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CONTENTS

*Please note that Helen Weller's hours at Westminster are now Monday-Thursday each week, 08.30-14.30.

EDITORIAL

This issue of the *Journal* begins in the seventeenth century and then jumps to the twentieth, ending in the twenty-first, though the historical distance should not suggest that there are no connections to be discerned between the articles. John Morgans discusses William Erbery and his journey from Calvinistic orthodoxy to what might now be termed, if a little anachronistically, a liberal spirituality. Though dismissed by subsequent commentators, Erbery was among the first to call for "toleration", arguing that "as the three chief Religions in the world, are the Christians, Jews and Turks; so this Christian Common-wealth appearing so favourable to the Jews, why not to the Turks? And if for unbelieving Jews, why not for misbelieving Christians …?" What, then, is religion and, more importantly, how significant is religious conviction?

This leads us naturally to John Parry's article, based on the Society's annual lecture delivered at the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Hounslow, on 28 June 2014. He recounts the activities of the URC's relations with those of non-Christian faith and highlights the tension which exists between being faithful to the Christian gospel while also recognizing the humanity and spirituality of those who belong to other religious traditions, especially in light of major world events (most acutely, perhaps, the attacks of 11 September 2001). The article somewhat poignantly reminds us that religious conviction need not prevent us from living together and understanding each other.

These two articles, along with that by Alan Argent, note the past and speak to the present. They highlight the historian's task of gathering and analyzing all manner of sources including an author's publications (Dr Morgans), the official record of a committee (Dr Parry), and personal reminiscence and opinion (Dr Parry and Dr Argent), all of which can be mined in order to construct an account and enrich its presentation. The keeping of records is crucial, and Helen Weller's report of the refurbishment at Westminster College, Cambridge, and how this has benefitted the collections held there, reminds us of the need to care for the archives entrusted to us as well as to secure archives for future researchers. I am grateful to all these contributors for offering considered and intriguing accounts of the subjects at hand.

We welcome David J. Appleby and Derek Browning as reviewers.

Note: The Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries is pleased to announce the publication in paperback of the well-received series of *Protestant Nonconformist Texts* under the general editorship of Alan P. F. Sell. The four volumes are:

1. *1550-1700* edited by R. Tudur Jones with Arthur Long and Rosemary Moore, £33.
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4. *The Twentieth Century*, edited by David M. Thompson with John H. Y. Briggs and John Munsey Turner, £33.

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"THE HONEST HERETIQUE": WILLIAM ERBERY (1604-1654)

William Erbery has been a neglected and misunderstood figure in the study of Welsh Puritanism. Although admired by some of his contemporaries as a pioneer who challenged the orthodoxies of his day, he became known to future generations not through his own work, but through the writings of those who saw him as a schismatic, turbulent antinomian, heretic and blasphemer. Some went further and described him as a mad man, probably buried in Bedlam.[1] Thomas Edwards, whose writings are well recognized for their virulent treatment of those not sharing his Presbyterian standpoint regarded Erbery as holding "many grosse errours".[2] Francis Cheynell condemned "Mr Earbury (who) doth publickly deliver divers blasphemous errours in this city".[3] Christopher Love, although converted under Erbery's ministry in Cardiff now regretted that Erbery had "fallen into dangerous opinions".[4] Treating all Welsh Puritans with scant respect, Richard Baxter, in his *Catholic Communion Defended* (1684), claimed "had not good forms been safer for that people than the doctrine of Mr Erbery, Mr Cradok, Vavasor Powell, Morgan Lloyd of Wrexham".[5] An anonymous tract of 1685 – *A Winding-sheet for Mr. Baxter's Dead* – has been regarded as throwing authoritative light upon Erbery's character because it was written as a reply to Baxter's attack upon the Welshmen. While the anonymous writer praised Cradock, Powell and Llwyd, he apologized for Erbery, "who was taken ill of his Whimsies … Mr Erbury's Disease lay in his Head, not in his Heart".[6]

These views of Erbery were passed down through the centuries by the few historians who took any note of him. The eighteenth-century Nonconformist historian Daniel Neal referred to Erbery as "a turbulent antinomian"[7] without quoting any decisive evidence in support of his claim. The nineteenth-century historian Benjamin Brook claimed that Erbery "had formerly laboured under a

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1 Anthony Wood suggests that Erbery died in 1654, "in the beginning of the year (in April I think) sixteen hundred fifty and four, and was, as I conceive, buried at Christ Church before-mentioned, or else in the Cemiterie joyning to Old Bedlam near London". Anthony à Wood, *Athenae Oxoniensis: An Exact History of all the Writers and Bishops Who have had their Education in the most ancient and famous University of Oxford* (London: Thomas Bennet, 1692), Vol. II, p. 104.

2 Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena* (London: s.n., 1646), Part I, Div. 2, p. 24.

3 Francis Cheynell, *An Account given to the Parliament by the Ministers sent by them to Oxford, March 26, 1647* (London: Printed by M. F. for Samuel Gellibrand, 1647), p. 51.

4 Christopher Love, *A Cleare and Necessary Vindication* (London: s.n., 1651), p. 36.

5 Richard Baxter, *Catholick Communion Defended* (London: T. Parkhurst, 1684), p. 28.

6 Anon., *A Winding-sheet for Mr. Baxter's Dead, or, those whom he hath killed and slain in his Catholic Communion sweetly embalmed and decently buried again, viz. Mr. Erbury, Mr. Cradock, Mr. Vavasor Powell, and Mr. Morgan Lloyd* (London: s.n., 1685), p. 4.

7 Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans* (London: s.n., 1822), Vol. III, p. 397.

sore affliction, which had deeply affected his head",[8] while Thomas Rees, the foremost Welsh historian of the nineteenth century wrote: "Mr. Erbery, several years before his death, was visited by a sore affliction, which to some degree deranged his mind",[9] and in his estimation of *The Testimony of William Erbery*, a collection of Erbery's major works, he noted that "Here and there we find in it flashes of wit, and some of the most correct, sublime and telling ideas, but interspersed with such a mass of religious nonsense, as none but a mentally deranged man would have penned".[10]

This position was the one taken by Geoffrey Nuttall in his magisterial *The Welsh Saints 1640-1660*, first delivered as lectures in the University College of North Wales, Bangor, in March 1957. Dr Nuttall, one of the most eminent and insightful historians of English Puritanism, justified excluding Erbery from his Bangor lectures by repeating the anonymous claim published in 1685 that "Mr Erbury was taken ill of his Whimsies … " and concluded that "In my own judgement a perusal of Erbury's writings unfortunately confirms these statements, and I do not propose to consider him further. He was not of the same calibre, mentally or spiritually, as the other three men, however much they may all have owed to him".[11] This was the scholarly estimation of William Erbery when Dr Pennar Davies suggested that Erbery needed rehabilitation because he was "an intellectual and moral giant … Erbery has been grossly neglected and misunderstood".[12]

I: A Sketch of Erbery's Life

William Erbery was born in 1604 in Cardiff. An Oxford and Cambridge graduate, he subscribed for deacon's orders in Bristol in 1626 and became curate at St Woolos, Newport in 1630. He was instituted in Cardiff on 7 August 1633. Almost immediately, his Puritan views tarred him as a dangerous schismatic. The King had instructed that *The Declaration of Sports,* issued on 18 October 1633, should be publicly read from every pulpit at Sunday worship. The declaration was targeted at "Puritans and precise people" and encouraged "lawful recreations and honest exercises upon Sundays, and other Holy-days".[13] Erbery refused to read the royal commandment and there followed a lengthy struggle between Erbery, William Murray (the Bishop of Llandaff) and William Laud (the

8 Benjamin Brook, *Lives of the Puritans* (London: James Black, 1813), Vol. III, p. 190.
9 Thomas Rees, *History of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales* (2nd edition, London: Snow and Company, 1883), p. 43.
10 Ibid.
11 Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Welsh Saints, 1640-1660* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1957), p. 21.
12 W. T. P. Davies, "Episodes in the History of Brecknockshire Dissent", *Brycheiniog*, 3 (1957), pp. 11-65 [p. 14].
13 S. R. Gardiner, *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906), pp.100f.

Archbishop of Canterbury). Laud wrote to Charles I that the new Vicar of St Mary's in Cardiff had been "very disobedient to your Majesty's Instructions".[14]

After appearing several times before the Court of High Commission at Lambeth, Erbery resigned his Cardiff living in 1638. At the same time he was holding conventicles in Cardiff and as such laid the foundation for an Independent cause which he established within two years of his resignation. This was when he published his first pamphlet, *The Great Mystery of Godliness.* Carefully written, this forty-page treatise takes the form of a traditionally prepared catechism. In it Erbery teaches a Puritan approach to the Christian life, reflecting orthodox Calvinism and emphasizing the place of the Word and Sacraments as central to the personal nurture of the Christian.

After resigning from the priesthood, he formed the first church "according to the New England pattern"[15] or "new-modelled church"[16] in Cardiff in 1640. Its government and ethos were similar to those of the Llanfaches church which had been incorporated the previous year. Erbery emphasized that Llanfaches and Cardiff were not "separatist" congregations but were the first Independent churches in either England or Wales. Independency, Erbery claimed, was the consequence of the work of divines such as "Mr. Cotton and others in New-England".[17] When the Long Parliament was recalled, Erbery was among the first to petition the House of Commons to provide a godly ministry in Wales. The petition was submitted in December 1640, and by January permission was granted for Erbery himself, Walter Cradock, Henry Walter, Ambrose Mostyn and Richard Symonds to preach throughout Wales. A second petition followed in February, pointing out that there were fewer than thirteen preachers in the thirteen shires of Wales and that it was critical for preachers of the Word to be appointed to preach throughout Wales. This second Petition was presented in the name of seven preachers, supported by "three hundred lay subscriptions".[18] Erbery was a key figure in this Puritan circle seeking the reform of the Church.

It is then no surprise that at the outbreak of Civil War in 1642, Erbery's home in Cardiff was "plundered" by Cavaliers. He fled to Windsor castle in the city and then became army chaplain under the Earl of Essex, General Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell. This proved to be the turning-point in Erbery's life. The army and radical London congregations exerted a revolutionary influence upon his thinking. He became associated with army chaplains, among whom were William "Doomsday" Sedgwick, Joshua Sprigge, a chaplain to Fairfax during the war, and John Saltmarsh, whose views appear to have been a forerunner of Quaker spirituality. In *A Scourge*

14 William Laud, *The History of the Troubles and Tryal of the Most Reverend Father in God and Blessed Martyr William Laud …* ed. Henry Wharton (London: Ri. Chiswell, 1695), pp. 533, 537, 544, 555.

15 Erbery, *Apocrypha* (London: s.n., 1652), pp. 7f.

16 Erbery, *The Wretched People* (London: s.n., 1653); cf. idem, *The Testimony of William Erbery* (London: s.n., 1658) [hereafter *Testimony*], p. 162.

17 Erbery, *The Honest Heretique* (London: s.n., 1652); also *Testimony,* p. 327.

18 Lloyd Bowen, "Wales and Religious Reform in the Long Parliament, 1640-1642", *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 12 (2005), pp. 36-59.

for the Assyrian, Erbery explored theological changes within the Puritanism of the previous one hundred years and argued that although interpretations of belief changed, the substance of the Gospel remained. He described four steps within English Puritanism as a pilgrim's progress from preaching which was "low and legal … [to] the Doctrine of free Grace … [to] the Letter of Scripture, and the flesh of Christ … [until] this is the fourth step which some have attained to, holding forth Christ in the Spirit, as Mr. William Sedgwick, Mr. Sterrie, Mr. Sprig, and others".[19]

During the summer of 1646, Oxford, the King's headquarters, fell to the Parliamentary Army. Erbery was present as a chaplain and his public lectures proved popular with rebellious students and victorious troops. Parliament sent six Presbyterian ministers to restore order. The Oxford Debates between Erbery and the Presbyterians reveal that Erbery had changed his views dramatically during the seven years since the publication of *The Great Mystery of Godliness.* National and revolutionary political and social events were paralleled by Erbery's radical experience of "external providences and internal discoveries". The world was being turned upside down. A monarch who had ruled by divine right, and an episcopally-ordered church by law established, were about to be replaced by parliament, army and a reformed church. As a consequence of his experience as an army chaplain and participant in radical London independent congregations, Erbery's new approach to theology was first expressed in his account of the Oxford debates, *Nor Truth nor Errour* (1647). A foundation had been laid for further exploration which continued during his remaining eight years.

The six Presbyterian ministers wrote to General Fairfax to expel Erbery from Oxford in 1647.[20] Fairfax complied with their request but enabled Erbery to remain as a chaplain at least until 1650.[21] Erbery spent his time between his Cardiff home and London where his base was Christ Church, Newgate. Towards the end of 1648, Erbery produced a third tract, *The Lord of Hosts,* published by Giles Calvert at the sign of the Black Spread-Eagle at the west end of St Paul's. Much of Erbery's work after 1648 was published by Calvert whose home and shop became a centre for radical thinkers.[22] Erbery's theological principles, first

19 Erbery, *A Scourge for the Assyrian* (London: s.n., 1652); also *Testimony*, p. 69.

20 Cheynell, *An account given to the Parliament by the ministers sent by them to Oxford,* p. 51.

21 Anne Laurence, *Parliamentary Army Chaplains, 1642-1651* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society, 1990), p. 124.

22 "By late May 1644 Calvert was occupying a tenement at the sign of the Black-Spread-eagle at the west end of St Paul's Cathedral in the parish of St Gregory by Paul's … this well-known address was to become a lodging, meeting-place, postal address, and distribution point for radicals and their printed literature. Calvert was a prolific publisher, with thirty-seven new titles in 1646, thirty-one in 1647, thirty-two in 1648. In 1653 Calvert began publishing Quaker titles … Of the fifty-two known titles issued or sold by Calvert that year, fourteen were by Quaker authors. In 1654 Calvert issued or sold thirty-eight known new titles. Of these thirty were by Quaker authors… (by his death) He had issued or sold either individually or in partnership 475 known different publications, of which about 200 were by Quaker authors". Ariel Hessayon, "Giles Calvert", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-10).

expressed in *Nor Truth nor Error* were expanded in *The Lord of Hosts* to reflect the changing political and social scene.

At the beginning of January 1649, (the month the King was executed at Whitehall), Erbery attended the Whitehall Debates of the General Council of the Army. Both the Putney and Whitehall Debates centred on *The Agreement of the People* (28 October 1647) which was drafted by the Levellers, both civilian and in the Army. It was an attempt to create a written constitution. Erbery's position was that freedom of religion and a righteous society were more important than theoretical discussions about constitutional reform.

From 1652 until his death in April 1654, Erbery wrote letters to friends and fellow-travellers, polemical and humorous writing, theological and ecclesiological tracts, and political pamphlets. They were aimed at audiences in Wales and England, and give rare insights into the fierce debates of the period. Erbery was active as a speaker, (he did not regard himself as a preacher), particularly in South Wales and in London. The consequence of these disputes was that he was charged with heresy. Placed under house-arrest in London, he appeared before the Committee for Plundered Ministers, a parliamentary committee established in 1642 to provide relief for Puritan ministers expelled from the church by episcopal authority. The committee also examined ministers charged with heresy or scandalous behaviour. The Trial, held in the Chequer Chamber at Westminster before an audience of more than five hundred, was a major event in the calendar of February 1653. There are two records of the trial. The first was an official report by William Clarke, secretary to the Council of the Army, and the other was Erbery's own defence published as *The Honest Heretique.* Erbery was charged with holding "unorthodox" views on the Lord's Supper, Baptism, prayer, the humanity of Christ and the Trinity. He answered all the charges of heresy with such clarity, passion and precision that he was declared innocent and released from house-arrest.

His release was the trigger for a new lease of life, and Erbery continued to write with even greater enthusiasm and energy. Fourteen tracts appeared in his final year. His last work, published three months after his death was *The Great Earthquake.* Like *The Honest Heretique*, it contains a systematic presentation of his convictions. Erbery died in 1654.

Most of Erbery's works were collected by John Webster, (a schoolmaster who like Erbery attacked the clergy and emphasized that scripture could also be interpreted by the laity), and published by Giles Calvert in 1658 as *The Testimony of William Erbery.* After Erbery's death, his family stepped out of the shadows. His widow Mary, and his daughter Dorcas belonged to the Quaker meeting in Cardiff as early as 1655, and were followers of James Naylor, a Quaker leader who, in 1656, had re-enacted Christ's entry into Jerusalem by a similar ride into Bristol. He was condemned and imprisoned for blasphemy. In 1667, Mary gave an orchard for a Quaker graveyard at Sowdrey in Cardiff. Another daughter, Lydia married Henry Fell and they served as Quaker missionaries in Barbados. Erbery's son, Mordecai married Elizabeth Chapman, daughter of Mary Chapman, a prominent Cardiff Quaker who gave land for the

Quaker graveyard at Quaker's Yard.[23]

II: The Contribution of William Erbery

John Webster's purpose in publishing *The Testimony* was to produce "a collection of the writings of the aforesaid author, for the benefit of posterity". His Preface concludes "Thou hast here presented to thee, some fragments of this Author, That his Testimony may not be lost, but may remain upon Record against the backslidings of this age" (p. ix.). *The Testimony* seems to have been effectively lost for three centuries because his reputation had been permanently blighted by the notion that "Mr Erbury … was taken ill of his Whimsies … Mr Erbury's Disease lay in his Head, not in his Heart". Despite the neglect of four hundred years, it is clear that Erbery had a significant influence on some of his contemporaries and he made an important contribution to the continuing Christian exploration into theology, ecclesiology and ethics.

