



THE OXFORD HISTORY OF PROTESTANT DISSENTING TRADITIONS

Volume III: The Nineteenth Century

Edited by
TIMOTHY LARSEN &
MICHAEL LEDGER-LOMAS

THE OXFORD HISTORY OF PROTESTANT
DISSENTING TRADITIONS,
VOLUME III

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PROTESTANT DISSENTING TRADITIONS

General Editors:
Timothy Larsen and Mark A. Noll

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Edited by Timothy Larsen and Michael Ledger-Lomas

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Timothy Larsen, Wheaton, August 2016

I am grateful to Timothy Larsen for the invitation first to contribute two chapters to this volume and then to share the work of editing it. First as my editor and then as my editorial colleague, he has been preternaturally efficient, and more encouraging to me in my labours on this and other projects than I have a right to expect. We have been lucky in our contributors, who were prompt in submitting copy and generous and meticulous in responding to editorial interventions. Karen Raith at OUP has been unfailingly speedy and precise in responding to a hundred and one questions. It is piquant that my

work on a volume about Protestant Dissenting traditions was carried out at what was long a citadel of Anglican Christianity: King's College London. I am grateful to my colleagues in the Theology and Religious Studies Department there who make it a happy place to work. In particular, Paul Joyce has been an exceptionally supportive Head of Department during my work on this project; Moira Langston has saved me from a thousand administrative mistakes; and David Crankshaw was a kind and helpful mentor on my arrival in the department. I am extremely grateful to the members of the Bible and Antiquity Research Group at Cambridge and to its director Simon Goldhill for fostering a community in which to develop thinking about nineteenth-century religion and culture. The volume Introduction in particular has benefited from Biblant's searching feedback. I owe much in particular to four Biblanti: Gareth Atkins, Jos Betts, Scott Mandelbrote, and Brian Murray, readers with differing interests but the shared ability to make one think hard about both detail and argument. Allison Knight made me rethink my attitude to Canadian Dissent via *Anne of Green Gables*, a work which alas did not make the select bibliography. Simon Mills and Robert D. Priest also provided detailed, wise feedback. Mark Hutchinson's initial assistance was crucial in adding a colonial dimension to my chapter on ministerial education. Jonathan Parry commented on the Introduction with the generosity and acuity I have come to expect from him ever since I began postgraduate work with him in 2001. For friendship and intellectual stimulation throughout my work on this project and during rich if sometimes tricky years in London, I am grateful to Gareth Atkins, Piers Baker-Bates, Alderik Blom, Simon Mills, Brian Murray, Rory Rapple, Katherine Spears, Zoe Strimpel, and Nicholas, Cecilia, and Helena Walach. Elisabeth Buecher's patience and support throughout much of this time kept me going, as did the love of my parents and siblings, who are not much interested in Protestant Dissent, but very much in my wellbeing. I had nearly finished this project when I met Richa Dwor, who has made some of its pages as well as everything else entirely different.

Michael Ledger-Lomas, Peckham, August 2016

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Series Introduction

Timothy Larsen and Mark A. Noll

There is something distinctive, if not strange, about how Christianity has been expressed and embodied in English churches and traditions from the Reformation era onwards. Things developed differently elsewhere in Europe. Some European countries such as Spain and Italy remained Roman Catholic. The countries or regions that became Protestant chose between two exportable and replicable possibilities for a state church—Lutheran or Reformed. Denmark and Sweden, for example, both became Lutheran, while the Dutch Republic and Scotland became Reformed. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) established the right of sovereigns to choose a state church for their territories among those three options: Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or Calvinist. A variety of states adopted a ‘multi-confessional’ policy, allowing different faiths to coexist side-by-side. The most important alternative expression of Protestantism on the Continent was one that rejected state churches in principle: Anabaptists.

England was powerfully influenced by the Continental Reformers, but both the course and outcome of its Reformation were idiosyncratic. The initial break with Rome was provoked by Henry VIII’s marital problems; the king rejected the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith and retained the Latin mass, but swept away monasteries and shrines, promoted the vernacular Scriptures, and had himself proclaimed Supreme Head of the Church of England. Each of his three children (by three different wives) was to pull the church in sharply different directions. The boy king Edward VI, guided by Archbishop Cranmer and Continental theologians like Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr Vermigli, set it on a firmly Reformed trajectory, notably through Cranmer’s second Prayer Book (1552) and the Forty-Two Articles (1553). Mary I reunited England with Rome, instigating both a Catholic reformation and a repression of Protestants that resulted in almost three hundred executions. Finally, Elizabeth I restored the Edwardian settlement (with minor revisions), while sternly opposing moves for further reformation of the kind favoured by some of her bishops who had spent the 1550s in exile in Reformed cities on the Continent. In contrast to many Reformed churches abroad, the Church of England retained an episcopal hierarchy, choral worship in cathedrals, and clerical vestments like the surplice.

The ‘half-reformed’ character of the Elizabethan church was a source of deep frustration to earnest Protestants who wanted to complete England’s reformation, to ‘purify’ the church of ‘popish’ survivals. From the mid-1560s,

these reformers were called 'Puritans' (though the term was also applied indiscriminately to many godly conformists). They represented a spectrum of opinion. Some were simply 'Nonconformists', objecting to the enforcement of certain ceremonies, like the sign of the cross, kneeling at communion, or the wearing of the surplice. Others looked for 'root and branch' reform of the church's government. (All Dissenting movements would remain expert at employing biblical images in their public appeals, as with 'root and branch', taken in this sense from the Old Testament's book of Ezekiel, chapter 17.) They wished to create a Reformed, Presbyterian state church; that is, to make over the Church of England into the pattern that ultimately prevailed north of the border as the Church of Scotland. Still others gave up on the established church altogether, establishing illegal separatist churches. Eventually, England would see a proliferation of home-grown sects: Congregationalists (or Independents), General Baptists, Particular Baptists, Quakers (or Friends), Fifth Monarchists, Ranters, Muggletonians, and more.

These reforming movements flourished during the tumultuous mid-century years of civil war and Interregnum, when the towering figure of Oliver Cromwell presided over a kingless state and acted as protector of the godly. But when the throne and the established church were 'restored' in 1660, reforming movements of all sorts came under tremendous pressure. The term 'Dissent' came to serve as the generic designation for those who did not agree that the established Church of England should enjoy a monopoly over English religious life. Some of the sects—such as the Ranters, Muggletonians, and Fifth Monarchists—soon faded away. Others, especially Independents/Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers, survived. Crucially, they were now joined outside the established Church by the Presbyterians ejected from their livings in 1660–2. Although Presbyterians continued to attend parish worship and work for comprehension within the national church, they were (as Richard Baxter noted) forced into a separating shape, meeting in illegal conventicles. In 1689, Parliament confirmed the separation between Church and 'Dissent' by rejecting a comprehension bill and passing the so-called Act of Toleration. The denominations of what became known as 'Old Dissent'—Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers—now enjoyed legally protected freedom of worship, even as their members remained second-class citizens, excluded from public office unless they received Anglican communion.

Over the course of the seventeenth century, all of these Dissenting movements had established a presence in the British colonies of North America. (They became 'British' and not just 'English' colonies in 1707, after the Union of England and Scotland that created 'Great Britain'.) In the New World began what has become a continuous history of English Dissent adapting to conditions outside of England. In this instance, Congregationalists in New England set up a system that looked an awful lot like a church establishment, even as

they continued to dissent from the Anglicanism that in theory prevailed wherever British settlement extended.

Complexity in the history of Dissent only expanded in the eighteenth century with the emergence of Methodism. This reforming movement within the Church of England became 'New Dissent' at the end of the century when it separated from Anglican organizational jurisdiction. In America, that separation took place earlier than in England when the American War of Independence ruled out any kind of official authority from the established church across the sea in the new nation.

In the great expansion of the British Empire during the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century, Anglophone Dissent moved out even farther and evolved even further. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and other imperial outposts in Africa and Asia usually enjoyed the service of Anglican missionaries and local supporters. But everywhere that Empire went, so also went Dissenting Protestants. The creation of the Baptist Missionary Society (1792) and the London Missionary Society (1795) (which was dominated by Congregationalists) inaugurated a dramatic surge of overseas missions. Nowhere in the Empire did the Church of England enjoy the same range of privileges that it retained in the mother country.

