitted after the second verse would have given the *Rejoice and Sing* Words Committee, asked to use inclusive language wherever possible, one of their regular headaches.

Proclaim salvation from the Lord,
For wretched, dying men:
His hand hath writ the sacred word
With an immortal pen.

This verse develops the thought of the hymn. To faithfulness, power and grace, already mentioned, Watts added salvation and then made reference to written scripture before talking, in the following verse, about the mighty promise engraved as if in brass. In this same hymn, following the present fourth verse, the original text is notoriously quaint.

He said, "Let the wide heaven be spread",
And heaven was stretched abroad;
"Abrah'm, I'll be thy God", he said,
And he was Abrah'ms God.

This verse was regarded as banal by Routley, but is, in fact, the unpacking of the promises mentioned in the fourth verse. Even more importantly, it makes sense of verse five, where the story of Abraham is made personal. The shortened

9. 67 *Congregational Hymnary* (=CH), 65 *Congregational Praise* (=CP), 93 *Rejoice and Sing* (=RS), PDHSS p.462 hymn 69.

text hides one of Watts's wonderful shifts of sense. The voice which "rolls the stars along" and speaks of Abraham might also speak to us as we sing the hymn; "O might I hear thy heavenly tongue but whisper, 'Thou art mine';". Over the course of the hymn the focus shifts from our singing the praise of God to "the all-creating voice" whose promises of grace are as real as the universe it has called into being.

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove",¹⁰ was not in the Congregational books. All modern editors omit Watts's second verse and it is difficult to see how it could have been restored:

Lord, how we grovel here below,
And hug these trifling toys;
Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach eternal joys.

Neither the grovelling nor the trifling toys have the same resonance or meaning for modern congregations. A text which was in *Congregational Praise*, "God is a name my soul adores",¹¹ is one of those in which some minor restoration of the original text was carried out for *Rejoice and Sing*. This was not in Watts's collection of hymns and psalms but in his sacred poetry and passed into hymnody through the editorship of Charles Wesley. Once again, old omissions of verses remain:

From thy great self thy being springs,
Thou art thine own original,
Made up of uncreated things,
And self-sufficiency bears them all.

This original second verse uses a reasonably simple vocabulary but the ideas are more complex than those Watts provides for congregational singing. A sixth verse is also omitted from hymn books. In this case the reference to the world as a hollow ball might be accepted by modern congregations as quaint but "worms", a frequent usage for human beings in Watts, is not suitable for current use.

Thrones and dominions round thee fall,
And worship in submissive forms;
Thy presence shakes this hollow ball,
This little dwelling-place of worms. [original v6]

As a difficulty for modern congregations the worms are only equalled by the bowels, which were also understood differently in the early eighteenth century.

10. 299RS, PDHSS p.435 hymn 34.

11. 32CP, 30RS. A note in *Companion to Congregational Praise* gives a history of these verses as a hymn.

“With joy we meditate the grace”¹² originally spoke of Christ’s heart being full of tenderness, adding to this “His bowels melt with love”. Modern editors have been spared the task of addressing the other major embarrassment in Watts’s hymns. This is quite unconnected with vocabulary and is to do with changing perceptions. Watts followed the Gospel writers, especially John, in referring to the Jews as the persecutors of Jesus. This was not a conscious anti-semitism in the modern sense but it is still anti-semitic. It is particularly embarrassing when Watts is Christianising original Hebrew scriptures. Both his versions of Psalm 118 reveal the problem.

See what a living stone
The builders did refuse;
Yet God hath built his church thereon
In spite of envious Jews.

Or

Lo! What a glorious corner stone
The Jewish builders did refuse;
But God hath built his church thereon;
In spite of envy and the Jews.¹³

The short metre version is the more successful verse but compounds the problem by concentrating the envy in the Jews. In his enthusiasm for the new Israel, and for protestant Britain’s providential role, Watts lost sight of the Jews as a people. In this he was no different from most of his contemporaries who, if they thought about the different faiths to be found in the world at all, regarded them as unenlightened and at the mercy of God.

Setting aside difficulties of vocabulary and concepts the remaining problem in preparing his verses for modern use is their overall length compared with modern hymns. Perhaps the most significant adjustment of a Watts text for congregational use is the majestic “Join all the glorious names”¹⁴ The original had twelve verses on the offices of Christ. No modern editor has had the courage to include them all, although it would be possible to sing it with pauses for reflection or reading of the relevant texts. Watts expected people to read religious verse as part of their private devotional life as well as sing it in public.

Indeed, a thorough reading of Watts reveals him as a devotional poet in the tradition of George Herbert. He has none of Herbert’s metrical ingenuity and far less imagery. What he does share with Herbert is intensity of personal devotion towards Christ. Herbert wrote solely for private devotion; some of his poems have

12. 206RS, PDHSS p.387 hymn 125.

13. PDHSS p.222 Psalm 118.

14. 173CH, 176CP, 280RS, PDHSS p 407 hymn 150.

become congregational hymns. Watts wrote congregational hymns; their devotional content is no less fervid than that of Herbert.

The op'ning heav'ns around me shine
 With beams of sacred bliss,
 While Jesus shows his heart is mine,
 And whispers, *I am his*.¹⁵

Watts's treatment of the *Nunc Dimittis* incorporates an image worthy of the metaphysical poets of the previous generation. He writes of the delight of Simeon,

When fondly in his wither'd arms
 He clasp'd the holy child.

And relates it to our own death

Jesus! The vision of the face
 Hath overpow'ring charms;
 Scarce shall I feel death's cold embrace
 If Christ be in my arms.

Then while ye hear my heart strings break,
 How sweet my minutes roll!
 A mortal paleness on my cheek,
 And glory in my soul.¹⁶

In these verses both what Watts himself calls the "overpowering" sense he has of the presence of Christ is linked with another constant theme, that of our mortality. Although some of his hymns on that theme have, as we have already seen, passed into the modern canon of his works, they are not representative of the balance within the whole corpus. Much of his verse echoes the following:

Naked as from the earth we came,
 And crept to life at first,
 We to the earth return again,
 And mingle with the dust.¹⁷

In his second collection, when he made his own selection of scriptural passages other than psalms, he returns constantly to this theme of our mortality. Sometimes it is in humbling and submissive mood. At other times it has a Pauline emphasis

15. PDHSS p.450 hymn 54.

16. PDHSS p .306 hymn 19 Song of Simeon.

17. PDHSS p.295, hymn 4 Submission to afflictive providence (Job).

on the promise of everlasting life in Christ by contrast with our life of sin and death. The recurrence of this theme is not, of course, original in Watts and was a commonplace of contemporary devotional literature. Watts balances it with a constant reminder of the saving grace of the gospel.

Shall we go on to sin
Because thy grace abounds!
Or crucify the Lord again,
And open all his wounds,

Forbid it, mighty God!
Nor let it e'er be said,
That we whose sins are crucified,
Should raise them from the dead.

We will be slaves no more,
Since Christ has made us free;
Has nail'd our tyrants to his cross,
And bought our liberty.¹⁸

Watts's realism on the subject of our mortality and our sin is more than equalled by his constant rejoicing in forgiveness. In a telling introductory remark to his version of the 119th psalm he writes:

In some places, among the words *law, commands, judgments, testimonies* I have used *gospel, word, grace, truth, promises* &c as more agreeable to the New Testament, and the common language of Christians, and it equally answers the design of the psalmist, which was to recommend the Holy Scriptures.¹⁹

This a quite breath-taking aside. Very few people today would assert that rejoicing in the law of God as the psalmist did is equivalent to rejoicing in the gospel. Perhaps in some cases that is because grace has been cheapened. Watts can only make this assertion because he has surveyed the wondrous cross where law and gospel meet. This marvellous redemption is constantly celebrated in his hymns.

Hosanna to the Prince of Light,
That cloth'd himself in clay,
Enter'd the iron gates of death,
And tore the bars away.²⁰

18. PDHSS p.376 hymn 106. Dead to sin by the cross of Christ.

19. PDHSS p.223 (of the 119th psalm).

20. PDHSS p.467 hymn 76.

With pitying eyes the Prince of Grace
 Beheld our helpless grief;
 He saw and (O amazing love!)
 He ran to our relief.²¹

Watts was always better at celebrating grace than at frightening us with hell. Although God's wrath and the Last Judgement are pictured in his verses they have less poetic impact than the Prince of light and grace who *tore* the bars away and *ran* to our relief.

There are those who scrutinised the Christology of Watts, looking for the beginnings of Unitarianism. The freedom of poetic imagery rarely withstands dogmatic scrutiny. To be clothed in clay might suggest something short of full humanity were it not for the associated biblical images, not least of Adam. It is possible to misread one of Watts's rare ventures into that classical language, later used so tellingly by Charles Wesley, in this verse.

Let Jews and Greeks blaspheme aloud,
 And treat the holy child with scorn;
 Our souls adore th'eternal God
 Who condescended to be born.²²

"Condescended" here carries its full weight. God in Christ does not superficially acknowledge us but comes down to be with us. God's coming in Christ was not some remote theological conundrum for Watts. It had evangelical reality.

Jesus, the God whom angels fear,
 Comes down to dwell with you;
 Today he makes his entrance here,
 But not as monarchs do.

No gold nor purple swaddling bands,
 Nor royal shining things;
 A manager for his cradle stands
 And holds the King of kings.

Go, shepherds, where the infant lies,
 And see his humble throne;
 With tears of joy in all your eyes,
 Go, shepherds, kiss the Son.²³

21. PDHSS p.479 hymn 79.

22. PDHSS p.510 hymn 136.

23. PDHSS p.294, hymn 4 on the Nativity.

Watts, the rational theologian, was also at one with the shepherds and the humbler members of his congregation, whose faith was fed by devotion rather than reason. His telling rendering of 1 *Corinthians* 13 bears this out.

Let Pharisees of high esteem
 Their faith and zeal declare;
 All their religion is a dream.
 If love be wanting there.²⁴

Watts introduces the word “Pharisee” to underline what Paul wrote about the faith which moves mountains not being enough. “Zeal” was a hallowed Puritan word. It was often zeal which had kept the tradition alive in the dark persecution of the 1660s and 1670s. As a summary of Paul’s allusions to martyrdom and sacrificial generosity it is an accurate word but combined with Pharisee it is not a positive sentiment. Watts then goes further than Paul, who dismisses these qualities as nothing without love. Watts makes the dismissal sharper by using the word “dream”. Faith becomes fantasy without love. Moreover, Watts passes over the translation “charity” which was the one familiar to eighteenth-century readers of the English Bible, in favour of “love”. This was undoubtedly with the last verse in mind, where once again he goes beyond Paul. Where Paul is content to say that faith, hope and love last for ever, with love as the greatest, Watts sees even faith and hope as ephemeral. Only love lasts for ever, not love in the abstract, but the community of love in which the saints rejoice with God.

Love is the grace which keeps her pow’r
 In all the realms above;
 There faith and hope are known no more,
 But saints for ever love.

This everlasting love has begun wherever the saints now gather, especially at the table for the Lord’s Supper. Watts prepared his third book of hymns “for the Holy Ordinance of the Lord’s Supper”. Most congregations are familiar with the verses “Jesus invites his saints to meet around his board”²⁵... From this hymn alone can be gleaned the sense that Watts had of our returning to the Upper Room to meet again with Jesus. *Rejoice and Sing* has restored Watts’s word “rebels” for the editorial “sinners” who meet to hold communion with their Lord. Watts was a true catholic. He traced continuity through the apostles to the present age through the broken body of Christ. By faith we can become members of that apostolic company who rebelled and yet were pardoned and commissioned. That marvellous sense of devotion to be found in Watts is paramount in the verses of this book.

24. PDHSs p.392 hymn 133 Love and Charity.

25. 434RS, PDHSS p.537 hymn 3.

The mem'ry of our dying Lord
 Awakes a thankful tongue;
 How rich he spread his royal board,
 And bless'd the food, and sang!

Happy the men that eat this bread,
 But doubly bless'd was he,
 That gently bow'd his loving head,
 And lean'd it, Lord, on thee.

By faith the same delights we taste
 As that great fav'rite did,
 and sit and lean on Jesus' breast,
 And take the heav'nly bread.²⁶

The "pardoned rebels" who meet at the Lord's Supper do not derive any status from ancestry. As with the Pharisees whom Watts found in 1 *Corinthians* 13 he is severe on those who count catholicity as something to do with historic continuity alone.

Vain are the hopes that rebels place
 Upon their birth and blood,
 Descended from a pious race;
 [Their fathers now with God]

He from the caves of earth and hell
 Can take the hardest stones,
 And fill the house of Abr'am well
 With new created sons.

Such wondrous pow'r doth he possess
 Who form'd our mortal frame,
 Who call'd the world from emptiness,
 The world obey'd and came.²⁷

The Creator is also the one who brings the new life of the gospel.

The happy gates of gospel grace
 Stand open night and day;
 Lord we are come to seek supplies,
 And drive our wants away.²⁸

26. PDHSS p.543 hymn 15.

27. PDHSS p.371 hymn 99 Grace not hereditary.

28. PDHSS p.298 hymn 8. The invitation of the Gospel.

My God, my portion and my love,
 My everlasting all,
 I've none but thee in heav'n above,
 Or on this earthly ball.²⁹

We are reminded that the reason why Watts could write so memorably about the wondrous Cross was that he had immersed himself in scripture. A generation which is losing its familiarity with the Bible is not well-placed to appreciate his devotional verse. The loss is entirely ours. One of his common metre doxologies makes an appropriate conclusion to a consideration of Watts's hymnody. His delight in the created world and the loving response to God's own love in Christ which is made wherever the church meets is expressed.

Let God the father and the Son
 And Spirit be ador'd,
 Where there are works to make him known
 Or saints to love the Lord.³⁰

STEPHEN ORCHARD

THE SOCIAL CONSCIENCE OF DISSENT C.1841

A recent reprint of tracts on the Corn Laws includes the *Report of the conference of ministers of all denominations on the Corn Laws, held in Manchester, August 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th, 1841*, first published in Manchester and London in that year.¹ The report is a valuable source for the attitude of Dissenting ministers to social questions at a time when their influence was growing but not widely recognised.

In 1841 the British Isles were going through a severe recession. Since 1838 there had been a succession of bad harvests and the price of bread had accordingly risen. The 4lb loaf, which in 1835 had cost 4Hd, now cost at least 7d.² Because people were having to spend more of their income on food, the demand for manufactured goods, clothing in particular, had dropped, and this meant unemployment and short-term working in the manufacturing industries. People were taking home lower wages, and many were living in destitution or near destitution.

29. PDHSS p.481 hymn 94.

30. PDHSS p.290.

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1. A. Kadish, *The Corn Laws: the formation of popular economics in Britain; IV Free Trade and Religion*, 1966, pp.1-264.
 2. *Report*, p.61.

To some extent the Industrial Revolution could be regarded as responsible for the distress. The invention of the power loom had virtually destroyed the livelihood of the hand loom weavers, for example. In 1795 they could earn 1s.8d. a yard, but by 1815 this was down to 9d. a yard, and in 1841 it was 2Gd. a yard.³ And undoubtedly there were manufacturers who paid their workers as little as they could get away with and employed children because they were cheaper. But these factors were not adequate to explain the widespread distress reported from all parts of the country. It was widely believed in the manufacturing districts, particularly in Manchester, that the Corn Laws were a major factor contributing to the recession. By imposing restrictions on the import of grain from overseas they kept up the price of grain at home at a time of scarcity. Duty was imposed on imports on a sliding scale. Let us suppose that grain could be imported at 56s a quarter. If the price of home grown wheat was below 60s, duty of 40s.8d. was imposed on foreign wheat, thus making it uneconomic to buy it. It was only when the price of home grown wheat reached 70s that it was worth importing, and then it would bring down the price of bread only a little.

The aim of the Corn Laws was to protect British agriculture and to ensure that the population was fed. If British farmers could be sure of a market for their wheat, they would be able to meet their rents and pay their labourers, and would not be tempted to take land out of cultivation. And the nation's food supply would not be jeopardised by the possibility of bad harvests overseas or by the cutting off of supplies during wartime. The memory of the Napoleonic wars was still very strong.

Manchester manufacturers however saw the Corn Laws as inhibiting their business. The high price of bread was damping down demand at home, and their export drive was frustrated because countries like America and Russia needed to sell Britain their grain in order to pay for its cotton goods. Other countries were developing their own textile industries and British manufacturers were being denied the chance to compete. And so in 1839 the Anti-Corn Law League was founded with its headquarters in Manchester.

Although the Reform Act had been passed in 1832, Parliament was still not as representative as it might be of the growing urban population. Moves to have the Corn Laws repealed did not get very far. The Whig government had intended to replace the sliding scale with a fixed duty of 8s. a quarter, but they had lost the general election in July 1841, and in the Queen's Speech at the opening of Parliament in September Sir Robert Peel, the incoming Conservative Prime Minister, would say that he

feared that no legislative remedy would wholly prevent the distresses to which the manufacturing classes must be subject from natural causes, from the unwise extension of credit, and from various other circumstances independent of the Corn Laws.⁴

3. *Report*, p.116.

4. *Watchman*, 1 September, 1841.

He would decide to defer any consideration of the Corn Laws until the following year. Therefore the Anti-Corn Law League had to continue its efforts to create a public opinion in favour of repeal. They did this by sending lecturers all over the country and by publishing innumerable pamphlets and tracts. But they also needed influential allies. From the beginning a number of clergymen and ministers had taken an interest in the League and attended its meetings⁵ and in some parts of the country the only places where the League's lecturers were able to speak were churches and chapels.⁶ There was a feeling that the movement for repeal had a religious and moral dimension. And so it was resolved in February 1841 to send a copy of the Anti-Corn Law circular to every clergyman in Manchester and Salford. At a tea party in June George Thompson, the new secretary of the League, welcomed the fact that many ministers were present, and as a result wrote to all the ministers in Manchester and its vicinity, inviting them to help arrange a conference of ministers from all parts of the United Kingdom. Twenty-eight ministers attended a meeting on 12 July and agreed to call such a conference in Manchester in the week beginning 15 August.⁷

There seems to be no record of how many invitations were sent out or how the list of those to be invited was compiled. There were advertisements in the press as well, to reach those who could not be reached by circular. The response was gratifying. The organisers⁸ claimed that they had received 1,500 replies, of which only six were opposed to the conference, with six more expressing hesitation. In the event 645 ministers assembled.

Dissenters predominated. There were 233 Independents or Congregationalists, 179 Baptists and twenty-three Unitarians. There were over forty from the Scottish Secession churches and more than sixty Methodists of various kinds. There were twelve Roman Catholics, eight of them from Ireland. But the conference did not attract ministers from the established churches: there were only two from the Church of England and only two from the Church of Scotland. Alexander Munro, minister of the Presbyterian church "in connection with the Church of Scotland" in St. Peter's Square, Manchester, wrote to Thomas Chalmers: "The Church of England ministers stand wholly aloof from the movement, with the exception of one curate... None of our Presbytery [the Presbytery of Lancashire] have taken anything to do with it, although invited, of course."⁹ Chalmers himself did not

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5. Particularly William McKerrow, minister of the Scottish Secession Church, Lloyd Street, in Manchester, and James Massie, who had recently become minister of Chapel Street Independent Church in Salford.
 6. R.G. Cowherd, *The Politics of English Dissent*, 1959, p.132.
 7. *Report*, pp.262-63.
 8. The organisation was largely in the hands of the local ministers, especially William McKerrow, James Massie and Richard Fletcher, William Roby's successor as minister of Grosvenor Street Chapel. Robert Halley was very impressed by Massie's energy and efficiency. J. Waddington, *Congregational History: Vol 4: continuation to 1850*, 1878, p.563.
 9. Munro to Chalmers, 11 August, 1851 (Chalmers papers, New College, Edinburgh, 1841 volume). G.I.T. Machin, *Politics and the churches in Great Britain 1832 to 1868*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1977, p.108.

think that the Corn Laws were "the great cause of the people's destitution and misery." Repeal would only bring temporary material benefits. Cheaper food would lead to reduced wages. Universal Christian education was the real remedy. The working classes would learn to save and thus strengthen their position in negotiating with their employers.¹⁰

The Wesleyan Methodist Conference had met in Manchester during the previous three weeks, and all their ministers had received an invitation, but only two of them stayed on. Conference had decided that it was "not called upon to enter, as a body of Christian ministers, into the discussion of a subject on which such different opinions are conscientiously held by large classes of our people, and which is primarily a question of political economy."¹¹ One of their ministers in Manchester, William Bunting, had written to say that, while he sympathised with the concern for "the relief of the suffering poor of our country", he did not think that Christian ministers should interfere in "a much disputed fiscal question".¹² When he learned that part of his letter had been quoted to suggest that he approved of the work of the conference he wrote to the *Manchester Guardian* to say that in his view ministers were no more competent to pronounce on the Corn Laws than laymen were to instruct ministers about "things ... directly concerning the kingdom of God".¹³

The conference was not entirely representative even of the older Dissenting bodies. Most of the ministers from Lancashire, Cheshire and Yorkshire attended (Liverpool being an interesting exception); the Midland industrial areas were well represented; there were a surprisingly large number from Wales and the West Country. Most leading Baptist ministers were present, both General and Particular; more of them came than would attend meetings of the Baptist Union.¹⁴ The best known (and better paid) Congregational ministers in London and the larger provincial cities did not come, however.¹⁵ Among the Unitarians it was the conservative wing with its biblically based views which was represented rather than the liberal wing which placed more emphasis on the spiritual quest.¹⁶

The conference was therefore ecumenical only in a restricted sense. Nevertheless among the radical Dissenting ministers there was considerable variety of experience. William Gadsby, the veteran Strict and Particular Baptist minister in Manchester, had a long record of activity on behalf of the poor.¹⁷

10. Thomas Chalmers to James Massie, 13 August, 1841; reprinted from *Scottish Guardian* in *Watchman*, 1 September, 1841.