Trust your experience of the living Christ

By the time Erbery became Vicar of St Mary's in Cardiff in 1633, he was a doughty opponent of the Laudian attempts to return the Church to its catholic and sacramental roots. He formed conventicles in Cardiff, spoke against the Book of Sports, was tried before the Court of High Commission and was forced to resign from holy orders. However, at this point he remained a resolute Calvinist and expressed this with clarity and passion in *The Great Mystery of Godliness* of 1639 and 1640. Although his theology did not initially change, his ecclesiology was transformed. He founded the first Independent church in Cardiff in 1640 – only a year after the formation of Llanfaches (the first such cause in Wales). By the early 1640s, Erbery was at ease with a Calvinist theology and an Independent ecclesiology. This stance would have served him well throughout a decade which saw the Independents replace the Presbyterians as the leaders of the Rebellion against King and Episcopacy.

Nevertheless, the Oxford Debates of 1646 and 1647 reveal that Erbery's thinking had changed radically. His participation in radical movements in the Parliamentary Army, in London congregations and with groups of searchers throughout the country resulted in the "new theology" he expressed at the Oxford Disputations. Richard Baxter visited the New Model Army after the battle of Naseby and deplored that many were:

> For State Democracy, and sometime for Church Democracy; sometimes against Forms of Prayer, and sometimes against Infant Baptism, (which

23 Brian Ll. James, "William Erbery (1604-54): Ceisiwr Cymreig", in J. Gwynfor Jones (ed.), *Agweddau ar Dwf Piwritinaiaeth yng Nghymru yn yr ail ganrif ar bymtheg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1986), p. 64; Christine Trevett, "William Erbery and his daughter Dorcas: Dissenter and Resurrected Radical", *Journal of Welsh Religious History*, 4 (1996), pp. 23-50.

> yet some of them did maintain); sometimes against Set-times of prayer, and against the tying of our selves to any Duty before the Spirit move us; and sometimes about Free-grace and Free-will, and all the Points of Anti-nomianism and Armininianism.[24]

Thomas Edwards had described Erbery's journeys throughout the south of England in the mid-1640s, as one who had "fallen to many grosse Errors, holding Universal Redemption, &c and now a Seeker, and I know not what … [speaking in] the Isle of Ely … Berry … Northamptonshire … Oundel, Newport-Pagnel … Marlborough".[25]

What was at the heart of Erbery's converting experience? He discovered two central, radical convictions. He had come to experience the immanence and the imminence of God.

The immanence of God

The events of the 1640s gave Erbery a new experience of God and humankind. Conflicting political, theological and ecclesiological systems and opposing armies, all claiming that God was only on their side, raised critical questions to which Erbery tried to respond. He no longer had any truck with theological systems centred on a deity with power but with only a limited capacity for grace. His chaplaincy during brutal warfare convinced him of the blasphemy of dividing humankind eternally into election either for salvation or damnation. Divine power revealed in the generosity of Christ's graciousness would not operate like this. Erbery was convinced that those beliefs were religious non-sense. He argued with David Davies, chaplain at Gelligaer, "what Gospel or glad tydings is it to tell the world, that none should be saved but the Elect and Believers? Whereas Christ came to save onely the lost, giving a word of life to all men … that he might have mercy upon all".[26] His view of God was now founded on a love and power expressed in the death and resurrection of Christ, and on the gift of the Pentecostal Spirit of fire and power. God who was in Christ was also in the saints, in full measure but not in the same manifestation. "Christ in you" and "the glory I have given them" were Pauline and Johannine convictions inspiring Erbery's exploration of divinity within humanity:

> That the fulnesse of the Godhead dwels in the Saints, as in the Son, in the same measure, though not in the same manifestation, he being in this last sense anointed above his fellows, and God manifest in the flesh: But seeing we are his Brethren, we have the same Divine nature, our Fathers nature as full in us as he: and we being his body and fulnesse

24 *Reliquiae Baxterianae, The Life of the Reverend Mr. Richard Baxter* (London: Matthew Sylvester, 1696), Lib. 1, Part 1, p. 53.

25 Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena,*, Part I, Div. 2, p. 24.

26 Erbery, *A Call to the Churches* (London: s.n., 1652); also *Testimony,* pp. 219f.

> also, though the oyl first appear poured forth on the Head, yet it runneth down to his hem, all his Members are annointed with him.[27]

This living, loving God could not be enchained in rigid scholastic formulae or in repetitive, dreary liturgical patterns. Erbery made no compromise with contemporary stereotypes or with his own past. His sense of the presence of God convinced him that the being of God in Christ was also discovered within the saints and the whole of humankind. The divine essence exists within God's people and the whole of creation. The universe exists because of its divine origin, participates in the divine nature, is being shaped by divine power and is to be fulfilled when "God shall appear not onely thy light, but the light of the World, the light of every Man, and the light of every Creature".[28] The Gospel mystery of "Christ in you" would be fully manifested at the fulfilment of the ages. Erbery, like most of his contemporaries, was convinced that the Day of the Lord was close at hand. This was clear from the evidence of these "speaking times".

The imminence of God

Erbery's personal experience of the inwardness of God was coupled with his conviction that the nations were providentially guided towards the fulfilment of God's purposes. The revolutionary political period of the Civil War was a precursor of the arrival of the Kingdom. Erbery reflected the millenarian vision of most of his fellow Puritans. Most of the twice-monthly sermons preached before Parliament in the 1640s encouraged the Members that they were God's agents in bringing in the Final Kingdom. The earlier part of that decade was dominated by Presbyterian ministers and the latter half by Independents. They shared a common conviction that they were God's elect hastening the last and glorious Day. Contemporary events reinforced their Biblical interpretation. It was only when the enthusiasm of the main-line Puritans waned that there was room for the Fifth Monarchist party[29] to recapture the vision. The English parliament served as the ensign of God's final great act of providence. During the revolutionary decade following 1640, Puritans tried to clarify their certainty that everyday events were being shaped by the expected Last Day. These were the final battles of Christ in which the saints exercised a specific and critical role

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27 Erbery, *Nor Truth nor Errour* (London: s.n., 1647); also *Testimony,* p. 8.

28 Erbery, *The Great Earthquake* (London: s.n., 1654); also *Testimony*, p. 308.

29 The Fifth Monarchist party was launched at All Hallows the Great, London, in December 1651 by John Simpson and Christopher Feake. Other supporters were John Rogers, Vavasor Powell, Major-General Harrison and William Packer. Inspired by their interpretation of the monarchies in the Books of Daniel and Revelation, they were convinced that King Jesus would soon literally return and establish his kingdom. They were furious with Cromwell when he disbanded the Nominated or Barebones Parliament in late 1653. See Erbery, *The Bishop of London* (London: s.n., 1652); also *Testimony,* pp. 43-47; idem, *An Olive Leaf* (London: s.n., 1654) and idem, *The Man of Peace* (London: 1654); also *Testimony,* pp. 184-216.

in establishing a godly order in the state.

Erbery rejected a physical Second Coming of Christ. Accordingly, the End Time will be when the destiny of humankind is fulfilled, when there is the revelation of the unity of person with person, for "all the people of God shall become one Land, one Continent, wherein the Lord alone shall live". It will be when saints are recognized as united with God:

> … for 'tis the glorious liberty of the children of God, the manifestation of the sons of God, the appearing of the great God in us, when we shall be like him, see him as he is, know him as we are known, see him eye to eye; as he sees us, we shall see him, see his Face, and his Name on our foreheads; that is, we shall not only see God, but men shall see God in us; for all that see us shall acknowledge that we are the seed which the Lord hath blessed: the blessed seed is Christ the Son of God, so all the Saints shall be in the glory of the Father, when the Son shall be subject, and God be All in all.[30]

The saints (the first-fruits to reveal God's Way), humankind and the whole of creation will reflect their oneness in divine power, justice and grace. In the culmination of the purposes of God, no-one and no-thing is left out. At the heart of Erbery's theology is a confidence in the fulfilment of God's purposes for creation. It is a breathtaking vision of universalism:

> … when thy light shall be the Lord God in thee, then God, thy Sun, shall not go down; and God, thy Moon, shall not be with-drawn: yea, God shall appear not onely thy light, but the light of the World, the light of every Man, and the light of every Creature: thou shalt then clearly see the invisible things of God, even the Eternal Power and Godhead in the whole Creation, and no more Sun or Moon shining in the Heaven, but God himself shining in both, and his glory filling the Earth also, and every thing in Heaven and Earth, as the appearance of God.[31]

The dominating themes of the immanent and imminent Christ resulted in Erbery breaking loose from the shackles of contemporary orthodoxy. Erbery's personal experience of God within him was coupled with his conviction that God was providentially guiding the nation towards the Third Dispensation, when God's purposes would be fulfilled. His vision was very different from that of the Fifth Monarchists who had believed that the Nominated Parliament of 1653 anticipated the coming of Christ's Kingdom. They were furious when Cromwell dissolved Parliament, and power was handed over to the Protectorate with Cromwell as Lord Protector. Erbery had confidence in Cromwell and entreated

30 Erbery, Letter to Morgan Llwyd in *A Call to the Churches*; also *Testimony,* p. 238.
31 Erbery, *The Great Earthquake*; also *Testimony,* pp. 307f.

his Fifth Monarchist friends, John Rogers, Christopher Feake and Vavasor Powell to cooperate with the Instrument of Government, the new constitution with Cromwell at its helm. Erbery had a firm grasp of the realities of government and was well aware that the Cromwellian government offered the most promising means of establishing the rule of God in contemporary Britain.

A theological revolution

Erbery's new experience of God demanded a similar revolution in theology. The old wineskins could not hold the new wine. How could he communicate his experience of God? God was a living, loving presence. Like other radical Puritans, Erbery explored the reality of the Spirit in opposition to the calcified form in which the church had become fixed. Erbery believed that much Puritan thinking and practice had trapped itself within scriptural legalism,[32] theological inflexibility,[33] ecclesiological formalism[34] and ethical pharisaism.[35]

Many Puritans stressed the letter of scripture. Radicals, like Erbery longed for scripture to be freed from the shackles of legalistic literalism. Erbery used all the tools of contemporary Biblical scholarship, but insisted that scripture became alive only with a meeting of the human spirit and the divine Spirit. Erbery approached traditional theological positions from this existential position. God was unwavering in the eternal purposes of bringing the whole of creation to fulfilment. He rejected a traditional doctrine that Christ's death fulfilled and satisfied the justice of God. A loving Father could not demand the sacrifice of a loving Son. Erbery's experience of God convinced him that the divine Spirit is eternally creative, reconciling in Christ and fulfilling through the saints, humankind and the whole of creation. Erbery's confidence in the fulfilling action of a Trinitarian God lay at the heart of his remarkable demand for the broadest expression of a liberty of conscience:

> … for unbelieving Jews … for misbelieving Christians, who to their utmost knowledge love the Truth and Peace … the Turks do (in their righteous ways) worship the Son in the Father, though not naming Christ as Christians do … the Apostles were in love … with men of all Religions … why may not honest Papists have the like liberty of Conscience.[36]

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32 Note Erbery's debate with David Davies of Gelligaer, *A Call to the Churches*; also *Testimony*, pp. 219ff.

33 Note Erbery's debate with the six Presbyterian ministers at Oxford, *Nor Truth nor Errour*; also *Testimony*, pp. 3-18.

34 Note Erbery's advice to the "pastors of Wales" in *A Call to the Churches*; also *Testimony,* pp. 217-251.

35 Note Erbery's dispute over the stipends of Cornelius Burges(s) and Lazarus Seaman in *Ministers for Tythes* (London: s.n., 1653); also *Testimony,* pp. 198-201.

36 Erbery, *The Honest Heretique* (London: s.n., 1653); also *Testimony*, pp. 333f.

An ecclesiological revolution

Because Erbery believed the seventeenth century was experiencing the death-throes of the age of the Apostasy, the ministry, ordinances and government of all formal Churches were no longer valid. In Erbery's opinion, formalism in church government, a literalistic interpretation of scripture, and a lifeless repetition of ordinances had replaced the presence of the Spirit. He saw himself as one of the "scattered saints, a seeker", and one who should "wait in peace and patience" for the coming of the Kingdom, the third and final dispensation in which God's purposes would be fulfilled. He sympathized with signs of a new movement of the Spirit with those who are termed "New lights", "Notionists", those who respond to "John's spirit in the North of England, and the Spirit of Jesus rising in North-wales".

> What is the meaning of those honest men and women in the North, that so many of them are taken with that power, that they can do nothing else but quake and tremble?[37]

Erbery wrote knowledgeably and forcefully about the history and practice of all church traditions. He was not alone in regarding the "Apostasy" as having begun when "Kingdoms began to be Christian; and Christian-Kingdoms, because they were Christian, would needs appear and act as Churches, call councels and Synods, condemn Heresies, judg of the Truth and Mysteries of God by the gifts of men".[38] He disapproved of the power wielded in the prelacy of "Kings and Rulers of the Nations … the Pope with his Conclave-Prelates in their Convocation; and Presbyters in their Classis call themselves the Church; yea, the Elders of Independent Churches also have all the power, and do Lord it over their Churches".[39] He dismissed their differing forms of government, ministries, sacraments and prayers. Having rejected all their stances, he reached the enigmatic position of "My religion is, to be of no religion, with man; that is, to have fellowship with none, and yet to have fellowship with all in God". His personal position was one of "retiring into the inner world, waiting in silence, seeking the truth, walking in light and being a wayfaring man". That his wife and children became members of the Society of Friends suggests that they, too, followed in a similar direction to Erbery's personal journey.

A political and social revolution

Erbery wrote a great deal about contemporary history and described the rule of monarchy, aristocracy in parliament, and democracy in the army. He was not convinced that constitutional change would necessarily meet the underlying needs

37 Erbery, *The Children of the West* (London: s.n., 1653); also *Testimony*, p. 140.
38 Erbery, *The Great Earthquake*; also *Testimony*, p. 270.
39 *Testimony*, pp. 270f.

of the governed. What was the function of government? It was "to breake in pieces the oppressor, to ease the oppressed of their burdens, to release the prisoners of their bondes, and to relieve poore familys with bread". Erbery put this New Testament text into practice in his daily life. One of the reasons for his rejection of payment by tithes was "the oppression of Tithes came to my ears, and the cry of the oppressed filled my heart, telling me, That I and my children fed on their flesh, that we drunk their blood, and lived softly on their hard labour and sweat".[40] The poor should be supported by the government taxing the rich, and providing a treasury for the poor. In the words of Sir Charles Firth, "Erbury, to use a modern phrase, demanded social reforms, and refused to be satisfied with improvements in the machinery of government".[41] For Erbery, action was more important than theory, the practice of justice rather than the form of government.

III: Conclusions

Erbery's ecclesiological and theological movement led him from a subscribing position as an ordained priest of the Church of England to one which emphasised the Spirit and a demand for justice. He was a radical thinker in revolutionary times. He was one of a group thinking out their position *de novo* during the Civil Wars. They did not retreat to university desks or monastic cells. They knew the heat of battle and the intrigue of political life. Erbery lived a faith which was dependent on the guidance of the Holy Spirit by resigning from the formal ministries of both the Church of England and Independency, and in 1652 by returning the annual payment of £100 (because it was "tainted" by the tithing system) when he had been appointed as an itinerant preacher by the Commission for the Better Propagation and Preaching of the Gospel in Wales.[42] Wynn Thomas sees Erbery's action as the first expression of the Welsh nonconformist conscience.[43]

Erbery is typical of those within Puritanism who moved from Calvinist orthodoxy to a theology of immediacy. Geoffrey Nuttall describes Puritanism as a movement which included "conservative" Presbyterian and Calvinist Congregationalists and "a series of positions which shade off … into pure and acknowledged individualism", which from 1650 onwards included Quakers who "repeat, extend, and fuse so much of what is held by the radical, Separatist party within Puritanism, that they cannot be denied the name or excluded from

40 Erbery, *The Grand Oppressor or The Terror of Tithes* (London: s.n., 1652); also *Testimony*, p. 50.

41 Sir William Clarke, *The Clarke Papers. Selections from the Papers of Sir William Clarke,* ed. C. H. Firth, (London: The Camden Society, 1894), Vol. 2, Chapter: Generall Councill.