Meanwhile, back in England, still more new movements added to the Protestant panoply linked to Dissent. Liberalizing trends in both Anglican and Presbyterian theology in the later eighteenth century saw the emergence of the Unitarians as a separate denomination. Conservative trends produced the (so-called Plymouth) Brethren who replicated the earlier Dissenting pattern by originating as a protest against the nineteenth-century Church of England—as well as lamenting the divisions in Christianity and longing to restore the purity of the New Testament church. The Salvation Army (with roots in the Methodist and Holiness movement) was established in response to the challenges of urban mission.

Even further complexity appeared during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries when Pentecostal movements arose, usually with an obvious Methodist lineage, especially as developed by the Holiness tradition within Methodism, but also sometimes with a lineage traceable to representatives of 'Old Dissent' as well. Historically considered, Pentecostals are grandchildren of Dissent via a Methodist-Holiness parentage.

Whether 'New' or 'Old'—or descended from 'New' or 'Old'—all of these traditions have now become global. Some are even dominant in various countries or regions in their parts of the globe. To take United States history as an example, in the eighteenth century Congregationalism dominated Massachusetts. By the early nineteenth century, Methodism was the largest Christian tradition in America. Today, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States is the Southern Baptist Convention. Or with Canada as another example, Anglicans remained stronger than did Episcopalians in the

United States, but Methodists and Presbyterians often took on establishment-like characteristics in regions where their numbers equalled or exceeded the Anglicans. In different ways and through different patterns of descent, these North American traditions trace their roots to English Dissent. The same is true in parallel fashion and with different results in many parts of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere, where Pentecostalism is usually the dominant style of Protestantism.

THE FIVE VOLUMES OF THIS SERIES

The five-volume *Oxford History of Dissenting Protestant Traditions* is governed by a motif of migration ('out-of-England', as it were), but in two senses of the term. It first traces organized church traditions that arose in England as Dissenters distanced themselves from a state church defined by diocesan episcopacy, the Book of Common Prayer, the Thirty-Nine Articles, and royal supremacy, but then follows those traditions as they spread beyond England—and also traces newer traditions that emerged downstream in other parts of the world from earlier forms of Dissent. Second, it does the same for the doctrines, church practices, stances towards state and society, attitudes towards Scripture, and characteristic patterns of organization that also originated in earlier English Dissent, but that have often defined a trajectory of influence independent of ecclesiastical organizations. Perhaps the most notable occasion when a major world figure pointed to such an influence came in 1775 when Edmund Burke addressed the British Parliament in the early days of the American revolt. While opposing independence for the colonies, Burke yet called for sensitivity because, he asserted, the colonists were 'protestants; and of that kind, which is the most adverse to all submission of mind and opinion'. Then Burke went on to say that 'this averseness in the dissenting churches from all that looks like absolute government' was a basic reality of colonial history. Other claims have been almost as strong in associating Dissenters with the practice of free trade, the mediating structures of non-state organization, creativity in scientific research, and more.

This series was commissioned to complement the five-volume *Oxford History of Anglicanism*. In the introduction to that series, the General Editor, Rowan Strong, engaged in considerable handwringing about the difficulties of making coherent, defensible editorial decisions, beginning with the question of how fitting the term 'Anglicanism' was for the series title. If such angst is needed for Anglicanism, those whose minds crave tidiness should abandon all hope before entering here. Beginning again with just the title, 'Dissenting' is a term that obviously varies widely in terms of its connotations and applicability, depending on the particular time, place, and tradition. In some cases, it has

been used as a self-identifier. In many other cases, groups whom historians might legitimately regard as descendants of Dissent find it irrelevant, incoherent, or just plain wrong. An example mentioned earlier suggests some of the complexity. In colonial Massachusetts, 'Dissenting' Congregationalists in effect set up an established church supported by taxes and exercising substantial control over public life. In that circumstance, 'Dissent' obviously meant something different than it did for their fellow Independents left behind in England. Nevertheless, Massachusetts Congregationalism is still one of the traditions out-of-England that we have decided to track wherever it went—even into the courthouse and the capitol building. Much later and far, far away, Methodism in the Pacific Island of Fiji would also take on some establishmentarian features, which again suggests that 'Dissent' points to a history or affinities shared to a greater or lesser extent, but not to an unchanging essence. Indeed, because Dissent is defined in relation to Establishment, it is a relative term.

Another particularly anomalous case is Presbyterianism, which has been a Dissenting tradition in England but a state church (*and* a Dissenting tradition) in Scotland and elsewhere. When one examines it in other parts of the world, a sophisticated analysis is required—for example, in the United States and Canada (where Presbyterianism was once a force to be reckoned with) and in South Korea (where it still is). In these countries, one encounters a tradition originally fostered by missionaries and emigrants with both Dissenting and establishmentarian roots. By including Presbyterians in these volumes, we communicate an intention to consider 'Dissent' broadly construed.

Other terms might have been chosen for the title, such as 'Nonconformist' or 'Free Churches'. Yet they suffer from the same difficulty—that all groups that might in historical view be linked under any one term will include many who never used the term for themselves or who do not acknowledge the historical connection. Yet 'Dissenting Studies' is a recognized and flourishing field of academic studies, focused on the history of those Protestant movements that coalesced as Dissenting denominations in the seventeenth century and on the New Dissent that arose outside the established church in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Still, the problem of fitting terminology to historical reality remains. The farther in geographical space that one moves from England and the nearer in time that one comes to the present, the less relevant any of the possible terms becomes for the individuals and Protestant traditions under consideration. Protestants in China or India, for example, generally do not think of their faith as 'Dissenting' at all—at least not in any way that directly relates to how that word functioned for Unitarians in nineteenth-century England. Even in the West, a strong sense of denominational identity or heritage has been waning, due to increasing individualism and hybridization. Such difficulties are inevitable for a genealogy where trunks and branches outline a common history of

protest against church establishment, but very little else besides broadly Protestant convictions.

The five volumes in this series, as well as the individual chapters treating different regions, periods, and emphases, admittedly brave intellectual anomalies and historical inconsistencies. One defence is simply to plead that untidiness in the volumes reflects reality itself rather than editorial confusion. Church and Dissent, Anglicanism and Nonconformity were defined by their relationship, and the wall between them was a porous one; while it can be helpful to think in terms of tightly defined ecclesiastical blocs, the reality of lived religion often defied neat lines of demarcation. Many eighteenth and nineteenth-century Anglicans read Puritan works, while many Dissenters imbibed the works of great Anglicans. Besides, an editorial plan that put a premium on tidiness would impoverish readers by leaving out exciting and important events, traditions, personalities, and organizations that do fall, however remotely or obscurely, into the broader history of English Protestant Dissent.

Which brings us to the second, more significant justification for this five-volume series. On offer is nothing less than a feast. Not the least of Britain's contributions to world history has been its multifaceted impact on religious life, thought, and practice. In particular, this one corner of Christendom has proven unusually fertile for the germination of new forms of Christianity. Those forms have enriched British history, while doing even more to enrich all of world history in the last four centuries. By concentrating only on the history of Dissent, these volumes nonetheless illuminate the extraordinary contributions of some of the greatest preachers, missionaries, theologians, pastors, organizations, writers, and self-sacrificing altruists, and (yes, also) some of the most scandalous, self-defeating, and egotistical episodes in the entire history of Christianity. Taken in its broadest dimensions, this series opens the story of large themes and new ways of thinking that have profoundly shaped our globe—on the relationships between church and state, on the successes and failures of voluntary organization, on faith and social action, on toleration and religious and civil freedom, on innovations in worship, hymnody, literature, the arts, and much else. It is a story of traditions that have significantly influenced Europe, North America, Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands, and even the Middle East (for example, the founding of what is now the American University of Beirut). Especially the two volumes on the twentieth century offer treatments of vibrant, growing forms of Christianity in various parts of the world that often have not yet received the scholarly attention they deserve. All five volumes present the work of accomplished scholars with widely recognized expertise in their chosen subjects. In specifically thematic chapters, authors address issues of great current interest, including gender, preaching, missions, social action, politics, literary culture, theology, the Bible, worship, congregational life, ministerial training, new

technologies, and much more. The geographical, chronological, and ecclesiastical reach is broad: from the Elizabethan era to the dawn of the twenty-first century, from Congregationalists to Pentecostals, from Cape Cod to Cape Town, from China to Chile, from Irvingite apostles in nineteenth-century London to African apostles in twenty-first century Nigeria. Just as expansive is the roster of Dissenters or descendants of Dissent: from John Bunyan to Martin Luther King, Jr, from prison reformer Elizabeth Fry to mega-mega-church pastor Yonggi Cho, from princes of the pulpit to educational innovators, from poets to politicians, from liturgical reformers to social reformers. However imprecise the category of 'Dissent' must remain, the volumes in this series are guaranteed to delight readers with the wealth of their insight into British history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with what they reveal about the surprising reach of Dissent around the world in later periods, and with the extraordinary range of positive effects and influences flowing from a family of Christian believers that began with a negative protest.