11. *Watchman*, 18 August, 1841.

12. *Report*, p.21.

13. *Manchester Guardian*, 25 August, 1841.

14. K.R.M. Short, "English Baptists and the Corn Laws", *Baptist Quarterly*, 21, 1966, pp.309, 315; E.A. Payne, *The Baptist Union* 1958, p.84.

15. R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962*, 1962, p.228.

16. D. Young, *F.D. Maurice and Unitarianism*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1992, pp.35-35.

17. *A memoir of the late Mr. William Gadsby*, 1844, pp.69-70, 122, 125.

Daniel Hearne, a Catholic priest who worked in Manchester for sixteen years, "had won the affections of his large Irish congregation by incessant labour for both their temporal and spiritual welfare" and had "rendered them sober, united and peaceful," so that socialism and Chartism had not won much support among them.¹⁸ At an Anti-Corn Law League rally in Stevenson Square in June, despite his support for the League, he had at least pleaded that the Chartist Charles Connor and the representative of the Society for the Protection of Agriculture, Dr. W.W. Sleight, should have a hearing.¹⁹ Patrick Brewster of Paisley actively supported the Chartists and had incurred censure from the Church of Scotland for preaching in a Christian Chartist Church. His *Seven Chartist and Military Discourses* would be published in 1843.²⁰ James Phillippo Mursell, minister of Harvey Lane Baptist Chapel in Leicester, also supported the Chartists in their campaign for universal male suffrage.²¹ Other ministers came with a record of practical assistance to the poor in their own communities. John Holgate, the Independent minister at Orrell in the Lancashire coalfield, opened an orphanage for the children deprived of their parents by mining accidents and travelled each year to beg for their support.²² Some were conspicuous for their generosity. Joseph Harbottle, Baptist Minister in Accrington, had been known to "hire a man with his ass, and to accompany him in order to distribute the food and clothing supplied from the scanty resources of his own very limited salary."²³ Younger ministers who attended would later be noted for their philanthropic work. Robert Milne would be the Congregational minister at Tintwistle during the Cotton Famine in the 1860s: he not only distributed relief funds but also found employment for workers in other parts of the country.²⁴ The conference could at least speak with some authority about "the condition of England."

There were some tensions to be overcome. Much of the first morning session was taken up with a procedural question: should the sessions begin with prayer? To William Gadsby "it seemed a shame, as professed ministers of the gospel, not to think it worth while to call upon God to bless them." Dr. Robert Vaughan, minister in Kensington, later to become the first Principal of Lancashire Independent College, was accordingly asked to "engage in prayer". According to the *Congregational Magazine* this was "listened to with a silence which was thrillingly profound."²⁵ For *The Times*, however, it was "the signal for a general engagement of ahems and ughs, and scraping of feet, and bobbing of

18. J. Gillow, *Bibliographical Dictionary of the English Catholics*, 1877, Vol. 3, p. 233.

19. *Manchester Guardian*, 2 June, 1841; *Manchester Courier*, 5 June, 1841.

20. *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p. 95; DNB.

21. A. Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester: a History of Leicester 1780-1850*, Leicester, 1954, pp.302-333.

22. *Congregational Year Book (CYB)* 1850, pp.240-41.

23. *Baptist Handbook (BHB)*, 1865, pp.122-23.

24. *CYB* 1883, pp.300-301.

25. *Congregational Magazine*, 1841, p.666.

umbrellas.”²⁶ But E.H. Nolan, minister of Ducie Independent Chapel in Manchester, pointed out that the members of the Society of Friends and Roman Catholics present might have different views. Dr. Robert Halley, the minister of Cavendish Street Independent Chapel, who was sitting next to the Catholic priests from Ireland,²⁷ said that if nonconformist ministers were allowed to offer extempore prayers, Catholics should be allowed to celebrate mass. He himself would want to know who was to pray before he could conscientiously join in. If John Relly Beard, the minister of the Unitarian Chapel at Greengates, Salford, were to be asked to pray, he would not think it right to stay. “They had met to consider the wants of the poor; and he hoped the apple of religious discord would not be thrown in to mar their efforts at removing them.” Eventually it was decided that those who wished to would hold a prayer meeting in Lloyd Street Scottish Secession Chapel each day before the morning session began.²⁸

The Times ridiculed this exchange as “an edifying squabble about prayer ... the only religious question proposed to them.”²⁹ But the fact that Catholics and Protestants, orthodox Nonconformists and Unitarians had come together was a quite remarkable event in itself. Catholic emancipation had taken place only twelve years before, and some of those present, like William Gadsby, had opposed it.³⁰ In 1824 the Manchester solicitor, George Hadfield, a Congregationalist and a member of the Anti-Corn Law League, had led a campaign challenging the Unitarians’ possession of chapels and funds intended for use by “orthodox” Christians. He booked a pew in Cross Street Chapel, confident that the Unitarians would shortly be expelled from it.³¹ These tensions have not been universally resolved even today; the ground had certainly not been laid in 1841. Even the British and Foreign Bible Society began its meetings without prayer, “in order to unite men of all denominations in forwarding its great object.”³²

It is worth recording that six of the Catholics wrote to the *Manchester Guardian* on the evening of the first day to express appreciation of the way their scruples had been respected:

We ... cannot pass over in silence the truly liberal conduct of the Rev. Dr. Halley, and the respected chairman, the Rev. Mr. Adkins,³³ in opposing the proposition which had been made, no doubt with the best of feeling and the

26. *Times*, 24 August, 1841.

27. Waddington, *Congregational History*, pp.560-61.

28. *Report*, pp.22-24, 36-38, 58, 66.

29. *Times*, 24 August, 1841.

30. *A memoir of the late Mr. William Gadsby*, 1844, p.125.

31. D. Young, *F.D. Maurice and Unitarianism*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1992, p.33; W.R. Ward, *Religion and society in England 1700-1850*, 1972, p.130; A.J. Long, *The Lady Hewley dispute 1830-42*, York, 1988.

32. Letter from “Alpha”, *Patriot*, 23 August, 1841.

33. Thomas Adkins, Independent minister in Southampton.

purest motive, viz. the proposition of commencing the discussion every day by prayer, but which was found to be obnoxious to many differing in religious belief and practice; and we beg to present our united and individual thanks to them for their exertions in bringing the affair to an amicable issue, by vindicating, for us, our right of not joining in prayer with others, who would as conscientiously as ourselves object to unite with us in our mode of supplication.³⁴

Historians have questioned whether the conference was truly representative even of the ministers' congregations.³⁵ Henry Solly's Unitarian congregation in Yeovil "would not provide funds for such a long and expensive journey", and so he relied on the support of the Yeovil Chartists and the Bridport Liberals.³⁶ Alfred Bishop, Independent minister in Beaminster in Dorset, had been deputed by the Bridport and Beaminster Anti-Corn Law Association.³⁷ Nevertheless many had come with the full support of their congregations – Thomas Swan, of Cannon Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, was "sent by the unanimous vote of a church of 800 members"³⁸ – and some represented other congregations as well as their own.³⁹ Charles Berry had been reluctant to accept the invitation but had been persuaded by his congregation (Great Meeting Unitarian Church in Leicester) to change his mind.⁴⁰ The fact that some were supported by local anti-corn law associations or by ad hoc meetings of working men in addition to their congregations should surely not be held against them.⁴¹ George Thompson, the Secretary of the League, made a telling point when he told the conference, "The suffrages by which you have been returned to this Parliament, are quite as extensive and independent as those of many honourable members. I think the means which have been taken to return you, are quite as pure and unexceptionable as those resorted to in many of the constituencies of the empire."⁴²

It has to be admitted that the conference was very carefully managed. A number of ministers of Christian Chartist and Socialist or Rational Religionist congregations were refused admission and were taken to court when they attempted forcible entry.⁴³ Committees were appointed to monitor the business for the day, to draw up resolutions, and to write the addresses to be sent to the Queen and the Houses of Parliament. A few carefully chosen speakers were

34. *Manchester Guardian*, 25 August, 1841.

35. N. McCord, *The Anti-Corn Law League 1838-1846*, 1968, pp.104-106.

36. H. Solly, *These Eighty years, or, the story of an unfinished life*, 1893, Vol. I, pp.370-71.

37. *Patriot*, 9 September, 1841.

38. *Report*, p.101.

39. *Report*, pp.119, 122, 149.

40. *Report*, p.77.

41. *Report*, pp.123, 149, 156.

42. *Report*, p.177.

43. *Times*, 20 August, 1841.

brought in: Richard Cobden, who had just been elected an MP for Stockport; a Mr. Curtis, from Ohio,⁴⁴ to plead the cause of free trade with the United States; and George Thompson, the Secretary of the League. Only proposers and seconders spoke to the resolutions; it could not be said that they were debated.

One minister who was unable to attend, Ralph Wardlaw of Glasgow, the well-known Scottish Congregational minister,⁴⁵ said in his letter of apology:

Your avowed object ... is consultation; – the comparing of both sides; the hearing of the *pros* and *cons*. Attendance pledges no one to a side.⁴⁶

One or two speakers echoed this. George Payne, president of Western College in Exeter, said that “the presence of any individual there did not commit him to an opinion that the operation [of the Corn Laws] was baneful,” and Charles Thompson, a Baptist from Swansea, said that he could not “fully agree” with “the general principles laid down by some of the speakers.”⁴⁷ But it has to be said that no case against the repeal of the Corn Laws was heard. Dr. W.W. Sleight, the spokesman for the Society for the Protection of Agriculture in Great Britain and Ireland, wrote to the conference on the first day, asking permission to address it:

It is certain that you, as a body, – and probably many of you as individuals, – have never had an opportunity of hearing what can be said *in their favour*.

But the committee turned down the request, resolving:

That the committee, having taken Dr. Sleight’s letter into the earliest consideration which the pressure of business admitted, beg to acquaint him, that the principle adopted by the conference is to *solicit* evidence on the subject of the corn laws, in any case in which it is judged needful.⁴⁸

As Robert Halley put it in one of the interesting letters he wrote commenting on the conference: “The feeling was so general in favour of the extreme view – no ‘protection’, no ‘fixed duty’ – that no person on the other side would have any chance.”⁴⁹

What did the ministers have to contribute to the campaign for the repeal of the Corn Laws? Were they in fact meddling in matters in which they had no

44. Possibly Samuel Ryan Curtis (1805-66), army officer, engineer and lawyer; *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 4, pp.619-20.

45. Minister of West George Street Congregational Church and Professor of Systematic Theology in the Congregational Theological Hall.

46. *Report*, p.21.

47. *Report*, pp.91, 81.

48. *Manchester Guardian*, 25 August, 1841.

49. Waddington, *Congregational History*, pp.563-64.

competence? Several speakers defended the right of ministers to speak about political questions. The veteran Independent, John Pye Smith, principal of Homerton College, said that their task included reminding the propertied classes of their duties and of the claims of the people.⁵⁰ James Massie said that the cause was comparable to the campaign for the abolition of slavery, and that their exertions then were regarded as “fully compatible with their profession as ministers of religion”.⁵¹ A Church of Scotland minister, J.Y. Strachan, told a story to show that, while “the affluent might ... say that the corn laws was a political subject, the suffering poor considered it a minister’s subject.”⁵² And Thomas Spencer, the curate of Charterhouse Hinton, near Bath, one of the two Anglicans present, pointed out that fellows of colleges, who were all clergymen, engaged in letting property; the convocations of the Church of England discussed finance; and the bishops, who thought meeting about the corn laws too secular, did not think the same about attending the House of Lords.⁵³

The issue probably did not need a very sophisticated theological treatment. It is perhaps worth noticing that no one suggested that the distress was a divine visitation, though Thomas Swan feared that “if iniquitous laws were not repealed, God’s judgments might be expected to come upon the land.”⁵⁴ The situation was not something beyond the ability of human beings to rectify. Perhaps the theological stance of the conference was most clearly stated in the address of the people of Britain, which was drawn up by a layman, George Thompson:

We have asked ourselves, if the calamities we have been called to contemplate and the more dreadful consequences with which we are threatened, are to be regarded as the just judgement and visitation of the Almighty; and our unanimous answer is – No... We charge existing misery and impending danger upon the selfish or ignorant inventions of man, which have frustrated the merciful designs of the Ruler of the universe.

The chastisements we are enduring are self-inflicted; our national distresses are the results of a departure, by human legislation, from the spirit and mandates of the divine law; and our strong conviction is, that our present deliverance and future safety, are to be secured only by recognising and observing the unerring and clearly revealed will of a beneficent Creator.⁵⁵

What were the “merciful designs” which were being frustrated? John Pye

50. *Report*, pp.31-32.

51. *Report*, pp.33-34.

52. *Report*, p.61.

53. *Report*, p.145.

54. *Report*, p.101.

55. *Report*, p.129.

Smith, early in the conference, declared that

the providence of God, by establishing the vast diversity of climate, soil, atmosphere, products of all kinds, and national capabilities, has abundantly demonstrated the intention that all the divisions of the human race should be *dependent* on each other.⁵⁶

Free trade contributed to the realisation of that interdependence. Francis Augustus Cox, minister of Mare Street Baptist Church in Hackney, went so far as to say, when he reported the conference at his own chapel, that “unrestricted barter” was in itself “a Divine ordinance for the equalisation of physical comfort, the prevention of international war, and the universal diffusion of the Christian religion.”⁵⁷ Pye Smith stopped short of that, but at least claimed that it was “in harmony with the essential principle and the benevolent design of the gospel,” and in a letter read at the meeting Cox addressed said that “the cause of Justice, peace, well regulated freedom” was God’s own, with freedom of trade on the same level as freedom of conscience and religion.⁵⁸

Naturally, being preachers, the ministers sought to justify their concern from scripture. At least 112 passages were quoted by those who spoke. John Sibree, minister of Vicar Lane Independent Church in Coventry, whose children were friendly with Mary Anne Evans, the future George Eliot,⁵⁹ had already preached a sermon on the Corn Laws in his own church, taking his text from *Nehemiah 5*, which describes the measures Nehemiah took during a corn famine.⁶⁰ He quoted eighteen passages in his speech at the conference, and on the text which was probably the one most frequently referred to – “He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him; but blessings shall be upon the head of him that selleth it” (*Prov. 11:26*) – he quoted the comments of Matthew Henry (Nonconformist), Thomas Scott (Anglican) and Adam Clarke (Wesleyan).⁶¹ Halley described his speech as “middling”, but the official report says that “the rev. gentleman was loudly cheered throughout his speech.”

This was not the first time that Matthew Henry had been called in aid by the supporters of the League. Earlier in the year Archibald Prentice, editor of the *Manchester Times*, had published a tract, “Corn in Egypt,” in which he quoted Henry’s comments on those passages of scripture which illustrated how “the abundance or super abundance in one quarter of the earth should go to mitigate the wants which were suffered in another.”⁶²

56. *Report*, p.30.

57. *Patriot*, 2 September, 1841.

58. *Report*, p.31; *Patriot*, 2 September, 1841.

59. G.S. Haight, *George Eliot: a biography*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1968, pp.35, 41, 55, 62, 64.

60. J. Sibree, *The corn monopoly condemned by the Scriptures*, 1841.

61. *Report*, pp.51-56.

62. A. Prentice, *History of the Anti-Corn Law League*, 1853; reprinted 1968, Vol. 1, pp.197-99.

The conference was happier listening to the support the cause received from scripture than trying to master the technicalities. Cobden was the person deputed to explain the grounds on which the League advocated the repeal of the Corn Laws and to deal with any difficulties.⁶³ He was a little nervous that ministers would go away and find themselves defeated in argument, and advised them not to deal with the question "on any other ground than that of abstract right and justice" but to leave "all the details and expedients necessary to carry out the principle to others".⁶⁴ John Howard Hinton, minister of Devonshire Square Baptist Church in London, accepted this position with some alacrity. "He delighted to think that the study of the Bible was adapted of itself to settle the corn law question... It would not lead into intricate questions of political economy, or long lines of figures and calculations, but it would bring us into the pressure of clear and irresistible moral obligations, to which any upright man must bow."⁶⁵ Only two ministers, John Pye Smith and George Payne, showed any sign of having read the political economists,⁶⁶ though John Eustace Giles, minister of South Parade Baptist Church in Leeds, moving the key resolution that the Corn Laws were "essentially and manifestly unjust", gave a careful review of the way the Corn Laws had operated.⁶⁷ Halley was not particularly impressed, but the official report said that "the rev. gentleman was listened to with intense interest."⁶⁸ Alexander Harvey, a Scottish Relief minister from Glasgow, who said that he had been lecturing against the Corn Laws for twelve years, contributed an equally careful review of their social consequences.⁶⁹

As far as the League was concerned, the chief contribution the ministers had to make was as gatherers of evidence. They had been asked before they came to prepare answers to questions about their own districts: was there much unemployment? had wages gone up or down? what had been the effect of the price of food on wages? on the finances of churches and charities? on attendance at church and Sunday school?⁷⁰ On the evening of the first day, some thirteen ministers spoke of the plight of working people in their own localities. (Others did so at various points thereafter). The Tory *Manchester Courier* was scornful: "The time was occupied in relating and listening to long and highly coloured yarns ... about the condition of the 'famishing multitude' – the Irish tales, of course, being the best."⁷¹ But Robert Halley said of the Tuesday evening: "Certainly I have never attended a more affecting meeting. The speakers kept strictly to the point;

63. *Report*, pp.39, 47.

64. *Report*, pp.164-65.

65. *Report*, p.130.

66. *Report*, pp.30, 91.

67. *Report*, pp.95-100.

68. Waddington, *Congregational History*, pp.562; *Report*, p.100.

69. *Report*, pp.92-94.

70. *Report*, p.211.

71. *Manchester Courier*, 21 August, 1841.

there was a feeling of deep sympathy for the poor.”⁷² To take the example the *Courier* had in mind: Daniel Hearne, the Catholic priest, said that in Manchester there were 2000 families without a bed to lie on. In one district 2000 families had only 1s.2Hd. per head per week. Because people could not pay, provision dealers had bad debts amounting to £24,000. In the course of his sick calls he had found one family of eleven in a cellar, and only the wages of two boys, 6s. in total, to keep them.⁷³ Ministers were in almost a unique position to provide evidence of the distress, since their work brought them into frequent contact with needy families.⁷⁴ Even if their congregations were relatively prosperous they might be given charitable funds to distribute.⁷⁵ There had been some research done into people’s health and living conditions, such as that done by Dr. James P. Kay in Manchester,⁷⁶ but Engels only came to Manchester in 1842, publishing *The condition of the working class in England* in 1845, and the investigative journalism of Henry Mayhew and others in the *Morning Chronicle* only began at the end of the 1840s. Not all the ministers who wanted to speak about their localities were able to do so, but 460 written statements were handed in and a digest was made of them.⁷⁷ William KcKerrow, who was secretary of the committee handling the documents, said before he read them “he had thought he had known somewhat of the distress of the country, but he had no idea of the awful reality.”⁷⁸

The distress of working-class people was certainly the dominant concern of the ministers. It was expressed particularly after a deputation of hand loom weavers appeared before the conference on the morning of the third day.⁷⁹ Robert Cairns, a Scottish Secession minister from Paisley, asked:

Why should those excellent persons be doomed to labour in a damp workshop, fourteen or sixteen hours a day, for the paltry pittance of a shilling? Why should they be obliged to toil from week to week, (when work can be had), for wages scarcely sufficient to procure as much provisions as will keep body and soul together? Why should such misery exist in our country, where our merchants are so enterprising, where our workmen are so skilful, and have such a facility of production in their several departments of labour?⁸⁰

72. Waddington, *Congregational History*, pp.561.

73. *Report*, p.60.

74. *Report*, pp.90, 104.

75. *Report*, p.79.

76. J.P.Kay, *The moral and physical condition of the working classes employed in the cotton manufacture of Manchester*, 1832.

77. *Report*, pp.212-60.

78. *Report*, p.134.

79. *Report*, pp.113-17.

80. *Report*, p.142.