42 Erbery, *The Grand Oppressor*; also *Testimony,* pp. 49-58.

43 M. Wynn Thomas, "Ceisio a Chael: Perthynas Morgan Llwyd a William Erbery"*, Y Traethodydd* (1987), p. 39.

consideration".[44] Erbery's radical experience of God drove him to explore new directions. He was a precursor of movements that flourished later in the history of the Church. His emphasis upon the Living Spirit and upon a Christ whose return was imminent foreshadows Pentecostalism. By insisting upon religious experience, he parallels the growth of Pietism in Germany and English Methodism. His sense of divine immanence shares much with late seventeenth century Platonism. His Biblical criticism served as a springboard for Rationalism. He shared much with the emerging Quaker movement, especially in the revolt against formalism.

Does the thinking of Erbery have relevance for our own age? His experience of the living Christ whose compassionate justice extended to all humankind and the whole of creation caused him to be severely critical of unbending formalism in the spheres of theology, liturgy, ethics and church government. He explored new ways of expressing the good news because of his experience of the immanent and imminent God. He was unwavering in his demand for toleration and justice.

His continuing search resulted in accusations of heresy. Although he lived with these attacks for much of his life, it was not until early 1653 that he was formally charged. After his defence and acquittal, his credibility was undermined by his being slandered as insane. Erbery successfully defended himself against heresy, but was defenceless against the posthumous stigma of being "ill of his whimsies". Was Erbery not of the same calibre, mentally or spiritually as the other Welsh Puritans? Or was he an intellectual and moral giant? It may be interesting to note a possible parallel between John Penry, the sixteenth-century Puritan pioneer from Cefn Brith in Breconshire and William Erbery. After his execution in 1593, Penry was forgotten, and as Tudur Jones noted, it needed "the Nonconformist romanticism of the nineteenth century [to] rediscover Penry and turn him into a hero … his place in the national tradition is secure on account of his great concern for Wales".[45] The same might prove true for Erbery in the twenty-first century, a period which has witnessed the resurgence of various forms of religious fundamentalism which threaten to destroy society. Erbery's rigorous search for truth and his inclusive and tolerant expression of the good news of God needs to be heard today.

JOHN I. MORGANS

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44 Geoffrey F Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1946), pp. 9-13.

45 R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales,* ed. Robert Pope (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 17.

WORKING WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS WITHIN THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MISSION AND OTHER FAITHS COMMITTEE

The Mission and Other Faiths Committee of the United Reformed Church (URC) was established as the result of a change of purpose initiated in the denomination's founding year, 1972, when the scope of the Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews of the Presbyterian Church of England was widened, and people of other faiths were no longer seen as targets for conversion. In terms of purpose, the committee's function was to meet the perceived need for understanding of other faiths without pre-judgement and for the establishment of a theology of religions dealing with their place within the providence of God.[1] Leading this change of purpose were two significant figures of the time, Boris Anderson and Alan MacLeod.[2] Both were returned missionaries, both were steeped in the culture and knowledge of the faiths which were most prominent in the lands in which they had worked and both reflected something of the attitude of mind that was inherent in the questionnaire distributed to representatives at the 1910 missionary conference held in Edinburgh, perhaps best summed up in terms of respect and deepening understanding.

Alongside this, we need also to look at the wider picture and the awareness, at that time, of the arrival of the East African Asian community which had been expelled from Uganda under Idi Amin in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[3] It was also at this time that members of the Asian community who had previously come to this country had sufficient disposable income to be able to make significant donations towards the cost of establishing Temples, Gurdwaras and Mosques. Britain was fast becoming a multi-cultural environment and the Mission and Other Faiths Committee saw its purpose as helping ministers and congregations in their approach to people of other faith communities.

To this end in 1974 a booklet was produced entitled *The local church's approach to those of Other Faiths*.[4] It was a manual of advice that was widely discussed and which received both complimentary and critical comments, there being a wide diversity of attitudes towards other faiths. For many it was the first time they had been obliged to address a variety of questions: What is God doing in the other religions of the world? Has He revealed Himself to those outside the Christian faith? Can sympathy for the religious belief and practice of those of

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1 Reports to the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church [hereafter, Assembly Reports] (1972), pp. 50f.

2 See Edward Band, *Working His Purpose Out: The History of the Presbyterian Mission, Part 1: The Pioneer Period* (London: Presbyterian Church of England, 1947).

3 See Parminder Bhachu, *Twice Migrants: East African Sikh Settlers in Britain* (London: Tavistock, 1985).

4 Assembly Reports (1974), p. 74.

other faiths degenerate into syncretism? For Christians who felt that they had been taught for almost two thousand years that their task was to make the whole world Christian, deepening understanding of the "other" and appreciation of her or his religious faith was almost anathema.

In October 1974, an article was published in *Reform*, in which John Hick, at that time a URC minister and professor of theology at the University of Birmingham, dared to question "Christ's uniqueness", arguing that the faith one espoused was more likely than not a matter of accident of birth.[5] At the time I was living in Bangladesh and received an annotated cutting from a colleague which included a pencilled comment in the margin exclaiming "Oh, no John, no John, no John, NO"! I later discovered that a subsequent issue published extracts of eight letters, all of which rejected Hick's arguments, with the editor adding "the letters printed above have all been shortened considerably. We have received more letters on this subject than on any since 'Reform' started".[6] Those letters of response were published under a title using the same exclamatory words. However, I think Professor Hick made a good point regarding accident of birth.

But the challenge was wider. The fact that many schools in Britain were by then multi-faith schools presented teachers with a double problem: what suitable arrangements could be made for school worship and how best was religious "instruction" to be given? This meant teaching Christianity in some schools having to give way to Religious Studies, aimed at introducing children to various contemporary faiths, and if that were the case, Churches would have to take responsibility for Christian commitment. As a result, the Other Faiths Committee worked with the Christian Education Movement in an attempt to make recommendations for good practice.[7]

The first time mention made of the Muslim community in the Committee's reports to General Assembly was in 1976 when notice was given of David Brown's booklet: *A New Threshold*.[8] By that time Bishop of Guildford, Brown had written a number of popular, and very useful, books on Christian apologetics to Islam. Like Boris Anderson and Alan MacLeod, Brown's early years had been spent on the mission field. I shall return to this point when we consider the nature of the Committee's work and expertise. That same year the Festival of Islam was held "without causing the antagonism that might have been expected".[9] Sadly it was not as well-patronised as exhibitions of Chinese and Egyptian cultures

Meanwhile the first of the Committee's residential conferences took place in that same year in Birmingham, which helped to ground the work of the

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5 John Hick, 'Christ's Uniqueness', in *Reform* (October 1974), pp. 18-19.

6 *Reform* (December 1974), pp. 17-18. The editorial also contained the words: "I'm tempted to wish Happy Christmas this year 'to John Hick and all his critics' – thus covering our entire readership in one go" (p. 2).

7 Assembly Reports (1975), p. 75.

8 D. Brown, *A New Threshold: Guidelines for Churches in their Relations with Muslim Communities* (London: BCC, 1976).

9 Assembly Reports (1976), p. 41; (1977), p. 51.

Committee in the life of the local church.[10] A Messianic Jew spoke of Judaism "from within" clearly pointing out our Jewish roots. Visits were also made to a local Gurdwara and a Mosque, in both of which the visitors were received with "greatest courtesy". To those of us who have been privileged to spend so much of our time in the company of fellow faithful people of a tradition other than our own, these two words were important in the breaking down of often self-imposed barriers of fear of the unknown. The Committee encouraged members of the URC to make similar visits. Sadly such encouragement often fell on deaf ears.

MacLeod and Anderson were concerned about the re-invention of the wheel by each denomination and to this end Anderson suggested to the British Council of Churches that consideration should be given to an ecumenical committee whose purview was relationships with people of other faith. On our behalf, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin opened the discussion in 1977[11] with the result that the Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths was formed with Kenneth Cracknell, another returned missionary, as its first Secretary.

The greater awareness of the presence of people of other faiths was showing itself in very practical ways. Care for patients of other faiths in hospitals was placed in the hands of the Free Church chaplains, most of whom had very little knowledge or understanding of the spiritual needs of such people. The Free Church Federal Council produced four leaflets to help.[12] So by this time concrete practical initiatives were being established and the URC was at the forefront, both in terms of the Other Faiths Committee and URC members who quietly got on with the job.

But getting on with the job was vital. One such person was the Revd Ron Lewis, of Welsh-Jewish background who had spent years, and was to continue to spend years, advising the Committee on Jewish-Christian relations. However, years of prejudice, misunderstanding and anti-Semitism still dominated. At a time of increasing inflation it was still thriving, to the extent that Lewis had a difficult struggle to have derogatory references to Jews removed from training cards issued by one UK High Street bank.[13]

A change of Committee Chairmanship in 1978, now under Professor David Kerr, saw a review of the functions of the Committee.[14] They were to be four in number: offering *pastoral* help to local churches; struggling with the *theological* task of seeking to understand the place of other faiths within the activity of God and calling Christians to be more "out-giving" of Christian love and "in-taking" of experience; being a *listening* post attentive to the experience of local churches and churches in other parts of the world and providing *information* to the denomination through its consultants, namely a group of Committee members

10 Assembly Reports (1976), p. 41.
11 Assembly Reports (1977), p. 51.
12 Five years later the King's Fund published a series of booklets on the issue. See Alix Healey, *Asians in Britain: Caring for Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs: Religious Aspects of Care* (Cambridge: National Extension College Trust, 1982).
13 Assembly Reports (1977), p. 51.
14 Assembly Reports (1978), p. 47.

who had expertise in particular faiths or issues.

Professor Kerr's own expertise was in the field of Islamic Studies, but other Committee members specialised in the study of other faiths as did the membership of the British Council of Churches' Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths. Two issues are of significance here. Within the membership of both committees were to be found returned missionaries who often had knowledge of the languages of those faiths and who were deeply committed to mutual theological understanding, so that dialogue was essentially theological in nature. But secondly it was with *people*, not an exchange of the understanding of philosophical/theological structures, but about the way in which theology influenced the outworking of faith in daily life.

This was particularly to be the case with regard to the Jewish community in Britain with a group of whose members the Committee met in October 1979 in order to set up a working party to take theological discussions to a deeper level.[15] Among British churches the URC was now entering a pioneering role on two counts. First, we were sponsoring face-to-face dialogue with the Jewish community and, secondly, the eventual outcome was to be a very well-received booklet on Jewish-Christian relations in the same format as *With People of Other Faiths in Britain*, a booklet which was published in 1980 and which contained three major sections: (1) the society round our doors; (2) personal testimonies and case studies; (3) theological perspectives. Until this time there was no comparable document in the UK and it was used by several churches, including the Armenian Apostolate Church in Lebanon.[16] The Committee also recognised that it needed to give attention to the issue of Ideologies, bringing together a meeting with trade unionists and those involved in Marxist-Christian dialogue. In the light of these near unique and very significant activities, it is sad to recognise that an insignificant place was given to other faith issues within the URC's Priorities and Resources Report of that time. Our pioneering work held little interest for a number of leading members of the denomination.

However, believing that the Committee's work was still vital, further publications were produced in the early 1980s by both the URC and the British Council of Churches. Work on *With Jews and Christians in Britain* continued apace.[17] The British Council of Churches' *Guidelines on Dialogue* were recognised and "made our own" in the Assembly of 1983;[18] a booklet on New Religious Movements entitled *Who Are They?*[19] was written and published and *Health Care of Ethnic Minorities in Britain* was commended, particularly since

15 Assembly Reports (1979), p. 65; (1980), p. 77.
16 Assembly Reports (1980), p. 77; (1981), p. 51.
17 Eventually published as *Christians and Jews in Britain: A Study Handbook for Christians* (London: URC, 1983).
18 *Relations with People of Other Faiths: Guidelines on Dialogue in Britain* (London: BCC, 1983). See also Assembly Reports (1982), p. 46; Record of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church [hereafter Assembly Record] (1982), p. 21.
19 Assembly Reports (1983), p. 65.

responsibility for patients from ethnic minority backgrounds still came under the aegis of the Free Church Chaplains in hospitals.

It was at this point that dialogue *per se* was beginning to be recognised as not simply the exchange of theological opinion but as a matter of life-style. In daily life, in India, one would not be engaged in dialogue, one would simply get on with the tasks of everyday life together with one's neighbours who often happened to be of a different faith background. This was the dialogue of life, and some within British society were beginning to see things that way too. Perhaps this helped the URC's Long Range Policy Group[20] to suggest that the Mission and Other Faiths Committee should be given a more positive place within the denomination's life and that many within the denomination, although they did not count people of other faiths as their immediate neighbours, nevertheless had considerable influence over their everyday lives in their role as managers in industry, commerce and other fields. But among church members many were embarrassed by their ignorance of their own faith and ability to speak about it and some even thought it disloyal to the Gospel, if they offered the hand of friendship.

In terms of personalities two people need to be mentioned. This was a time when Rabbi Norman Solomon had been introduced to the denomination's annual Assembly. An Orthodox Rabbi, Solomon would be appointed lecturer in Jewish Studies at the Selly Oak Colleges and without his contribution our meetings of Jews and Christians and our understanding of Judaism would have been much the poorer. By the same token, the Committee, along with others within the URC, would not have had a depth of pastoral concern and theological reflection and integrity, were it not for the work of Iorwerth Thomas who stood down as Secretary in 1984. His long years of work in South India enabled him to see people as people, irrespective of their faith commitment.[21] It was around this time that an attempt to amend the Slaughter of Animals Act[22] by means of a private member's bill came to the notice of the Committee. It would have had serious consequences for the Jewish and Muslim communities had it been successful.

August 1984 saw the first of the Consultations of Sikhs and Christians sponsored by the URC.[23] It would not have been possible without the support and advice of Dr Owen Cole and Sardar Piara Singh Sambhi. Their pioneering work in the field of Sikh studies enabled us to bring together leading members of the Sikh community from both sides of the Khalistan debate. (Some weeks previously *Operation Bluestar* had led to the liberation or occupation – whichever side of the politics you stood – of the Harmandir Sahib complex in Amritsar, otherwise known as the Golden Temple). It was a time of tension, but significantly not during our three-day meeting. We met in Campion House, a Jesuit late-vocations seminary, in Hounslow and visited the Hounslow Gurdwara

20 Assembly Reports (1984), p. 89.
21 Assembly Reports (1984), p. 89.
22 Assembly Reports (1985), p. 37.
23 Assembly Reports (1985), p. 37.

in its early form. Here Dr Gopal Singh Puri, Indarjit (later Lord Indarjit) Singh, Gobind Singh Mansukhani and Ajit and Charanjit Ajit Singh were to enfold us in a warmth of spirit that we had not experienced in dialogue before. Whereas dialogue with members of some faith communities had, at times, been guarded, no such suspicion was felt. It was the early days of Christians daring to use the term "Mother" of God. The Sikhs chuckled. "What's your problem?" they said, "We've been doing that for the last 300 years!" We shared scripture studies together. Two passages on the same subject were selected, one from each scripture, with a Sikh to open up discussion on the Biblical passage and a Christian to speak about the passage from the *Guru Granth Sahib*. We discovered meaning previously unseen as the scriptures were read with fresh eyes. We agreed to meet again![24]

Meanwhile the consultation with the Jews continued. Further writing was done in preparation for another booklet. And a new area of dialogue was opened up, much to the horror of members of Assembly. Conversations were held with representatives of the Unification Church, commonly known as the Moonies.[25] Truth to tell the discussions took place in my house in Southall. Here was an opportunity to get to know why people had joined the movement, their attitudes to family ties, and the denial of contact with family members. The Committee believed that for the sake of integrity no movement must be judged by hearsay but both sides of the story must be heard. We were able to re-establish contact for some families, but in the 1985 Assembly there was much debate and vilification of the Other Faiths Committee. A motion forbidding us to have further communication was finally "not put", but the Committee and church as a whole were encouraged to offer support and care for those families that had been divided by the Unification Church.[26]

This was an ugly time. Speaking personally, as Committee Secretary I found Assembly stressful, and was not helped one year by one delegate, later to become a Synod and Assembly Moderator, who announced to Assembly that the Committee was so open-minded that its members were in danger of having their brains fall out.[27] But life moves on and Roger Tomes and I were asked to write a report on Freemasonry which had been open to suspicion because of its secrecy. We recognised that it was difficult to ascertain if Freemasonry exercises hidden influence in public life, something that could be neither proved nor disproved. Although dire threats were made against those who fail to keep the secrets of Freemasonry, they had never been used. The real penalty is that of "being branded as a wilfully perjured individual, void of all moral worth and totally unfit to be received into [this] worshipful lodge or … any society of men who prize honour and virtue".[28]

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24 Author's personal notes.
25 Assembly Reports (1985), p. 37.
26 Assembly Record (1985), p. 19.
27 Contribution to debate at the URC's General Assembly, 1985, at Southend on Sea.
28 See Assembly Reports (1986), Appendix 2, p. 53.