Introduction

Michael Ledger-Lomas

In the spring of 1857, while out on a journey, preaching and lecturing in different places, I was suddenly prostrated, as by a blow:—utterly unable to think and write, to contemplate or undertake any public service. It was as if a bolt had been withdrawn, or a wheel broken, in some whirling piece of machinery, and the entire apparatus had at once come to a dead stop!

Thomas Binney, the Independent minister of the King's Weigh House Chapel in London, was ready for a holiday by the time he landed at Melbourne on 31 March 1858. It was a characteristically strenuous break, taking in five colonies and every settlement of note from Brisbane to the splendidly named towns of 'Jericho, Jerusalem, and Bagdad'. As a visiting celebrity, Binney was naturally drawn into the affairs of local Congregationalism. In the new colony of South Australia, founded in 1836, he entered into dialogue with the Bishop of Adelaide with a view to reuniting evangelical Dissenters with the Church. If Binney was the doyen of English Dissenters, then the most striking feature of their published exchanges was his eagerness to take a holiday from Dissent; to work for the 'practical oblivion of sectarian differences' and create a 'Church of the Future'. With that 'one great rock of offence . . . the connexion between Church and State' removed, conversation could turn to a shared interest in converting 'Jew and Gentile . . . Brahmin and Mahomedan'. Binney was open to the negotiated euthanasia of evangelical Dissent, for its 'historical position . . . is a relative one. It is that of protest against the system which caused and created it'. With the Church cleansed of its iniquitous establishment and stocked with evangelicals, Dissenters could do business with it, seeking 'the improvement of an institution which, with all its imperfections, has mighty capabilities for good'. Binney called on Dissenters to recognize 'His Church under all forms' and 'fraternize in any way and to any extent with those who hold it, leaving secondary agreements, as to order and rule, to come as a result out of such and so brotherly a beginning'.¹

¹ Thomas Binney, *Lights and Shadows of Church Life in Australia: Including Thoughts on Some Things at Home* (London, 1857), pp. xi, xxiii–xxx, xliii–xliv, 3, 7.

The church of the future did not survive the voyage home. Yet Binney's holiday romance reminds historians of Dissenting traditions in the nineteenth century of the interest and conceptual difficulties involved in following their subject from Britain into the world. The fortunes of British Dissent were inseparable not only from the continued impact of the Evangelical Revival, but also from the expansion of the British Empire and the United Kingdom's heavy demographic and cultural traffic with the United States, a free religious market in which Protestant denominations expanded with startling vigour. The chapters in this volume concentrate on Dissenting traditions in the United Kingdom, the British Empire, and the United States. This Introduction weaves together their arguments, giving an overview of the historiography on Dissent while also making the case for seeing Protestant Dissenters in different Anglophone cultures as interconnected and conscious of their genealogical connections. While the history of nineteenth-century Anglophone Protestantism is often largely identified with global evangelicalism, it can be as illuminating to understand it as the apogee of the Dissenters, whose characteristic traits—volatile biblicism, a questioning attitude to authorities, and an intense but fitful commitment to equality—developed striking variations in different national contexts, without ever losing their family likeness.

To concentrate on English-speaking Dissenting traditions and their interactions does of course bracket them off artificially from a broader world of Protestant Dissent. The Protestants in this volume read histories which presented Dissent as the offspring of a Reformation Continental in its inception; visited 'homes and haunts' of the Reformers in Wittenberg or Geneva; spent time and money on the struggles of their historic counterparts, whether Hungarian Unitarians or Italian Waldensians, and promoted their particular brand of Protestantism in translation. Yet it is undeniable that Anglophone Dissenting traditions were given particular coherence and importance by the 'settler revolution' that peopled the British Empire and the United States in this period. From 1790 to 1930, English-speakers grew from around 12 million to 200 million people.² From 1815 to 1900, over 15 million people headed from Britain to the Anglo-world: over 10 million to the United States, around 2.4 million to British North America, 1.8 million to Australia and New Zealand, and just over 300,000 to the Cape and Natal.³ That process was good for Protestant Dissent, while also drawing its centre of gravity away from Britain. By 1900, Protestants in the Anglo-world outnumbered those in the United Kingdom, even if their denominational origins made for an umbilical link with it. A Canadian Methodist visiting London during the seventies

² Jim Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford, 2009), p. 4.

³ John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 42.

descended on a 'spot dear to the heart of every Methodist the wide world over': City Road Chapel, where he sat in Wesley's chair, goggled at his enormous teapot, and felt 'nearer to the springs of Methodism'. Sitting in Westminster Abbey, he felt a 'stranger from over-sea', if not quite an 'alien'. The Dean's sermon induced 'spirit-stirring memories of the English-speaking race throughout the world' and he shed 'tears of deep and strong emotion'—a momentary access of Englishness that occluded his Dissent.⁴

It is important to follow historians of global Anglicanism in recognizing that Dissent benefited from this Anglo-world precisely because it changed as it travelled.⁵ Denominational patriots regretted that 'Home impressions in some minds but too soon wear away in a foreign land'. It took decades for Dissenting ministers to see emigration as the export rather than the haemorrhage of faith.⁶ One thing Dissenters might lose abroad was the awareness of being Dissenters. Even in Britain, 'Dissent' had always been a leaky umbrella noun; not so much a theological as a legal category, which lumped together groups who had defied the 1662 Act of Uniformity and braved stiff civil disabilities and social contempt. The 1862 Bicentenary of the ejection of Dissenting ministers kept alive this negative definition of Dissent as the rebellion of martyrs against the established Church, though it always fit Old Dissent better than Methodists.⁷ Take away this legal definition and what united Unitarians who denied the divinity of the crucified Jesus with evangelical Dissenters whose eschatology was overshadowed by the cross; Baptists sworn to the independence of congregations, with Presbyterians who subjected them to presbytery and synod? Dissent could even accommodate those whose Protestantism most British Dissenters would have questioned. As Queen Victoria once commented acidly, a high-flying bishop of the Scottish Episcopal Church was really a 'mere Dissenter' from the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.⁸

Given this plurality, histories of Dissent centred on the United Kingdom often take church-state politics as their organizing principle, emphasizing the struggle against establishment and privileging the Congregationalists and Baptists who were its fiercest critics.⁹ Yet outside the United Kingdom, in

⁴ W.H. Withrow, *A Canadian in Europe: Being Sketches of Travel in France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Holland and Belgium, Great Britain and Ireland* (Toronto, Ontario, 1881), pp. 29, 32.

⁵ Sarah Sohmer, 'Christianity Without Civilization: Anglican Sources for an Alternative Nineteenth-Century Mission Methodology', *Journal of Religious History*, 18 (1994), 174–97.

⁶ Rowan Strong, 'Pilgrims, Paupers or Progenitors: Religious Constructions of British Emigration from the 1840s to 1870s', *History*, 100 (2015), 392–411.

⁷ Timothy Larsen, 'Victorian Nonconformity and the Ejected Ministers: The Impact of the Bicentennial Commemorations of 1862', in R.N. Swanson, ed., *The Church Retrospective* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 457–73.

⁸ Queen Victoria to Victoria, in Roger Fulford, ed., *Your Dear Letter: The Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria, 1865–1871* (London, 1971), p. 231.