It was evident that the distress was not confined to the manufacturing districts. Speakers made it clear that in the agricultural districts, whose prosperity the Corn Laws were designed to protect, wages were low and being undercut by redundant factory workers, and farmers were going out of business.⁸¹ The plight of people who were unwaged – elderly single women, and widows living on a small fixed annuity – was not forgotten.⁸² Only Thomas Scales, minister of Queen Street Independent Chapel in Leeds, referred to the stress which was making the employers ill.⁸³ Some ministers were obviously embarrassed at the gulf between their own living standards and those of the people they visited. James Stirling, a Scottish Relief minister from Kirriemuir, said that:

The duty of visiting his people, in which he formerly delighted, was now becoming one of the most unpleasant nature; his feelings were tortured by the scenes of misery and suffering he encountered.⁸⁴

John Ragland, the Unitarian minister from Hindley, said

I can hardly sit down to take a meal in comfort. Before I have half finished there is a rap on the door; I find standing before it half a dozen, sometimes a dozen, able-bodied men begging for relief, and assuring me their wives and children are starving.⁸⁵

There were great discrepancies in the living standards of the ministers present. Michael Angelo Garvey, co-pastor of Kentish Town Independent Chapel in London, could speak of the affectionate relationship between ministers and their congregations, on which “much of the comfort of our lives and the usefulness of our labours” depended. “In seasons of adversity they will suffer to extremity before they will allow that adversity to touch their minister.”⁸⁶ Garvey did not reveal what his stipend was: some London ministers, and Thomas Raffles at Great George Street in Liverpool and John Angell James at Carr’s Lane in Birmingham, had stipends of between £400 and £800 per annum.⁸⁷ But, as James Massie reminded the conference, the income of some of those present did not exceed £50 a year. They were still doing better than their congregations however, which might not contain “three persons whose incomes were more than 8s. a week.”⁸⁸ It has been estimated that in 1836 a family would need an income of at least 16s. a week

81. *Report*, pp.50, 121, 148.

82. *Report*, pp.89, 94.

83. *Report*, pp.132-33.

84. *Report*, p.64.

85. *Report*, p.75.

86. *Report*, p.150.

87. R. Tudur-Jones, *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962*, 1962, p.229.

88. *Report*, p.34.

for a reasonable standard of living which included some bacon, butter and cheese, as well as bread, sugar, tea, candles, soap, coal and the rent.⁸⁹

The ministers did have other concerns beside the widespread distress. One was the fear of civil unrest, which the rise of Chartism had awakened. John Pye Smith feared this. Desperation would drive people to riot. Troops would be brought in, "and the terrible catastrophe will befall us of a revolutionary anarchy, or a stern, revengeful, and unsparing tyranny."⁹⁰ Charles Berry, to whose church (Great Meeting Unitarian Church) most of the leading citizens of Leicester belonged,⁹¹ agreed with him: "If something were not done to promote the happiness of the people, and give them a sufficient supply of food, anarchy and disorder would come upon us; or the alternative would be, that we should experience the vengeance of a reckless despotism, under whose sword all our liberties would be extinguished."⁹² Francis Cox regarded the conference as "a shield – a shield against the encroachment of aristocratic power on the one hand, and the faction and fury of mob-democracy on the other."⁹³

Another concern was the effect that the distress was having on religious practice. Timothy East, minister of Steelhouse Lane Independent Chapel in Birmingham, reported that "a large number of his congregation were unable to attend to Christian ordinances from want of clothing, have been obliged to pawn their raiment to provide themselves with food." His Baptist colleague, Thomas Swan, confirmed this, and the leader of the hand-loom weavers' deputation said: "I believe there are hundreds and thousands that would most anxiously attend places of worship, but they have not a shirt on their backs, nor a coat or shoe to wear."⁹⁴ In Glasgow a missionary employed by a Scottish Relief congregation to visit the families in the district "became convinced that it was in vain to attempt to communicate religious instruction to them till their temporal condition was improved, and he gave up his labours in despair."⁹⁵ Hugh Garside Rhodes, Independent minister in Fulwood, Sheffield, said that he had bought a Bible from a pawnbroker. "On the blank leaf in the front there is recorded the date of the marriage of the parties who did possess it, the date of the births of their children, and the date of the deaths of some of them. There are marks in it of its having been very diligently used. It must have been dire necessary that forced this bible into the pawn shop."⁹⁶ At a less desperate level the theological colleges too were feeling

89. N. Longmate, *The Breadstealers*, 1984, p.58.

90. *Report*, p.32.

91. Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp.16-17.

92. *Report*, p.80.

93. *Report*, p.110.

94. *Report*, pp.47, 101, 115.

95. *Report*, p.93. Cf. Cobden, *Report*, p.45; "They [the ministers] were accustomed to meet with the poor, and must be well aware that it is vain to try to instruct, to train, to evangelise them, while their minds were brooding over their distress."

96. *Report*, p.122.

the effects of the recession. James Acworth, President of the Baptist College in Bradford, said at the close of his speech that "he would just advert to the fact, perhaps not yet noticed, that in the institution over which he presided, and, of course, in all similar institutions, a greater number of men might be prepared for the Christian ministry, with the same amount of pecuniary means, derived entirely from voluntary contributions, provided only the necessaries of life could be procured at a cheaper rate."⁹⁷

One of the resolutions passed by the conference drew attention to the effect of the economic distress on the funds of the churches and their charitable institutions. Joseph Freeman, Independent minister in Walthamstow, former missionary in Madagascar and later one of the Foreign Secretaries of the London Missionary Society, estimated that these institutions drew a third of their income from working-class people, and that their decreasing ability to contribute damaged their self-respect.⁹⁸

The education of children was of course suffering. According to the deputation of hand-loom weavers, "In the first place, it is out of our power to educate [our children] ourselves; in the next place, it is out of our power to clothe them decently to send them to school, consequently they are destitute of education."⁹⁹ As Alexander Harvey reminded the conference: "Parents are compelled to send their children to work before they are educated; and although night-schools have been provided for such, little good can be accomplished by their instrumentality. Can it be expected that children of ten or twelve years of age, after having toiled from six in the morning till seven in the evening, in a heated atmosphere, can be in a fit state to receive instruction after that late hour."¹⁰⁰ However, it must be remembered that at this period education was still provided by the voluntary efforts of the churches, and that these sufficed to cater for only between one in ten and one in fourteen of the children of a town like Manchester.¹⁰¹ The campaign for universal education did not get going until the end of the 1840s, and many Nonconformists resisted it even then.

There was also a concern for moral standards. This was to be one of the leading themes of the London Congregational Union pamphlet, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, which was so influential in improving London's housing later in the century. Daniel Gould, Baptist minister in Dunstable, reporting to his congregation after the conference, lamented that children were "driven, through the pangs of hunger, to thieve until they became delinquents."¹⁰² Richard Slate, minister of Grimshaw Street Independent Church in Preston, said that "in some instances, no less than eight individuals were lying together in the same bed,

97. *Report*, p.127.

98. *Report*, pp.109, 180-81.

99. *Report*, p.116.

100. *Report*, p.92.

101. *A few facts and figures* (Lancashire Public Schools Association, c. 1850).

102. *Patriot*, 2 September, 1841.

without any covering but their daily clothes. Brothers and sisters, fourteen and sixteen years of age, had to lie in the same bed.”¹⁰³ Henry Solly pointed out that “the scanty employment and remuneration of the working classes” in Yeovil was driving women to prostitution. Their sympathies had been roused “in the behalf of female purity in the slave states of America, and would they refuse to interpose in behalf of the victims of oppression at home.”¹⁰⁴ At least one speaker, Benjamin Parsons, of the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, from Ebley in Gloucestershire, was anxious to stress that the majority of the poor were *deserving* poor. Some of those in the deepest distress “were tee-totallers, and therefore it could not be laid to their charge that improvidence had any thing to do with their condition.”¹⁰⁵

The ministers were well aware that they must do more than preach to the converted in conference. Thomas Spencer reminded them that “‘he that withholdeth corn’ is not merely the man who locks it up in the granary, and keeps it by restrictive laws from the people; but he who allows the thing to go on when he might prevent it; he who renders himself a party to it is himself guilty of the deed, almost as much as the man who does it.”¹⁰⁶ It was recognised that there was a greater urgency about the situation than there had been about, say, Catholic emancipation, the abolition of slavery, and the enfranchisement of the industrial cities.¹⁰⁷ Thomas Jones, a Welsh Calvinistic Methodist from Wrexham, hoped that “in addition to making this effort for obtaining legislative and permanent relief for the poor, ... the various ministers would raise subscriptions amongst their congregations for the temporary relief of the most distressed districts.”¹⁰⁸ Such charitable relief would continue. Andrew Reed, of Wycliffe Chapel, one of the wealthier Independent ministers in London, who had an enviable record of founding homes for orphans and the disabled, and had only been prevented by illness from attending the conference, paid a six day visit to the North West in the summer of 1842 and distributed relief he had collected to more than 700 people.¹⁰⁹

But it was generally agreed that charitable relief could not cope with the crisis. Archibald Baird of Paisley, Moderator of the Scottish Secession Church, spoke about the efforts that had been made in that direction, but said that the funds were exhausted, while the number of applicants was increasing.¹¹⁰ What other action could they take? They sent an address to the Queen¹¹¹ and a petition to

103. *Report*, pp.122-23.

104. *Report*, p.157.

105. *Report*, p.77.

106. *Report*, p.84.

107. *Report*, p.80.

108. *Report*, p.159.

109. A. and C. Reed, *Memoirs of the life and philanthropic labours of Andrew Reed, D.D.*, 3rd edition, 1866, p.371; *Report*, p.20; *CYB* 1863, pp.255-56.

110. *Report*, p.57.

111. *Report*, pp.128-29.

Parliament;¹¹² they called for a day of prayer;¹¹³ they pledged themselves never to cease “to agitate peacefully, but earnestly, till the sufferings of the people are relieved.” They would do this by publicising “the facts, statements and principles” they had heard and urging people to continue to petition Parliament.¹¹⁴ For some weeks afterwards the *Patriot*, a weekly Nonconformist newspaper, carried accounts of meetings at which the ministers had reported the conference. The day of prayer was observed in some localities on 6 September. Only the deputation from the Operative Anti-Corn Law Association referred to the ministers’ duty of “carrying the hopes and consolations of religion to relieve and sustain those who, without them, would fall victims to the blackest despair.”¹¹⁵ There was some talk of calling a similar, but larger, conference in London.¹¹⁶ This came to nothing, though there were meetings of forty ministers in Caernarfon in November and upward of 500 Scottish nonconformist ministers in Edinburgh in January 1842.¹¹⁷ At a more general anti-Corn Law conference in London early in February 1842, 115 of the 583 attending were ministers. During the meetings to mark the opening of the Free Trade Hall in Manchester a year later about 300 ministers attended a one-day conference “to consider the bearing of the Corn Laws upon the physical, moral and religious condition of the people.”¹¹⁸

The press was sharply divided in its coverage of the conference. *The Times* was scornful of this “conference of political preachers”, gave publicity to those who had declined to take part, and even published the words of a song which lampooned the motley crew and their hearty appetites.¹¹⁹ The *Morning Chronicle*, which was sympathetic, was nevertheless piqued by the fact that the conference did not accept its offer to publish its statements and documents.¹²⁰ Among the local papers, the *Manchester Guardian* was impressed by “this great and important conference” and gave full reports; the *Manchester Times* published a three-page report on 21 August, even allowing it to displace the advertisements which normally occupied the front page; the *Manchester Courier* affected to regard the conference as of no significance – “We look upon this movement of dissenting teachers as altogether unworthy of serious comment”. It regarded the conference as a desperate attempt on the part of Dissent to restore its declining fortunes – “Dissent is at a lower ebb than it has ever been in our times” – a judgement which was to be somewhat shaken by the census of 1851.¹²¹ The *Nonconformist* judged that the press coverage,

112. *Report*, pp.133-34.

113. *Report*, p.139. J.P. Marshall said “he should be sorry if it should be said that they met to discuss a secular question, without doing something in their religious capacity.”

114. *Report*, pp.140-41.

115. *Report*, p.144.

116. *Report*, pp.138, 151.

117. A. Kadish, *Corn Laws*, IV, p.266.

118. Prentice, *History of League*, Vol. 2, p.23.

119. *Times*, 20 August, 1841.

120. *Spectator*, 21 August, 1841.

121. *Manchester Courier*, 14 August, 1841.

favourable and unfavourable, had all helped "to draw unwonted attention to the meeting and to invest it with uncommon interest."¹²²

Historians have sometimes judged the conference cynically. Norman McCord, for example, said that it was "skilfully rigged by the League"¹²³ and W.R. Ward, the Methodist historian, agreed that it was "carefully contrived."¹²⁴ Certainly Robert Halley helped to create that impression. He wrote to the conservatively minded (and well paid) minister of Claremont Chapel in London, and editor of the *Congregational Magazine*, John Blackburn, before, during and after the conference.¹²⁵ Before the conference he expressed doubts as to whether he should attend – he was not very keen on the kind of ecumenical support it was receiving – but eventually decided to do so. He was impressed, as we have seen, by the statements on the condition of the poor in various parts of the country. When the conference was over, Halley said that he felt it had been "remarkably preserved from many dangers... It was a very important meeting, and has excited amazing interest throughout the manufacturing district." But he judged that "the thing never came to a *Conference* at all, but only a convocation. There was no discussion."

Halley's reservations about the conference are probably justified, but the positive things he said should be remembered too. The conference may have been one-sided, and politically and economically naive, but there can be no doubt that most knew cases of destitution at first hand and were genuinely concerned that their plight should be on the conscience of the nation. Parliament took little notice of it. When Cobden referred to it in his maiden speech in the Commons in the following week, he was greeted with some laughter.¹²⁶ There is no evidence that Peel was directly influenced by the conference, and indeed it was five years before the Corn Laws were repealed. The economic situation improved after 1842, but although it was the potato famine in Ireland in 1845 which precipitated repeal, Peel had already been convinced, as the ministers had been in 1841, that the hardships of the poor in England were aggravated by man-made restrictions. He told Parliament:

Gloomy winters like those of 1841 and 1842 may again set in. Are those winters effaced from your memory? From mine they can never be.

You may talk of improving the habits of the working classes, introducing education amongst them, purifying their dwellings, improving their cottage, but believe me, the first step towards improvement of their social condition is an abundance of food.¹²⁷

ROGER TOMES

122. *Nonconformist*, 25 August, 1841.

123. N. McCord, *Anti-Corn Law League*, pp.103-106.

124. Ward, *Religion and society*, p.200.

125. Waddington, *Congregational History*, pp.556-64; McCord, *Anti-Corn Law League*, pp.105-106.

126. J. Morley, *Life of Richard Cobden*, 1906 [first published in 1879], p.180.

127. N. Gash, *Sir Robert Peel: the life of Sir Robert Peel after 1830*, 2nd edition, 1986, pp.580-82.

**“THERE WAS A FESTIVAL IN ROME” :
THE SHAPING OF A CONGREGATIONAL TEMPER**

Holy Father! So increase our faith that by The Holy Church we may come into Thy holier Kingdom through the grace of Christ, who is the Holiest of All. Amen.¹

That prayer concluded the Chairman's address to the 1905 May Assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. One cannot be sure about the immediate impact of that address. One cannot even be certain that the prayer was uttered. On the face of it, this was prime time: May 1905, the declining days of a discredited Tory government, on the eve of a Liberal revival beyond the dreams of even the most faithful; 9 May 1905, the first full day of a leading Free Church's most representative public gathering, in which upwards of two thousand of its most representative figures, ministerial and lay, men and women (English Congregationalists were only twelve years away from their first ordained woman minister), had assembled to hear their most representative man of that year, their Union's Chairman, Peter Taylor Forsyth, principal of one of their theological colleges, and already recognised as a theologian of unusual quality, deliver his inaugural address in the City Temple which, in 1905, was without any shadow of doubt London's, and therefore the Empire's, leading Free Church pulpit.² The Nonconformist Conscience was on one of its parades. And the Chairman's message met the hour. In its printed form it develops an argument of immense spiritual and practical power.³ At its end its hearers must have been as drained as its deliverer habitually was on such occasions. Yet what did they hear? For it was immensely long as well as immensely powerful. The official record makes it clear that only part of the address was delivered.⁴ It reads as a lecture, and a lecture was not what representative Congregationalists had come to hear on that May Tuesday morning. Yet I find it inconceivable that that prayer did not close whatever was delivered. It was natural for Forsyth to end his sermons and addresses with prayer, truly extempore prayer, carved out of his preparatory wrestling with his theme.

So much for the prayer's immediate context: now for its content and rhetoric. None of Forsyth's hearers could have done other than say "amen" to the content. It mounts from faith, to Church, to Kingdom, to Christ. The order is critical. Each element is critical. Each is set in place. Each is constant. There are no variables. A route is described and a relationship is revealed. The route is described by

1. *The Congregational Year Book* (hereafter *CYB*), 1906, p.56.
2. For Peter Taylor Forsyth (1848-1921) see *DNB*, Missing Persons.
3. "A Holy Church The Moral Guide of Society", *CYB*, 1906, pp.15-56. It was also published as a separate pamphlet by the Congregational Union of England and Wales; it was excerpted in *British Weekly*, 11 May 1905; reprinted in *Examiner*, 11 May 1905 and incorporated in P.T.Forsyth, *The Church, The Gospel and Society*, 1962, pp.5-64.
4. *CYB*, 1906, p.4.

which a collection of redeemed individuals is transformed into the people of God and the journey reveals a developing relationship – *our* faith, *Thy* Church, *Thy* Kingdom, *our* place in it, through Christ's grace. All in thirty words. Amen. But could these Edwardian Nonconformists have felt quite so easy about the rhetoric? "Holy Father"? "Holy Church"? Those who knew their Forsyth would have recalled that nine years before he had preached memorably to the Congregational Union on "The Holy Father".⁵ Even so, could a Nonconformist hear that phrase without the Pope's image flickering across his mind's eye? Could a Nonconformist hear such a phrase as "Thy Holy Church", particularly after even part of an address on "A Holy Church The Moral Guide of Society", and not compare the Congregational *Union* with Mother Church? Or the Anglo-Catholics down the road? Was such language simply the latest audacious case of refusing to let the Devil have the best words? What made such language not just possible but acceptable on so representative a public occasion?

This opens up my theme, which is to suggest, and to place in context, elements contributing perhaps to one of the more surprising, possibly to one of the most significant, and certainly to one of the most interesting changes in twentieth-century English Free Church history, and therefore in English Church history: the engagement of a major section of Free Church opinion – in many ways the most influential section of that opinion – with the idea of the Church, and ideas of churchmanship, and the consequences which that had for other shadings of Christian opinion. All sorts of contemporary pressures made that a timely thing to do. We know that now. But the light of retrospect is not the only light in which a historian works. The participants in this particular engagement had a quite natural source in their own revalued but entrenched ecclesiology. They did not need to invent this. They did not even need to rediscover it, so much as just take it down and dust it, to appreciate that their part of the tradition was more than fit to be shared. There was a new tone of confidence, edging out old inferiorities and defensiveness.

The significance of this needs stressing. It is easily minimised now that this part of the Church seems to have slipped more than most into a numerical and cultural backwater. Nonetheless, the confidently developed ecclesiology which by October 1972 had led English and Welsh Congregationalists into union with English Presbyterians, and by September 1981 into union with English, Welsh, and Scottish Churches of Christ – three by then small but still mentally significant and confessionally distinct British Protestant groups, each belonging to sizeable international confessions – would not have been possible without the climate of opinion which could have countenanced and heard that public prayer uttered on 9 May 1905. That prayer was not uttered in a vacuum.

5. This was printed in *Independent and Nonconformist*, 1 October 1896; *Christian World Pulpit*, 7 October 1896; *British Weekly*, 19 and 26 November 1896. It was incorporated in P.T. Forsyth, *The Holy Father and the Living Christ*, 1897, pp.1-95, and in P.T. Forsyth, *God the Holy Father*, 1957.

So what made it acceptable, Forsyth's personal credibility and the electricity of the occasion and the possibility that though published it was never uttered, apart?

There are, of course, insistent (although not always consistent) background factors. Despite the confidence of that prayer, one cannot ignore the defensiveness which lurks in any dissenting utterance. Defensiveness is a precondition of dissent, especially as dissent is braced and shaped by what it reacts against. In the immediate English ecclesiastical context this means the Church of England. The Prayer Book still stamps the prayers of those whose ancestors came out in protest against it in 1662. Indeed, the shape and movement of that prayer of Forsyth's is a case in point. It is a collect in miniature. In the broader Protestant context, however, the reaction is against the Church of Rome, with which there must be the ultimate engagement. There is a tempting political parallel to this double dissent. In the 1830s, for a heady moment which never quite vanished, there was a small but significant number of Radical MPs in the newly reformed House of Commons. Sensible men knew that their natural allies were the Whigs, not least because the Whigs, men of liberal inclinations born and educated to rule, were at last in command; but true Radicals were impatient of the Whigs, whom they suspected differed on all essential matters from their real enemy, the Tories, as by the shadings of a shade. The Whigs may have held the reins of power, they may even have promised a share of power, but they were at best a distraction for men of true Radical principle. The Churches of England and Rome played that sort of role in the lives of English Nonconformists.