In 1985, a consultation of Sikhs and Christians again took place at which "a spirit of openness was plainly evident".[29] One of Indarjit Singh's questions, if I remember rightly, borrowed from Guru Nanakji, still sticks firmly in my mind, "What is the use of your spirituality if my stomach is still empty?"[30] It has haunted me ever since and challenges the potential religiosity, inherent in some forms of pious religious practice. It is in such moments that interfaith dialogue is at its best, when we are challenged with regard to what we have taken for granted in both what we believe and how we express our faith.

In the mid-1980s questions of religious freedom were very much on our minds. New Religious Movements were at the centre of controversy and at the heart of the challenge regarding the extent of freedom of belief and expression, but in the Jewish-Christian consultation of that year the issue was raised in terms of the revival of Christian missionary effort directed towards the Jews. Centuries of persecution were not far from the minds of the community. We also heard a strong plea that people from both traditions should face the racial and religious prejudice in themselves and combat it when also found elsewhere.[31]

In the Assembly of 1986 members of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth (FURY) encouraged both the Other Faiths Committee and the Youth Committee to continue to develop resources for mutual interfaith understanding and opportunities for meeting. In response to their enthusiasm Assembly carried a resolution to this effect.[32] Provision was made, for example, in terms of the *Summer in Southall* programme where young people spent a fortnight in Southall helping with various summer projects for younger children, play-groups, football skills and the like. They spent the evenings as guests of Asian households or in scripture studies with the Sikh community. One young man reported that on helping to put away crockery after a meal he opened a cupboard only to discover that "They eat cornflakes just like us!" Trite though this may seem to be, it was in fact a profound discovery of common humanity. These were life-changing experiences, impacting on career choices. However, as a programme, jointly sponsored by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches with young people coming to us from such places as Turkey, South Africa, Sweden and Germany through the World Council of Churches, very few young people from the URC were involved.

That same year saw the third of the consultations of Sikhs and Christians. By this time we knew each other well and some discussions were prefixed with the words, "I've never told anyone before but …" That depth of sharing only comes when trust has been established and good relationships formed. We were reminded once again that we do not practise faith in a social vacuum. Sikhs spoke of the pain of growing discrimination against teachers and pupils of Asian

29 Assembly Reports (1986), p. 48.
30 Assembly Reports (1986), p. 48.
31 Assembly Reports (1986), p. 48.
32 Assembly Record (1986), p. 19.

background. Mass use of school transport, bussing children to large schools from wide catchment areas, had been a harrowing factor in the lives of Asian children. The churches were challenged because they were not seen to join in the protest about the increasing difficulties because of visa regulations for people entering Britain. *Faith in the City*[33] had been published in the autumn of 1985. Ajit Singh asked two questions: "Whose faith? Whose city?" As engineers, builders and town-planners our Sikh colleagues spoke with authority about urban development, as people of faith they spoke of community cohesion before it became a regular by-word.[34]

We continued meeting and working with Jewish colleagues; racism, feminism, the role of women and the Holocaust were discussed. In our discussions with the Jewish community we were also faced with the *real-politik* of the day. Pilgrimage to the Holy Land took people to the sites of biblical antiquity, but rarely did Western Christians meet the peoples of the land. We determined to do something about this and a visit to Israel/Palestine in 1987 fell to me to organise. We attempted to meet people who brought a variety of perspectives; responding was difficult. We trod on egg-shells. One of our speakers was arrested immediately after we left our meeting place. We learnt to read the geography of the land. A pile of stones was more than it seemed, it was the rubble you get when you knock down a home. Interfaith dialogue was no luxury to be pursued when time allowed, it was a matter of commitment, strained commitment, because we had friends and colleagues on both sides of the spectrum. Others have taken up the denomination's involvement with the so-called Holy Land and for that I am grateful.[35]

But we also were challenged on a regular basis about the place of dialogue which some members of the URC felt was incompatible with the Gospel. That said, now and again we had a small number of people indicating to us how their experience of dialogue had a profound effect on their theology, and that opportunities for dialogue were God-given. In November of 1987 we set up a one-day conference on "Dialogue and URC Integrity"[36] in which we recognised that dialogue does not preclude witness to faith. Participants spoke of the way in which their faith had been deepened, quite simply because in dialogue they had been obliged to do two things: work out what they believed, and find ways of speaking about that belief. Sadly the gain-sayers were not there to hear of this matter. We went on to speak of dialogue, not as a matter of discussion of theological issues, but in terms of the life-style required in the struggle for justice and peace and striving for the Kingdom of God.

We put together a theological justification for dialogue presented to the Assembly in 1988 in an attempt to enable church members to understand our basis of work.

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33 *Faith in the City* (London: Church House Publishing, 1985).
34 Assembly Reports (1987), p. 80.
35 See Mission and Other Faiths Committee Minutes, OF87/191.
36 Assembly Reports (1988), p. 149.

Biblical guidelines were shown to be far from the easy dismissal of dialogue. Its theological consequences were considered and in conclusion we affirmed the need to witness to our faith, leaving the outcome to the providence of God.[37]

Committee meetings in a variety of places – in 1988, in Bradford and Leicester – were to become the norm.[38] By doing so we were able to give support to those actively engaged in dialogue. Two new members added further expertise and a younger person's voice. Dr Jack Thompson was a senior lecturer in the Selly Oak Colleges specialising in New Religious Movements while Janet Orchard enabled us to gain insight into the issues of concern among young people.

Pastoral support was given through the publication of a booklet on interfaith marriages and funerals. We recognised that such marriages were not to be entered into lightly and advised ministers to help those doing so to consider carefully the implications of such marriages, since some faith communities, including our own, would find this a difficult issue. The Jewish community, in particular, were concerned as the children of a male marrying out of the community would not be considered properly Jewish by the Orthodox movement.[39]

Roger Tomes's period of office as Convenor came to an end in 1989.[40] He left us with a dialogue on dialogue in which he dealt with a variety of issues, such as (1) the attempt to avoid the issue of dialogue since "there are none around here"; (2) the need to treat people with courtesy; (3) the value of building up relationships over a long term; (4) the nature of dialogue as a life-style – a matter of daily concern. He also dealt with some of the causes of dissatisfaction, such as (1) dialogue passing over the matter of salvation "only in Christ"; (2) dialogue as a strategy for evangelism; (3) the potentially patronising place of inclusivism. Finally, he encouraged the study of scripture together in order to realise the width of God's self-disclosure and "the suspension of judgement".

The Committee's new Convenor, John Sutcliffe, reminded the 1990 General Assembly of the Committee's function: to encourage members of our churches to be aware of, and make contact with, people of other faiths and ideologies, with a view to establishing mutual understanding and respect and seeking ways of clearly witnessing to our Christian faith.[41] He outlined priorities for the Committee's work, the first of which was to encourage the incorporation of learning about other faiths in ministerial preparation. Pastoral care for the families of those who were involved in interfaith marriages was seen as an area for reflection and writing. Further work was needed on the theological basis for dialogue. Under John Sutcliffe's leadership we continued the programme of consultations. At a time when the Church was becoming more and more conscious of human stewardship of God's creation, we were fortunate to have the

37 Assembly Reports (1988), Appendix 1, pp. 156ff.
38 Assembly Reports (1989), p. 85.
39 Assembly Reports (1989), p. 86.
40 Assembly Reports (1989), Appendix 2, "A Dialogue on Dialogue", p. 88.
41 Assembly Reports (1990), p. 93.

input of Professor Gopal Singh Puri, a distinguished UN environmentalist who helped us to recognise that, together, people of various faiths share in the responsibility for the good care of God's planet.[42]

Our discussions with the Jewish community alerted us to the dilemma experienced by many of their number who were horrified by the practices of the government of Israel and who were sympathetic towards the Palestinians struggling through the Intifada. What does one do when loyalty to the faith is tested against loyalty to the State of Israel? We were impressed by those who stood up to be counted, often at the expense of old friendships. A further testing time came when we took a group of Jews and Christians to meet together in Coleg Trefecca near the Brecon Beacons and some twelve miles from the nearest railway station. We also invited Dr Bert Breiner from the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christianity at the University of Birmingham, Rabbi David Rosen, erstwhile Chief Rabbi of Ireland and the Revd Dr Kamal Farah of the Anglican Church in Israel. We learnt of the nature of daily life as a person of faith, be it Muslim, Jewish or Christian. We heard of the tension of being a Christian Palestinian with Israeli citizenship. We discussed the nature of responsible pilgrimage and heard the point emphasised from many quarters that meeting with people has to be made a priority.[43]

Our meeting with the Sikhs that year brought us into discussion about how we communicate the faith to the coming generation.[44] From our perspective some members of FURY took on a greater awareness of the presence of people of other faiths, thanks to the 1988 Education Act in which an understanding of our own faith together with that of others, was deemed vital. My recollection of this time was the increasing work of SACREs (Standing Advisory Committees for Religious Education) on which sat a number of our Committee members. A good deal of time was spent in establishing suitable syllabuses, sometimes duplicating a good deal of work. It was this that made our young people aware of the presence of people of other faiths, an awareness in which friendship was often the norm, the example of the younger generation becoming a challenge to their parents' generation. But the issue at hand in our consultation was about the deepening of faith among our young people. What facilities were available? The nature of *Partners in Learning* (educational support documentation) was discussed and we moved into wider matters of the maintenance of interest in the community of the congregation. It was at this time that my local Gurdwara was buying land to provide sports facilities for their young people and those still trying to be young. And, it was pointed out that the URC was the only denomination in the world that was involved in bi-lateral dialogue with the Sikh community.[45] On the national

42 Assembly Reports (1990), p. 94.
43 Assembly Reports (1992), p. 81.
44 Assembly Reports (1992), p. 81.
45 Private conversation between the author and the Revd Dr Wesley Ariarajah of the Dialogue Unit, World Council of Churches.

scene we were the only denomination which arranged and sponsored meetings for dialogue.

It was in the light of this fact of uniqueness that we were able to take stock of the material produced for the Decade of Evangelism. We heard from our partners in dialogue that they were concerned about being seen as targets for conversion; the Jews, especially, were reminded of centuries of discomfort at the hands of those who regarded them as Christ killers. I wrote a pamphlet which was endorsed by the Committee rather cheekily entitled: *So you think you've got all the answers!*[46] It basically indicated the critique made by other faith communities of Christian faith and practice. Needless to say, that was not very well received by some members of the Christian community, but it provided a basis for a useful course, within ministerial education, on seeing ourselves as others see us. This became a new pre-occupation for me when I stood down as Committee Secretary after eight years, the last of the returned missionaries to take on that task, and then moved to Manchester in 1992 to become involved in theological education.

The struggle against racism[47] became a major area of the Committee's concern since there was a considerable increase at the time – 1993 – in racial abuse and a sense of exclusivisms in the United Kingdom. Official statistics showed racist attacks happening every 28 minutes; young Asians had been subjected to abuse and physical attacks; Jewish graves were violated, there was intercommunal violence in India with members of the Vishva Hindu Parishad and other groups destroying the 430 year old Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, while in Germany the far right began to attack Turkish migrant workers. Some newspapers were not averse to smearing people of other faiths and ethnicity in a way which, while not overtly racist, nevertheless attempted to undermine good race relations. Churches were encouraged to campaign, bringing to mind "the ethos of apathy and disinteredness which in a large measure prevented the church from actively opposing exclusivism in the 1930s and led eventually to the holocaust".[48] The Committee's report to Assembly in 1993 went on to say:

> Similarly it would be easy for us now to feel that anything we were able to do would make no impact on so complex and vast a problem. We reject this view and urge churches in both urban and rural areas to undertake a programme of education which addresses inherent prejudice and campaign for a law which penalises racial harassment.

In considering the work of the Committee it was in this year of 1993 that one finds disquiet with regard to the Muslim presence in the UK. *The Satanic*

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46 John M. Parry, *So you think you have all the answers! Other Faiths' views of the Decade of Evangelism* (London: URC, 1991).

47 Assembly Reports (1992), p. 81; (1993), p. 57.

48 Assembly Reports (1993), p. 57.

Verses[49] issue had brought that presence into the fore following the book's publication in 1988, but now the Committee recognised that many non-Muslims were beginning to feel threatened by Islam and, by the same token, Muslims felt threatened by Christians. In January 1991 the coalition forces had attacked Baghdad and other parts of Iraq. President George Bush had used the term "Crusade" and one began to feel that antagonism bred antagonism, hostility begat hostility and misrepresentation led to more misrepresentation. In terms of a relationship with Muslims in the UK the Committee encouraged the formation of good local relationships. But there was also something of a new note, almost an alarm bell: the need to help Christians to answer the claims made by Muslims that are unacceptable to Christians,[50] for instance that the Qur'ān contains the whole and final truth from God, or that Jesus did not die, but to find ways to speak of our faith that are humble, honest and do not break relationships. But the Committee also asked: What is God saying to our Muslim and Christian communities about our co-presence not only with each other, but with God, in our land? It goes without saying, of course, that the question is equally valid with regard to other faith communities.[51]

Those of us of a certain age will remember the musical *Hair* with its opening song and its memorable line "This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius" with its belief that the age of Pisces (representing Christianity) was coming to an end and a new age was starting. The Committee became aware that while much of the New Age movement may be antipathetic to Christianity, nevertheless there were issues that were of common concern including the growing secularism of much of western society and concerns for ecology, peace, health and wholeness. The Committee suggested what it called a double approach to the New Age: on the one hand being informed about the philosophical background of the movement, and on the other being open to those areas of common interest and the insights that the movement might give us.[52]

In 1994 when Bill Mahood and Brenda Willis led the Committee, support was given to local initiatives with visits made to Nelson in Lancashire and Bradford. Concern was again expressed about the negative attitude to Islam found in newspapers and there was a call for the legitimisation of the diversity of views within the denomination regarding the place of other faiths in the providence of God and Christian attitudes to other faiths.

I regret to say that by then the Committee was reduced in status to a Task Group[53] rather than a committee, at a time when Christian-Muslim relations were at a very low ebb, the Sikh-Christian consultations were discontinued, we lost good contact with the Jewish community, and relations with the Hindu

49 Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988).
50 Assembly Reports (1993), pp. 57f.
51 Assembly Reports (1993), p. 58.
52 Assembly Reports (1993), p. 58.
53 Assembly Record (1995), p. 48.

community were non-existent. At the same time the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland's Commission for Inter-faith Relations had neither the staff availability nor the money to do anything, but had to rely on denominations to take on responsibilities. And yet many local churches were finding themselves involved in interfaith relations and were asking for help and advice. Thank God, Assembly saw fit to re-instate the Committee, despite attempts by certain denominational officers to close down its work altogether – something which was made clear to me in a private conversation some years later.[54]

The response was a short but useful paper from the Committee called *Problem or Opportunity*[55] which explained why Christians might be involved in dialogue in local situations in order to demonstrate the love of God for "his" peoples, to help build inclusive and welcoming communities to witness to our understanding of truth and to enrich and transform our own Christian faith through discussion with people of other faiths. Church members were encouraged to join local interfaith groups; to build up links with other places of worship; to respond courteously to requests for the use of church buildings and to make a study of the faiths in their communities. But perhaps most important was a short paragraph on four forms of dialogue: the dialogue of life; the dialogue of collaboration in social involvement; the dialogue of theologians: and the dialogue of religious experience.

In 1999, the World Council of Churches met in Harare. We scored another first: it was probably the first time any denomination was given a short report on that Assembly by a Sikh! Mrs Charanjit Ajit Singh addressed our URC Assembly and spoke of her experiences.[56] As we moved into a new century, leadership was in the hands of Daphne Beale as Convenor and Sally Thomas as Secretary. At Assembly that year local churches were encouraged to be involved in interfaith activities and both Daphne and Sally worked tirelessly in their own localities to give fine examples of what could be done to improve relations between the faiths. By meeting in various venues, the Committee was able to give meaningful support to those who often felt side-lined by many within their churches. Encouragement was given to support asylum seekers and refugees who found themselves in a strange, sometimes alien environment, with few who understood their culture and faith. The Committee also welcomed closer involvement with the London Inter-faith Centre in Kilburn where Peter Colwell was Deputy Director and Gillian Jones the Centre Manager. The increasing resources for schools were highlighted and the Committee was fortunate to have Janet Orchard who was to go on to play a significant role in religious education. A great deal was achieved at this time,

54 Private conversation held during Mission Council at Ushaw College, Durham.

55 Assembly Reports (1997), Appendix 4, p. 171.

56 Assembly Record (1999), p.11. This was in keeping with Resolution 26 of the URC's General Assembly of 1993: "The Assembly resolves that as an act of goodwill leaders of other major world faith communities should be invited to the 1994 and subsequent Assemblies, that they should be received by the Moderator, and that they should be asked to take their communities the greetings of the URC".

thanks to the hard work of the Convenor and Secretary, but also because the Committee was no longer threatened with the possibility of demise. It could, therefore, get on with its job through an extension of its life to 2006.