⁹ See e.g. Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: Vol. 2: The Evolution of Evangelical Nonconformity, 1791–1859* (Oxford, 1995).

places such as Binney's South Australia, church-state relations could be so different that we must question the possibility, rather than assume the existence, of a clear and clearly political Dissenting identity with a capital 'D'. In the United States, the counterparts of British Dissenters lived in states that had never known establishment; where it had long been abolished; or where they had been its beneficiaries. Moreover, in many British colonies, the leading Protestant rival to the established Church of England had not historically been Dissenters from it, but rather the Church of Scotland, an established church at home but which abroad led resistance to Anglican pretensions, while seeking state support itself. The picture gets murkier still when we recall that this church exported its own Dissenters, many of whom considered themselves the true national church and thus had little principled hostility to the establishment principle.¹⁰ The founders of the Otago colony on New Zealand's South Island used its revenues to build a Free Church fiefdom and were annoyed when a malcontent created a rival church in Dunedin, with an English Independent as its minister.¹¹ The most successful Dissenters around the Empire were often Methodists whose position on church-state relations struck Congregationalists or Baptists as impure. Queensland's Baptists grumbled in their jubilee history that they had relied on the 'virility of their principles' while Methodists had swallowed state grants.¹² Methodists themselves were divided: British Wesleyans tangled bitterly with Episcopal Methodists for control of imperial resources in early nineteenth-century Canada.¹³ And there was a further complication in that in the United States and the colonies Dissenters mingled with and sometimes recruited from Continental Protestants with very different understandings of church-state relations. The first section of this Introduction therefore suggests that investigation of English-speaking Dissenting traditions must acknowledge that they were different where there was no establishment from which one could dissent. Yet it also notes that the ubiquity in the British Empire of a Church which aspired to be culturally pre-eminent even where not established kept

¹⁰ John S. Moir, "Who Pays the Piper": Canadian Presbyterianism and Church-State Relations', in William Klempa, ed., *The Burning Bush and a Few Acres of Snow: The Presbyterian Contribution to Canadian Life and Culture* (Ottawa, Ontario, 1994), pp. 67–82.

¹¹ John Collie, *The Story of the Otago Free Church Settlement, 1848 to 1948: A Century's Growth by a Southern Sea* (Christchurch, New Zealand, 1948), pp. 54–5.

¹² *Queensland Baptist Jubilee: Record Volume, 1855–1905, Containing a History of the Baptist Denomination in Queensland, and an Account of the Jubilee Meetings* (Brisbane, 1905), pp. 49–50. Those 'principles' did not preclude borrowing a government steamer for their jubilee outing.

¹³ See Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal, Québec, 1996), ch. 4 and Todd Webb, 'How the Canadian Methodists became British', in Nancy Christie, ed., *Transatlantic Subjects: Ideas, Institutions, and Social Experience in Post Revolutionary Canada* (Montreal and Kingston, 2008), pp. 159–99.

other Protestants in a mutually constitutive, often hostile relationship with it and thus conscious of their Dissent.

In political conflicts between Church and Dissent, there was always a third pugilist on the bill: the Roman Catholic Church. Even if Dissenters were never the mainstay of ‘constitutional-national anti-Catholicism’ in the United Kingdom, because they disliked its conflation of Protestantism and establishment, they were disturbed at the ease with which ‘Popery was putting its hand into the colonial treasure, for its support in Australia, Canada and other sections of the British Empire’.¹⁴ Anti-Catholicism pervaded the Anglo-world even as it worked differently from place to place. Both liberal and nativist varieties of anti-Catholicism thrived in the United States among Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists, often constituting a transatlantic bond with co-religionists in Britain, where as Eugenio Biagini’s chapter shows, the spectre of Home Rule revived anti-Catholicism at the century’s close.¹⁵ The same went for Empire: much of Canada was dyed orange, with Toronto being another ‘Belfast’, while the orange lodges of South Australia were crammed with Methodists, Baptists, and Salvation Army members.¹⁶ Fear of Catholicism encouraged evangelical Protestants to make common cause across the boundaries between Church and Dissent and with Continental partners, notably in such institutions as the Evangelical Alliance, while the apostles of anti-Catholicism travelled along Dissenting networks. In 1853, the renegade priest Alessandro Gavazzi made the incendiary remarks that triggered riots in Québec City in a Free Presbyterian Church. He repeated the offence in a chapel founded by a Congregational missionary on furlough from South Africa.¹⁷ Another Catholic renegade, Father Chiniquy, joined the Presbyterian Church of the United States after his conversion, but mixed easily with Scottish Free Churchmen, evangelical Anglicans, and Freemasons.¹⁸ Yet it was just as possible, given the right conditions, for Dissenter and Catholic to join forces against the privileged Church. In Auckland, Bishop Selwyn’s plan to endow his bishopric was blocked by two Scottish Presbyterians and one Roman Catholic member of the

¹⁴ John Wolffe, ‘A Comparative Historical Categorisation of Anti-Catholicism’, *Journal of Religious History*, 39 (2015), 182–202. Colin Barr, ‘“Imperium in Imperio”: Irish Episcopal Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century’, *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), 611–50.

¹⁵ David W. Kling, ‘Presbyterians and Congregationalists in North America’, Chapter 7 of this volume; Bill J. Leonard, ‘Baptists in North America’, Chapter 9 of this volume; Andrew Holmes, ‘Religion, Anti-Slavery, and Identity: Irish Presbyterians, the United States, and Transatlantic Revivalism, c.1820–1914’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 39 (2015), 393–5.

¹⁶ Donald MacRaid, ‘Transnationalising “Anti-Popery”: Militant Protestant Preachers in the Nineteenth Century Anglo-world’, *Journal of Religious History*, 39 (2015), 228–9; D. Fitzpatrick, ‘Exporting Brotherhood: Orangeism in South Australia’, *Immigrants & Minorities*, 23 (2005), 282, 286–8, 309.

¹⁷ *Brief annals of Zion Church, Montreal, from 1832 to 10th May, 1871* (Montreal, Québec, 1871), p. 9.

¹⁸ Charles Chiniquy, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome* (Chicago, IL, 1885), pp. 5–7, 820.

Council: 'misery, it is said, acquaints a man with strange bedfellows'.¹⁹ In mid-nineteenth-century Newfoundland, adept politicians convinced Methodists to desert the Conservatives and throw their lot in with Roman Catholics in disputing the hegemony of Tory Anglicans.²⁰

Insofar as Dissent was a political and constitutional identity then, it was a relative and tactical one. If the connection between church and state is not primarily what we talk about when we talk about what binds Dissenting traditions, then what ought we to discuss? The second section of the Introduction presents a fixation on the Bible as the watermark of Dissent.²¹ As Mark A. Noll's chapter of this volume emphasizes, 'the otherwise fractious universe of Dissent' was united in affirming Scripture as the supreme religious authority.²² British Dissenters had historically rebelled against the Church because its liturgy or government were unscriptural and shared visceral assumptions about what the Christian church was: Christ was its sovereign head; Scripture supreme over human will in its government; church members free to exercise private judgement and the individual conscience in reading Scripture; and membership of it acquired through conversion rather than inherited right or obligation, subject to discipline and policed through excommunication. These assumptions naturally often conflicted with each other, especially as Dissenting congregations built ambitious denominational and ecumenical societies to moralize the people or evangelize the heathen. Rebellions and schisms proliferated as malcontents could claim that such societies substituted human inventions for the plain word of God. As the Bishop of Adelaide sighed to Binney,

our resistance to the Powers of Evil is like the death-struggle of Inkerman; a series of hand-to-hand combats, broken regiments fighting in detached parties, never receding indeed, but incapable of combined effort or mutual support.

Their fractious attempts to square their theology and ecclesiology with the New Testament meant that Methodists, Congregationalists, and Baptists remained Dissenters, no matter how far they lived from established churches.

The third section of the Introduction identifies a radical insistence on human and spiritual equality as a persistent characteristic of Dissenters throughout the nineteenth century while also suggesting it was hard to maintain. Dissenters often imagined themselves as both spiritual democrats and living epistles directed against social, economic, or racial injustice, scepticism, hollow respectability, or materialism. To be a Nonconformist was in Saint Paul's

¹⁹ Dickson, *Presbyterian Church*, p. 40.

²⁰ Frederick Jones, 'John Bull's Other Ireland: Nineteenth-century Newfoundland', *Dalhousie Review*, 55 (1975–6), 227–35.

²¹ See Scott Mandelbrote and Michael Ledger-Lomas, eds., *Dissent and the Bible in Britain, c.1650–1950* (Oxford, 2013).