And yet the dissenting attitude to Rome was not quite as black and white as the more rumbustious rhetoric suggests. Of course Nonconformists remembered the lessons of the Inquisition, were stirred by tales of bygone Protestant heroism, warmed to the investigative journalism which revealed and revelled in abuse in convents, pursed lips at the effeminacy of Rome, and displayed their prejudices in their choice of adjectives: "Roman" might be objective, almost respectful; there could be no respect in "Romish" or "Popish". Nonetheless, alongside the inevitable reaction, the traditionalary fear, there was also a cultural fascination, even identity. In the nineteenth century the Grand Tour was democratized into the Cook's Tour (Thomas Cook was a Baptist). European horizons enlarged the views of more British people than ever before. New layers of experience became theirs, not just classical antiquity but the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation of course, the Baroque, long vistas of development illuminating a world struggling to be free and now – such was the nineteenth century – within sight of freedom. Plenty of these new Europeans were Nonconformists. For many of them it was a northern experience. The Teutonic Spirit was a fascination of the age. But it was also an Italian experience. Thanks to John Ruskin, whose formation and rhetoric made him one of them, Venice could be understood by moral Protestants. Thanks to the Brownings, whose formation and rhetoric were even more sympathetic to the Nonconformist temper, Florence was annexed alongside Venice. Rome had no Brownings or Ruskin. It was altogether a more difficult place. But it had the Church, if only one could get at it. It had to be braved. It was

not to be missed from the itinerary of any cultural Christian imperialist. Rome's Church of Scotland is a telling case in point. Beginning as an outpost of the Free Church of Scotland, the present St. Andrew's was opened in January 1885 on the Via Venti Settembre amidst the grand administrative plant necessary for the new Italy's capital. Though purpose built, the church was disguised as a palazzo, but it was a Florentine palazzo, not a Roman one, its interior a plain, airy Scottish room, not quite no-nonsense, however, because nonsense threatens to break out in the ceiling and there is something irrepressibly Italian about the pulpit and platform. It is a room which has tentatively embarked on cultural dialogue.⁶

There is a political factor to be added to this cultural one: the extent to which politically active Nonconformists, notwithstanding populist pressures and their own instinctive prejudices, supported, or declined to oppose, Catholic claims to civic equality. Ireland, of course, was a consistent and complex testing ground; Catholic Emancipation, 1829, was the most obvious single issue, and a relatively simple one; more suggestive was the "Papal Aggression" – the restoration of a Catholic hierarchy in 1850, with the inevitable backlash in the shape of the Ecclesiastical Titles Act of 1851. What Roman Catholics called their bishops and where they put them was no public business of Congregationalists or anybody else. By no means all held that line, but it was consistently taken by Dissent's sharpest and most systematic political writer, Edward Miall, editor of *The Nonconformist*, a man whose influence has never been adequately assessed by posterity.⁷ It led to a variant of the classic English attitude: "Some of my best friends are Roman Catholics but..." For many Nonconformists it was more a case of: "I have no truck with Rome, but..." And that is an attitude which allows for change.

This sounds crude, but it illuminates what was in fact a far from simple encounter which has much to say about the interwoven fabric of British Church life. Here is Harriet Needham, an elderly English Protestant gentlewoman, writing to her son, Robert Raikes Needham, a youngish clergyman of the Church of England, in 1896:

I dined at Cousin William Dobson's. They had much to tell of their recent visit to Italy. They received Holy Communion from the hands of the Pope, in company with several Cardinals, and they look back upon that event as

6. This entirely pleasing atmosphere is accentuated by the two drawing-room chairs behind the table, and not wholly corrected by the Celtic cross above the pulpit against a generous panel of padded blue silk. Rome's most telling British building, however, is the British School of 1911, Lutyens's interpretation of the first storey of Wren's St. Paul's taken from Ludgate Hill and secularised into a Roman villa for the Valle Giulia; can ever there have been a subtler carrying coals to Newcastle?
7. For Miall (1809-81) see *DNB*. This attitude forms a principle theme of T. Larsen, "Friends of Religious Equality: The Politics of the Nonconformists, 1847-1867". Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Stirling, 1997, esp. pp.230-244:

one of the most blessed in their life's history. To me it is a far more blessed thing to know we have free access at all times to the sacred Presence Chamber of the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity.⁸

And here, from 1904, is that same gentlewoman's reaction to her son's sight of Pope Pius X: "she was scarcely interested, whilst the knowledge that I had trodden the Appian Way, where the feet of St. Paul once trod, awoke in her the keenest interest."⁹

There are three immediate points to note about this. There is no escaping the evangelical Protestant tone; there is no escaping the engagement with the mission-conscious Protestant's historical heart of the matter – where the feet of St. Paul once trod; and there is no escaping the visit of two members of her family, her son and her Cousin William, to Rome and their fascination with Rome's most distinguished inhabitant. Now probe further. That evangelical gentlewoman's cousin William was a Roman Catholic, one of the three representatives of the English Catholic laity at the Jubilee of Pius IX. No wonder they were full of it. And her clergyman son belonged to the Catholic wing of the English Church. He had been taken up, as a young ordinand, by Bishop King of Lincoln, and his reminiscence, *Just for Remembrance* ("Preface By The Bishop of Lewes"), outlines a standard Anglican life of the more catholic sort: St. Martin's Worcester, St. Michael's Handsworth, Christchurch Priory, St. Patrick's Hove. It was representative in other ways too. Needham had worked out that his was the twenty-sixth identifiable generation of Needhams to have lived in the Peak District, prospering adequately as types of the rural and semi-rural middle classes, an army officer here, a lawyer there, commerce of course, and edging into landed gentry. Except that the last five or six generations, some at least since 1714, had not been Anglicans at all. They had been Dissenters, a mix of Old and New Dissent, with a Lutheran infusion; and Bishop King's protégé had first trained for the Congregational ministry. He thought highly of his Dissenting college. He liked and respected its tutors. In no sense did he witness against his formation: it had informed his catholicity. And liberating influence though Bishop King undoubtedly proved, so too was Dr. Reynolds, president of his Nonconformist college, who wrote thus to his conforming pupil:

I need not say that your letter has fallen on me like a thunderbolt out of a blue sky... Come and see me next week... I am much grieved that you will very shortly, if not at once, leave our brotherhood. I was counting on your presence... So far as the honour and claim of the College go, you are perfectly within their lines, but so far as the personal feeling of the entire staff is concerned, such an event is one of considerable anxiety and sorrow.

8. R.R.N. [Robert Raikes Needham], *Just for Remembrance*, Eastbourne, n.d. [c.1940] p.16.

9. *Ibid.*

However, conscience is king, and I will never try to disturb a deep conviction of this kind by personal considerations. Wherever you go, I shall love you, and watch your progress with great interest, and with prayers that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you.¹⁰

Dr. Reynolds is part of my theme, but my immediate point is that this English clergyman's social and spiritual progress is more a matter of convergence and development than of antithesis and reaction. It illustrates a temper. My remaining concern is with that temper as it was to be found within the Dissent which Needham had now left. It can be explored with particular reference to a building, an assembly, and some publications: to structure, concourse, and discourse, the whole expressive of order, of *ecclesia*.

First the building. It is at Walpole, in Suffolk, on the edge of a straggling, wholly rural village. Although services are now only occasionally held, it has been a place of worship since the 1640s and the building itself is older.¹¹ Its essential arrangements have changed little since then, and such changes as there have been tend to conform rather than break the continuity.

It is clear from the building's exterior that it is old and domestic. That useful word "vernacular" comes to mind. Here is a day-to-day place, natural to its setting, unpretentious but not undignified, homely but certainly not small. It is not rambling, though that is the impression it leaves. If we had to place such a building socially, we would place it in the middle.

The interior confirms these feelings: the age, the dignity, the domestic atmosphere of affectionate, understated respectability. It is in that sense an easy building. It is also an expectant building. The seating arrangements make it clear that this house is a meeting-house. One seldom meets without a purpose, hence the expectancy.

Although the seating appears haphazard, there is an order, even hierarchy, to it. That is to say, it tells of a community, probably widely drawn, of families, indeed of households, networked together. The network's intersections can be followed in the graveyard, which is where – had this been a farmhouse rather than a meeting house – the garden would have been.

There is certainly order at the focal point of pulpit and table. Here is concentrated the meeting's main ritual, which is the ritual of the Word, breathed,

10. Letter of 5 September, 1884, R.R.N., *op. cit.*, p.25. Although in practice training men for the Congregational ministry, Needham's College, Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire, had been founded by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, to train ministers regardless of denomination. For Edward King (1829-1910) and Henry Robert Reynolds (1825-1896) see *DNB*.

11. See J. Browne, *History of Congregationalism, and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk*. 1877, pp.437-40 and E.W. Newby, *History of Independency in Halesworth and District*, Halesworth, 1936. The building is now in the care of the Historic Chapels Trust.

proclaimed, explored, explained, shouted. Here is the place for breaking the Word, Word as read, as expounded, as sung, as prayed, as released to each pew from table or pulpit through the agency of a minister called by God as recognised by his hearers in this place. It wings its way to each, for this is a place where each person, man, woman, child, is individualised, though they have come here, and sit here together, in their families and their households and their networks. Here meets a complete society, yet gathered from the wider society, and at its core are – in the Gospel sense – saints.

There is nothing passive about such a place, for words can strike home. Words can be deeds and the cause of deeds: that is, if they elicit a response. And that response provokes its own ritual: the settling down for the sermon, the careful placing and surreptitious sucking of peppermints, the smoothing of handkerchiefs for a nap or a cough, the incense of mothballs, lavender, and wood; the insensible changes of attitude. For if nobody here would kneel to pray, some might stand (as freemen before the King), though most would sit, an unsatisfactory word for what some interpret as a crouch, or a semi-kneel, head barely bent, or bent reverently yet conveniently cupped in the fingers or palm of a hand, rural prototypes for Rodin's thinker. And they might sit for the hymns, singing them unaccompanied, the note pitched by a tuning fork; or accompanied by a scratch band; or by a harmonium or American organ, cost rather than conservatism explaining the absence of a proper organ, for rural conservatism can be overstated and wide networks can be the channels for surprising things. Change is as much a matter of convenience and practicality as it is of fashion. Even in such a wordy place as this there is the problem of literacy, or poor sight. So hymns and psalms are lined, the words given out, then sung, line by line; and pity the poor innovator. Do hymns have to be lined by line? Might they not be lined by verse? Are some not so well known that lining is redundant? At what point has the nearest school so educated the meeting's children that you cease to line since all can read?

There remains the most telling ritual of all: the ordinance, the monthly communion, sometimes quarterly, yet held regularly and solemnly, for which the minister presides at the table, assisted by the deacons, the meeting's leading lay office-holders, elected like him by the meeting's members. Together they commemorate that last, or first, supper, serving their fellow men and women, in their seats, with bread and wine, the latter from cups, though not yet from the individual glasses introduced by hygiene-conscious people, alert to infection and the plague of TB.

But *whom* are they serving? Here we come to the heart of the matter, the question of polity. We are back to order. This meeting is stately Independent or Congregational. The words have become interchangeable. They are very speaking words, for here the Word confronts each individual who must make a decision as to the right response; and here such individuals congregate.

Their congregating is not a matter of chance, for they believe in a particular way of organising themselves. A group of them, men and women, have covenanted with each other to walk in scriptural fellowship together and with God as revealed

in Christ, obedient in observing His ordinances of communion and baptism, in attending public worship and also the meetings of members held, usually monthly, to order the fellowship's life, mission, and relationships. *These* are the *church*. They are the Church, catholic yet localised, in that place, autonomous, though for matters of education, mission, and general convenience they associate themselves with like-minded churches in the county, indeed in the country. Thus there are county unions of such churches, and from 1831 there is a Congregational Union of England and Wales. But it is they who are the Church, electing their officeholders, calling their minister, acting under biblical warrant, standing of their own choice on their own feet and yet obedient – to the Word (found authoritatively in the Bible), to the Church (ordered in their covenanted fellowship), and to the individual conscience (ordered by their conscious act of membership). Autonomy, of church, or individual, is in equipoise with obedience. Focused here and networked through the county and thence countrywide, is a distinct mentality. This seventeenth-century rural meeting-house, surviving in 1998 as it was essentially in 1878, 1798, or 1698, speaks of a distinct order in society, in worship, in church structure, quite as representative as those Catholic Churches to be found in apparently isolated countryside in central Lancashire, and indeed quite as representative as the parish churches of the National Church.

Now translate this meeting-house mentality to what is apparently a quite different sort of meeting, an earlier variant of the one which P.T. Forsyth chaired and addressed in 1905. This meeting is held in October 1869. The Congregational Union of England and Wales held two assemblies each year; in London in May and in the provinces in October. The attendance at both was similar, although the autumnal accent was more regional. The 1869 Congregational Autumnals were held at Wolverhampton, mainly in the Queen Street Chapel. Two years earlier towns like Wolverhampton had seen their electorates rise enormously because Mr. Disraeli's administration had given their male householders the vote, which was why Mr. Gladstone was now in power.¹² Enough is known of the attendance at these meetings for us to trace in them the social, political, and commercial outworking of the networks suggested by such meeting-houses as Walpole's. They can also be broken down into individuals who can be given a cultural and literary clothing as well as a spiritual one. An understanding of such an auditory allows for an understanding of their representative figure, their Chairman.

Their Chairman in 1869 is Robert William Dale, a Londoner in his fortieth year, who has lately leapt to attention as the leading minister in Birmingham.¹³ For the next twenty-five years he will be respected beyond his communion as pastor, theologian, educationalist, politician, polemicist, and historian. Like Forsyth in 1905, Dale in 1869 addressed the social and political issues of the age seizing the

12. Wolverhampton's electorate in 1832 was 1,700; in 1868 it was 15,772, in 1874 it was 24,406; J. Vincent and M. Stenton eds., *McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book: British Election Results 1832-1918*, 8th edn., Brighton, p.322.

13. For R.W. Dale (1829-1895) see *DNB*.

high ground. Like Forsyth he takes care to place them in much more than an island setting. The world is held firmly in view. His May theme was "On Christ and the Controversies of Christendom" and his October theme was "The Holy Spirit in Relation to the Ministry, the Worship, and the Work of the Church".

The controversies of Christendom were with Rome and unbelief. That was standard Victorian evangelical platform fare. The rhetoric, however, was far from standard. This is how he began his Wolverhampton address:

In the summer of 1867 there was a festival in Rome...¹⁴

One can imagine the nation's representative Congregationalists settling down for some comfortingly ritual Pope-bashing. In 1867 and 1868 the Church of England, the Church in Ireland, and ritualism, had held centre-stage in their Chairmen's addresses. Now it was Rome's turn. In fact what they heard was a riveting account of the eighteenth centenary of the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul. For several minutes this Protestant assembly was transported to Rome. With Dale they stood in "one of the most magnificent structures ever consecrated to the worship of the Saviour of Mankind", gathered under "its stupendous dome". With him they saw saints made:

The excitement of the festival was intensified, and its joy perfected by the homage which was done to martyrs and confessors who, in more recent times, were inspired with the same unshaken faith, the same ardent devotion, the same heroic constancy in suffering, the same victorious hope of immortal life and blessedness, and to whom, on that day, a place was decreed among the shining company of the saints.¹⁵

And they too, like "the head of the Roman Communion", were "surrounded by the representatives of two hundred million of the faithful".

There were men of every complexion, of every climate, and of every tongue. They had come from the north and from the south, from the far east and from the far west. There were bishops and archbishops from nearly all the countries of Europe. The Patriarchs of Constantinople, of Alexandria, of Antioch, and of Jerusalem were there, who claim to be the successors of Chrysostom, Athanasius, Ignatius, and Cyril. They came from India and China, and the Islands of the Indian Seas; from Cincinnati, Baltimore, and St. Louis, from Canada, and from Brazil. There were Greeks, Armenians, Maronites, Chaldeans, Syrians, and Copts. Even at the most famous of the Councils there was never present so large a proportion

14. *CYB*, 1870, p.58.

15. *Ibid.*

of the whole number of the bishops of the Catholic world: and there were forty thousand priests.

When choir after choir, and the vast assembly itself burst into song, and the exulting tones of the *Te Deum* rose at once from tens of thousands of voices of "all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues," who can wonder that there were some who felt as if innumerable angels and the glorified spirits of the just had descended from the city of God, to unite in the worship and rapture of the church below?¹⁶

And there, in St. Peter's, it was as if a second Pentecost were in waiting. And there, in St. Peter's, were England's representative Cromwellian Independents, congregating in Wolverhampton two years later, sharing in the Church Catholic through the words of their representative man of the year. The effrontery of such a thing in England in 1869.

In fact, Dale was no more selling the Protestant pass than he was rubbishing Rome. His priorities were clear, but he possessed the prime preacher-teacher's gift of realising best what he yet distrusted most; and his Wolverhampton address to those serried ministers and lay magnificoes was certainly teaching. He went on to explain how this eighteenth centennial of the martyrdoms of Saints Peter and Paul, set in the current context of peril for the nineteenth-century Roman Church as problematic as was ever faced by the Church of Peter and Paul, was to lead to a Council: "a result which may prove to be one of the most momentous events in the history of Christendom" (and time has yet to prove this Birmingham Dissenter wrong). His stern condemnation of the *Roman system* could not disguise his respect for the *Catholic claim*:

The rulers of the Roman Church are not ignorant of the temper of the age. They have measured the strength of that great movement against which the Church has to struggle. They have seen that... it is reorganising the constitution of European society; and they have resolved to meet it in the plenitude [*sic*] of an authority declared to be derived from the supernatural illumination of the Holy Ghost.

...[T]here is a certain moral grandeur in [this] which no abhorrence of Roman superstition can make us insensible... [T]here is something in the spectacle of this ancient Church reasserting its supernatural claims, which may not only provoke controversy, but suggest deep and serious reflection.

We also profess to believe in the Holy Ghost... Rome, in an age of universal scepticism, has declared her unchangeable faith in the supernatural presence of the Holy Ghost in ecclesiastical rulers and Councils; she is

16. *Ibid.*, pp.58-9.

about to act upon that faith in magnificent defiance of the derision of nearly all Europe. I wish to inquire this morning whether our nobler creed is held with the same firm and vigorous grasp, and whether it is illustrated and consistently maintained in the actual life and organization and customs of the Congregational Churches of this country.¹⁷

Thus are St. Peter's Rome, Queen Street Wolverhampton, and Walpole too, caught in the same catholicity by an imperial sweep. Thus, by extension, might the flawed, petty magnificence of Rome sit side by side with the flawed, petty magnificence of the Pilgrim Fathers. To have heard those words at Wolverhampton in 1869, and then to have taken them back to the Peak District, or to Suffolk...

A year later Walpole ceased to have a resident minister of its own. That was no more a reflection of faithlessness after over 200 years of witness than it was of the irrelevance to local need of such utterances at Dale's. It was rather a consequence of mounting agricultural depression and cumulative changes in the whole economic infrastructure of rural England. Congregationalism was not, in fact, a denomination of the great cities whatever its influence on their movers and moulders: it belonged more truly to the county and market towns, the countryside a little thickened and congested, places in which every shopkeeper was half a farmer, as one of its novelists memorably put it.¹⁸ It was a church for farmers and freeholders. That is where its ministers had come from. Now they were vulnerable. The farmers' children were scattering into the towns as teachers, journalists, shopkeepers; producers were becoming communicators and middlemen. Continuities were shifting, stretching, sometimes snapping. Such pressures concentrated thoughtful minds on history, in a century which was determinedly appropriating history as a useful discipline for the modern mind. R.W.Dale's Wolverhampton address presupposed not just nerve but a pretty well-developed historical nerve in speaker and hearers alike. In October 1880 John Browne, minister at Wrentham, just such a church as Walpole, on the Norfolk-Suffolk border, spoke to the Congregational Union (meeting, as it happened, in R.W. Dale's own church, Carr's Lane, Birmingham), on the "Religious Condition of Suffolk".¹⁹ He reflected on his experience of the past thirty years: how, of 100 who had joined his church in that time, one now ministered in the midlands, one taught at a teachers' training college, three taught in girls' boarding schools, one was matron of an orphanage: none was lost to the church, but all were lost to Suffolk.²⁰ Browne was an educated, energetic, village minister, whose history of

17. *Ibid.*, pp.60-1.

18. "Mark Rutherford" (William Hale White), *The Revolution in Tanners Lane*, 1893, p. 264.

19. *CYB*, 1880, pp.62, 158-161.

20. *CYB*, 1880, p.160. His predecessor's son, James Ewing Ritchie (b. 1820), became a successful London journalist writing under the pseudonym of "Christopher Crayon".

Congregationalism in Norfolk and Suffolk, a conscious stewarding of the tradition, remains a foundational work.²¹

It is to the development of this historical nerve and, by association, of the ecclesiological nerve that this paper now turns.

Dale's recapturing of Rome 1867 for Wolverhampton 1869 was bold but apposite. It spoke not just to tourists and newspaper readers but to a new breed of philanthropists, "the sentimentalists in drab" who were beginning to visit foreign watering-places and capitals for international conferences. The Peace Society was a widely-known example; the World's Alliance of YMCAs, not yet based in Geneva, was approaching its fifteenth year. These eminently practical, and often political, occasions came naturally to prosperous people who were active in mission-conscious churches. The world of the NGO was already in its infancy. International denominationalism and Pandenominationalism were on the march, though seldom on the same parade-ground. In 1891 Dale would be Moderator of the first International Congregational Council, meeting in Boston, Mass; and at Wolverhampton in 1869 Dale introduced a session on the "Oecumenical Council at Rome", which considered two proposals from the Swiss Protestant historian of the Reformation, Merle D'Aubigné. The first was that special prayers should be offered by all Evangelical and Protestant Christians during the second week of December, "that being the week when the Roman Council will be opened"; the second was "that a year hence a general Council of Protestants from all countries be held at Geneva."²² It is therefore interesting that the Congregational Union appears to have made no direct reference to an international council closer to home. The first Lambeth Conference had met in September 1867. Notwithstanding the controversies which led to it, and in which Nonconformists took a lively interest, the conference itself was a modest affair even though it gave shape to the concept of the world-wide Anglican communion. Lambeth's seventy-six bishops (out of a possible 144) pale beside what was happening in Rome. Perhaps

21. John Browne, BA. (London), (1823-1886) "frequently spoken of as the 'Cromwellian preacher' ", was ordained at Wrentham on 1 February 1849, the bicentenary of the church's formation. Browne, *Congregationalism in Norfolk and Suffolk*, *op. cit.*, pp.421-433, esp. 433; see also *CYB*, 1887, pp.174-177.