Prior to the end of Daphne Beale's convenorship "9/11" occurred.[57] She left with a very strong plea for us to take steps towards a greater understanding of Islam and specifically the concept of *Jihad*. She pointed out the increasing level of abuse against Muslims and, as she put it, the fear of terrorism generated by governments, with the consequent infringement of human rights because of the introduction of repressive measures. The fear of persecution in the West could sometimes lead to the persecution of Christians in other parts of the world in tit-for-tat measures.

Encouraged by Daphne when I took over as Convenor, I wrote a short pamphlet on *Jihad*[58] and another on what may have been part of the motivation for the 7/7 bombings.[59] Also in an effort to help understanding, with the Committee's encouragement, I wrote two further essays on Jesus, one through Muslim eyes and one through Hindu eyes.[60] We also tried to encourage people to recognise that there is a forum for progressive Muslims, many of whom are professional people, Arabic speakers who are concerned about what has become known as the "Urdu captivity" of Islam. In 2006 we organised a joint visit to India with members of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan. The differing responses to life and the practice of faith in India was the subject of debate between us. The warmth of Indian hospitality could not have been better illustrated in all the places of worship we visited.[61]

With reluctance I resigned due to a breakdown in relationships and communication. Peter Colwell took over as Convenor with Jean Potter continuing as Secretary. The Committee continued to exercise concern with regard to the increasingly difficult tensions expressed in the media about the Muslim presence in the UK and went on to point out that Islam is not the monolith that is often thought to be the case. The increasing cooperation with our ecumenical partners, and, perhaps, the tightening of purse-strings, meant that we explored and established closer working arrangements with the Methodist Church. Sadly, and for reasons unknown to me, Peter Colwell also resigned, but the denomination's interfaith work continues, under the leadership of Clare Downing who brings her considerable experience of work with Andrew Wingate and others at the St Philip's Centre in Leicester.

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57 "9/11" is the shorthand reference to the hijack, by Islamists, of four aeroplanes on 11 September 2001. Two were flown into the towers of the World Trade Center in New York resulting in their collapse. A third was flown into the Pentagon while the fourth, apparently intended for the White House, came down in Pennsylvania. Some 2,996 were killed as a result of the attacks.

58 John M. Parry, "Jihad and Martyrdom: A Briefing Paper", (2005).

59 "7/7" is the shorthand reference to the attack by four Islamists on the transport system in London on 7 July 2005. Bombs were exploded on three underground trains and on one bus resulting in 52 deaths and serious injury to over 700 people.

60 John M. Parry, "Isa: Jesus through Muslim eyes", (2005); idem, "Jesus through Hindu eyes" (2005). See also Assembly Reports (2005), p. 66.

61 Assembly Reports (2005), p. 67.

So, how does one even try to sum up?

The establishment of what was then known as the Mission and Other Faiths Committee was a very bold step within a denomination that had been and still is committed to God's mission. That it was the brain-child of two returned missionaries, Alan MacLeod and Boris Anderson highlights an interesting phenomenon in mission history, that over the years many of us who have been involved in overseas mission, have recognised and acknowledged the very real faith of those people of other faiths whom we have met. Needless to say the mission enthusiasts, back home, have found this puzzling: was our task not to be one of conversion? Conversely what we found was a depth of faith and spirituality among our partners in what became dialogue that was moving and sometimes enviable. I well remember being very deeply moved as Charanjit Ajit Singh was speaking to a group of Cambridge ordinands at the King's Hall Methodist Church in Southall, where I had inaugurated an interfaith project and thinking that I was with a fellow-traveller. Indeed, how could I use a word like "other" faith when I was talking with fellow people of faith? In asking such a question, do I betray my Christian calling?

In asking such a question, "Yes, you do" is what some people would have wanted to reply in the early days when I was Secretary of the Committee. I loathed going to Assembly because we were attacked regularly as a result of the perception that we had crossed sacrosanct frontiers, talking to the Moonies, Pagans from the New Age, watering down the Gospel in our discussions with Muslims, and so on were the accusations. I existed in a love-hate relationship with the URC. I was privileged to be considerably supported by its leaders, but it could be pretty awful when you knew you were being talked about pejoratively in conversations a few yards away.

But over the years an interesting development has occurred. People have come up to those of us involved in interfaith dialogue and spoken in quite unexpected ways of their own experiences of warm friendship when they have visited places of worship and of the active support of neighbours at times of difficulty. I thank God for that.

I am struck by the change in the nature of dialogue over the last thirty years. If you considered the members of the Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths of the erstwhile British Council of Churches – a committee established thanks to URC pressure – you would have seen that its members were essentially returned missionaries whose knowledge of the scriptures of the faiths among which they had worked was second to none. Knowledge of Arabic or Sanskrit or sixteenth century Panjabi was not unusual. The consequence was that our dialogue was much more scripturally and theologically based. As our Committee membership became more a matter of those with home-grown experiences of the multi-faith environment, so our debate became much more pragmatic and a dialogue of life. The interesting thing about this is the way in which it reflects the experience of a country such as India, where you do not necessarily make time for formal dialogue because you are involved in interfaith dialogue as soon as you leave your house, or in the Panjab you do not even have

to leave your house because some families will have both Sikhs and Hindus as beloved members. Thus dialogue is becoming not so much a matter of theological reflection but of how, together, we can enhance community, environment, society. For me as a Christian it is about Kingdom issues and values – the Kingdom of God, when the pure ones will rule, or *raj karega khalsa* as the Sikhs say. How wide is your concept of *khalsa* – the pure ones – I have to ask?

But what influence has the Other Faiths Committee had on the URC? Sometimes I think it has been the grit that has formed the pearl. I recall friends saying that they have found themselves asking about the implications of certain policy decisions in their local churches, in the light of the fact that they live in a multi-faith society – much as in the same way that education authorities had to ask the same question in the 1970s. But does the sometimes precarious existence of the Other Faiths Committee indicate, for some, that interfaith dialogue is a "luxury" we cannot afford? By contrast, would it be that without our small effort of conscientising, the influence of racism in this country would have driven more young people into radicalism? That theme which has dominated our newspapers, as young people have made their way to Syria to join Islamic State is not simply "their" problem. It is ours too, and interfaith dialogue has some part to play in tackling the matter.

But let us look at the positive issues that have arisen over the years.

We produced material that enabled better mutual understanding. Perhaps the most outstanding example is the booklet we published on Jewish and Christian relations. It brought together a number of people who knew and trusted each other. That friendship had wider implications in terms of further work done in other fields. But to have our booklet hailed by Jews as the best short introduction to Judaism, and used within synagogues as such, really was a feather in our cap. I am sorry that we never managed a similar booklet through our consultations with the Sikh community, but thanks to that process we were able to introduce Sikh friends to the wider church. We were able to establish relationships that enabled greater mutual understanding, respect and love. (And I would not have got a PhD,[62] either!) But even more significantly, we were challenged in our understanding of our own faiths and deepened in that faith. Do not let anyone say dialogue undermines faith, it deepens faith – but it does not stop the questions!

Perhaps the most important matter is that the work of the Committee has changed people. It has opened doors of opportunity, enabled us to see ourselves as others see us, challenged our prejudices, allayed our fears, deepened our faith, undermined spiritual arrogance and for some of us widened our understanding of God's purposes for humankind. So, as we Christians say: to God be the glory!

JOHN M. PARRY

62 Thanks to the support of Northern College, Manchester, and now published as John M. Parry, *The Word of God is Not Bound* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2009).

CONGREGATIONALISM 1972-2000 – REFLECTING ON THE DECISIONS OF 1972: A SURVEY

The publication in 2013 of my book, *Transformation of Congregationalism 1900-2000*,[1] was greeted by some as a welcome addition to twentieth century denominational histories. Others pointed out that the treatment of the last twenty-five years was less full than for the first three-quarters of the century. This was not accidental. Clearly any discussion of those still living requires sensitivity, given that the feelings of readers who remember individuals and events may easily and unhelpfully be inflamed. I did not intend my publication to exacerbate wounds and cause further divisions. Rather I hoped that it might lead to greater understanding and even stimulate reconciliation.

Nevertheless, although some had advised me to end my account at the commencement of the United Reformed Church in 1972, and others in 1980, the bolder decision to continue to the year 2000 prevailed. The historian is then left with the question, how best to cover the period 1972-2000? Having reflected on the criticism, and the apparent desire on the part of some observers to investigate more deeply the years 1972-2000, it seemed sensible, while many still survive, to allow those veterans who participated in the decisions of 1972, at whatever level, to speak for themselves. Consequently, helped by others in framing the questions, I sent a questionnaire to a wide circle of friends and colleagues in the United Reformed Church (URC), the Congregational Federation (CF) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches (EFCC).[2]

In spite of considerable urging over some time, the great majority of those canvassed proved unresponsive, with not a few openly stating that they had neither any wish to revisit those times, nor any desire to reconsider the issues. This negative response was true across all the three bodies, while I was unable to attract interest from any acquaintances within the Unaffiliated Congregational Churches. Some few of the forty respondents, whose answers are here examined, replied with alacrity and openness. Most of the respondents required reminders and cajoling. This requirement may testify to the forbidding prospect of re-examining one's own life and revisiting important decisions, especially, in this instance, where denominational allegiances and loyalty to friends past and present came into question. It may also signify that these people have settled down into the post-1972 order and that for some a degree of inertia, even complacency, exists. This study aims to examine the answers to my questionnaire from a range of ministers, elders, deacons, and church members, all of whom were directly affected by the decisions of the churches in 1972, that is whether to join the URC or whether to remain Congregational or Presbyterian.

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1 A. Argent *The Transformation of Congregationalism 1900-2000* (Nottingham: The Congregational Federation, 2013).

2 I am grateful to Revd Anthony Tucker, Margaret Thompson, Peter Young and to others for help with the questions and the framing of this article.

The questions which follow are those which respondents attempted to answer, although, as might be expected, the several answers were not always precisely to the point. Some gave narrative comments, often lengthy, without specifically addressing the questions. Others chose only to answer some, but not all, the questions. Thus for most questions the largest category in the tables below is "unanswered". Individuals have naturally tried to explain what factors influenced them in their attitudes and, in doing so, have often not been able to reduce their replies to a formula. Nevertheless, for the purposes of my study I have grouped the replies in the various tables. Although only a very few asked to be anonymous, it seemed prudent to withhold all respondents' names.

I: Responses to the survey

The majority of those who responded were originally English Congregationalists. One had grown up as a Welsh Independent and another moved from Scottish Episcopalianism to being a Welsh Baptist. Another respondent had attended a Methodist church, while others were Presbyterian. Of these respondents, five were the children of ministers and thirty became ministers themselves, although many were ordained later in life, after careers in school teaching, academia or some other profession. The forty respondents include both theological liberals and conservative evangelicals.

Entered ministry before 1972	16
Entered ministry after 1972	14
Lay	10

Male	34
Female	6

Denomination in 1972		joined URC	joined CF	joined EFCC	joined URC but later moved to CF
Congregational (inc Congregational Union of Ireland and Union of Welsh Independents)	33	15	15	1	2
Presbyterian	5	4	1		
Churches of Christ	1	1			
Baptist	1	1			
Total	40	21	16	1	2

Five respondents, having started in other denominations, became Congregationalists before 1972.

Question 1: *How have you experienced and envisaged the balance/tension between the local and the wider church?*

Positive response	14
Negative response	7
Middling	2
Other	5
Unanswered	12

Respondents to this question understood it in various ways. Some wrote of the balance between the local and the national within one denomination while others mentioned the relations between denominations at a local level. One CF minister insisted on his passionate belief "in the One Church worldwide of Jesus Christ – not as a distant dream, but a present reality". He claimed that the independence of synagogues and mosques is analogous to Congregationalism and compared the episcopalian denominations to those first century Christians in Jerusalem who "continued to value 'temple' worship". A few respondents considered that they, or their congregations, were content within their own local church and had no need of wider relations.

One URC minister stated, "I have realised more and more that the wider church can only influence the local and not command". Another described the URC as "bottom-up" in organisation, contrasting it with "top-down Methodism". However a URC layperson noted that, at times, "difficult" issues had been left to the local level, "giving an impression of indecision rather than regarding subsidiarity and local leadership as virtues and a real expression of the Holy Spirit in local congregations". This respondent avowed a personal preference for "independent churches of a Congregational style" but wondered if they can work effectively "in the modern era", suspecting that charity and employment law has moved responsibility for employment of ministers (their pensions etc) and property to the "centre". Unfortunately, in the view of this respondent, the synod office has not satisfactorily managed any issue out of the routine. The respondent further considered that the URC has "failed miserably to have an impact as a 'brand' in the UK because its creation involved fuzzy language which in the early days it would have been unhelpful to try to unpack". This habit has continued with the gulf between the evangelical and more liberal churches today.

Question 2: *In the 1960s and 1970s did you see ecumenism as a positive and obviously good development?*

For	17
Against	6
Suspicious	5
Unaware	2
Unanswered	10

Of the seventeen who were positive towards ecumenism, five joined the CF while surprisingly one URC minister was negative towards ecumenism. Two married couples (one URC and the other CF) demonstrated independent attitudes with wives and husbands, in each case, differing from each other in their answers. From the accompanying narratives, unmistakeably some respondents were positive towards ecumenism but found the form of ecumenism embodied in the URC unappealing. Others were initially unwilling to accept the URC, but joined and came to support it.

Question 3: *Who/what has been most influential in the framing of your attitudes on these matters?*

Reactive	1
John Huxtable	2
Wider/Interdenominational contacts	5
Home church	4
Home minister	3
College	2
Parents	1
Friends	6
Unanswered	16

The single entry marked "reactive" indicates a respondent who found that the movement for organic church union detracted from the main thrust of the gospel and therefore he rejected that form of ecumenism. In contrast, the five entries under "Wider/Interdenominational contact" consist of three URC and two CF respondents (that is one layperson and four ministers) who found such contact attractive. The other categories – home church, home minister, friends, college etc. – speak for themselves. In the early 1970s, one respondent happily "went with the flow". In this it is, of course, possible that this might reflect the experience of others. Seemingly this question is not one which allows many to give a simple answer.

Question 4: *Have your views changed? If so, how? Please outline the process and factors.*

The responses to question 4 will be covered jointly with those to question 5, see below.

Question 5: *Have your views remained the same or even been reinforced? Again please elaborate on the factors involved.*

Remained same	15
Changed	3
Now better informed	2
Nuanced and developed (rather than changed)	3
Unanswered	17

Again the relatively small number who admit that their views have changed and the greater number of those whose views are unchanged suggest that profound change is never easy, although Christians are required by their faith to examine their attitudes and consciences. We must conclude that, having done so, these Christians are at peace with their decisions. We might also accept that Christians tend to put less stress on the denominational identity of their chosen place of worship and more on the fellowship, friendliness, style of worship and other factors.

Question 6: *Have your views led to conflict or frustration with others in your churches or with other Christians?*

Conflict and frustration	2
Conflict	2
Frustration	7
Neither	12
Unanswered	17

One URC minister expressed regret that there had not been a national union of Congregationalists and Baptists earlier in the twentieth century, although this minister conceded that, had such a union occurred, it would have created an ecumenical "dead end".[3] Another URC minister considered frustration to be altogether un-Christian and, therefore suggested that Christians and ministers ought never to allow themselves to decline into that emotion. In contrast yet another URC minister has found frustration to be a characteristic of "Christian discourse".

Frustration therefore, according to these respondents, has taken many forms which include the failure to form significant further denominational unions. Others, both URC and CF, have been frustrated at the narrow, local visions which they have encountered in the churches, often combined with a lack of understanding of local needs from central officers. One respondent has become "immensely frustrated" at the efforts "wasted" on organic union or in seeking to find a common statement of faith. Thus, working together and emphasising where Christians agree must take priority.

Question 7: *Have other Christians welcomed your views and changed their former views, influenced by yours?*

Yes	6
No	3
Don't know	9
Unanswered	22

3 See Argent, *The Transformation of Congregationalism 1900-2000*, chapter 7.

On the whole I believe that respondents struggled to answer this as honestly as possible and many held that, although they may have had some telling influence on others on occasions, they were uncertain about the long-term effects. One URC layperson found it sad that, despite genuine interest in "the way we do things" from recruits from other denominations, church membership classes stress common Christian teachings, with little mention of distinctive URC contributions. The respondent judged that the URC has consistently downplayed its own specific insights and strengths. One URC minister abruptly stated that, in terms of influence on others, I would "have to ask them".