²² Mark A. Noll, 'The Bible and Scriptural Interpretation', Chapter 13 of this volume.

sense to be an anti-conformist: 'And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God' (Romans 12:2). Yet the story of nineteenth-century British Dissent is often told as a slow knuckling under to the cultural and economic powers that were; an intellectual and cultural 'dissolution'. For Michael Watts, later nineteenth-century Dissenters were gripped by a determination to impress their cultivated despisers, investing in ministerial education, 'Suburban Gothic', and fashionable theologies of divine immanence and evolution instead of remaining true to repentance, conversion, and individual salvation. The consequence was that Dissenting denominations stopped growing as—with a few uncultivated and thus robust exceptions—their preachers could no longer clearly explain their gospel.²³ Watts's view is echoed in Jeffrey Cox's argument that Dissenters turned out to be the 'worst imperialists of all' or in Dominic Erdozain's that evangelical Dissenters secularized their understanding of sin and thus in the end themselves.²⁴

Outside Britain, the radicalism of Dissenters could equally be seen to fade as they became aligned with elites in unequal, often predatory societies. Dissenters in the American south endorsed slavery; in Australia or New Zealand they rarely hindered and often abetted the subjugation of native peoples. Without denying the drift to conformity, the third section of the Introduction suggests ways in which Dissenters could retain their radical brio. On the one hand, the transnational contacts treasured by Dissenters strengthened what might otherwise be sagging levels of moral zeal. On the other, the hair-trigger secessionism of Dissenters meant that individuals were always ready to throw over ossified or compromised structures in pursuit of conscience. The fourth section suggests that what held for radicalism also went for the defence of the faith, with recent work showing that both Dissenting apologetics and revivalism flourished best when they assumed networked and transnational forms.

The final section of this Introduction asks how far a Dissenting identity permitted participation in high, national, and imperial cultures. The blows struck against Dissenting philistinism by that smiling assassin Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* (1868) never really healed. Arnold did not so much allege that Dissenters lacked a culture as that their cultures were too introverted, too rebarbative in their 'Hebraism', to allow genuine participation in culture as Arnold understood it, which was sunny, civilized, and national.

²³ See Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume III: The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity* (Oxford, 2015).

²⁴ Jeffrey Cox, 'Were Victorian Nonconformists the Worst Imperialists of all?' *Victorian Studies*, 46 (2004), 243–55; Dominic Erdozain, 'The Secularisation of Sin in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62 (2011), 59–88.

Could Dissenters swap their acrid tea urns for Arnold's sweetness and light without losing their identity? The answer involves paying attention to lived experience and material culture as well as assessing how far Dissenters were able to position their spiritual cultures within the sweep of national histories. Both within but particularly outside the United Kingdom, historians of Dissenting traditions faced the twentieth century with the disarming confidence that they were not the victims of history but its architects, empowered, as descendants of the Puritans, to hold the ring for the missionary expansion of the West. If British Dissenters could look around the world in 1900 and bless their industrious progeny, then the Introduction ends by arguing that this confidence was tempered in some quarters by gloom, as evangelical pessimists who claimed that the modernization of societies was a process detached from and threatening to evangelical faith began to gain a hearing.

‘FRIENDLY SEPARATION’: DISSENTERS ON CHURCH AND STATE

Before his Australian tour, Thomas Binney was better known for ‘Billingsgate’ abuse than for honeyed words. In an 1837 address, he had repeated a Scottish voluntary’s remark that a ‘state church destroys more souls than it saves’. One of his Anglican critics asked what really followed from that remark. As it was merely bad history to view the Church of England as a ‘state religion’, rather than a church allied to the state, what did it mean to cut that tie? Many of the practical steps involved, such as exempting Dissenters from church rates, would deny them the say in the Church’s affairs presupposed in their calls for its reform. Binney, this critic commented, ‘seems to apply the word *national* to the Church of England, or to refuse to apply it, as suits his purpose’. It was up to Dissenters ‘to state explicitly what they mean by the union of Church and State, and to point out the process by which the separation can be effected’.²⁵ The critic put his finger on an uncertainty: did Britain’s Dissenters want a formal separation of church from state, making the latter secular? Or just a reform of the Church that rendered it acceptable to evangelical Protestants, which most of them were? From the mid-nineteenth century on, Baptists and Congregationalists undoubtedly pushed a hitherto rather quietist Dissenting community towards a ‘politics of equality’ in which a secularized state was meant to preside over competitive free churches.²⁶

²⁵ Edward Burton, *Thoughts on the Separation of Church and State* (London, 1834), pp. 33, 14, 28–9, 69.

²⁶ Timothy Larsen, *Friends of Religious Equality: Nonconformist Politics in Mid-Victorian England* (Woodbridge, 1999).

Though the Church of England's Parliamentary allies repelled their assaults, their militancy rippled outwards, as Dissenters pressured Parliament into blocking new establishments abroad or reversing old ones, through for instance the 1869 disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. For Dissenters such as the Baptist George Fife Angas, who promoted South Australia as 'a place of refuge for the pious Dissenters of Great Britain, who could... discharge their consciences before God in civil and religious duties without any disabilities', the colonies were a place to start afresh.²⁷

Yet hatred for state meddling in religion did not burn as consistently there as in the United Kingdom. As Joanna Cruickshank's chapter in this volume notes, the Church certainly lost its monopoly over state funding in most colonies.²⁸ Yet what happened next was often unpredictable, given that the colonies duplicated the heterogeneity of metropolitan Dissent. Methodists were less suspicious of the established church than Congregationalists or Baptists and often came to outnumber them, not least because they gobbled up resources for clerical salaries and church building that voluntaries sniffed at.²⁹ Nor were Methodist stances preordained. A rift opened between the Methodist Episcopal Church in Upper Canada and the British Wesleyan Conference in the 1830s, concerning who had the state's support for missionary work, with the Canadians mortified that the British sided with colonial authorities and the Church in regarding them as American blow-ins.³⁰ The result of these complex fights was that colonial legislatures took decades to eradicate ecclesiastical funding: in Victoria, the State Aid Abolition Act passed only in 1870; at the Cape, a Voluntary Bill in 1875.³¹

If Dissenters were divided on what the state could do for churches, their estimate on what it could do for religion depended on what or where 'the state' was at any given time.³² The missionary movement for instance often drew Dissenters closer to the state as a shield or vehicle for their conversionist and humanitarian projects. John Philip of the London Missionary Society collaborated with London just as English Congregationalists turned against flirtation with government grants so that he could defend a space at the Eastern Cape in

²⁷ Douglas Pike, *Paradise of Dissent: South Australia, 1829–1857* (London, 1957), p. 71.

²⁸ Joanna Cruickshank, 'Colonial Contexts and Global Dissent', Chapter 12 of this volume.

²⁹ See generally Hilary Carey, *Empires of Religion* (Basingstoke, 2008); idem, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c.1801–1908* (Cambridge, 2011).

³⁰ See Egerton Ryerson, *Report of their Mission to England by the Representatives of the Canada Conference* (Toronto, Ontario, 1840).

³¹ Rodney Davenport, 'Settlement, Conquest, and Theological Controversy: The Churches of Nineteenth-century European Immigrants', in Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport, eds., *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), pp. 59–60.

³² Keith Robbins, 'Nonconformity and the State', in Robert Pope, ed., *T. and T. Clark Companion to Nonconformity* (London, 2013), pp. 75–6.

which his Khoikhoi converts could thrive.³³ Where Dissenters were intent on secularization, this often had more to do with local power struggles than imported principles. Bishop Selwyn's haughty treatment of Wesleyan ministers in Auckland caused Dissenters to fear that he wanted to build a 'Levitical republic' and they sided with settlers against his Maori 'pets'. The Congregationalist Josiah Firth, who told a monster meeting in May 1860 that Selwyn had 'more sympathy for one brown man than for ten white ones' and later fought in the Maori wars, ended up the 'Duke of Matamata', with 60,000 confiscated acres.³⁴ Cruickshank reminds us that Dissenting missionaries often encountered states that were not British at all, forcing compromises on them. In Tonga, Wesleyans naturally friendly to monarchs backed the aggressive ruler Taufa'ahau—baptized 'King George'—because he built schools and churches and wrote Sabbatarian and moral principles into the law codes of his state. George was no pawn, working with a rogue Wesleyan minister to create a national Wesleyan church that was firmly under his royal thumb.³⁵

Given this diversity, where and how far Dissenters prioritized the secularization of the state could depend on how aggressively local Anglican hierarchies clung to their pre-eminence. In early nineteenth-century Canada, tension between a hierarchical church obsessed with the maintenance of stability and evangelical Dissenters flared up repeatedly.³⁶ Egerton Ryerson's emergence as a Methodist crusader for disestablishment in Upper Canada was billed by him as a defensive act, provoked by an archdeacon's sermon which presented Dissenters as a seditious threat to true Christianity.³⁷ Ryerson became a formidable advocate of removing ecclesiastical funding by secularizing the so-called clergy reserves, his opponents realizing that it was unwise to 'charge men with disaffection, and stigmatize them as rebels, until they are really become soured in their feelings'.³⁸ Episcopal rhetoric—such as the claim by Charles Perry, Bishop of Melbourne that the 'growth of dissent' was merely a symptom of 'want of faithfulness' in the Church—was thus as important as it

³³ Michael Rutz, *The British Zion: Congregationalism, Politics, and Empire, 1790–1850* (Baylor, 2011), p. 106; Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853* (Montreal, Québec, 2002), chs. 5–10.