22. *CYB*, 1870, pp.90-1. The intermediary was the Liberal M.P. for Perth, the Honble. Arthur Kinnaid (1814-87), future 10th Baron Kinnaid. Kinnaid was an invaluable linkman who deserves more prominence than he has been given. Impeccably connected to the Irish, Scottish and English nobility, he was an aristocratic banker who bridged the Evangelical wing of the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, and Congregationalism. He was a pillar of the YMCA and his wife, Mary Jane Hoare, was a founder of the YWCA. The Congregational Union's response was judicious: Dale "called on the assembled brethren to consider the subject in their several homes, and take such courses as might seem to them best adapted to promote the great interests of Protestantism and Evangelicalism throughout the world". The trouble was that the European situation in 1869-70 was hardly conducive to great Councils.

Lambeth's significance was missed by otherwise alert observers. Perhaps Dale's switching to Roman horizons symbolises the extent to which the long engagement with the National Church was already of secondary importance to people with catholic horizons.

Early in 1874 Dale lectured for the YMCA in London's Exeter Hall. The place and the patronage could not have been more protestant and his title would appear to confirm this: *Protestantism: Its Ultimate Principle*.²³ The Wolverhampton enthusiasms were decidedly moderated for Exeter Hall's Christian Young Men, though much of their substance survived. There *was* a quarrel with Rome, of course there was: but the high tone remained. Here was a man who a few years later called himself a "Congregationalist heart and soul", and felt it "worthwhile to be hung for Congregationalism", and coat-trailingly observed that while Methodism "is simply anxious to make men Christians; Congregationalism is anxious that men who are Christians should realise in their Church life Christ's own conception of what their church life should be,"²⁴ who recognised that national churches could not be other than political, and so were bound to be snares whatever their polity, but who also recognised that individual Christian citizenship was a duty fired in the crucible of the Church, the divinely instituted Christian community; who knew that the community of the Church in the light (and shadow) of the Cross was the prerequisite for action in the civic community; who knew, therefore, that the Church literally conditioned politics. No wonder Rome engaged his attention as city, system, and history. It forced him, as the Church of England hardly did, to justify his own stand.

He took that stand sturdily: "the true glory of the nation began with its great controversy with Rome... If England ceases to be Protestant, the change must affect the chief monuments of our national literature; we shall have to re-write our national history; and to break with our national traditions."²⁵ The bulwark of those traditions was Protestantism, or rather, it was the triple cord of Protestantism's ultimate principle: the Right of Private Judgment, the Authority of Scripture, and Justification by Faith. That was clear, but what was also clear was that Protestantism, like Romanism, was a matter of order:

The Right of Private Judgment is not the right to form no judgment at all on matters of transcendent practical importance... [for] when God reveals Himself to every man, it is the duty of every man to receive the revelation as God gives it... We Protestants... re-assert the ancient rights of the commonalty of the Christian Church. We reclaim the prerogatives which

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23. R.W. Dale, *Protestantism: Its Ultimate Principle* [hereafter *Protestantism*], 1874. My copy belonged to a run-of-the-mill Congregational minister from R.R. Needham's generation, whose wife belonged to Dale's Church in Carr's Lane, and whose own ministry included periods in Wolverhampton and Norfolk.
24. Quoted in A.W.W. Dale, *The Life of R.W. Dale of Birmingham*, 1898, pp.352-3.
25. *Protestantism*, pp.10-11.

the Bishop of Rome has usurped... [T]he right to listen... when God speaks to us... The direct access of the soul to God – the direct access of God to the soul.²⁶

There turned the controversy with Rome: “The Roman Church is not only unjust to the individual Christian: it strips the Church – the organised society of Christian men – of the honours and powers which are conferred on it by Christ, and which are necessary for the full manifestation of the glory of the kingdom of God on earth of which Christ is the Prince. In the Roman communion, the Church vanishes and only a priesthood is left; and by the recent decision of the Vatican Council, the priesthood itself... is bound hand and foot...”²⁷ For Dale Church and State, properly understood, were indeed inseparable, foretastes of the Kingdom and guarantors, if only Christians exercised their citizens’ rights (for such rights presuppose duties), of a truly evangelical order. And what an *evangelical order* might be, Dale deftly illuminated for his Exeter Hall young men:

Come home to God, and come at once; and as soon as you come, the Father you have forgotten will throw His arms around you, and tell you that there is still a place for you... and that in His own heart your place has never been lost; – transform this into a doctrine, and you have the doctrine of Justification by Faith.²⁸

Dale’s affirmation of Protestantism’s ultimate principle is thus a demonstration that there is more to evangelical Protestantism, especially his own Congregationalism, than pragmatic anarchy. It is a matter of order, and doctrine. It has an ecclesiology.

In 1870 Dale had contributed to a book of essays. His own title was characteristically provocative: “The Doctrine of the Real Presence and of the Lord’s Supper”. The volume’s editor was Robert Needham’s future college principal, Henry Robert Reynolds, and his title was “The Forgiveness and Absolution of Sins”. It comes, therefore, as no surprise to learn that the collection’s overall title was *Ecclesia*.²⁹ Its aim was “to give combined utterance to some of the theological, ecclesiastical, and political principles” of the “Free Churches of Britain”.³⁰

Ecclesia set neither the Thames nor the Tiber on fire, but it was sufficiently well received for its editor to publish a companion volume, and to send his contribution

26. *Ibid.*, pp.31-2, 35, 42-43.

27. *Ibid.*, pp.91-2.

28. *Ibid.*, p.83.

29. H.R. Reynolds ed. *Ecclesia: Church Problems Considered in a Series of Essays*, 1870.

30. *Ibid.*, “Advertisement”. This was a significant use of the phrase “Free Churches”, gaining wider currency in the 1860s, though hitherto tending to have a Scottish connotation, or to be used by the small and ultra Protestant Free Church of England.

to that, on "The Holy Catholic Church", to Archbishop Manning, who promised to read it "with care and interest".³¹ Well-disposed outsiders felt that it showed the power of Congregationalism's Broad Churchmen, and R.H. Hutton of *The Spectator* assured Reynolds that it "is a wonderfully better volume than *The Anglicans and the Age*, which I noticed last week, wherein the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol and his friends do their best."³²

There were nine contributors. As was inevitable in the Congregational tradition, eight had at some point sustained an influential pastorate (and the preacher's rhetoric and inability to be sparing with words stamps the volume throughout), and the ninth had served for twenty-five years in Calcutta, a missionary in the classic tradition. Eight were masterful, entrepreneurial men, and several could have been described as ecclesiastics had they been in other communions. Six of them became Chairman of the Union, one of them twice. The youngest was thirty-five, the oldest sixty-three; they spanned the years 1807 to 1918. They differed significantly from each other on several issues, notably politics, but though one was a "Blowbroth" and another a pre-incarnation of Tony Benn, they belonged together to Congregationalism's broad ministerial mainstream.

Their overlapping concerns in *Ecclesia* began with history and ended in overseas mission, but theology provided the purposive thread, leading through the present into the future. Their prime engagement was with their own responsibility as public Christians, but that led to other engagements. There was, inevitably, a constant one with the Church of England; the issue of an established church seemed especially pressing in 1870, however much the terms of engagement were already shifting. And the way these men shaped their history in fact made the national Church's status almost an irrelevance. These men had travelled as well as read.³³ They were well aware of, and did not dismiss, the Eastern Churches,³⁴ though they knew that their real engagement with history lay as yet on a western rather than a global scale. They were staking their claim in the western Church, measuring themselves in the light of its history, and seeing themselves not just as witnesses to truth, but as possible catalysts in the movement to fuller truth. There was not yet any sense of ecclesiological convergence; but parallels (which, of

31. H.R. Reynolds ed., *Ecclesia*, 2nd Series, 1871. *Henry Robert Reynolds DD His Life and Letters Edited by His Sisters, with Portraits*, 1898, pp.238-9.

32. *Ibid.*, p.232. The bishop was C.J. Ellicott (d. 1905), formerly Hulsean Professor at Cambridge, whom Disraeli had hoped to appoint to Canterbury in 1868.

33. What, whom, where, and when, they read is a vital quadrilateral of prior questions which cannot be answered in this paper, but these were learned men whose scholarship was broader than that of the auto-didacts who are often assumed to have furnished the leaven of Nonconformist knowledge.

34. And one delicious footnote encircles the globe: "The rule of Columbanus is more in the key of the Asiatic monastic system than that of St. Benedict. Several features of Buddhist monasticism seem to be recalled by the Celtic missionary from the far West – a likeness which it might be interesting further to explore". J. Baldwin Brown, "The 'Religious Life' and Christian Society", *Ecclesia*, 1870, p.150 n.

course, never converge) had been recognised and a platform for debate, the sort which might lead to dialogue, had been mounted.

Dale's was the essay which was likeliest to arrest the outsider and which made insiders sit up; it had clearly been on his mind when delivering his Chairman's addresses in 1869. He condemned the Zwinglianism of his fellow Independents as roundly as he condemned the inconsistencies of Rome and Canterbury (and allowing a degree of consistency, however spurious, to Anglican ritualists). He captured his readers at once with a vigorous account of what happened when Charles the Bold asked for a definitive rendering of the ancient Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist (a word used by several of the essayists) and Ratramnus responded, and what, over the centuries, was the long consequence of that.³⁵ The same high tone gleams elsewhere. H.R.Reynolds could write quite naturally of "principles common to all members of the Holy Catholic Church, and to all Evangelical believers in the Lord Jesus Christ," and of "the great revelation which is expressed alike in the writings of the early fathers, in the decrees of the Council of Trent, in the Thirty-nine Articles, and in the Westminster and Augsburg Confessions."³⁶ John Stoughton of Kensington was quite clear from his examination of "Primitive Ecclesia" that "a new social law entwined itself round the communion of the body and blood of Christ" and he was quite clear that it was *law and order* of which he was writing: "Faith, including theology; fellowship, including discipline; and worship, including prayer, praise, baptism, and the Lord's Supper".³⁷ He was also quite clear that "Independency, cut off from the parent stock of truth, and engrafted upon human nature, as we often find it, is likely to produce 'very sour crabs' ".³⁸ Most suggestive of all, however, was his view of the State:

I must confess that I cannot regard the State simply as political and economical – a nation is not a mere aggregate of human bodies, it is a congregation of human souls, and as such it stands in a moral and spiritual position towards God, religion, and the Church.³⁹

Henry Allon of Islington was supremely (and wordily) judicious when it came to worship, but there could be no doubt of his drift. "He only reverences the past intelligently who accepts all its fruitage, who recognises the spirit of Ambrose in

35. R.W. Dale, "The Doctrine of the Real Presence and of the Lord's Supper", *Ibid.*, pp.315-390.

36. H.R. Reynolds, "The Forgiveness and Absolution of Sins", *Ibid.*, pp.243-312. esp. pp.252-3.

37. J. Stoughton, "Primitive Ecclesia: Its Authoritative Principles and its Modern Representations", *Ibid.*, pp.1-55, esp. pp.8-9. For John Stoughton (1807-1897) see *DNB*. His son's firm, Hodder and Stoughton, published *Ecclesia*.

38. *Ibid.*, pp.44-5.

39. *Ibid.*, p.45.

the latest sacred poet, and the spirit of Gregory in the latest sacred musician".⁴⁰ This was liturgical Mrs. Beetonism: first recognise your Ambrose and your Gregory, and *then* cook up your modern worship.

Punchiest and most suggestive of all was Baldwin Brown of Brixton.⁴¹ Brown was a notorious Independent. His spanking new Brixton Independent Church had recently been opened.⁴² He took a decidedly independent line in *Ecclesia*. On the face of it, his thesis was comforting:

...in truth, Roman Christianity has only three centuries of history; dating from the time when the Papal See formally and finally rejected the principles of reformation. Then Romanism was born...But up to the time of the disruption, and the development of what is after all but the great Papal sect, the movements of Christian society... were altogether too large, too deep, too human, too Christian, to be covered even by the ample name of Rome.⁴³

The point made, he could afford to ask bold questions, presupposing bold, affirmative answers: "What would the Europe of the Middle Ages have been without the Popes?... What would the Middle Ages have been without their Saints... what would the Middle Ages have been without their hermits, monks, and nuns?" "In truth, the history of the Church, up to the time of the development of a national life and a national literature in those Western nations – which dates roundly from the thirteenth century – is in the largest sense the history of mediaeval society."⁴⁴ Brown looked at medieval monks, and saw in them both "the devoted soldiers of the Roman Church" and "from the first the distinctly Evangelical element in the Church."⁴⁵

The Roman Church during the Middle Age was just a rude battery of force, the main current of which was Christian, which had to act on a state of society too hard and gross to be acted upon by more subtle and spiritual means...

But one thing the Church accomplished, though at a cost morally, which makes it difficult to strike the balance of gain: she wrought the facts and truths of Christianity into the very texture of the intellectual, the social, and the political life of humanity... the things which were of *supreme* importance were in the custody of the Church...

40. H.Allon, "The Worship of the Church". *Ibid.*, pp.393-462, esp. p.435. For Henry Allon (1818-1892) see *DNB*.

41. For James Baldwin Brown (1820-1884) see *DNB*.

42. It is now (1998) a Roman Catholic Church.

43. Brown, *art cit.*, pp.133-191, esp. p.134.

44. *Ibid.*, pp.134, 138.

45. *Ibid.*, pp.172, 169.

Without the monks, this work of the Church would probably have been impossible.⁴⁶

Regardless of the thesis, such things were usefully addressed by such a man to such a readership.

Inevitably such quotations are selective. They do little justice to the checks and balances and qualifications habitual to shrewd and weighty men. They did not of themselves change a denomination's direction. One cannot really predict where any of these men might have stood a hundred years on, though one might guess about most of them. Nonetheless they assume a wide significance in view of the direction that *was* taken over the next century by their successors.⁴⁷ They help to explain how a man like W.E. Orchard could be called to a prime Congregational pastorate and sustain a credible, if eccentric, *Congregational* ministry.⁴⁸ They also, less eccentrically, provide a context in which to place that supposedly isolated genius, P.T. Forsyth.

That context can only be outlined here, but it was both contradictory and predictable.⁴⁹ Baldwin Brown was a great personal influence on the young Forsyth; he assisted at Forsyth's ordination and he officiated at Forsyth's first marriage; the rhythm and vigour of his style can be traced in Forsyth's, and Forsyth preached memorably on the occasion of Brown's death. Dale was a comparable but profounder influence on the middle-aged Forsyth. They met in the early 1890s and Dale was deeply impressed. When Forsyth became minister at Cambridge, Dale's son and biographer was one of his deacons.⁵⁰ And throughout, from his more liberal youth to his more conservative maturity, Forsyth demonstrated an immense sense of the idea of the Church; only Dale approached that sense among fellow Congregationalists. The young man who could write in 1877: "We have been delivered by the grace of God and Luther from the church" also wrote in the same letter, "We have yet, as a church, to lean simply on Christ."⁵¹ The word "Church"

46. *Ibid.*, pp.176-7.

47. And at Wolverhampton in October 1869 J.B. Paton, of Nottingham, delivered a paper "which led to a lengthened and animated debate". Its subject "A Possible Basis of Union Between Presbyterians and Independents". *CYB*, 1870, pp.89, 105-110. Paton was a heavyweight on Dale's lines. For John Brown Paton (1830-1911) see *DNB*.

48. William Edwin Orchard (1877-1955), was ordained as a Presbyterian minister at St. Paul's, Enfield, in 1904; sustained a famous ministry at the King's Weigh House Congregational Church, near Grosvenor Square, 1914-32, and was received into the Roman Catholic Church in Rome on 2 June 1932. See Elaine Kay and R. Mackenzie, *W.E. Orchard: A Study in Christian Exploration*, Oxford 1990.

49. The best studies of Forsyth are W.L. Bradley, *P.T. Forsyth: The Man and His Work*, 1952, and T. Hart, ed., *Justice the True and Only Mercy: Essays on the Life and Theology of Peter Taylor Forsyth*, Edinburgh 1995.

50. For Sir A.W.W. Dale (1855-1921), Fellow of Trinity Hall and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Liverpool, see *Who Was Who 1916-1928*.

51. That letter was to *The English Independent*, 8 November 1877, quoted in Bradley, *op. cit.*, p.29.

was prominent in the title of his books and though he never crowned his writing with the book on the Church for which his development cried out, his views are easily charted.⁵² At Cambridge from 1894 to 1901, faced by the ineffable superiority of a University at whose edges he stood yet from which in all real respects he was excluded, he wrote two polemical but characteristically telling series of lectures: *The Charter of the Church* and *Rome, Reform and Reaction*.⁵³ These are best seen as Dale's *Protestantism: Its Ultimate Principle* twenty years after. In them too condemnation tugs with admiration. Then, some twenty years further on, came *The Church and the Sacraments* (1917), with its recognition that

A bodiless spirit of good will never master the well-organised spirit of the world. The Spirit of God, as it has a historic Word, must have a historic Church. We have to face a kingdom, and almost a Church, of evil. Some organised and tangible unity is forced on us as we realise the nature of the work we face.⁵⁴

That statement suggests one interpretation of what Congregationalists set themselves to do over the next fifty to sixty years. It is not simply the product of one remarkable man's powerful intellect. It is not even the immediate product of a World War which he found unimaginably agonizing. It is the distillation of a more representative frame of mind which had been steadily shaping at least for several decades, certainly from the 1860s.

A postscript is in order, because it widens the significance of the development which has been suggested in this paper. The prayer of Forsyth's which I have used as epigraph, has been used by Keith Clements, the Baptist church historian and theologian, to end an essay on Forsyth's political theology.⁵⁵ In his essay Clements daringly, though less modishly than might appear, links aspects of Forsyth's thinking not just with Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer – that has been done before – but with Latin American and South African liberation theology. If that has to be done, Clements is the man to do it with due perspective. What he has in fact done is to suggest more of what I have here tried to suggest, something of the mental temper which gave British Congregationalism a significance quite out of proportion to its size, which turned confrontation into debate and then dialogue, none of it presumptuous. That had indeed been some festival in Rome; and as refracted through Wolverhampton by a Birmingham minister in 1869, who knew where it might end?

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52. See S. Sykes, "P.T. Forsyth on the Church", Hart *op. cit.*, pp.1-5.

53. *The Charter of the Church: Six Lectures on the Spiritual Principle of Nonconformity*, 1896; *Rome, Reform and Reaction: Four Lectures on the Religious Situation*, 1899.

54. *Lectures on the Church and the Sacraments*, 1917; 2nd edn., entitled *The Church and the Sacraments*, 1947; p.114 quoted in Bradley *op. cit.*, p.224.

55. K.W. Clements, "P.T. Forsyth: A Political Theologian?", Hart *op. cit.*, pp.146-167, esp. p.167.

“A WELSHMAN THROUGH AND THROUGH” DAVID MARTYN LLOYD-JONES (1899–1981)

There was nothing unusual in Welsh preachers occupying English pulpits. J.D. Jones, for example, had exercised a distinguished ministry at Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, from 1898 to 1938, and Howard Williams was at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, from 1958 to 1988. But few could have equalled David Martyn Lloyd-Jones's passion for Welshness and few could have been more shaped by it. Lloyd-Jones – an old-time Welsh Presbyterian among English Congregationalists – sustained an influential ministry in the heart of London from 1939 to 1968, and became one of the outstanding preachers of his day. Yet he never moved from his roots, and it is the significance of this background that concerns us here. It should be noted that this forms part of a larger study which more fully demonstrates the nature of his nationalism and the way it affected how he saw things and accomplished his purposes. Footnotes have therefore here been kept to a minimum. Unnamed sources are either Lloyd-Jonesian quotations or references to personal correspondents.



In the first of three talks on Radio Wales in 1943, Lloyd-Jones described himself “as a sort of Welsh exile”. He had been “in London and in England” only four-and-a-half years yet after forty-two years of living in England he felt the same. He took his holidays in Wales, missed no opportunity to preach in Wales and at the end of his life, it was the Bible and a Welsh hymnbook “that were his only reading”. By a piece of good fortune for a Welshman, he died on St. David's Day and when he was buried five days later, it had to be in Wales: “He couldn't have been buried anywhere else”.¹

Martyn first visited London at the age of eight years when he went with his father, Henry Lloyd-Jones, to an exhibition at the Agricultural Hall in 1908 but the family moved to London when Henry was looking for work in 1914. The family became members of the Welsh Presbyterian Church in Charing Cross Road (formerly the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church in Nassau Street, Soho), and their names first appear in the *Annual Report* of 1915. There was no change in the *Report* until 1918 when it was recorded that Harold, Martyn's older brother, was “killed in action” and in 1921 when Martyn first appeared as “Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones”. In 1925 the *Report* records the death of Henry Lloyd-Jones and by 1926 the family had moved to 12 Vincent Square, Westminster. According to the *Chapel Report* of 1927, Martyn had taken away his membership paper but this was because he had married Bethan Phillips at the Chapel on 8 January, and arrived in Aberavon in February to take up his first pastorate. In 1939 when he joined Campbell Morgan at Westminster Chapel, Magdalene, his mother, withdrew her

1. F. and E. Catherwood, *The Man and His Books*, 1982, p.33.

membership paper from Charing Cross and was welcomed into membership at Westminster Chapel by Certificate of Transfer at the communion service in January, 1940. In the same year Vincent Lloyd-Jones, who at Oxford had developed a strong interest in Roman Catholicism,² moved to 24 Vincent Square.