Question 8: *Have the denominational boundaries since the 1970s turned out as you expected?*

Yes	5
No	13
Partly	2
No expectation	1
Comment only	5
Unanswered	14

One layperson responded that different churches co-operate well, in spite of continuing denominational divisions, a fact which caused both surprise and pleasure. Among the unforeseen developments, volunteered by one respondent, is the ministry of a CF minister in a local URC. Of course, with this question, as perhaps with others, varying responses may suggest regional or even local differences. Several respondents commented on the state of interdenominational relations over the years without saying what their earlier expectations had been. Nobody confessed an inability to remember what their expectations forty years ago actually had been. A URC minister had thought that the Church of England and "high Methodists" would formally come together, leaving "low Methodists" and the URC to combine (along the lines of the United Church of Canada). This respondent still entertains hopes of a union of Reformed churches (although it was not explicitly stated whether or not this would be in England alone, in the UK or internationally).

Question 9: *How do you anticipate change in the future? More ecumenism and in what form, more contraction or growth. Again please give reasons.*

More ecumenism	12
No ecumenism	2
Decline/stagnation of most British churches	7
Conflict/competition with Islam	1
Other	7
Unanswered	11

Significantly no respondent argued that the churches will remain unchanged in the future, nor did anyone mention inter-faith co-operation. However two respondents mentioned "militant" Islam, one of them persuaded that this development in the United Kingdom must lead to conflict. Three respondents (two ministers and one layperson) expected more fundamentalist/conservative /black-led/pentecostal growth. Only one respondent wrote of "recent battles … centred more on the liberal/fundamentalist divide". Several were disappointed at conflict in the churches over issues of sexuality.

One respondent, a URC minister, anticipated more ecumenism in a resurgence of organic unions. All other respondents to this question saw future ecumenism in local co-operation and in being prepared to accept Christians from other backgrounds. One commented on the exhausting nature of "schemes of union", although for some respondents "domination" by the Church of England remained an ongoing problem. Several respondents predicted that local churches in the future will consist of members with a wide denominational heritage, combined with a disinterest in, even apathy, to denominational differences. Some foresaw a proliferation of small groups of Christians. Indeed, one URC minister remarked: "There is a great irony in that some of the most vigorous congregations – in terms of their ability to attract new worshippers – are those which insist on being independent of any wider structure but do not do so out of a classically Congregational background".

Numerical decline was foreseen by several, with one perceiving "unions and quasi-unions" emerging out of weakness. One minister anticipated "smaller and smaller churches and more and more exhausted ministers and priests, just rushing around 'doing' services". On the other hand one URC layperson, having expressed a fear of decline, stated, "It could take only one or two vibrant personalities to relight the Christian message for this generation".

A CF minister wrote:

> Once it was URC members bemoaning the fact that they shouldn't have left Congregationalism. Now it is the righteous complaints of Roman Catholics that their church was wrong to cover up the criminal misdemeanours of priests.

This respondent added that the Roman Catholic Church has been "fundamentally wrong over women" and its views on contraception are "widely ignored". In spite of the proven Anglican ability to "muddle through" and overcome obstacles, this respondent also held that the Church of England is split irrevocably, stating that "You just can't have one area served by two bishops and call yourself one church". As a result, "radical change" would follow, with Catholic folk relying more on women, lay leadership, keeping marriage behaviour strictly private and relying less on celibate, male, priests.

> I expect the Church of England to seep from both ends: the evangelicals going the Free Church way and the Anglo-Catholics going to Rome. I

expect to see more Methodists (covenanted with the Anglicans) and the URC (having lost half its membership since its inception) moving towards the middle ground of the Church of England and ecumenically serving our villages and small towns. I expect to see immigrants following Pentecostal ways, probably organised according to Congregational principles of polity, and revitalising Christianity in the face of an increasingly influential Islam.

Question 10: *If you believe we need a different kind of ecumenism in the twenty-first century, how do you see this developing?*

Reconciliation between URC and other Congs	2
URC and Methodist union	1
New generation with new ideas	1
Local unions	1
Mutual respect and acceptance	1
Working together where possible	4
Local initiative guided by Spirit	2
Reformed co-operation	1
Build on existing world ecumenism	1
More theology, less staff	1
More Holy Spirit, less management	1
Federal union	1
Don't know	1
Other	4
Unanswered	18

Although this and the previous question are similar and a few respondents combined their replies, the answers in general differed and were wide-ranging. Under this question no one wrote of reconciliation with the Anglicans or the Catholics. Two URC ministers maintained that the URC and the Congregationalists should be reconciled, one saying that the CF and URC "continue to need each other". Unions in weakness are mentioned again by two URC ministers (who fall into different categories in this table). One stated that a day would come "probably not too far ahead when the United Reformed Church can no longer survive unless it joins with, say, the Methodist Church".

Question 11: *Why did your church make the decision it did in 1972?*

Strong personalities	3
Followed the minister	3
The Holy Spirit/will of God	4
Divisive church meetings	1
Local church too small on its own	1

Financially expedient	1
Existing union or already advanced talks	5
Strong church meeting majority	3
Insufficient majority	5
Other	7
Unanswered	7

One minister, reflecting on the personal choice made in 1972, took the view "that most ministers would support the union as they felt this would bring them financial security … Not all Congregational churches, or their treasurers, paid the minister properly!" Other respondents pointed to the considerable pressure exercised by denominational officials.

Some mentioned "misleading information" which frightened church members. One CF minister identified an area moderator who was "witty, charming and, apparently, totally without principle. Certainly he … pressurised churches into the union and in some cases told them downright lies. The bitterness … lasted many years".

A URC minister pointed to the belief that many Congregational "church members did not appreciate the significance of the changes that were being made; and expected that after 1972 it would be 'business as usual'. It has taken most of forty years to indicate that it is otherwise". By contrast, another URC minister commented that many fears bandied about in the early 1970s about how the URC would work proved unfounded. "There has, for example, been no attempt to impose a stricter doctrinal uniformity, and relatively few decisions from the wider councils of the Church which compel local congregations to do what they do not wish to do. Few today would wish to go back on the national remuneration scheme for ministers and the improved pensions".

Question 12: *Looking back, do you think it was the correct decision or not? Why?*

Yes	17
No	5
Other	1
Unanswered	17

Of those for whom it was the wrong decision, two are CF ministers who in 1972 disagreed with their local church's decision to join the URC. The remaining three favoured union in 1972 but subsequently have changed their minds. Nevertheless most respondents do not regret the decisions of 1972 and, therefore, one must conclude they would not wish to change those decisions or their outcomes. One respondent observed that "people seem to think that they made the right decisions in 1972, whatever they were". This respondent continued by speculating that "had the Covenant proposals been accepted by the Church of England there might have been a different story". Another respondent makes a similar point.

> Only the failure of the Church of England to stand by Huxtable and the Commission after 1972, and the narrow decision to vote down union with the Methodists, leads one now to say, well after the event, that hopes of general organic union were mistaken.

One URC minister recalled that the Church of England approached the URC to start the Covenant for Unity although, as events proved, the Anglicans were not ready for it. Certainly the failure of the 1981-82 covenant with the Church of England and other denominations is felt keenly by some URC minister respondents who mentioned it several times, frequently with regret at its failure. Still, it was called to mind most often by one who opposed it, referring to it in four separate answers.

One URC layperson pointed to "the lack of statesmanship and vision among those who stood aside" from the union of 1972, "thus making a mockery of the objective of forming a church which could be a catalyst for other unions". This too, this respondent stated, deserves "comment, or rebuttal, in any history of twentieth century Congregationalism".

II: Other comments

As expected, several additional comments made by respondents carry weight, although it is impossible to reproduce them all. One remembrance summed up for many the mood of the early-to-mid 1970s: "The time seemed so exciting but now feels as though people have forgotten how driven towards union we were". Another of that generation was "convinced that Church Unions were the will of the Holy Spirit" but had recently met a newly ordained URC minister who said candidly, "Most of us are not interested in unity that way, now!"

Testifying to the maxim that the best critics come from within, one URC minister offered the comment that "the URC is far from perfect – we have too high a proportion of Chiefs to Indians and our fully conciliar structure sometimes takes far too long to take obvious decisions". Another URC minister maintained that, "The URC has done many things well, but in times of decline its complicated organisation" demands much of too many people. "Its search for a slimmer, more flexible structure" has failed. Yet it has rightly "persisted in an ecumenical approach to ministerial training and has resisted 'dumbing down' that training by making it shorter and weaker".

Another reflected on the passing of the former URC Districts.

> I was a member of a District Council which voted for its own abolition. At the meeting, I was the only one to vote against the abolition of the District . . . The legal headache of abolishing the Synods and disentangling the finances would have made it impossible. But the absence of the District has been a disaster. There has been no continuing informal fellowship, and we are basically isolated independent churches. The Moderator and the Moderator's Pastoral Advisors do a

> good job, but it is not part of their remit to build up fellowship between churches at the district level. However, not all our churches are isolated, because 3 larger churches (out of 8 in the former district) are all, rightly and successfully, united with the Methodists. The synod is geographically and psychologically distant in the synod office. I remain in touch with the local UR churches, as I still lead worship in them and also lead worship in the Methodist circuit.

Three other URC ministers take a similar view of the abolition of District Councils.

Changing tack, some respondents commented on aspects of my book,[4] one correctly stating that centralisation extends back "into the nineteenth century and was not a twentieth century innovation". Indeed, this respondent continued, centralising "was a way of sustaining congregations that had run out of steam". Furthermore, "the old Congregational county unions could … exercise more direction over a local church's life than much of the Congregational mythology now remembers".

Another deemed that, "it is too soon to assess the period after 1972" and the space in the book given to it was "justified". This respondent continued:

> A detailed account of what each wing of Congregationalism has done since would have been a tedious ending to a well judged and almost nostalgic account of Congregationalism up to the 1960s. This might no longer have been classic Independency, but it was still loveably earnest, sincere and brotherly, but unhappily no longer affordable. It was also increasingly out of touch with changes in the society it was seeking to serve and to save. Change of some kind to match outreach to economy was essential and union with the Presbyterians whose orthodox beliefs we shared, and where the ground had already been trodden once, had to be tried.

Another respondent stated that it was "wise not to deal with the decade of 1970 in greater detail".

Making a point which might have enriched my book, one former member of the joint committee, which guided the URC's proposals for union into being, recalled the Presbyterian chair of that committee likening the formidable task of uniting Presbyterians with Congregationalists as bringing *Daily Telegraph* and *Guardian* readers together. In actuality, all the Presbyterian committee members did read the *Telegraph* and every Congregational member took *The Guardian* (apart from John Huxtable who read *The Times*). In the last two years of the joint committee, Huxtable considered that the proposals only needed to be submitted for all to see their good sense and agree to them. Others felt that the

4 Ibid.

proposals needed a measure of "advocacy". The latter view resulted in an advocacy committee being set up, with recruits from the county unions.

Yet this same veteran committee member maintains that the joint committee made two major mistakes. First it promised every church that it would receive pastoral care – which was not altogether the fault of the joint committee because none supposed that in ten years' time the URC would still exist. Secondly the committee was at fault in proposing that in the URC General Assembly, instead of every church being represented, only representatives from District Council, by rotation, should attend. Rather than being more manageable and improving debates, this respondent contended that this has been "disastrous" for a number of reasons. Individuals appointed on rotation, for three years or so, are lost and overawed and do not speak. In the former Congregational pattern, individuals came to the fore by attending assembly and contributing there which has not happened in the URC. As a result many churches simply have lost touch, this respondent indicated. To be fair to all parties, one might allow that local churches are always in danger of feeling isolated from the centre and, before 1972, many Congregational churches had little contact with officials of the Congregational Union, or Church, of England and Wales in London.

III: Conclusion

Reconciliation is undoubtedly a Christian imperative and, for many, ecumenism has been a form of reconciliation.[5] It is also arguably a matter of peculiar importance to Congregationalists, given that the polymath Isaac Watts (1674-1748) wrote in his *Divine Songs*:

> Birds in their little nests agree
> And 'tis a shameful sight
> When children of one family
> Fall out, chide, and fight.[6]

In such a light, given that former members of the same family of churches once made different decisions about a model of union which has now been largely abandoned, should not these estranged family members seek to settle their differences more permanently?

With regard to the present and future state of the churches, one respondent belonging to a suburban congregation, wrote of its transformation, asserting that it has "changed from being largely mono-ethnic to being a church with over twenty nationalities". This respondent expressed hope in the future for "theologically active local congregations with a vision of what the gospel is and

5 See 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 2: 15-20; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 2:16-18.

6 I. Watts, *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715) Song 17 "Love between brothers and sisters".

a delight in it". That comment carries no denominational baggage, save that a denomination must be open to accepting Christians of all backgrounds and traditions, without wishing to change them into something else, apart from stimulating their thoughts on Christian faith. It does accord well with the comments of a former Presbyterian, a layperson, who holds to a view of ecumenism which enables "unity in diversity". This respondent argues that

> … the Congregational form of government and its traditional non-subscription to creeds allows churches with differing views to be in fellowship with one another. In addition people with differing views can even join the same church fellowship. This is the ecumenism for the twenty-first century.

I should have to admit that even Albert Peel (1887-1949)[7], the diehard Congregationalist, would endorse that view.

The survey has failed to reveal any widespread unanimity. Rather the respondents have put forward a variety of views, some at length, others more succinctly. To this commentator these views suggest a vibrancy, an ability to reflect thoughtfully and share those reflections, (albeit after some strong persuasion), on their church life and their own faith. Such variety indicates life and health, instead of the assurance of imminent death. As a result I am encouraged by the answers given and am grateful to my respondents for their help and co-operation.

ALAN ARGENT

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7 For Albert Peel see John Taylor and Clyde Binfield (eds), *Who They Were: In the Reformed Churches of England and Wales, 1901-2000* (Donnington: United Reformed Church History Society/Shaun Tyas, 2007), pp. 176-77; also, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*

A MOVING TALE: ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AT WESTMINSTER COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE[1]

As readers of this Journal will probably be aware, in 1844, the new Presbyterian Church in England founded a college in London to train (largely) young men for ministry in the Church. After fifty years in rented accommodation, the Church was offered a plot of land in central Cambridge and a donation towards the cost of a building of their own, and so, in 1899, the College moved to Cambridge. The architect Henry Hare designed Westminster College, a beautiful new building on the corner of the lane leading to the village of Madingley. An Arts and Crafts jewel with tiled fireplaces, stained glass windows, and oak panelling, it was also fitted with all the modern desirables: electric lights, an impressive kitchen, and a state of the art ventilation system.

In 1967, Westminster College joined with Cheshunt College, (founded in 1768 in Trefeca, Wales, by the Countess of Huntingdon, moving to Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, in 1792 and then to Cambridge in 1905), which latterly trained candidates largely for Congregational ministry. Five years later, in 1972, the Presbyterian Church of England and the majority of churches affiliated to the Congregational Church in England and Wales came together, to form the United Reformed Church. In 2015, Westminster College is one of the four Resource Centres for Learning for the United Reformed Church and, as part of its core activity, ministerial candidates continue to be trained there. Nevertheless, its remit and its activities now also encompass a wider constituency including the provision of training for EM2 (education for ministry during the first three years after ordination) and EM3 (all education for ministry following the initial three years of EM2), for lay preachers, and for learning opportunities for the whole church.

However, while the hundred-and-ten years after the College opened its doors in Cambridge had witnessed the replacement of its roof and the installation of central heating, no other major update of the buildings had taken place. At the beginning of 2013, the original 1899 glazed bricks remained in the kitchen walls, no wheelchair access was available to the library, and there was one bathroom for every four students. One architect's report said that the building was "remarkably unmodified" – a two edged sword!

In 2014, following eighteen months of work, the College completed a £7.2 million programme of renovation and refurbishment of every aspect of its facilities, from overhauling the heating and wiring to updating the accommodation, offices and kitchens. Of even greater interest to members of this Society, it also included the opportunity to re-assess and renew the provision for Archives and Special Collections facilities.

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1 A version of this article first appeared in the ABTAPL Bulletin of November 2014. It is reproduced here by permission.

I: Collections overview

As well as a main library of over 40,000 volumes, used by students of the College and the Cambridge Theological Federation, there are, broadly speaking, three bodies which hold archival material at Westminster. These are Westminster College, the Cheshunt Foundation, and the United Reformed Church History Society. The five interconnected collections they hold are the archives of Westminster College (1844-present); the archives of Cheshunt College (1768-1967); the collections of the URC History Society (seventeenth century to the present); the records of the central administrative bodies of the Presbyterian Church in and of England (1843/4-1972); and the records of the central administration of the Churches of Christ (1842-1981).