³⁴ John Stenhouse, 'Church and State in New Zealand, 1835–1870: Religion, Politics, and Race', in Hilary M. Carey and John Gascoigne, eds., *Church and State in Old and New Worlds* (Leiden, 2011), p. 254.

³⁵ Sione Lātukefu, *Church and State in Tonga: The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries and Political Development, 1822–1875* (Canberra, 1974).

³⁶ Nancy Christie, "'In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion'", in George Rawlyk, ed., *The Canadian Protestant Experience* (Montreal and Kingston, 1990), pp. 11, 16.

³⁷ John Strachan, *A Sermon Preached at York, Upper Canada, Third of July, 1825, on the Death of the late Lord Bishop of Quebec* (Kingston, Ontario, 1826), p. 26; Egerton Ryerson, *A Review of a Sermon, Preached by the Hon. and Reverend John Strachan, D.D.* (Montreal, Québec, 1825); Nathanael Burwash, *Egerton Ryerson* (London, 1905), pp. 68–71.

³⁸ Adam Townley, *Ten Letters on the Clergy Reserves Question, Addressed to the Right Hon. W.H. Draper* (Toronto, Ontario, 1839), p. 3.

was often counter-productive.³⁹ The situation was complicated by the Roman Catholic Church's vigorous expansion around the Anglo-world. For many church defenders, this was all the more reason for the state to back their church as a Protestant bastion; for men such as Ryerson, the establishment principle was objectionable precisely as a Romish invention.⁴⁰ The Tractarian sympathies of many bishops from mid-century made a common Protestant front against Catholicism impossible. Bishop Edward Feild's attempts to make the Church autonomous in Newfoundland thus pushed Methodists together with evangelical Anglicans in opposition to him and generated a dispensation in which Catholics, Methodists, and Anglicans enjoyed separate, equal favour from the state.⁴¹ The impressive historiography on Catholicism and Anglicanism's imperial ambitions might then be further advanced by envisioning Anglicans, Catholics, and Dissenters as dancing around but also with one another in different settings, lobbying London and exploiting colonial legislatures to prevent the local capture of the state by any one confession.⁴²

It was unsurprising that British debates on church-state relations constantly invoked the United States. 'American' understandings of religious freedom had already been carried deep into Canada in the decades after the American Revolution and the border remained permeable even after the war of 1812. Throughout the century, Dissenters from across the British world visited America to see how their denominational cousins fared where the Church had never been established or had long been dethroned. Francis Cox and James Hoby were pleased to confirm as *Two Baptists in America* (1836) that their travels vindicated the 'purely "voluntary principle"'. The restless Presbyterian John Dunmore Lang, who left his adopted New South Wales to visit New England, addressed his thoughts on *Religion and Education in America* (1840) to the laity of the Church of Scotland, encouraging them to withdraw from the civil magistrate to the 'Holy Hill of Zion' because the 'American Presbyterians [who] are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh' were educating children, relieving poverty, and building churches without its assistance.⁴³ The United States was the true paradise of evangelical Dissent because disestablishment there coincided with and facilitated the Second Great Awakening. The fact that Thomas Jefferson made his remarks on the

³⁹ Charles Perry, *A Letter to the Right Hon. Lord John Russell, on the Present State of the Church in Canada* (London, 1851), p. 11.

⁴⁰ William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-century Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston, 1989), p. 25.

⁴¹ Calvin Hollett, *Beating Against the Wind: Popular Opposition to Bishop Feild and Tractarianism in Newfoundland and Labrador* (Montreal and Kingston, 2016).

⁴² See e.g. Colin Barr and Hilary Carey, eds., *Religion and Greater Ireland: Christianity and Irish Global Networks, 1750–1950* (Montreal and Kingston, 2016) for a recent collection that puts Anglican, Catholic, and Dissenting projects side by side.

⁴³ John Dunmore Lang, *Religion and Education in America: With Notices of the State and Prospects of American Unitarianism, Popery, and African Unitarianism* (London, 1840), pp. v–vi.

'wall of separation' between church and state in a *Letter to the Danbury Baptists* (1802) suggests that disestablishment was informed less by freethinking blueprints for secularization than recognition that the new wine of itinerant Evangelical Revival must break old, established bottles. The last establishments to fall, which were Congregational, not Anglican, collapsed because surging numbers of Baptists and Methodists robbed them of legitimacy or because internal conflicts between evangelical and Universalist or Unitarian parties undermined them.⁴⁴ An Australian champion of 'colonial Congregationalism' later rejoiced that his American cousins had rejected 'theocracy' and an 'unhappy compact' with the state.⁴⁵ The evangelicals whose energies were unleashed by disestablishment understood themselves to be insisting on the neutrality of the state in relation to competing churches, rather than its total secularization.⁴⁶ Moreover, until at least the Civil War, they lived happily in individual states that retained extensive 'police power' over popular morals. As David W. Kling and Luke Harlow's chapters in this volume show, they banded together in societies to pursue federal enactment of Sabbatarianism and temperance.⁴⁷ Nervous about a state that promoted theologies, America's Dissenters embraced one that enforced values. Philip Schaff, the Lutheran author of *Church and State in the United States* (1888), described his adopted nation as enjoying a 'friendly separation' of church and state, which had nothing to do with the 'infidel and red republican theory of religious freedom' that had promoted 'carnal licentiousness' from the French Revolution onwards.⁴⁸

The much-discussed transformation of the 'Nonconformist conscience' in the United Kingdom from a passion for emancipation to the authoritarian pursuit of virtue should be seen as a variation on a global trend in which Dissenters urged states into crusades against 'carnal licentiousness' now that church-state controversies were largely though not wholly spent. Schaff's nebulous distinction between 'freedom *in* religion' and 'freedom *from* religion; as true civil liberty is freedom *in* law' would have met with ready acceptance in the United Kingdom. Harlow notes that many Protestants after the Civil War now saw state coercion not moral suasion as the best way to create a Christian

⁴⁴ See Thomas S. Kidd and Barry Hankins, *Baptists in America: A History* (Oxford, 2015), ch. 4.

⁴⁵ Thomas Quinton Stow, *Congregationalism in the Colonies* (Sydney, New South Wales, 1855), pp. 5–6.

⁴⁶ Stephen Green, *The Second Disestablishment: Church and State in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford, 2010); Michael O'Brien, 'The American Experience of Secularisation', in Gareth Stedman Jones and Ira Katznelson, eds., *Religion and the Political Imagination* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 132–49.

⁴⁷ Gary Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present* (Princeton, 2016), chs 2–3; Kling, 'Presbyterians', Chapter 7 of this volume; Luke Harlow, 'Social Reform in America', Chapter 18 of this volume.

⁴⁸ Philip Schaff, *Church and State in the United States, or The American Idea of Religious Liberty and its Practical Effects with Official Documents* (London, 1888), pp. 9–10, 15.

America. Similarly, Cruickshank notes that Australian Dissenters became 'Wowsers': Puritan legislators driven by the conviction that 'when law touches morality, or religious freedom, we are all going to have a finger in the pie'.⁴⁹ Canada also had its Wowsers, engaged from mid-century in the 'public evangelism' of temperance and Sabbatarianism.⁵⁰

These Puritan urges were not just parallel but entangled, with later nineteenth-century Dissenters resembling other social policy brokers in trading tales about how laws create benign change.⁵¹ The prohibitionist cause shows that if Dissenters were killjoys, then they were inquisitive killjoys, amassing stories from denominational channels about how to foster individual and social rebirth. The Methodist William Henry Withrow cited communications from ministers in Maine to convince Canadians that prohibition was the 'duty of the hour': in coastal towns, fishermen sat reading Scripture on the quayside where once rocks had run with blood and women had run for their virtue.⁵² Temperance organizations around the Anglo-world depended on each other for associational models and morale. The founders of Canada's Women's Christian Temperance Union emulated the American Methodist Frances Willard, while the International Temperance Convention held at Melbourne in 1888 received remote congratulations from numerous English Dissenting organizations, which hailed them as 'sons of England at the antipodes...laying the foundation of great states and empires on the deep and broad principles of religion and morality'.⁵³ Historians similarly now understand the social progressivism of later nineteenth-century Canadian Protestants not as a narrowly Canadian phenomenon or as an ill-advised flirtation with Hegelianism, but as a product of Dissenting networking: the application by preachers of the prophetic Free Church lecturing they had absorbed in Scottish colleges to the problems of Canada's growing cities.⁵⁴

The embrace by Dissenters of state education was the single most important symptom of a growing acceptance of the state as a partner in the moralization of society. New England set the pace, with many denominations accepting state provision of non-sectarian education because it still involved a Protestant

⁴⁹ Ian Breward, *A History of the Churches in Australasia* (Oxford, 2001), p. 186.