Charing Cross Chapel, from the end of 1914 to the end of 1926 when Martyn was a member, was a liberal church and something of "a transit camp for Welsh who came to London to work or study". It was "a cultured church" and Lloyd-Jones referred to the "high intellectual level" of papers "read at the Literary Society meetings on Friday evenings and the discussion that followed".³ But although he was appointed Sunday School Superintendent for a year these were spiritually barren years for an unconverted man: "What I needed was preaching that would convict me of sin and make me see my need... But I never heard that". The gospel that was preached by Peter Hughes Griffiths, minister at Charing Cross Chapel for almost forty years, did not have the conservative emphasis that Lloyd-Jones adopted; even so, he remained in membership until January, 1927, while occasionally visiting Westminster Chapel during the ministry of J.A. Hutton. Lloyd-Jones preached "about twice in Charing Cross after he retired" but because of his conservatism he "was not a...popular preacher...with the members".⁴ His invitation to preach at the centenary services in 1949 was partly because he and his family had been prominent members between 1914 and 1927 and also because, although there was disagreement with his theology, he was a distinguished figure in London church life and a convinced Welshman as well.

Before moving to London, however, he had grown up in a Welsh-speaking rural community and in one of the centres of Calvinistic Methodism. Under the preaching of Daniel Rowland of Llangeitho and Howell Harris of Talgarth, Cardiganshire and Breconshire had been at the heart of the eighteenth-century awakening in Wales, and for Lloyd-Jones these men were among the heroes of the faith. As a child he attended the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel in Llangeitho where Rowland had been minister for fifty years and at the age of thirteen he had attended the Summer Association meetings where four or five thousand gathered to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Rowland. These meetings made a profound impression on Lloyd-Jones and it would have been surprising, given his increasing interest, if some of the enthusiasm of those days had not rubbed off on him and if the life of Rowland had not caught his youthful imagination. Rowland, "the greatest preacher of them all", had preached in Wales to crowds of up to 3,000 and people travelled from all over Wales to hear him. Above all, it was "a Welsh movement, led by a Welshman preaching in the Welsh language"⁵ and this

2. David Mathias Lloyd-Jones, 19 October, 1996. Vincent became a member of the Thomas More Society in London and read *The Tablet* every week throughout his life.
3. *Y Ganrif Gyntaf*, Charing Cross Chapel, 1949, p.17.
4. I.D. Pickering, letter to author, 9 September, 1995.
5. C.R. Williams, "The Welsh Religious Revival, 1905-5", *The British Journal of Sociology*, 3 (1952), pp.242-259.

was undoubtedly the kind of revival Lloyd-Jones would like to have seen in twentieth-century Wales. Indeed, it is not difficult to find similarities between the two men: conviction in preaching, extended exposition of the same text, a vibrant doctrine of Scripture, and belief in evangelical Calvinism.

He did, of course, meet with people who had experienced the 1904-5 revival in Wales – the South Wales minister who lacked careful sermon preparation for example – and considered himself to “belong to that generation”. But although “the Calvinistic Methodists received an added 24,000 into membership”,⁶ and the revival spread to the whole Principality, north and south, there were problems. He would not deny that God was present in the revival but there were “certain tendencies to extreme mysticism in Mr. Evan Roberts” and the “general difference in character” between this and earlier Welsh revivals was “the lamentable failure of the preachers to continue preaching and teaching during the revival.” He also referred to the absence of sermon preparation during the revival and the problems it caused afterwards; “I knew several such men and had to try to help them a little out of the spiritual depression which in some cases...crossed the line from the spiritual to the psychological”. So things were not as he would have liked and recalling a conversation of “many years ago” he spoke of “the sad decline in spiritual tone and spirituality of the Church in Wales” since the revival.

Yet while the revival had proved to be disappointingly transient and had not touched Llangetho – “By the time I came to live there” the church where Daniel Rowland had been the minister was “of all churches that I have known, the most lifeless” – there were still a lot of very devout people around. True, “Welsh preaching [had] lost the old-time power” and the original enthusiasm had gone, but some churches had retained good congregations, probably through a strong sense of tradition. Others were not so fortunate. When Rhys Davies visited Wales in the mid-1930s he found the majority of chapels empty, and in one place “20 people sat huddled in the centre pews”, the vast number of seats both downstairs and in the galleries empty.⁷ A decade later Wales had failed to revive its Nonconformist traditions and the general attitude to religion was one of apathy. Writing in 1946, the view of Thomas was that religion in Wales “is not attacked, nor is it fiercely discussed...it is subjected to something worse – it is ignored as something irrelevant”⁸ and Lloyd-Jones’s assessment in 1963 was that “Wales is quickly turning into paganism and is becoming popish.” The same, of course, was true of England but so far as Wales was concerned, while people turned out for cultural occasions such as the Llangollen International Eisteddfod, local eisteddfodau, or the excitement of an election, when it came to chapel life, “only a celebrity like Lloyd-Jones could draw a crowd”.

But although his commitment to revival was strong, because he was “a Welshman through and through” there was also a robust, lifelong nationalistic

6. E. Evans, *The Welsh Revival of 1904*, 1969, p.146.

7. Rhys Davies, *My Wales*, 1937, p.126.

8. T. Jones, *The Native Never Returns*, 1946, pp.13-17.

element in him and, like his father, he "carried Wales in his heart". The subject arose a number of times in his lectures and sermons but the best source is found in "Nationalism, Tradition and Language", a printed version of an interview with Gaius Davies in 1964. Here Lloyd-Jones distinguishes between nationalism "according to the flesh" that is, idolizing it above others "because you belong to it", and nationalism as the inheritance of a language and tradition which are integral to upbringing and citizenship. For this he cites the apostle Paul who was "of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee" but who looked upon such things as "dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him". That a man is a Christian "does not mean that he ceases to be a citizen of his own country" but it was not the United Kingdom he had in mind so much as the "Welsh 'anian'." This "ethos or temperament", largely preserved by language and accent, was to be preserved on the grounds that real Christian faith does not violate or change a person's individuality. National characteristics remain as do pre-conversion faculties and talents, but the problem was that indigenous Welsh culture was under attack and anglicization, as we shall see, was thought to be the main offender. To lose culture and language because of external influences, to lose the "anian" and conform to another cultural pattern, was unthinkable for Lloyd-Jones because it "not only betrays" a man's "country, but also betrays human nature." In other words, the "man who is ashamed of his Welshness, or who tries to crucify his Welshness" by suppressing his accent, for example, "is...doing something that I would argue the New Testament itself condemns."

None today would wish to question the place of ethnic cultures or the value of regional and minority languages in society, but so determined was Lloyd-Jones to retain Welsh Christian tradition, that is the tradition of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, that when he moved to London he would not conform to the English pattern of doing things, either at Westminster Chapel or in Inter-Varsity Fellowship circles. And because, in his view, the Welshman has a "higher rate of intelligence" and is "more theologically inclined than the Englishman", his purpose in coming to England was to teach the English "this element of depth" which they lacked. With unabashed confidence he told "the English many times" that he had "come amongst them as a missionary...Though I put it in a jocular form, I really mean it." Indeed, to reverse the argument, any idea that the Welsh needed the help of the English was as "utterly superficial" as the idea "that Britain needs the help of America...It is we who have got the real contribution to make because of this element of depth."

Three main points arise from all this: his understanding of the Welsh temperament, the importance of the Welsh language and his belief in the superiority of the Welshman to the Englishman.

As might be expected, his view of the Welsh was favourable. His understanding of the Welsh temperament arose initially in 1943 with his theory that psychologically there were "a number of different levels" in the Welsh personality each one independent of the other. Among these levels, feelings are the most superficial but then came emotion, imagination, a sense of the melancholic and

tragic, reason, clarity of argument, systematic thinking, a feeling for the truth and finally the will, which "is not easy to reach". It "is possible for one level to be awake while another sleeps", which explains why the Welshman can be moved by his feelings alone, or by his interest in argument or public speaking without any further commitment – the danger of being "religious without being Christian". Thus the Welshman's feelings are "merely a thin layer on the surface...underneath is the thick, strong layer...namely the mind". The Englishman has one unified and "totally simple character" whereas the Welshman is more complex, "with many facets" to his personality.

The result, according to Lloyd-Jones, was stability, conservatism, preference for authority and exactness of thought, and it was for these kinds of reasons that the " 'Via Media' of the Church of England or Arminianism [was] too indistinct and not systematic enough for the Welshman". It was either Calvinism or Catholicism with their more extreme and precise positions which appealed most to the Welsh. Whether this psychology of the Welsh temperament is scientifically tenable or merely an example of unrestrained partiality we leave for others to judge but it seems perfectly feasible that such levels of personality are present in most people. None the less, the same ideas resurfaced over twenty years later in "Nationalism, Tradition and Language" and shaped the content of what he said. The Welshman was a mystic, "a bit of a dreamer, emotional but not sentimental like the English". He was essentially a humble man, helpful and tending towards self-denial but above all his thoughts were of a greater depth than his English neighbours. He instinctively took to the cut and thrust of "discussion, questions and answers", and "the essence of the Welsh genius" was the ability to deal with "profound questions" and "give expression to the truth", particularly through "incomparable" preaching. And because of "uncommon mental abilities" the Welshman refuses "to conform with the majority" and is inclined towards preciseness and definitions: "He prefers authority and systems which set out truth clearly in every point and which reconcile everything together." If there is a downside to being Welsh, it is that "We are also natural actors and imitators", "lazy by nature" and, disliking change, "very conservative".

Such were some of the elements in the nature of a Welshman. He was a dissident at heart, a protester, an individualist and Nonconformist with a good deal of the "serf complex" ("Cymlethdod y taeog") bred into him by "the past history of our nation". The problem was that he belonged to a smaller and more dependent country in which "the overwhelming direction of...social and economic life" was "towards greater integration with the English way of life", and this was unfortunate for Wales.

But the dominance of a larger nation over a smaller one was nothing new although, in the case of Lloyd-Jones, allied to his concern for national survival was a strong sense of ethnic superiority. For example, in the late 1950s or early 1960s he gave an address to the Church of England Jews' Society in which he said that as a Welshman, he had a kind of affinity with the Jews, and this was, in part, the significance of his second radio talk in 1940. In the Old Testament the Jewish

nation was also small by comparison to many other nations, yet in spite of this and of “all its failings, and sin and weaknesses” Israel had been chosen by God to bring his revelation of the truth into the world. For much of her history Israel had been overshadowed by her neighbours and in New Testament times she was a vassal state of Rome. But Israel was a nation raised up by God “for his own purpose” and it was this Messianic element that set them apart from the other nations. While the situation with regard to ancient Israel was historically unique the sense of isolation and specialness was not that far from the “inestimable value” of Welsh Christian tradition or his missioner-to-the-English concept. It was also to the Jews he referred when answering the question as to whether Wales had “made any particular contribution to the Church’s understanding of the truth?”: the “genius of the Jew lies in his talent for expression. I believe up to a point that the same thing is true of us. This is our particular gift”.

The comparison was unmistakable. Evangelical truth was “the only true expression in doctrine of the Christian faith”, it was the vessel by which God chose primarily to reveal himself. Lloyd-Jones, its chief exponent in his day, had the added advantage of coming from a land of outstanding “eloquence” and of “intellectual understanding”. By the grace of God, Welsh evangelicalism, although only a minority view in modern Wales, could still be a spiritual force in a godless world.

The same interest in ethnic minorities arose in a sermon on the “Woman of Samaria” in 1964, of which he afterwards wrote: “I was amazed...it lent itself to the occasion as the condition of the Samaritans was so similar to that of modern Wales – Nationalism, interest in religion and theology, preaching etc.”⁹ But it found its widest expression within the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. There he warned “of the dangers of Western domination” and did much to encourage the indigeneity of developing countries such as those in Africa and Asia. Chua Wee-hian’s observation was that Martyn Lloyd-Jones’s Welshness “helped considerably”, and in the 1947 conference at Harvard he amused some of the delegates with a defiant comment “when he insisted that he would not allow the English or the Church of England to formulate his Christian perception of the truth!”¹⁰ Whether he was as intent on keeping the English out as bringing the others in is more than likely but to be fair, much of the groundwork in overseas Christian development had been done either by English graduates or with their support. Moreover, had there been any Anglican colonialism or “Western domination” as Lloyd-Jones had warned, the IFES would soon have folded, but the reverse was true.

The implications of one group eclipsed by another may also have had its ramifications in the remnant principle and the “Gideon scenario” of David against Goliath and Gideon against the Midianites where right triumphed over might, but there was also a personal component. When Lloyd-Jones used the quotation – “the

9. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Letters 1919-1981*, Edinburgh, 1994, p.117.

10. C. Catherwood, *Chosen by God*, Crowborough, 1986, pp.124, 113.

greatest things in this world [have] been done by small men and small nations!" – it was no tongue-in-cheek comment. That he meant what he said appears, for example, in his lecture, "John Knox – The Founder of Puritanism" where he describes the Reformer as "of short stature" and adds, autobiographically, "a fact not without significance!" That Knox was apparently "not a handsome man" or "distinguished in appearance as judged by modern standards" was important since it shifted the glory away from man to God. The same thought arises in *The Weapons of our Warfare* where, when quoting *I Corinthians* 10:1 and 10, he suggests that Paul "was not of striking appearance" but "probably, according to all accounts, a short man with a bald head and also suffering inflammation of the eyes." Lloyd-Jones was of course a short man. Whether he was influenced at times by taller people is possible, certainly some thought so, but it would not be surprising given that many of his friends were taller than he was. But that aside, Lloyd-Jones may have been less secure than his public persona suggested and it is possible that he shared what A.B. Philip identified as a Welsh characteristic, "an inferiority complex towards England and its people."¹¹ If this was so it would help explain why, on the one hand, he was a Welshman and "proud of it" and on the other how he harboured "a real contempt for the English".

Temperamentally the Welshman was a Celt and Lloyd-Jones believed that Celts had "a high regard for the importance of doctrine and a national aptitude for theology". He argued for national differences in emotional and intellectual outlook, and when distinguishing between different parts of Britain he made it clear that Celtic Scotland "had retained more of the older art of biblical exposition and theological interest than the South", and this was true of "Wales and Northern Ireland" too. But this begs the question as to whether, if a church-by-church survey were made, it would show a lower percentage of expository preaching in England, 1900 to 1950, compared to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Much depends on what we mean by expository preaching. And to find contemporary preaching weak by comparison with our "evangelical fore-fathers" was not so much a comment on the general religious scene as an anti-English way of looking at things. This is clear from his further remarks in which, "Greatly daring", he criticized "certain aspects of English Evangelicalism" and Englishmen in particular. But if preaching had declined in England it had also declined in the rest of Britain, and if English evangelicals paid "fulsome lip-service" to the past it was also true that Welsh believers indulged in the same kind of backward-looking Christianity, to 1904 and 1859, to Daniel Rowland and Howell Harris. As for "the older art of biblical exposition" and "preaching (in its truest meaning)" perhaps there was more of it than he knew.

It is doubtful also if he was justified in distinguishing between the four ethnic groups in Great Britain on the grounds of intellectual capacity and faithfulness to God's Word. There is, it is true, a distinct Welsh culture as, indeed, there are English, Scottish and Irish cultures which are different, and we would agree that

11. A.B. Philip, *The Welsh Question*, Cardiff, 1975, p.322.

there is such a thing as a Celtic sense of the visionary and poetic. Genetic and environmental factors are important and Lloyd-Jones agreed: our "views are determined by a number of accidents...Celts and Saxons start with a different bias and prejudice." But such has been the inter-mixing of accents and traditions in modern Britain and the decline of the Welsh language itself, that entities such as Celtic individualism or Saxon inflexibility are found in most corners of the British Isles.

The Welsh language, however, was a matter "of very great value". Lloyd-Jones was a Welsh-speaking Welshman and his preaching among Welsh-speaking people in Wales added to the effect and influences of his sermons. He believed that the preservation and continued use of Welsh strengthened the "Welsh 'aniam'" and to the extent "that you lose the language you will also tend to lose this 'ethos'." So Welsh was more than a means of communication, it was "a way of thinking and feeling, even a way of life", and it was a safeguard against uniformity and "certain psychological patterns." What he had in mind was the violation of "a man's personality" and the making of a "standard type" of believer such as cults produce. But the "standard type" was also a reference to "the establishment", that is to the English universities and the English Church.

Once again Lloyd-Jones used his biblical knowledge to demonstrate his point. The purpose of a regional language like Welsh, set as it was among so many other languages and against a majority language like English, was analogous to "the whole question of the inspiration of Scripture". All Scripture was inspired and inerrant but it was not mechanically transmitted and there was a variation of style between the writers. They were "all controlled by the same spirit" and directed as to what they should write, but they expressed "their personality" in the way they wrote. Thus, if you can "recognize Paul's style as distinct from that of John or Peter", the same is true of nationality and language. The "peculiar quality" of Welsh was that it had the capacity to "convey aspects of the glory of the gospel in a way which...a Welshman alone can do", and this was especially evident in the case of Welsh hymns with their "emphasis on the heart and affections" as well as the mind. "I am sorry for the people who do not understand Welsh!", he said, when preaching at Westminster Chapel on the theme of praise and worship in 1959: there was simply no comparison between English and Welsh hymns. Welsh was a better means of thinking and feeling about the faith, a better expression of praise. Gwynfor Evans and Ioan Rhys defined this "peculiar quality" as something inherited from the old Welsh and the Methodist revival which "produced, not hymns as the English know them, but lyric poetry as great as any in the Welsh language",¹² and Lloyd-Jones would have agreed with this. But it was not only the vivacity of the old Welsh, it was the deeper doctrinal content as well as the "grandeur and dignity" of the language which, allegedly, exceeded English hymns. So while Welsh has its own intrinsic value it was also thought to

12. O.D. Edwards, *Celtic Nationalism*, 1968, p.221.

be an ideal vehicle for the expression of theological truth and liberty of the Spirit.

In effect, "God had so gifted" Welsh Christians with this unique means of declaring the gospel that a moral and spiritual obligation rested on them to learn and use the language: indeed, it was their "bounden duty to do so."

Yet in spite of all this, Welsh had hardly changed in five hundred years and words had to be invented and added to the language to contend with modern forms of knowledge and expression. In that sense Welsh could not match the variety and breadth of the English language and not even Lloyd-Jones had the same facility of words in Welsh that he had in English. And since the use of Welsh was outlawed in official business in the Act of Union of 1536 – "the most important manifestation of the anglicizing tradition in Wales"¹³ – English had become embedded in Welsh culture as the language of commerce and industry. Of course Welsh writers and poets became vehicles for the arts and humanities and later for the sciences as well, but whether Welsh provided a better way of thinking about the Christian faith depends upon the point of view. Many would feel that there is little to match the 1611 King James Bible or much of the literature that it generated.

But although he believed that Christians in Wales had a duty to learn the language he was not saying that Welsh alone should be spoken. After all, Wales had been in some measure bilingual since the conquest of Wales by Edward I (1282-84) and Lloyd-Jones himself preached in both languages regularly. His point was that, to preserve national identity, Welsh should be used and in this he was adamant: people who go to live in Wales should learn Welsh and non-Welsh-speaking Welshmen should learn their own language. It was laziness not to do so.

The logic of Welshmen speaking their own language might seem plain enough but there was a streak of Utopianism here. Not all Welshmen wanted to learn Welsh. Census returns for the years 1901 to 1981 show a constant decline in the number of people in Wales who could speak Welsh, and notwithstanding the efforts of Plaid Cymru (Welsh Nationalist Party), the Welsh Language Society, a Welsh language fourth television channel, the teaching of Welsh in schools and *Papurau Bro* (community papers), by 1981 the figure had dropped from the fifty per cent of 1901 to nineteen per cent. There were, certainly, spatial differences between strong heartland areas like Bala where the figure in 1971 was eighty per cent and in Llangetho where it was seventy-nine per cent, but apart from Welsh-speaking Wales which was mainly in the West of the Principality, the rate of decline over the years 1901 to 1981 was constant, and in Colin Baker's view, it was a trend "towards extinction."¹⁴ Welsh church attendance had also declined and chapel, which had been a major centre for integrating Welsh language and culture had, for the most part, either anglicized or closed. So despite optimistic claims from Welsh interest groups and Lloyd-Jones's conviction on the learning of Welsh, the reality was very different. To be fair, while Welsh was a matter of "very

13. *The Welsh Question*, p.42.

14. C. Baker, *Aspects of Bilingualism in Wales*, Clevedon, 1985, pp.1, 2.

great importance" to Lloyd-Jones he did not share the extreme view that to lose the language was to lose everything: that was to be "guilty of going too far". What troubled him was loss of identity, "the slavish way that so many Welshmen" appeared to lose their individuality through anglicization, something neither the Scots or Irish had managed to do "in spite of having, to a large extent, lost their language".