The Archives and Special Collections include a huge range of material: there are eighth century Syriac and Arabic manuscripts; glass plate photographs from the 1890s taken by Mrs Lewis and Mrs Gibson, scholars and benefactors of Westminster College; over two thousand letters to Lady Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon who founded the theological college in Trefeca which later became Cheshunt College; a manuscript draft of the Westminster Confession of Faith, after which the College is named, dating from 1646; the Elias Collection of hymnals produced over a three hundred year period; the nineteenth and twentieth century administrative records of two Colleges and two Churches; biographical files for 2,500 ministers and missionaries in the Presbyterian Church of England; and an enormous range of books and pamphlets on the history of dissent and nonconformity.

There are usually just over one hundred external enquiries a year, and about a fifth of those enquirers will visit the Archives in person.

II: What we wanted to achieve

At the beginning of the project, Archives and Special Collections materials were held in twelve different locations throughout the College – libraries, store rooms, teaching rooms. We needed to reduce that number to something more manageable, and improve the quality of the Archives storage facilities (and free up more space in the teaching rooms by removing some of the floor-to-ceiling bookshelves on every other wall). And we wanted a dedicated space for a reader to have invigilated access to archival material.

However, with space in the College at a premium, there was never going to be a single, sufficiently large strong room; and given that the building is Grade II listed, we had to work within the existing layout. Between 2010 and 2013, an Archives and Library Group decided that a sympathetically-designed extension block, on the ground floor, to allow for the weight of paper and shelving, would house the main store. Space would be maximised with rolling racking specified in three different shelving depths (to fit small books, large books, and archive boxes) and shelving bays were designed to be exactly the right width to hold three stacks of archives boxes each. There would also be provision for oversize

material (including volumes of newspapers and the huge handwritten nineteenth century library catalogue). Two or three additional strongrooms would be refurbished, or created from existing rooms within the College, and an Archivist's office would replace the desk used in the library.

III: Running the Project

We had always known we would have to close both the Library and the Archives services for certain parts of the building work while the rooms they were housed in were renovated. A small library of core texts was selected by the librarians and the teaching staff, so that the College students had access to most key material; students were also allowed to borrow a larger number of books, and for an extended period, while the main library was inaccessible.

Furthermore, we could not run a full Archives service for external users. There were two specific periods when we suspended the service entirely, for about four weeks when packing, and about six weeks when unpacking; and for the remainder of the time, we decided to keep three key series on-site – sixty boxes and five filing cabinets of the most frequently requested material – so that we could run a reduced Archives service throughout the works. Fortunately, the majority of users seemed very understanding!

A further four hundred boxes and ninety-three metres of rare books also remained onsite, but inaccessible during certain phases of the building work, as parts of the College were closed off by the builders. Over one thousand boxes of archives and books were packed up (using the services of a very careful commercial removal company) and stored off-site for the duration of the project. With great kindness, Churchill College in Cambridge allowed us to use some of the space in their own Archives centre to store our material – securely and in climate controlled conditions – for fifteen months while we worked on our building. We tried to keep users informed throughout, using our website, our entries on ARCHON, and Library and Archives mailing lists. We also kept in touch with colleagues in other Archives, posting messages to Archivists' lists, and contacting the repositories with most researcher overlap, such as Dr Williams's Library and SOAS.

We began packing those collections designated for off-site storage in May 2013. Packed boxes were coded by individual collection (rather than in a long series of 1-2000, say), and each was given a different alpha-numeric code, so that we could immediately identify by sight which boxes contained "the Rupp Collection", for example, or "the Cheshunt archives". This was especially important because collections which had been stored in the same room in 2012 might end up in different final locations in 2014 – and of almost 1,500 boxes packed and moved, fewer than fifty went back to their original location.

Using separate codes also meant that when one area of the building was released back to us by the builders, we could recall the relevant set of boxes and unpack them immediately. So, for example, the books from four glass-fronted bookcases in the area outside the Dining Hall were recalled, unpacked, and re-

shelved in December 2013, as soon as work on that part of the College was complete; other collections did not return to the College until the final main moves of June-August 2014. A staggered programme of recalling material also meant that we did not have all one thousand boxes coming back at the same time, so we could unpack one round of boxes before starting on the next.

Most of the programme of moves ran according to plan. There have been delays, of course – the completion of the strongroom on the ground floor took longer than we anticipated to acclimatise to the standards in PD:5454, (the UK standard for archival storage), for example. There have been unexpected deposits, as people have found the renovation and consequent office moves to be a catalyst for a re-arrangement: I expected to receive some of the usual College paperwork, but I did not expect (or plan storage space for!) over one hundred annual College photographs which had been in the residential wing; nor did I expect the signed wooden laths from the ceiling and 1930s "at home" cards, found down the back of an old fireplace, from the Site Foreman! But by October 2014 everything was back on site. At the time of writing, there remains plenty of work to be done (and some things still in boxes!) but we can at least say we are running a full Archives service once more.

IV: What we have now

First, we have an Archives and Special Collections store compliant with PD:5454, which is a secure room with climate control and a fire suppression system, fitted with rolling racking, where we can keep all our written archives and the pre-1700 books. A second, pre-existing strongroom has been retained, where further rare books collections are kept securely in a stable climate; and then there is a large third room for the modern printed material in the special collections.

We also have a dedicated Archivist's office, with a reader's desk, where visitors are able to have invigilated access to archival material while still being close enough to ask questions. With one part-time archivist, and a relatively small number of footfall visitors a year, this seemed to be a more practical solution than a separate reading room. Our beautiful new accommodation is ready!

But I still would not say we have finished. The main delay in completing the whole project has been self-inflicted: rather than just unpacking material onto new shelves, we have been trying to take this opportunity to re-examine the holdings as we move them. We have tried to disentangle collections that were not related, and ended up sharing a shelf. We have tried to re-unite parts of other collections that were separated because they were a larger format and there was simply not enough room for them in the same place. We have tried to identify duplicates, work out what needs listing and cataloguing, and look at the logic behind some of the decisions about where items were stored so we can re-appraise levels of access. As we move into a new century for Westminster College, this assessment of material is taking time – and will take more time – but I think it is time well spent!

HELEN WELLER

REVIEWS

***Calvin Today: Reformed Theology and the Future of the Church*. Edited by Michael Welker, Michael Weinrich and Ulrich Möller. London and New York: Bloomsbury/T & T Clark, 2011. Pp. 221. £19.99. ISBN 978-05675-2160-6.**

This collection of essays originated in a symposium that focused on "central themes in Calvin's theology as they relate to the present" (p. 3). Its orientation is deliberately theological rather than historical. Most of its fifteen contributors are European academics whose contributions have been grouped into three parts: (1) Faith; (2) Ecumenism; (3) Public Responsibility. The first chapter by Michael Beintker argues that Calvin's proposal that "the chief end of life is to know God and devote ourselves to his glory" is especially pertinent today, for "this is exactly how we are saved from our fixation with ourselves … by looking to God, we find ourselves, without great tension or effort" (p. 3). One could make the point that the experience of prayer often involves both tension and effort, while at the same time conceding the point to Beintker that the contemporary fixation with self expends far more energy, often counter-productively. Herman Selderhuis shows that Calvin's approach to children was innovative, since he recognised the uniqueness of every child within God's covenant and believed that the Church has a mothering role in nurturing and educating each child to know God. Selderhuis argues that amidst the overwhelming amount of information that they receive today, the Church has an important role in teaching children to know God, so they can interpret this information and distinguish what is necessary from what is harmful. This is an argument with which one could hardly disagree, but even when the Church attempts such pedagogy in discernment, one also acknowledges with regret how few children of a Christian parent seem to make an unbroken transition to adult Christian discipleship. Michael Weinrich compares the life and thought of Calvin with Karl Barth, noting that both theologians made themselves unpopular with their contemporaries by their dogged adherence to biblical and theological principles. Both maintained that *God* is the crucial question, not human beings; and that only free persons and a free Church can give God the glory. We might reflect that the contemporary tendency to exclude God and confine glory to the human, (such as when celebrities are regarded as surrogate gods), results in servitude to vainglory.

It always surprises some ultra-Protestant enthusiasts of Calvin's theology to learn that Calvin considered himself to be a catholic Christian. As André Bermielé argues, by "catholic" Calvin meant the universal fellowship of those who display the marks (first articulated in the Augsburg Confession) of the true Church: where the Word of God is preached and heard, and where the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's command. Calvin argued that where the Papists abandon these universal marks they also abandon catholicity. Thus we may speculate with some certainty that if someone had asked Calvin the question: "Is the Pope catholic?" Calvin would have answered: "No". Today, in view of ecumenical liturgical renewal, as well as the greater emphasis on the Scriptures

and preaching promoted by the Second Vatican Council, Calvin's "two marks" of the Church would seem especially relevant points for Protestant–Roman dialogue.

Anyone interested in the role of Reformed theology in the South African Dutch Reformed Church's one-time defence of Apartheid, as well as the role of the same, in the anti-Apartheid Belhar Confession, should read Dirkie Smit's long but fascinating essay "On Self-Love". The commandment to "love your neighbour as yourself" was interpreted by some Afrikaner Christians to justify racial self-preservation and separate development, while cultural self-determination was understood to be a Calvinist calling. Willie Jonker, a Dutch Reformed theologian from Stellenbosch, wrote an essay in 1974 arguing that the emphasis on "self" ran contrary to the intended object of Jesus' commandment: one's neighbour in need. The person who in the name of self-preservation perpetuates injustice against one's neighbour is "lost" in gospel terms. It is in giving up one's own life that one finds life in the gospel and is free for one's neighbour. In 1982 the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) suspended the South African Dutch Reformed Church from its membership on the basis that the theological justification of Apartheid was *status confessionis*. The South African Dutch Reformed Mission Church adopted the Confession of Belhar, stating that "any teaching which attempts to legitimate … forced [racial] separation by appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation, but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief, denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered ideology and false doctrine". The South African Dutch Reformed Church was readmitted to WARC after its General Synod denounced apartheid as wrong and sinful in its fundamental nature, effects and operations.

One of the merits of this wide-ranging collection of essays is that its contributors are able to be both critical and appreciative about the legacy of Calvin as manifested in Reformed theology and church life today.

JULIAN TEMPLETON

Christianity Outside the Box: Learning from those Who Rocked the Boat. **By Nigel Scotland. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012. Pp. xiv + 330. £30.00. ISBN 978-1-61097-360-1.**

The history of Christianity is littered with groups of impatient believers who, for various reasons, departed or were propelled away from the mainstream. Historians have tended to call these Christians schismatics, although contemporaries may have denounced them as heretics and troublemakers. Often such movements were motivated by reform impulses so that their witness provided, and perhaps still provides, a corrective to the orthodoxy of their day. Nigel Scotland is to be thanked for this historical survey of such Spirit-led "missional" movements, although his title suggests a populist if understandable attempt to be catchy and colloquial. Indeed does "outside the box" infer an

escape from preconceived notions or even the surprise gained from a Jack in the Box? The book jacket shows a man from behind carrying a closed box in a grassy field, which image conveys no greater understanding.

Nevertheless this is a scholarly survey of these varied enthusiasts, arranged broadly on a chronological basis from the Montanists and Donatists of the early church to the Pentecostals and Vineyard Churches of today (Scotland is interested in New Religious Movements). He has identified fourteen such groups including the Celts (I should prefer the title the Celtic Churches, rather than a term which denotes a people), the Waldensians, the Lollards, the Moravians, early Wesleyan Methodism and the Primitive Methodists. From more recent history he discusses the Salvation Army and the Settlement Movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The book carries footnotes, a select bibliography of seven pages and an index of eleven pages, although the spelling accords to American English.

Rather more directly relevant to the readers of this journal, chapter six is devoted to the Puritans, as if they were "outside the box", and as if they constituted together one unified movement. We might allow Scotland to assert that they did the latter, although they were only outside the box if we define that box narrowly. Puritanism was a phenomenon operating within the Church of England, although it clearly influenced those zealots who dissented from it. The dissenters from the Elizabethan and early Stuart church were Separatists, not strictly Puritans. His facts do not always survive close scrutiny. For instance, he describes the (presumably late Elizabethan) classis system, following his discussion of Richard Baxter's pastoral strategy, noting that Puritan candidates for the ministry went first for approval to the classis and then to the bishop for ordination. Clearly this did not happen during the Puritan ascendancy of the inter-regnum, but Scotland fails to say so. Some might think that the subject of his chapter eight, the Society of Friends, might have been discussed under the umbrella of Puritanism.

We must accept that authors have the freedom to select for themselves the parties which they wish to examine and Scotland has, for the most part, done a good job in outlining the characteristics of his chosen groups. However his selection implies a need to tackle with seriousness more recent developments like the Pentecostals and the Vineyard Churches. I should have liked the Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists to gain an equal seriousness. I looked in vain in the index for Congregationalists, Independents, Isaac Watts, women's ministry, dissent and academies, although the latter are discussed in his Puritan chapter. Missing also are the Churches of Christ and the London Missionary Society although the Baptist Missionary Society is there. Alas, I did find "Dodderidge" [*sic*]! Of the four references to "the Presbyterian Church", only one of them is in the chapter on the Puritans. The index has Richard Baxter, who certainly did not see himself as outside the box, but fails to include his contemporary, John Bunyan, who was totally unacceptable to the authorities of his day.

Arguably many other Christian movements fell outside the box and could be rediscovered with profit. Among those who reacted against "nominal, establishment religion" who had "a Spirit inspired and biblically faithful vision"

were the monastic pioneers of the early church, the first Franciscans and Dominicans, the Hussites (briefly mentioned in the chapter on Moravians), and Savonarola in Renaissance Florence. Nevertheless, this book may serve as a broad introduction to its theme.

ALAN ARGENT

***A Great Deliverance: Ecclesiastical Lay Patronage in Scotland until 1750*. By Laurence A. B. Whitley. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013. Pp. 334. £25.00. ISBN 978-1-61097-990-0.**

From its emergence at the Scottish Reformation in 1560, the history of the Church of Scotland has been one of definition and redefinition in its relation to the political establishments of the day and the people of the land. As the most visible presence in virtually every sizeable community, the parish church and its minister played a significant part in the ordering of Scottish society at a local and ultimately national level.

Laurence Whitley's sprightly study takes in the broad sweep of Scottish ecclesiastical history from the late sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries through the turbulent times of Reformation, Covenanting wars, Restoration, Revolution and Settlement. Much has been written about sixteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth century church matters, but Whitley has alighted on the period between the Revolution Settlement and the Disruption where the Church of Scotland, perhaps with less violence and drama, was still evolving. The path to the 1843 Disruption of the Church of Scotland, rooted in the issue of patronage, was formalised by the passing of the Patronage Act of 1712, where lay patrons had been given the privilege of choosing and presenting parish ministers. Patronage had been in existence since the Reformation in a variety of forms, but this particular Act enshrining patronage legally, was a major turning point in the Church's understanding of its role in society, the political world, and also its ecclesiastical self-awareness. The issue had always been a thorny one, as the Church sought to determine its own polity and who its ministers should be, whereas the state, and the ruling classes, knew that control of pulpits would give them a distinct societal advantage. State guarantee of a Presbyterian Polity confused the matter in what was frequently an awkward relationship with the national church. Ongoing tensions around issues of the recognition of Episcopalianism, the ebb and flow of Jacobitism in Scotland, and the further emergence of an articulate and literate population, not willing to be subservient to a small number of powerful patrons, only added to the challenging mix of Scottish secular and ecclesiastical politics. This was particularly the case in the aftermath of the 1707 Union of the Parliaments when the London authorities were not always sensitive to, or appreciative of, the frequently marked differences of Church matters north of the border.

The Crown itself had around a third of Scotland's parishes in its gift, so it was

unfortunate that in the tense time after 1712, and immediately prior to the death of Queen Anne and the accession of the Hanoverian George I, the first royal presentee became a *cause célèbre*. A Roman Catholic who converted to Presbyterianism, he thought he would be a good minister for Burntisland in Fife and was supported by a Jacobite-leaning element in the burgh. However, William Duguid was said to have sexually assaulted a serving wench, run about naked in front of his landlady and touched her inappropriately, drank until he vomited, French-kissed a nursing mother, swore at bowls, called the synod of Fife a "pack of knaves and rascals", and drank the health of the Old Pretender. He was later ordained by the Bishop of Carlisle on becoming an Episcopalian and, bizarrely, returned to the town as a priest.

The whole fiasco revealed the political and ecclesiastical tensions of the time, and though among the more extreme cases, underlined that resolving issues around patronage would be important to the peace and well-being of Church and State. Certainly it became evident that the Church of Scotland's continuing uneasiness about patronage was more reasonably heard after the 1715 Jacobite Rebellion when it became clear that a largely loyal Presbyterian Church, with pro-Hanoverian ministers in pulpits, would be of benefit to the new regime in London. The problem of patronage was not resolved, nor would it be until after 1843, but many patrons, and others in the political classes, realised the benefit of having the support of an organisation whose reach and influence touched every parish in the land. Nonetheless, the tensions remained, particularly where congregational members showed unhappiness with pulpit presentees, and Presbyteries stood up for the importance of the "freedom to call". Whitely also suggests that in some of the eighteenth century contested patronage presentations, nascent elements of disillusionment with the integrity of the Kirk, laxity over theological issues, and the blatant attempts to manipulate church courts and traditions by political rivals began to trouble the conscience of many within the Church, ministers and people alike, and this laid the way for the strengthening of the evangelical party within the Kirk, who were to challenge the ascendancy of the Moderates who had held sway for several decades, culminating in the Disruption.