⁵⁰ Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *Christian Churches and their Peoples, 1840–1965: A Social History of Religion in Canada* (Toronto, Ontario, 2010).

⁵¹ Daniel Rodgers, 'Bearing Tales: Networks and Narratives in Social Policy Transfer', *Journal of Global History*, 9 (2014), 305–6, 308.

⁵² William Henry Withrow, *Prohibition the Duty of the Hour* (1877), p. 13.

⁵³ Sharon Cook, 'Through Sunshine and Shadow', *The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874–1930* (Montreal and Kingston, 1995), p. 110; *Temperance in Australia: The Memorial Volume of the International Temperance Convention, Melbourne, 1888* (Melbourne, Victoria, 1889), p. 191.

⁵⁴ Bruce Fraser, *The Social Uplifters: Presbyterian Progressives and the Social Gospel in Canada 1875–1915* (Waterloo, Ontario, 1988).

diet of Bible-reading and hymn-singing.⁵⁵ As Harlow notes, evangelical Protestants did not trust Horace Mann, the Massachusetts architect of the first state system, because as a Unitarian he was unsound on Christ. Yet Mann was quite successful in arguing that his system ‘welcomes the religion of the Bible...allows it to do what it is allowed to do in no other system,—to speak for itself’ and variations on such non-denominational religious education spread across the States.⁵⁶ If such ‘non-sectarian’ education became much less devotional by the end of the century, then Protestants accepted that shift as the price of defending non-sectarianism against Roman Catholic clerics intent on separate schools.⁵⁷ In Upper Canada, Egerton Ryerson, the paladin of disestablishment, became not only the Chief Superintendent of Education but also an enthusiast for Prussian and Irish models of non-denominational instruction. Canadian governments were, for Ryerson, entitled to provide non-sectarian religious education because their ‘creed...as representing a Christian people of various forms of religious worship, is Christianity, in the broadest and most comprehensive sense of the term’.⁵⁸ His state system was rolled out to other Canadian provinces though flintier Dissenters argued he was smuggling in a bastardized state religion.⁵⁹ New Zealand’s Presbyterians also considered that a non-denominational system would eliminate ‘misappropriation of the public funds [and] dangerous favouritism’.⁶⁰ As close students of other educational systems, many British Dissenters also drifted generally towards backing non-sectarian rather than secular state education. This move was best seen as a compromise with rather than a capitulation to the state, as many still exploded at any sign of state favouritism for Church schools.⁶¹ After the Education Bill of 1902, leading Dissenters let their household goods be seized and sold to pay school rates they condemned as subsidies to the church and to Roman Catholicism. They were martyrs for a cause that their ancestors would have understood, but that might have puzzled Binney or Miall: not the state’s abstention from teaching religion, but from teaching the wrong kind of religion. The irritating presence of the Church meant that in

⁵⁵ Noah Feldman, ‘Non-Sectarianism Reconsidered’, *Journal of Law & Politics*, 18 (2002), 65–117.

⁵⁶ Steven Green, *The Bible, the School, and the Constitution: The Clash that Shaped Modern Church-State Doctrine* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 21–4.

⁵⁷ See Green, *Bible*.

⁵⁸ Egerton Ryerson, *Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada* (Montreal, Québec, 1847), pp. 22, 50.

⁵⁹ Egerton Ryerson, *Dr. Ryerson’s Letters in Reply to the Attacks of the Hon. George Brown* (Toronto, Ontario, 1859).

⁶⁰ John Dickson, *History of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand* (Dunedin, 1899), p. 325.

⁶¹ See Jonathan Parry, ‘Nonconformity, Clericalism and “Englishness”: The United Kingdom’, in Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser, eds., *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 152–80.

Britain, unlike elsewhere, Dissenters could not be as free or as confident in letting the state build Christian nations.

‘IT IS WRITTEN’: DISSENTERS AND THE BIBLE

Writing the history of his denomination at the turn of the twentieth century, the New Zealander John Dickson explained why it was that ‘if there is any Church on earth which can consistently take for its motto—“New Zealand for Christ”—it is the Presbyterian Church’. The reason was ‘her loyalty to the Word of God’. Once one understood that the church of the New Testament was characterized by parity between ministers, it became clear that Presbyterianism was the ‘true Episcopal Church of New Testament times’. Moreover, their Westminster Creed was ‘strictly Scriptural’, composed as it had been by divines ‘with their Bibles in their hands’. Thanks to these principles, insisted on during the 1843 Disruption of the Church of Scotland, Presbyterians had the ‘divine equipment and God-given mission’ to ‘go into all lands’. The scriptural polity of Presbyterianism prevented it from ‘sinking in the shifting sand of human expediency, or splitting on the adamantine rocks of ignorance, pride, and self-righteousness’.⁶² Dickson did not wish to ‘unchurch other denominations’, but would not be convinced that any other church form was the ‘true Catholic church’. If being a Dissenter did not entail a dogmatic commitment to the separation of church and state—and Presbyterians are a good example, given that the Free Church took decades to embrace voluntarism—then it did nearly always mean a claim to a unique understanding of and obedience to Scripture. That claim was as divisive as it was unstable. It led Dissenters out of established churches and to repeatedly split from and rail against each other. As the Pennsylvanian Lutheran John William Nevin fulminated in 1848, ‘Antichrist (Matthew 4:6) is ever ready to urge on “It is written” in favor of his own cause... it is characteristic of the sect mind universally, as we know, to make a pedantic parade of its love for the Bible’. Nevin thought he could stop the ‘spirit of endless division’ by outlawing an ‘absolutely immediate’ use of the Bible, but as D. Densil Morgan’s chapter in this volume notes, he was tilting at the strongest tenet of Dissenting faith.⁶³

If all Dissenters claimed their ecclesiologies and lives were modelled on the Bible, extremism in making that claim came to distinguish sects from more sedate denominations. The embarrassing cousins to respectable Dissenters throughout the century were figures such as the Canadian Isaac Bullard, a

⁶² Dickson, *History of the Presbyterian Church*, pp. 2, 5–6, 11.

⁶³ Nevin, *Antichrist: Or, the Spirit of Sect and Schism* (New York, 1848), p. 57. D. Densil Morgan, ‘Spirituality, Worship and Congregational Life’, Chapter 21 of this volume.

'hypocrite and enthusiast' with a voluminous, verminous red beard and a son named the 'Second Christ' who fled a murder charge to found a commune in Vermont, persuading his followers that the New Testament meant not washing, dining off gruel eaten through quills while standing, holding wives in common, and leaving the dead unburied. It was easy to mock Bullard's followers and their characteristic chant—'Mummyjum, mummyjum, mummyjum, mummyjum, mummyjum, mummyjum'—but harder to laugh off his assertion that he had read the New Testament's commandments more clearly than existing churches.⁶⁴ Sober Quakers said much the same. James Backhouse paused on a quasi-official preaching tour of the prisons of Van Diemen's Land in the early 1840s to publish a pamphlet explaining that Quaker 'peculiarities' in 'language, costume and manners' were rigorously scriptural.⁶⁵ As Tim Grass and Douglas Foster's chapters in this volume remind us, primitive and Restorationist movements arose independently throughout the century but were all sprigs from Protestantism's hermeneutic freedom.⁶⁶ If the Brethren or the Churches of Christ's insistence that they were exempt from denominationalism's evils looked naive or mischievous to other Dissenters, it reiterated an impulse once basic to the Evangelical Revival and the Second Great Awakening.⁶⁷

Provided they did not follow Bullard into social or sexual heterodoxy, individuals with these views were always assured a hearing in a scriptural Dissenting world. Figures such as the Restorationist Alexander Campbell, an American refugee from Irish Presbyterianism who went on to secede from the Secession church before luring Baptist congregations into a movement of his own, were Protestant neutrons, fired out from their denominations only to collide with and explode others in their quest to recover the church of the apostles.⁶⁸ Even Campbell's supposedly undenominational Churches of Christ were soon racked by disputes over whether American or British leaders should decide on participation in communion.⁶⁹ The dynamic through which scriptural rebels against theological impositions onto Scripture were toppled by fresh insurgencies was just as common in groups that were the antithesis of Calvinists, such as Universalists and Unitarians. As Ledger-Lomas's and Shoemaker's chapters in this volume note of Unitarians, their 'most pernicious

⁶⁴ F. Gerald Ham, 'The Prophet and the Mummyjums', *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 56 (1973), 290–9.