Coming to his "contempt for the English"¹⁵ and belief in the superiority of the Welsh, on the surface it may seem innocuous enough, but underneath there were some strong anti-imperialist feelings and harmful generalizations. Of the latter, for example, his view was that the English were pragmatists with "a genius for compromise". Pragmatism and the "via media appeals to the Englishman" because "he likes the idea of compromise" and dislikes "over-precise definitions". Indeed, there is "a hatred of definitions and precise statements" and because he is a compromiser, the Englishman is an Arminian rather than a Calvinist. The "English way of thinking" is not only superficial – "There is no depth or depths in his character" – it is "dangerous to Protestantism", which relies on exact statements and doctrinal precision.

Put another way, the typical Englishman is "an out-and-out empiricist who moves carefully without knowing in what direction", rather like "the glory of the British Empire" which did not have "a written Constitution. It just happened, and with the principle of empiricism enthroned...she... 'muddled through'." So, in effect, the English do not think; they have an innate dislike of precision and rather than follow a principle, they settle for moderation. In terms of the Christian faith this amounted to "a little superficial religion: with "no great doctrinal content", and to a nebulous "brotherliness" which merely "strives to create a good mankind" and no more. "In a word", it was "to agree with Thomas Arnold who defined religion as 'morality touched by emotion'."

The tragedy, as Lloyd-Jones saw it, was that the English way of thinking and doing things had done great harm among Welsh students who had been heavily influenced by the Student Christian Movement which was more liberal and open-minded than the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. Above all he was disturbed by the way in which they became "adorers of William Temple, the most typical Englishman you could ever find", and "one of the worst influences, not only upon the Christian life of Wales, but upon the Welsh life of Wales". There were some grounds for this feeling. By 1908, when Temple was only a Deacon in Holy Orders, he had become a popular speaker in the Workers' Educational Association, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Student Christian Movement and other societies, and from Iremonger's biography it is clear that Temple was consulted by these groups as much as Lloyd-Jones was in IVF circles. In addition, Temple was at the heart of ecumenical affairs in the early days and presided over the founding of the British Council of Churches in 1942.¹⁶ Perhaps

15. *Barn*, June, 1963, p.236.

16. F.A. Iremonger, *William Temple, His Life and Letters*, 1948, p.413.

there was an element of rivalry between the IVF leader and the SCM leader: certainly there was some disappointment. After "influencing the IVF for thirty years", Lloyd-Jones admitted failure in the sense that Welsh students had "been too ready to conform": they "— have not let me down exactly — but have been sort of battling against me." The trend was "to go under the umbrella" of the larger group and to follow William Temple and the SCM, the "big organization", and that was the cause of the "present deplorable condition in Wales" because it exposed students to modernism and the anglicization of their thinking. That large numbers of Welsh students chose not to follow Lloyd-Jones and his Welsh way of doing things probably reflected a wider field of interest as much as anything else, but if the SCM group did "adore" Temple it is equally true that the IVF group and similarly minded people idolized their leader.

Temple's interests were wide ranging and with respect to Wales, he had become chairman of a committee in 1936 which looked into the problems of long-term unemployment and among the practical results of this was the opening of a large number of occupational centres in South Wales, for which Temple's part was highly praised. And towards the end of his life he played an important role leading up to the 1944 Education Act by his speeches, so given the Welsh concern for poverty, unemployment and education, it is little wonder that Temple endeared himself to so many people. But it was the theological comprehensiveness and ecumenical activities of the SCM and William Temple that Lloyd-Jones was most concerned about, and it was this that was most "deplorable". Whether there is such a thing as a "typical Englishman" and whether Temple really exercised such a negative influence again depends on the point of view, but he could hardly be charged with a second-rate mind or lacking principles. What irked Lloyd-Jones more than anything about Temple was that Welshmen had responded to a figure from the English Establishment, and this was nothing less than a return to the old serf complex.

Ultimately, his feelings about "the average Englishman" and the English way of life centred upon social status and class: "I hope that I do not despise any person", he said in 1963, "but I admit to despising social or intellectual snobbery, and especially so in the religious realm".¹⁷ He also had the impression that religion and the Bible were sometimes "valued solely in terms of England's greatness" and this had given rise to "the charge of national hypocrisy". Britain had been "blessed in the past" because it had been religious, and God honours those who honour him, but when we "advocate religion in order that we may be blessed we are insulting God" because the grounds of true worship are that he is Almighty and Holy; we worship him because of who he is. The idea that the "more religious the nation, the more moral and the more dependable and solid is the nation" may be true, but it was a tempting proposition for "statesmen and leaders to pay lip service to religion and to believe in its maintenance" as a quid pro quo, for political purposes.

The idea of the English as the ruling class was never far away. When referring

17. *Barn*, June, 1963, p.236.

to 1660 and the restoration of the monarchy in England his comment was of "the conservatism of the English mentality, and its liking for ceremonial": "This is one of the few countries left in the world that has a monarch. This is not an accident, it is typically English. A fondness for kings and queens, a liking for titles and names, is a part of the whole outlook." The Welsh, on the other hand, were "a peasant people" and "Never had the veneration for titles that is found so commonly in England". In his sermon "What is the Church?" he makes the same distinction. He commends the subordination of nationalist feelings to the greater duty of placing "a Christian brother before a Welshman" but in the following paragraph, speaking on separation from "the orders of society", he refers to "The squire! The Lord! the great men of the district; and the various gradations down until you come to the underling". His point was fair enough: there is no room for a "monarchical" or "aristocratic principle" in Christianity; believers are equal although differently gifted. But his illustrations were distinctly anti-English, and the rich man of *James 2:1-9* became "the Lord of the Manor".

It was a caricature of the English "country gentleman" who "must have his weekend", but his feeling about the English ruling classes was also a stab at the public school ethos. In a letter to his friend Douglas Johnson, he said that if he were ever to write "a best seller" (it was a tongue-in-cheek remark) his thesis would be "that the main cause of our present ills [1940] is due to the tragic breakdown and failure of the middle-class in this country [England] due especially to their aping of the aristocracy in sending their children to public schools."¹⁸ This was one of the reasons why he reacted so strongly to William Temple. He had been to Rugby School before going up to Oxford, and the significance of Rugby was the influence of Thomas Arnold, Headmaster from 1827 to 1842. Lloyd-Jones referred to this in a sermon dealing with "righteousness with holiness" in 1956: "I am afraid that in many respects Thomas Arnold of Rugby was mainly responsible for... the so-called Public School religion, which is concerned about producing a gentleman, not a saint." The inference was that by teaching religion and morality Arnold believed people would behave "in a nice, decent, respectable" manner and produce a "law-abiding society", but the "appalling thought" for Lloyd-Jones was that people could be moral and decent, and even "enjoy public worship without knowing God!"

There can be no doubt that it was Lloyd-Jones's Welshness rather than any theological position which accounted for the majority of these feelings. Lloyd-Jones had grown up in an atmosphere of antagonism between church and chapel and one of the great questions of his youth was the disestablishment of the Church of Wales. It had been a long and divisive struggle, but when it finally came and the pre-1662 endowments were "secularised and transferred to the University of Wales and county councils", it was considered by the majority of Welshmen to have been a victory for the Nonconformists. What made matters worse was the

18. *Letters 1919-1981*, pp.56, 57.

sharpness of feelings that lay behind the division between church and chapel. Welsh Anglicanism was seen by many as English ecclesiastical colonialism and since most of the landed middle and upper classes in Wales were Anglicans, it is not surprising that there was tension, especially in the Welsh-speaking heartlands where Lloyd-Jones had grown up. But just as important and as fiercely debated was the question of education in Wales. Nonconformists were in favour of a national education system under effective public control and with religious equality, which was not found in church schools. Anglicans and Catholics argued for the retention of denominational schools but in addition, they wanted public funds to maintain them and this, for the Nonconformists, was incipient priestcraft.

So there was much anti-Anglicanism, anti-Romanism and anti-ritualism about and if we add to this the element of Celtic individualism and the inflexible nature of the English Establishment, it is not hard to see how Lloyd-Jones came to think as he did. He was on the side of the peasant class, the Nonconformists, and while he may not actually have "despised" Englishmen he had difficulties with them, and had "a Welshman's distrust of the English upper-classes".¹⁹ That he "hated public schools" may also have had its roots in his own unhappy experience as a child when he boarded at Tregaron County School.

Thus while he spoke against nationalism, he came very close to it himself. Indeed, if Welsh Nationalism is a protest against anglicization, Lloyd-Jones was "on the side of the Welsh Nationalists". In that sense he did not cease to be nation-conscious. In the early days he refused "automatically every invitation that came from England. I did not even consider them. I was called to Wales." Eventually he accepted an invitation to speak at a Bible Witness Rally at the Royal Albert Hall in 1935 and thereafter his visits to England increased, but on matters Welsh there was no compromise or middle ground. In fact so determined was he at one time that when asked by Bethan Phillips, his future wife, "whether she or Wales came first [he] had to say that Wales came first", and when speaking at the centenary of Westminster Chapel in 1965 because the second pastor, Henry Simon, came from Pembrokeshire he "did not acknowledge him as a Welshman" at all.

Yet none of this precluded his criticism of the Welsh. Far from it. On preaching, for example, "there were men who turned" it into "entertainment [by] the over-use of illustration and stories...We have a glut of this especially in my own country of Wales." He severely criticized the Presbyterian Church of Wales and was very critical of his Welsh brethren over charismatic matters. But his most devastating critique came in a lecture, "The Tragedy of Modern Wales", to the Literary and Debating Society of Charing Cross Chapel in 1925 and was reported at length in the *South Wales News*. He rebuked Welshmen who "worship degrees", and who formed "spurious" aristocracies based on wealth, especially among the London Welsh: he attacked gambling, the membership of London Clubs where "men ate and drank like beasts", wire-pulling in public and church life, excessive singing and the "great abomination" of preacher politicians. Wales, once a Christian

19. C. Catherwood, *A Family Portrait*, Eastbourne, 1995, p.59.

nation, had "lost its soul" and was "on her death-bed". Not surprisingly, the lecture evoked a great deal of comment and produced a number of articles and letters. Editorials pronounced it a "wild and indiscriminate abuse of his fellow countrymen...an outbreak of hysteria" and in response to a letter defending him it was said, "If Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones talks like this at twenty-five, we tremble to think what he will say about us when he is fifty". Among those who spoke in his favour were Peter Hughes Griffiths, chairman of the meeting and minister of the church, who referred to Lloyd-Jones's "brilliant introduction" although he did not agree with all that he said, and Tomos Phillips "the well-known eye specialist" and father of Bethan Phillips, who agreed with "every word of it". Of course, the lecture was the product of a fiery young Welshman, but although time may have tempered some of his words he remained just as uncompromising and the lecture of 1925 could easily have been given in 1965.

So far we have not questioned the value of ethnic cultures or denied the role of nationhood in the Christian's experience. As Lloyd-Jones said, "Salvation...does not erase...national characteristics. It is the man or the soul which is re-born and not his...abilities nor his temperament...The personality, as such, remains the same" and we agree with this. The problem is that while there is much that is commendable in what he says, he tends to generalize and much of what he said is coloured by anti-English feelings. We would not deny that the Welsh have their own brand of thinking, as do the Scots and the Irish, and it could only be blinkered reasoning which refused to admit that there were a lot of very good thinkers in England too. But much of the content, for example, of the first and third of his 1943 radio broadcasts was a parody of the English. In fact the whole series was more like an autobiographical tirade against his pet dislikes rather than a constructive discussion on an important subject. There were elements of truth in what was said but his bold generalizing on matters of faith and practice was unconvincing. For example, he contends that Welsh services and public meetings lay great stress on preaching, whereas the English emphasis was "on other things". What he meant by "other things" in this context was an "eminent man", a "Mayor or Lord Mayor" who was invited to take the chair and, as the guest speaker, "to give his address – not sermon – after the choir has sung". He was "expected to speak on a topic of current affairs – political problems, moral problems – without raising a text from the Bible", and then the "listeners – not the congregation – show their appreciation...by clapping their hands". But of which church was he speaking? Occasionally it might have been true, in England or Wales, but on the whole it was inaccurate and misleading. The majority of churches are not like that. Again, he argued that English preachers "usually" read from manuscripts "fairly closely", producing "an essay rather than a sermon" but in the author's experience this was the exception; the use of notes in preaching was normal practice, but reading a sermon was rare. Similarly, "the Englishman likes movements" – the Council of Free Churches, Student Christian Movement, Christian Endeavour, Keswick, Missionary Societies, Holiness and Prophetic movements, the Children's Special Service Mission and Young Life Campaign –

whereas "We as Welshmen, do not like a lot of small societies", they are "not congenial with our spirit as religious people". But why then did he associate with the Evangelical Movement of Wales, the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, the Banner of Truth Trust and the British Evangelical Council? Were not these movements and societies?

When it comes to his analysis of the English and Welsh character the same kinds of problem arise. Is it true that an Englishman's character is "close to the surface" with "no depth or depths", or that below the surface of a Welshman lies a "thick, strong layer... namely the mind" with "its love of reason and of definitions"? And is there any substance in the view that, while Englishmen "claim" to be controlled by reason, they hate "definitions and clear and plain boundaries" of thought? Is it only Welshmen who think for themselves and "believe in principles" or is all this nothing more than special pleading? The latter seems more likely.

The irony of the situation is that while Lloyd-Jones had genuine feelings for Wales, his uncompromising identification with conservative evangelicalism earned him the reputation of being a fundamentalist, and "as such he was largely ignored" by his own people. Those who held him in the highest regard were a generation of men who had come to faith in North and South Wales in the late 'forties and 'fifties during the ministry of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, but it was significant that when he died in 1981, very little appeared in the Welsh press about it. The common people heard him gladly, perhaps out of curiosity as much as anything else, but the majority of leaders in the Presbyterian Church of Wales had been vexed by his outspoken convictions as had many others.

As for the preservation of Welsh culture and nationality apart from preaching Lloyd-Jones did nothing to promote it and played little or no part in London Welsh life. This was one of the points made in the editorial response to his lecture, "The Tragedy of Modern Wales": "where and when has Dr. Martin (sic) Lloyd-Jones done anything towards delivering Wales from its besetting sins and shortcomings?... A critic who claims the right to indict a nation should at least be able to show that he has laboured long and assiduously to save it from itself."²⁰ In his defence, Lloyd-Jones carried a heavy load of engagements and was frequently out of town, and when he was in Wales he probably felt that preaching in Welsh was contribution enough. On the question of nationality there was no quest for nationalism in the political sense but there was an ideal, and this was the Welsh Christian tradition based upon the "Methodist Revival of the 18th century". But if a revived Methodism had awakened Wales to a new Nonconformity and consciousness of religion, it was hardly likely that Calvinistic Methodism was going to have the same effect in the twentieth century. Certainly the 1904-5 revival did nothing to restore the old position and in 1969 his comment was that "conditions, religiously speaking, are worse today in Wales than in England".

One should also take into account a strong element of tribalism and brotherliness in Welsh culture, especially in Welsh-speaking Wales, and a general

20. *South Wales News*, 9 February, 1925, p.6.

feeling for the old values and beliefs. We are not saying that Lloyd-Jones had a nostalgic urge to restore a fading Welsh way of life but there was more than a hint of the romantic in his references to the Welsh language and to the traditions of the Methodist fathers. Yet in spite of the clannishness of the Welsh, Lloyd-Jones was not a social being and unlike other ministers, he did not have to keep his congregations together, they willingly came to him. In this sense he was on the periphery of things and although individually he helped many, it was characteristic of the man that his individualism made it hard for a large number of ministers to work alongside him. This may have been a trait in Welsh Nonconformity and indeed of Congregationalism in general, but Lloyd-Jones had been an individualist from the beginning.

Notwithstanding all of this, the preaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones had a remarkable impact on his fellow Welshmen. Chapels all over Wales invited him to preach in their pulpits and such were the numbers that attended his meetings in the 1920s and 1930s that Iain Murray used "revival" to describe what was happening. To give two examples: an estimated 7,000 heard him at the 1935 Sasiwyn (Presbyterian quarterly meeting) at Llangeitho, and 2,000 at a meeting in Felinfoel in 1936,²¹ but contemporary newspapers carried many such reports. Even so, it is not our concern here to deal with the nature of his preaching so much as with its effect. Why, when Welshmen were struggling with unemployment, poverty and in some cases were growing "impatient with the chapel" and the church, did so many people flock to hear him? It was not that he was demonstrative or had "the old furious way" of the early revivalists. In fact Lloyd-Jones had said, "I am not and never have been a typical Welsh preacher", and when Rhys Davies went to hear him he was disappointed because instead of fire, he found "a cold ruthlessness" in his preaching.²² But such sermons as "Christianity – Impossible with Men" (1928), "Why Men Disbelieve" (1930) and "Repentance: The Gate to the Kingdom" (1932) attracted great crowds and were relevant because they emphasized the cause of their troubles – "the desecration of everything that is sacred and of God", and offered the answer – "to discover the mind of God" and return to him.

If we accept that "the hand of God was upon him" what was happening was not unlike revival but there were other, more "worldly" reasons, chief of which was the celebrity factor. Lloyd-Jones did nothing to encourage media interest in his life and deliberately played down the idea of sacrificing a medical career for a less prosperous one in a poorer area of Wales. Nor, in his mind, was there anything noble about it since it had never occurred to him to go anywhere else: he was called to minister in Wales where the need was greatest. He had also inherited his father's radical views and concern for the poor, and this was probably a major factor in his going to Aberavon in 1928. But this was not how the newspapers and people of Wales saw it. The impact of his leaving Harley Street and a promising

21. I.H. Murray, *The First Forty Years*, Edinburgh, 1982, pp.202-227, 299, 307-324.

22. *My Wales*, p.119.

career as a consultant physician for a Mission in a depressed area of South Wales "was, in those days, like Albert Schweitzer going out to Africa".²³ It was a talking point, a sensation, and such were the columns of print which newspapers devoted to religious affairs in the first part of the twentieth century that it would have been unusual if Lloyd-Jones had not become well known. In that sense he had a lot going for him although he did not have the same media coverage after the late 1940s. Still, it was the celebrity factor that initially caught the imagination of the Welsh: as D. Ben Lewis said, "Listening as a child, it was this aspect of what he had given up which was present in all the conversations about him".²⁴ But it was a combination not only of celebrity but of oratory and authority which brought all kinds of people to hear him, and what they heard was a voice of assurance in difficult times. And such was the interest, that some "of the poor of the valleys" saved their "'dole' money for weeks in order that they might travel to listen to him".²⁵

Another reason for his success was the Welsh sense of occasion. As people went to hear David Lloyd-George and later Aneurin Bevan so they flocked to hear Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and in this sense at least, he certainly was in the great Welsh tradition of oratory and among the last to draw large congregations in Wales. These occasions were social events, not dissimilar to a Durham Miners' Gala, and people travelled in from the surrounding countryside, giving the whole day up to two or three meetings. They were crowd-pulling events and provided a focus of interest even for non-evangelicals who would go along to hear his logic and passion. In the early days he preached in churches where ministers were sympathetic, and many of these became annual visits but later, when ministers moved on and in some cases were replaced with liberal-minded men, such was the strength of local feeling towards these visits that the tradition was allowed to continue: to have stopped them would have provoked a strong reaction. What was unique about this sense of occasion was that it was almost entirely Welsh. In England people went to hear W.E. Sangster, Leslie Weatherhead and Lloyd-Jones in large numbers but there was not the same gala atmosphere. When people filled halls and churches in England to hear Lloyd-Jones the majority were evangelicals whereas in Wales, even those who disagreed or were indifferent went along – it was part of the tradition. Such was the case with Rhys Davies who was not a believer and had no wish to be "induced...to be 'saved'", and for a collier who responded to his preaching by saying that, "as a Welshman it held and roused me, but as another man it left me cold."²⁶ This may have explained, in the case of Davies, why the congregation was unresponsive. He was, of course, comparing it with earlier and more demonstrative preaching, as in the 1904-5 revival, but it is a useful comment in that it shows how little Lloyd-Jones played on the emotions or forced the will of his auditors. Perhaps the evidence of the Spirit was deeper than words but it also

23. D. Ben Rees, 20 May, 1992.

24. D. Ben Rees.

25. *Y Goleuad*, February, 1933.

26. *My Wales*, pp.119, 120.

serves to remind us of Ramsay MacDonald's observation in 1922, that some of the people of Aberavon were more interested in the excitement of elections than in the politics.²⁷ Why such a "Welsh exile" remained so long in an English pastorate was in itself very Welsh, but there is no doubt that he saw Westminster Chapel as a centre of influence at the heart of what had been the British Empire and in this sense, his London ministry was the greatest "occasion" of all. It was a mission to the English and to the world.

But his parody of the English was largely driven by a lifelong distaste for Anglicanism which had its roots in his upbringing and background. In many respects it was a confrontational background in which Wales was set against England, Nonconformity against the Established Church and public school against state school. These were all part of the chemistry of the situation. He could, it is true, lay aside his feelings and talk with American friends but such was his "almost pathological loathing of the Church of England" and unwillingness to recognize that any good thing could come out of the Church of England, even at the Reformation, that we need to consider the matter further.