Through a careful study of a number of patronage cases, Acts of the General Assembly, and a broad grasp of eighteenth century British politics, Whitley demonstrates that change was in the air and that the attempts to deal with the legacy of the 1690 Presbyterian settlement, the difficulties of the 1712 Patronage Act, and the popular culture of political engagement seen in the American and French revolutions would move steadily towards the 1843 Disruption, and the 1929 Reunion when the right to call ministers to parishes was placed firmly in the hands of congregations under the respective Presbyteries.

DEREK BROWNING

***Calvin's Company of Pastors; Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536-1609*. By Scott M. Manetsch. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. 428. £45.00. ISBN 978-0-19993-857-5.**

Those who have ever attended regular meetings of ministers might not think of the records of such gatherings as the most fascinating of documents for analysis, but when those records are of the Grand Company of Pastors in and around Geneva from 1536 to 1609, and the person looking at them is the historian Scott M. Manetsch, they prove a fertile field indeed.

Drawing on these records, and those of the consistory and the city council, alongside sermons, correspondence, and theological writing, Manetsch has spent ten years producing a description of the lives of many of the 135 men who took to the town and country pulpits during these years. The result gives us a more intimate look at some of the lives of individuals we think we know, and introduces us to many whom we almost certainly do not. The choice of dates is not arbitrary. We begin with the arrival of Calvin and his early attempts, along with Farel, to forge a sense of collegiality among ministers. And we travel to a few years beyond the death of Beza, and leave Geneva's pulpits in the hands of a third generation.

After Calvin's return to Geneva, in addition to Sunday and weekday preaching in the three city churches and the many country parishes, a regular weekly routine emerged which would provide the structure for formal communication among the ministers and between ministers and citizens of Geneva. On Thursday at noon the city ministers and elders met as consistory to hear cases of lapses in morality and piety. On Friday morning (after morning sermon) at Congregation the ministers, and academy staff gathered to hear one of their number give a bible study lecture, in an event open to citizens. Only after this did the ministers alone meet as the Grand Company itself, to comment on the interpretation given earlier, and to engage in other matters. This weekly pattern was supported by a quarterly meeting of the pastors, the ordinary censure, through which the ministers were accountable for each other for their work and their behaviour.

In commenting on this weekly rhythm as it developed over nearly seventy years Manetsch covers many themes, some expected some surprising. These include: presidency of the Grand Company, lives of married ministers and their families, relationships between city churches and country parishes, continuing Roman Catholic devotion, hostility from surrounding Roman Catholic countries, struggles with the City Councils, achieving fair moral oversight, preaching and worship, "foreign" ministry in the Genevan church, ministry to plague victims, and discussion on how to handle Calvin's legacy.

Somehow Manetsch manages to tell the narrative in such a way that those who come completely fresh to sixteenth century Geneva should not be completely adrift, while those who think they are familiar with it should discover something new on nearly every page. I suspect every reader will have their own highlights. I particularly appreciated the analysis of the relationships between ministers, between churches and between town and country.

From the beginning Calvin wanted a collegiate ministry. He encouraged

rotation between the churches during preaching services, for which there was considerable scope because there were thirty five of these services every week between the three church buildings within the city walls. Outside the city, life was different. I have always wondered about life outside the walls, but other works on this period give the country parishes little more than a passing reference. Manetsch, however, explores many facets of their life. There was often a struggle to find ministers to serve these communities, (often ministers were serving two or three concurrently), and perhaps this relates to the constant tension between a belief in the parity of ministers and the increased status (and stipend) of city posts. Country ministers had to contend with poor housing, dilapidated buildings, farming to supplement the stipend and flock scattered over some distance. In addition, they had to live with the expectation that they ought to be coming to the city on Friday mornings when possible, a distance of up to twenty miles and sometimes through hostile territory.

One of the most heartrending parts of the book is the discussion about how to provide ministry to plague victims. In the first visitation in 1542 a plague hospital was established (outside the city) and one minister Pierre Blanchet volunteered to relocate there. Calvin felt that in the event of Blanchet's death it would be up to him to volunteer, but when it happened, the city council would not let him and a young minister, Mathieu de Geneston, took up the role. When the plague returned in the 1560s, the ministers would not prove to be so brave.

The book takes us over fifty years beyond Calvin's death and so the question of Calvin's legacy cannot be avoided, especially as Calvin's deathbed speech had included the exhortation to "change nothing … because all changes are dangerous". Manetsch makes a careful assessment of how the succeeding generations responded. Although they were cautious and conservative, there was some opportunity for change and development. Nevertheless I think Manetsch would say that when there was doubt, the instinct was to let things remain as Monsieur Calvin had wished.

I suspect it is clear by now that I have enjoyed reading this book and would wish to recommend it to readers of the *Journal*, whether you know nothing or a great deal about the minsters of the Grand Company.

ALISTAIR SMEATON

***T&T Clark Companion to Nonconformity*. Edited by Robert Pope. London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2013. Pp. x + 758. £100.00. ISBN 978-0567505262.**

This is an exceptionally comprehensive volume, as one might expect from the title and size. However, the price means it is likely to be only a library volume in most cases. Robert Pope has set out to create a comprehensive volume, according to the cover, aimed at postgraduate students, scholars and libraries. It meets this purpose admirably, and is a great asset in this area both because there is no volume that already does this, and because it does it so very well.

The first two-thirds of the book consists of twenty-two themed chapters, each by a different author who is an expert in their field, and the final quarter is an "ABC of Nonconformity" with a multitude of short dictionary-type entries on every topic imaginable, again by experts in their fields. The remaining space, dividing them, consists of a thoroughly comprehensive bibliography. All of this vastly exceeds what those to whom it is marketed need to know, setting them on their way to more detailed work.

The themed chapters include contributions by Densil Morgan on Wales, David Thompson on polity, Alan Sell on Christology, Ian Bradley on hymnody, Clyde Binfield on architecture, Stephen Orchard on education, David Jeremy on business and wealth, Robert Pope on the Nonconformist Conscience, and Noel Davies on ecumenism, amongst others. Naturally each author tackles their own chapter in their own style, but all the chapters are a similar length, and fully referenced, some with over one hundred footnotes.

The Bibliography covers thirty-seven pages, and could not be described as anything other than comprehensive, although of course it is far from exhaustive. However, the books, libraries, and other sources of reference, referred to here, will themselves lead the enquiring reader on to other sources. The "ABC", although shorter, is likely to be of more use to many students, especially those looking for an introduction. The articles average around 250 words each, but vary a little in length. Some cover topics such as Temperance, Methodism, the Happy Union, Bunhill Fields, the Social Gospel, and the Clarendon Code. A large number cover people, such as P. T. Forsyth, Ann Steele, Vavasor Powell, John Rylands, Geoffrey Nuttall and Ernest Payne. All the denominations also receive an entry.

I have just one criticism, regarding the inconsistent treatment of Methodism. The introduction points out that a separate Companion on Methodism has been published, and makes a cogent case for the obvious differences between Methodism and Old Dissent, however this lets itself down by saying that "Methodists … were not, initially at least, Nonconformists", with the direct implication that the traditions of Old Dissent were. This is a questionable foundation, because a good proportion of the traditions of Old Dissent were likewise not Nonconformists by choice. The differences between old and new Dissent are clear, but this is not the best way to build that case. Likewise, some contributors stick to old Dissent, while others include Methodism. I would have preferred either a better stated case for the exclusion of Methodists, and that stuck to, or their inclusion. However, this should be treated as a comparatively minor criticism (and such fine distinctions may elude secular publishers), of what is really a first rate and highly useful book.

This book is well-written by a variety of experts. It is balanced, objective, fair, informed, educative and intelligent. I would commend it to anyone, and those able to afford it would benefit from owning a copy.

MICHAEL HOPKINS

***Puritan Evangelism: Preaching for Conversion in Late Seventeenth-Century English Puritanism as seen in the works of John Flavel*. By Clifford B. Boone. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013. Pp. xvi +. 259. £29.99. ISBN 978-1-84227-784-3.**

The seventeenth-century minister John Flavel, or Flavell (1630-1691) has routinely been underestimated by scholars, not least because, as Clifford Boone quite rightly points out in this book, they have habitually tended to focus on the works of more extrovert Puritan divines such as John Owen and Richard Baxter. Whereas the likes of Owen, Baxter and Calamy interacted with political and religious leaders on the national stage, Flavel was most often to be found composing sermons for seafaring congregations in and around Dartmouth. Although Boone has not set out to write a biography or a general history of nonconformist preaching, his study certainly serves as a timely reminder that Flavel produced a remarkably voluminous catalogue of publications (which were popular on both sides of the Atlantic), and he makes a persuasive case for the minister's prominence within seventeenth-century English Puritanism.

Having established the fame and erudition of Flavel's preaching and the minister's influence as a writer, Boone moves on to the central theme of the book: preaching for conversion in late seventeenth-century England. He discusses much relevant historiography in order to arrive at a definition of Puritanism, and to identify a niche in the literature. The author occasionally treads rather heavily when discussing the shortcomings of fellow scholars, but nevertheless makes a convincing plea for academic historians to reappraise the purpose of Puritan sermons, particularly as regards their role in evangelism and conversion encapsulated in the concept of the "effectual call". Naturally enough, Flavel is presented throughout as a prime exponent of such preaching. Successive chapters guide the reader through Flavel's theology, rhetorical style and preaching strategies. Boone's analysis of the minister's exegesis is predicated on Puritan "faculty psychology", the theory that the faculties of the soul can be divided into three levels: intellect, will and emotions (the latter alternatively labelled "passions" or "affections"). Building on this in Chapter 5, the protocol of the "effectual call" is similarly divided into three stages: illumination, conviction and finally renewal of faith. In the course of this exposition Boone makes interesting forays into Flavel's handling of issues such as sin, conscience and predestination. The tables which appear at strategic points in the text are particularly useful, and in these Boone provides a summary of his analyses of various aspects of Flavel's doctrine and method in a clear, straightforward manner.

The book culminates in a useful set of appendices. Appendix One reproduces and describes the image of a spiritual compass featured in the edition of *Navigation Spiritualized* which appeared in the 1701 collection of Flavel's works. As Boone notes, the image was omitted from the supposedly definitive collection of the minister's works published in 1820 and reprinted in 1968. It would be interesting to know the provenance of this compass, however, as it is markedly different from the image published in the original *Navigation Spiritualized, or a New Compass for Seamen* (1698). Appendix Five features a

handy annotated bibliography of Flavel's known works, both in print and manuscript, which will be much appreciated by many readers.

Inevitably, this reviewer has one or two criticisms to posit. As regards prose style, the gratuitous use of the "royal we" in the text quickly becomes intensely irritating; such archaic nosism detracts from what is undeniably a tremendous research effort. There are one or two small factual errors (for example, Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence only suspended the penal laws against non-Anglicans in 1672; it did not revoke them as claimed on p. 34 – an important distinction). Audiences and the reception of Flavel's sermons are mentioned in passing in several places, and these interesting and highly pertinent issues might have been given more weight in the overall thesis, with sustained discussion informed by up-to-date studies, such as Arnold Hunt's *The Art of Hearing* (2010). Similarly, the sporadic allusions to preaching techniques, particularly the now-disputed notion of the so-called Puritan "plain style", might have benefited from consulting a few more recent studies by scholars such as Mary Morrissey, as well as the more traditional offerings of Fraser Mitchell (1962) and J. W. Blench (1964). Having said this, however, there are extremely useful discussions in several sections regarding the emotions of both audience and preacher.

Reviewers must always try to avoid the temptation to review the book they expected, or wanted, rather than the actual work placed in front of them. Despite its all-encompassing title, *Puritan Evangelism* does not pretend to be a study of John Flavel's preaching *per se*, much less a general history of seventeenth-century Puritan preaching; Boone readily acknowledges that there are other aspects of Flavel's preaching in addition to evangelism and the "effectual call", and that there were many other Puritan preachers, who may not have shared Flavel's views. He notes, however, along with Gavin McGrath (p. 218), that broader studies of Puritan preaching have often lost sight of the nuanced contours formed by preachers' individual doctrines. This study, by contrast, approaches matters from a different angle, and in doing so will provide useful food for thought.

DAVID J. APPLEBY

***English Students at Leiden University, 1575-1650*. By Daniela Prögler. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. Pp. 317. £75.00. ISBN 978-1-40943-712-3.**

In this handsomely-produced book an important story is told, and Dr Prögler is to be congratulated upon her assiduous research and her judicious interpretation of a mass of statistical and other information. There are six substantial chapters which are enhanced by illustrations and peppered with statistical tables, some of them multi-coloured; there is an appendix listing the English students at Leiden during the period under investigation, a substantial bibliography, and indices of subjects and persons.

The volume offers much more than its title immediately suggests, for the situation at Leiden University is compared and contrasted with that at other

European universities in terms of student numbers and origins, subjects studied, and duration of individual attendances; and all with reference to the religious, political and commercial circumstances of the time.

The students who matriculated at Leiden University were variously motivated. Some came in order to gain a professional qualification in medicine or law; others because of a love of learning and the reputation of particular courses; still others were birds of passage on a pilgrimage around a number of continental centres, while the nobles among them tended to gravitate to such departments as the fencing school. In addition, there were religious and political refugees, and in these, readers of this *Journal* will be especially interested. They comprised "Puritans from the 1580s, Separatists during the 1590s, anti-Laudians during the 1630s, and Civil War refugees during the 1640s" (p. 80).

Between 1575 and 1650 a total of 21,045 students matriculated at Leiden, of whom 831 were from England. Many of these were members of Dutch and Walloon communities – notably the Dutch Church, Austin Friars, in London – which those who had left their homeland during the struggles against Spain in the 1570s and 1580s had established on English soil. By no means all of the students graduated; the average length of stay in Leiden was fewer than three years, while some remained for a few months only. Their choice of Leiden was facilitated by geographical proximity, the favourable political and economic links between England and the United Provinces, and the generally humanistic attitudes which prevailed at the University. But it was the relative freedom of religion and the generally Reformed ethos which appealed to English Puritan and Separatist refugees, amongst whom we meet Thomas Cartwright, William Ames, the Brownists and Barrowists, Henry Jacob and John Robinson. Robinson, a Cambridge MA who also matriculated for divinity at Leiden and maintained fruitful links with its university, was pastor of the Separatist congregation established in Leiden in 1609. It numbered some three hundred members until the majority became the initial body of Pilgrims of 1620. Hugh Goodyear, MA (Cantab), the minister of Leiden's English Reformed church, also matriculated for divinity at Leiden.

Dr Prögler rightly notes the importance of the Dutch printing and publishing businesses, to which the Puritans and Separatists added their own, notably in Amsterdam and Leiden, from whence books which it would have been illegal to produce in England were smuggled across the water. At Leiden, the printer at the Pilgrim Press was William Brewster, an elder in Robinson's church, while Thomas Brewer supported both church and press financially. Books by English Puritans, especially devotional works that would appeal to Dutch Pietists, were translated into Dutch, notably by Willem Teellinck, whose wife was English, and who had studied at St Andrews University.

Careful accounts are given of the several Leiden faculties, courses and prominent teachers, but here I shall focus briefly upon the Faculty of Theology which, relative to its counterparts, was small, and concerned with postgraduate degrees only. Reference is made to the winds of Socinianism which swirled around the divinity hall, and especially to the celebrated debate between the two

theological professors, the orthodox Calvinist, Franciscus Gomarus, and Jacobus Arminius, which prompted the convening of the Synod of Dort. Between 1575 and 1650 seventy-three Swiss students matriculated in the Faculty, as, from the 1630s when Heidelberg University was closed owing to the Thirty Years' War, did 228 Hungarians. English students in the Faculty numbered 135, of whom two thirds had continental connections. Forty of them had studied at Oxford or (predominantly) Cambridge, and of these two-thirds had graduated MA. Eighty-three per cent of them were committed students who stayed in Leiden for an average of two years, but six only remained long enough to graduate in divinity.

Dr Prögler treats us to two contradictory opinions of the value of an education at Leiden University. William Browne of Trinity College Oxford exhorted John Aubrey thus: "I do seriously advise you to go to Leiden . . . Besides your advancing your abilities in learning you will much better your understanding of the world and state affairs" (p. 238). On the other hand, James Howell opined that "a small time and lesse learning, will suffice to make one a Graduate" (p. 105). On a selective interpretation of the evidence here provided, both claims would appear to be justified.

ALAN P. F. SELL