In 1963, comparing cathedrals and parish churches to "some of the churches in the New Testament" he wrote of "self-conceited dignity... formal deathliness and... respectability" which was more reminiscent of "pagan false religions... than the simplicity of the Early Church", and of "the spiritual famine of the ecclesia anglicana". And quoting D. Gwenallt Jones, who had crossed from Nonconformity via the social gospel to Anglicanism before finally returning to Calvinistic Methodism, he referred to the Anglican Church as "the old mother" and "the old traitoress".²⁸ Seven years later, at a meeting commemorating the sailing of the Pilgrim Fathers, he cited "John Foxe, the great martyrologist" who believed "there were still remnants of popery left in the Church of England which he wished God would remove, for God knew that they were the cause of much blindness and strife". In other words, the Reformation had not gone far enough in the Church of England, and this was his point in 1962 when he distinguished between Puritanism and mainstream Anglicanism. What he believed about the Puritans, who were mostly Anglicans up to 1662, was that they were a movement "for a pure church, pure in practice as well as doctrine, pure in life as well as belief". "Essential Puritanism" was a desire that "the Reformation of the Church of England should be completed" and since "the gathered church" was "at the heart of the Puritan idea" and of Scripture itself, the Church of England could not be truly reformed until it had become congregational. It was semi-reformed and still contained Catholic customs and traditions. The only exception in the history of Anglicanism was the Puritan movement, and that was "a glorious exception", and this is how he saw his erstwhile friend James Packer. He had regarded him "as a latter-day Puritan" and would not acknowledge that he was "a real Anglican" at all, predicting that his fellow Anglicans would not accept him.

27. J.R. MacDonald, *Wanderings and Excursions*, 1929, p.113.

28. *Barn*, April, 1963, pp.172, 173.

Whether such a view of Puritanism is acceptable or not, and many would argue against his premise that "a truly Reformed Church" is a gathered church, what is clear is his hostility to what he saw as "the mechanics of worship" and a religion of externalities and doctrinal deadness. Unlike the Puritans, the Church of England had no interest in going back to the New Testament and was only concerned to maintain its "continuity and tradition" as a kind of bridge between Rome and Geneva. For Lloyd-Jones the claim "to be Catholic as well as Reformed" was an expression of compromise and expediency, and this is what he meant by "Anglican thinking among members of the Baptist Union, the so-called Congregational Church of England", Methodists, and other churches. By remaining in their denominations, reason rather than revelation became the controlling factor for evangelicals. There were exceptions, but generally speaking, the Church of England was a lost cause and "the greatest obstacle to revival" outside of Rome itself.

He was especially critical of the first National Evangelical Anglican Congress held at the University of Keele, 4-7 April, 1967, because it condemned the "narrow partisanship and obstructionism" of earlier evangelicalism in the Church of England and pledged a new willingness "to welcome truth from any quarter" and fellowship with other Christians whatever their differences. This was primarily an ecumenical issue but for Lloyd-Jones it was also an example of the nature of Anglicanism which, as he believed, was flawed through compromise and accommodation. He was right to say that Keele marked a change in the position of Anglican evangelicalism: it was a landmark. Delegates not only made an ecumenical commitment but were encouraged to place loyalty to the Church of England above that of loyalty to evangelicals in general, and this was clearly stated in the printed report,²⁹ but what it also highlights is the black-and-white manner in which Lloyd-Jones saw things and his unwillingness to reconcile opposing ideas. He would not accept that men like John Stott and James Packer could be true evangelicals while at the same time nurturing a wider fellowship of Christians and, although there were some exceptions – his brother Vincent, for example – he would not allow that Anglo-Catholics and Roman Catholics were Christians or that Rome would ever reform. When Archbishop Ramsey, a man known for his openness towards Anglo-Catholics and liberals, was invited to speak at the Keele Congress Lloyd-Jones was "amazed" that such a man should be "called onto an evangelical platform...I still personally have to be satisfied that the man is really a Christian in the New Testament sense of the term at all."³⁰ He was also doubtful about C.S. Lewis, and although he had written a favourable but short review of *The Screwtape Letters* in 1942, he doubted that Lewis was a Christian in 1963.³¹ Lewis was a moderate Anglican layman, neither Roman nor Genevan, but such was his popularity among conservative Christians that Lloyd-Jones thought he had

29. P. Grove, (ed.), *Keele '67 Report*, 1967, pp.15, 8.

30. D.M. Lloyd-Jones, tape recorded sermon, 1 November, 1974.

31. *Christianity Today*, 20 December, 1963.

"almost become the patron saint of evangelicals", but he "was never an evangelical and said so quite plainly himself".³² Obviously Lewis did not meet the criteria of Lloyd-Jones's definition of a Christian.

Intriguing, too, was his sympathy for J.H. Newman and his search for truth. Newman had come from an evangelical family on his journey to Rome, and he had immense influence on the Anglo-Catholic tradition in the Church of England. Lloyd-Jones had urged Iain Murray "to get hold of Wilfred Ward's two-volume *Life of Cardinal Newman* [1912] which he had recently finished" and during the 1941 IVF mission to Oxford, he was evidently pleased to have preached in the pulpit of John Henry Newman in St. Mary's Church. Lloyd-Jones was a prolific reader of all kinds of books but while the whole story of Newman fascinated him, what especially caught his attention was how Newman came to see the Church of England as a compromise between Romanism and Protestantism, and how he had withdrawn from Anglicanism, although he could not condone his move to Rome. The same kind of response arose in the case of his old friend A.T. Davies (1909-80) who had moved to the Church of Wales: "if he had, like Mr Saunders Lewis turned Catholic I would understand and would see a kind of consistency although I would disagree completely". In Lloyd-Jones's view Roman Catholics and evangelicals in Wales were "the only two groups who know where they stand and why they believe": Anglicanism counted for nothing. The trouble with A.T. Davies and his High Church tendencies was that he had moved from a distinctive position in Calvinistic Methodism to an "anti-theological", empiricist position and Lloyd-Jones could not understand such a defection. All he could hope was that "some day we shall see ATD 'coming to his senses'" by returning to the faith.³³ There is, of course, no question as to the antipathy of Lloyd-Jones to Rome and all it stood for but it is striking how he was often more sympathetic to people in the Catholic Church than to people in the Church of England.

It is evident from what we have seen that Lloyd-Jones did not give sufficient credit for the doctrinal stand and intentions of Anglican evangelicals. That their doctrine of the church differed from his is clear enough both before and after Keele, but people like John Stott and James Packer, two of the leading Anglican evangelicals, also believed in the purity of the church and Stott had said so: "We do not believe in a doctrinally mixed church and in such comprehensiveness."³⁴ And in spite of the imperfections of the Church of England Stott could not "disown the great majority of Anglicans as if they were not Christians": they were like "Apollos, needing to be taught the way of the Lord". Lloyd-Jones agreed with this, at least the latter point, but remained adamant that neither Scott or Packer, nor anyone else would ever change the Church of England. Packer, a continuing evangelical although ecumenically involved, "never had any qualms of conscience about the integrity" of his position, and men like Alec Motyer and

32. D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, Edinburgh, 1989, p.21.

33. *Barn*, June, 1963, p.173.

34. John Stott, 16 November, 1991. These were his words to Lloyd-Jones.

Kenneth F.W. Prior, while under no illusions as to the faults of the Church of England and acknowledging Lloyd-Jones's deep distrust and dislike of Anglicanism, remained Anglican.

So the insistence that unless Christian truths were expressed in a certain way they were not truly truths, effectively cut off the majority of Anglicans, although he remained friendly with some of them. Those who did go to hear him in the late 1960s and after became more cautious and sifted what they heard. Nor were they tempted to secede. He did not preach at All Souls although Stott had invited him (especially to their annual Doctors' service) but he did address meetings of the Eclectic Society in its London groups on such topics as prayer and revival, and that was after 1966.

In fact his influence on the religious scene so far as the Anglicans were concerned was minimal. In the mid-1950s and 1960s such was the attraction of the Westminster Chapel pulpit that Anglicans and Nonconformists alike were impressed but as he became more outspoken on ecumenical issues, and particularly after 1966 when he publicly called for evangelicals to withdraw from their denominations and realign, his influence declined. Nor could we say that the "call" of 1966 inadvertently triggered a response among Anglican evangelicals as to their own position. There had been plenty of talking going on well before 1966 and 1967. As Packer said, the Church of England had been "in process of getting a total spring clean" since the 1950s.³⁵ *Prayer Book* and canon law revision was under way, the question of patronage had been raised as was the value of the Thirty-Nine Articles and whether they should remain. Latimer House had been founded in 1959 and this in itself brought about "a lot of ad hoc discussion" and the involvement of a number of "top people at that time who met and formed a kind of strategy for Anglican evangelicals". So the planning for Keele went back three years to 1964 and its roots at least ten years, and was going on while men like Motyer, Prior and others were visiting Westminster Chapel.

Despite this blind spot for Anglicanism, at a personal level Lloyd-Jones had friends among Anglicans and was "always ready to have commerce with them." He believed that they erred by remaining in the Church of England and said so strongly, but there were some long-standing friendships. Stott "had a very friendly relationship at a personal level right to the end" in spite of their differences, Sir Norman Anderson (first Chairman of the House of Laity in the General Synod of the Church of England) was thankful for "the warmth of his friendship and his dealing with individuals", and Alec Motyer saw him as "a great man and a good friend".³⁶ D.R. Davies, a Welshman from Pontycymmer in Glamorgan, who moved from Unitarianism and Marxist Socialism to faith in Christ and was eventually ordained by Archbishop William Temple into the Church of England's ministry, spoke of Lloyd-Jones's preaching as an influence which "defies analysis"

35. J.I. Packer, 5 June, 1992.

36. John Stott, 16 November, 1991, Sir Norman Anderson, 6 May, 1991, Alec Motyer, 19 December, 1991.

and reached the depths.³⁷ Although Davies went through Nonconformity and settled for Anglicanism Lloyd-Jones willingly put him in touch with Hodder & Stoughton who published his book, *On to Orthodoxy* (1939), an account of his disillusionment with rationalism.

All the same, he could never understand the appeal of Anglicanism and while he looked for flexibility and change in men like Packer and Stott he was not willing to be flexible himself. In the end, his anti-Anglicanism as we suggested earlier, was essentially a Welsh view of the English. Being Welsh did not wholly account for his theology, although his upbringing associated with Calvinistic Methodism was a significant factor, but it gave emphasis to his attitude and was as much a "national outlook" as any for which he condemned the English. Some of his criticisms of the Church of England were probably justified, this we would not dispute, but that does not allow for his lack of respect of Englishness or horror of Anglicanism. Christopher Catherwood, seeking, no doubt, to mitigate the circumstances, suggests that "the Doctor did not ever become 'anti-Anglican' per se. It was simply that in England, the Church of England was by far the biggest of the 'mixed' denominations".³⁸ But this does not match the evidence: as one of his admirers said, "he was never 'fair' to the Church of England! It was his *bête noire*".³⁹ Nor does it account for his singularity in the matter. He did not, for example, object to the Church of Scotland or the National Church of Wales, or to the State Church in Australia or Canada, or to the Lutheran Church in Scandinavia or Germany in the same way. They did not generate the same kind of emotion and annoyance that the Church of England did; not even his antipathy to Roman Catholicism equalled it.

As we have said, he related to certain individual Anglicans, and during his lifetime did nothing to discourage his daughters and grandson from going to Oxford or becoming term-time Anglicans, but he remained "extremely vocal" in his criticism of the Church of England and of what he perceived Englishness to be. It was part of his national outlook. As he said, "national characteristics influence the lives of religious men" and their "understanding of the truth", and he was right.

J.F. BRENCHER

37. D. R. Davies, *In Search of Myself*, 1961, p.194.

38. *A Family Portrait*, p.128.

39. Alec Motyer, 19 December, 1991.

REVIEW ARTICLE: Buried Treasure

Justice, Courtesy and Love: Theologians and Missionaries Encountering World Religions 1846–1914. By Kenneth Cracknell. London: Epworth Press, 1995. Pp. xviii + 459, ISBN 0-7162-0501-7, £20.00 pbk.

Happy the scholar who discovers boxes of documents that have lain unpublished despite urgent pleas by the meeting for which they were written that they be made widely available. Happier still when these papers, for all their diversities of situation and authorship, constitute a massive refutation of a myth that has dominated all too many minds and gravely harmed possible movements over eighty years and more in service of world peace.

Warm congratulations therefore to Kenneth Cracknell, already celebrated in a host of different circles for his pioneering work as the first staff member of the British Council of Churches for inter-faith relations from 1976 onwards. Already during his many explorations of those years he had come across the fact that Commission IV of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910, on “The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions”, had sought help with its work by drawing up a questionnaire in 1909 “to be circulated as widely as possible” (Cracknell’s phrase – there are apparently no records either of those to whom it was sent nor how they were chosen). It was in 1978 that he discovered in the WCC archives in Geneva one of four extant sets of the original typed transcripts of the responses from some 200 hand-picked missionaries in relevant countries.

His analysis of the thrust and tenor of these replies can be summarised in the quotations he uses as sub-heads for the thirty pages that form the heart of this epoch-making book: “profound sympathy and deep appreciation”, “identification and solidarity”, “not to disfigure the image of our neighbour”, “reverence must be encountered by reverence”, “as genuine fellow-pilgrims”, “authentic mutual witness” and “willingness to be candid”, “evolution the category of the age”, “the work of God in the world’s living religions”, and “the process of fulfilment”. In short, where “the world” has by and large considered the attitude and work of western Christian missionaries in the “era of imperialism”, from say 1850 to the First World War, to have been one of aggressive superiority and condemnation of other peoples’ “lower” or even “idolatrous” superstitions, these replies reveal a large cross-section of missionaries to have been following quite other paths of exploration, discovery, friendship and mutual enrichment in relation to the teachers and leaders of the other world faiths in their areas.

From this startling discovery the book grew into a parade of substantial studies alike of eight outstanding British and American missionaries, of whom only Timothy Richard, J.N. Farquhar, and C.F. Andrews were names I, for one, already knew, and – still more surprising – of five leading Anglo-American theologians whose teachings lay behind much that these eight were inspired to discover, articulate and embody: F.D. Maurice, B.F. Westcott, A.M. Fairbairn, A.V.G. Allen

and C.C. Hall. The book then rounds off this major study of a deeply impressive yet largely forgotten "mind-set" with a brief account of the way the Commission's work was presented at the Edinburgh Conference, and comparably lively summaries of the writings in which Temple Gairdner, missionary in Egypt and the chronicler of the Edinburgh Conference, and James Hope Moulton, Methodist scholar of Zoroastrianism and of New Testament philology, interpreted and sought to propagate in direct follow-up to the conference this distinctive Edinburgh approach and spirit.

I count this book as one of relatively few historical works that have opened up a new world and so re-arranged my mental and spiritual horizons as to mark a major turning point in my earthly pilgrimage. I hope it will for many others too.

At the same time, I note some three areas of puzzlement that may be worth mentioning, not least for Cracknell's promised, and now most eagerly awaited, further study on the "distinguished missionaries of the 1920s and 30s."

One, of no lasting significance, concerns two curious factual errors. In the Preface Cracknell speaks of "The first three world missionary conferences", (at Edinburgh, Jerusalem and Tambaram), although he begins his substantial chapter 4 with the words: "Edinburgh 1910 was by no means the first 'world missionary conference'." He chronicles briefly the earlier meetings which led to it, although surprisingly does not trace these back to the intriguing suggestion made by William Carey in a letter to the Baptist Missionary Society in May 1806 from Serampore: "would it not be possible to have a general association of all denominations of Christians, from the four quarters of the world, kept at the Cape of Good Hope one in about ten years? I earnestly recommend this plan, let the first meeting be in the Year 1810, or 1812 at the furthest". (For which see Ruth Rouse's article "William Carey's 'pleasing dream' " in the *International Review of Mission*, April 1949, pp.181-92).

I mention this last in part because the other curious error concerns Carey. Already in his first pages, sketching the theological background to Maurice's amazing Boyle lectures of 1846, Cracknell starts from the proliferation of new world missionary societies that sprang up in Europe and the USA at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and lists the five "streams of missionary thought that had converged to mould William Carey". This takes him into considering Millennialism and the "repudiation of Milton's radical pessimism about this 'perverted world' " by such American thinkers as Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards. So the title of Edwards's *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Unity of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of God's Kingdom on Earth* of 1748 occurs in the text before, on the following page, we come to Carey's no less pioneering essay listed in both text and footnote as his *An Humble Enquiry: into the Obligation of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. An early instance of an American-preferred phrasing outshining a British original?

Secondly, I am disappointed that the actual text of Edinburgh's Commission IV is nowhere reproduced, neither in whole nor in part; despite the pages and pages

of fascinating quotations from the many missionaries and theologians whose work that Commission reflected and fulfilled. Presumably Cracknell expects the reader either already to know that report from the Edinburgh volumes or to go searching for it directly on starting this book. He gives us generous extracts from the address by Professor David Cairns, the Commission's chairman, to the Conference, so we are not left in much doubt about what it intended. But the Report itself is the great absentee of the book, to the latter's loss.

Thirdly, I was much seized by the autobiographical framework that Cracknell gives to the book. He starts from the failure of the preparation given to him as an apprentice missionary in 1963 in West Africa to wake him "from a deep dogmatic slumber", or even so much as to suggest to him that his job might be to listen to the people among whom he was to serve. "My own formation had rejected any talk of 'points of contact' and of building upon the religion that already existed among those to whom the missionary went. Barth and Kraemer, I thought, had taught that religion was a purely human work and as such 'the affair of sinful men'".

This, later on, develops into a fierce critique of the leadership that failed to build upon the achievements of the Edinburgh Conference but rather ensured a different emphasis in both the Jerusalem Conference of 1928 and that of Tambaram in 1938, to the point that the WWC at its foundation in 1948 – and the International Missionary Council of that generation – "found no difficulty in virtually avoiding the theological issues involved in religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue".

This critique reappears more fully in the closing pages but quite lacks the "justice, courtesy and love" in relation to such figures as Temple (drafter of the Jerusalem message), Kraemer (commissioned to write, at dangerously short notice, the major study for the Tambaram Conference) and indeed Karl Barth (the greatest teacher and spiritual force behind the entire "missionary endeavour" with which outstanding Christians were to confront the forces of Hitler and Stalin over fifty years), which it has previously lavished on so many earlier witnesses. Those of us who may, like Cracknell, have started as deplorably ignorant about God's purposes in, through, and for the religions of the world but who have found in those three (and others) an inspiration and exploration no less true or profound than in the subjects of this book, will await the volume devoted to the 1920s and 1930s with eager expectation, if also with a tremor of nervousness about the dangers of re-fighting the battles of an earlier generation.

MARTIN CONWAY

SHORTER REVIEW

The Waldensian Story A Study in Faith, Intolerance and Survival. By Prescott Stephens, foreward by Giorgio Bouchard. Pp. xxi + 375. Lewes (Sussex): The Book Guild, 1998.

Three centuries before Luther posted up his famous *Theses* on those fatal Wittenberg gates, the first Waldensians had already attracted the attention and concern of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities in various countries. Their independent and unconventional attitude to spiritual life defied contemporary assumptions about religious orthodoxy, social deference, and gender roles. In their search for a more intimate and pietistic Christian lifestyle, they seemed to span medieval mysticism and modern sensitivities. Today they survive in Italy and Latin America as the oldest Reformed church in the world. Prescott Stephens's new history presents a refreshing survey of the unique experience of this *popolo-chiesa* – the "Israel of the Alps".

The Medieval Waldensians formed a widespread popular movement, with branches in various parts of Europe, and a strong presence in Germany, southern France, and Italy. In the sixteenth century the surviving branches of the movement in northern Italy adopted the European Reformation. The acceptance of the *Confessio Helvetica* and the Swiss Reformation was a turning point in many respects, and it is in 1532 that modern Waldensianism really originated. Since then "by God's grace" – as they saw it – the Waldensians have managed to withstand wars, persecutions and repressions, till they were granted toleration in 1848, when, like the Piedmontese Jews, they benefited from the liberal revolution.

Not surprisingly, the Waldensians have always fascinated historians; moreover, as a denomination, they are themselves historically minded. As a consequence there are dozens of studies on the Waldensians, ranging from seventeenth-century accounts to the modern professional works by Armand-Hugon, Vinay, Molnar, and Euan Cameron. Prescott Stephens's latest addition to this rich and stimulating literature is nevertheless most welcome. Though in some respects a book for the general public and the non-specialists, *The Waldensian Story* is based on an impressive amount of research on primary sources in various languages, and on a detailed study of the historic valleys of Waldensian culture in present-day Piedmont. This enables Prescott Stephens to discuss the historiography and to intervene authoritatively and effectively in some of the recent debates. In particular, Euan Cameron's revisionist analysis of the pre-Reformation movement and the synod of Chanforan (1532) is revisited and substantially "revised": using both written sources and evidence from the geography of the alpine valleys, Stephens shows that the traditional Waldensian interpretation was both well-founded and consistent with what we know about the communication routes and the cultural exchanges between the Waldensian valleys and Calvinist Switzerland.

The most convincing chapters are perhaps those dealing with early Waldensianism and the critical Reformation age, including an interesting

comparison with the Huguenots. More generally, Prescott Stephens's reconstruction is especially fascinating in the chapters dealing with the social and everyday life of the Waldensian communities. Particularly instructive is the verbal and visual evidence about women's role among the "teachers" of the faith – a feature appreciated by both Counter-Reformation prosecutors and modern scholars, though for different reasons.

The book brings the story to the end of the twentieth century. The current relationship with the post-Vatican II Catholic Church, as well as the enduring links with German, Swiss and French Reformed Churches, dominate the last part of this most interesting study. Elegantly written and lavishly illustrated, this handsome volume represents a remarkable achievement and deserves a wide circulation among both students and the general public.

E.F. BIAGINI