⁶⁵ James Backhouse, 'A Concise Apology for the Peculiarities of the Society of Friends, Commonly Called Quakers, in their Language, Costume, and Manners', in *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies* (London, 1843).

⁶⁶ See Tim Grass, 'Restorationists and New Movements', Chapter 6 of this volume.

⁶⁷ David Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall: A Short History of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland* (Birmingham, 1980), pp. 8–9; Tim Grass, *Generations: British Brethren Mission to Spain, 1834–1990* (Ramsey, 2011), pp. 24–5.

⁶⁸ Grass, 'Restorationists and New Movements'.

⁶⁹ Thompson, *Churches of Christ*, pp. 79–85.

adversary' was usually Dissent from their own ranks. Early American Unitarians created new associations founded on radical honesty to Scripture, yet soon had to face transcendentalists who argued that the most authentic reading of Scripture dispensed with its revealed authority.⁷⁰

This pattern was strongest in the post-revolutionary United States, where as Foster argues, the appeals of Christian Primitivists and Restorationists to the transparent, universally accessible text of Scripture reinforced anti-authoritarian impulses. *Sola Scriptura* was a democratic principle for a democratic society. Primitivism was impossible to disentangle from eschatology and American Protestants were particularly prone to feeling the terrifying, exhilarating nearness of the future described in the New Testament. Their insistence on the easy legibility of the New Testament's ecclesiology and eschatology, whether aided by revelation, the Holy Spirit, or simply common sense, made their political culture democratic, just as that culture democratized their reading of Scripture. In New England, where Calvinist clergy initially headed up established churches, it permitted, even enjoined, a virulent anti-clericalism which cast them as roadblocks between believer and Bible. In frontier states, the head-spinning proliferation of sects conversely encouraged spiritual authoritarians such as Joseph Smith to rally the confused with the startling claim not only to have understood but to have added to the Scriptures.⁷¹ Neighbouring Protestant cultures instinctively identified such anarchic anti-clericalism as American. In the early forties, the staid Methodists of Canada's Eastern Townships were appalled by roving millenarian Millerites, who taught that 'ministers were "dumb dogs that would not bark"; "lying prophets"' and Reformed Methodists, people who 'cannot read our Common Bible without spelling the large words'. Both gained an easy hearing from the 'almost exclusively American' locals, whose 'views of civil and religious institutions are really incompatible with proper submission to pastoral authority, or any particular reverence for God himself'.⁷²

If early nineteenth-century America was a propitious environment for insurgents to challenge ministerial guardians of Scripture, then the relationship between authority and interpretation was a chronic problem everywhere. Thomas Kennedy's chapter in this volume shows that Quakers spent much of the nineteenth century trying to strike a balance between the letter of Scripture and the inner light; Ledger-Lomas argues that Presbyterians could not decide whether the Westminster Confession was a safeguard or impediment to a biblical religion. Two problems remained endemic to Dissent. The first was

⁷⁰ Stephen P. Shoemaker, 'Unitarians, Shakers, and Quakers', Chapter 10 of this volume; Ledger-Lomas, 'Unitarians and Presbyterians', Chapter 4 of this volume.

⁷¹ See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT, 1989).

⁷² J.I. Little, *Borderland Religion: The Emergence of an English-Canadian Identity, 1792-1852* (Toronto, Ontario, 2004), pp. 135, 202.

whether creeds inherited from the past, if permitted at all, still passed muster as accurate accounts of the Bible's teaching, given supposedly steady advances in the understanding of its original language since their composition. For all Dickson's paeans to the sublime simplicity of the Westminster Confession, he muttered that some 'within the pale of the Church seek to disparage that historic document...like the savage who, walking through the streets of London at night, complained that the lamp-posts were an obstruction to traffic'.⁷³ The second was the criticism and especially the higher criticism of the Bible. Because Dissenters backed their denominations only insofar as they faithfully embodied the Scriptures, it was incumbent to be sure that its text was authoritative. Dissenters could never resist scratching that itch, wherever they travelled. Sir Richard Davies Hanson had been reared on Binney's preaching in London before becoming a globe-trotting journalist and politician in Canada, New Zealand, and finally South Australia, where he ended his career as Chief Justice. A political Dissenter, he nonetheless felt compelled in time to investigate the scriptural foundations of Congregationalism's politics. His anonymous *The Jesus of History* (1869) told readers that sifting the New Testament's various layers revealed it to have wrongly represented a Jewish teacher as a God. Hanson's subversive objectivity owed little to German or French higher criticism, but much more to his lawyerly desire to cut through clerical mystification, a tactic that made him a true Dissenter and the archetypal honest doubter.⁷⁴ In the preface to *The Apostle Paul* (1875), which he wrote on a boat back to Adelaide after receiving a knighthood from the Queen, Hanson posed as a martyr to conscience. Once a doubting Joseph of Arimathea who had by dint of a 'few mental suppressions' continued to attend services in the 'denomination with which from my childhood I had been connected', Hanson now stood up to expose Paul's fibs, even if it entailed a final breach with 'liberal Christianity'.⁷⁵

If disputes generated by the higher critical investigation of the Scriptures generally assumed a legal form in established churches, then for Dissenters they concerned the negotiation of spiritual authority. The worst that Dissenting laymen like Hanson had to fear from critical dabbling was mild ostracism; ministers could lose their jobs. Ledger-Lomas suggests in Chapter 20 of this volume that their incessant rows from mid-century over how far they could publicize critical techniques and findings were the bitter fruit of professional ambition. In early nineteenth-century denominations created or transformed by revivalism, their prospects depended on the demotic unction with which they preached or just the physical strength to jog around extensive preaching

⁷³ Dickson, *History*, p. 7.

⁷⁴ Richard Hanson, *The Jesus of History* (London, 1869), pp. 18–19.

⁷⁵ Richard Hanson, *The Apostle Paul and the Preaching of Christianity in the Primitive Church* (London, 1875), p. xvi.

circuits. Over time, though, the authority of ministers became synonymous with scholarship as they gravitated to an older Dissenting model of a learned ministry. As Nevin noted in 1848, a mark of the schismatic ‘Antichrist’ was a tendency to ‘undervalue the true idea of the Christian ministry’.⁷⁶ Building colleges, attending universities, and harvesting degrees allowed ministers to put Antichrist in chains, establishing the interpretation of Scripture as a complex, top-down activity, vested in their learned caste. That not only froze out the unlettered as well as women, who were denied college tuition in dead languages, but also opened a rift between the erudite minister and the congregations to which he preached. The result was argument about how much technical detail could be obtruded on them in sermons, but also fears of spreading doubts that Scripture was really the word of God. If enemies of higher criticism liked to represent it as an external threat, emanating from the theology departments of German universities, then that was hardly a long-term strategy. Mainstream denominations nursed intellectual pretensions: their ministers engaged a floating public assumed to want frank discussion of scholarly problems and were sensitive to charges that intellectual cowardice was ‘popish’ or unmanly. The only Protestant groups exempt from the dilemma of how to develop expertise without alienating denominational publics were sects such as the Brethren or Churches of Christ who set no store on a distinct ministry and whose leaders stifled discussion of biblical criticism.

Though occasionally subject to heresy trials, ministers ultimately found strategies to smooth out wrinkles between preaching and teaching roles, particularly, as Noll notes in Chapter 13 of this volume, in colonial settings where there appeared to be more pressing tasks than wrangling over the Scriptures. This could mean imagining Christianity as an affective relationship with Christ rather than a conviction resting on tottering textual pillars, or emphasizing that it was the Holy Spirit who instilled faith in the Scriptures, rather than scholarly proofs. It was a move enabled by what Bebbington describes in Chapter 13 of this volume as a shift from enlightened to romantic approaches to apologetics.⁷⁷ Moreover, higher criticism could be billed as renovating, not endangering the Bible: eager dissectors of the Old Testament emphasized that their work vindicated the prophets and psalms as reformers of society. Of course, liberalizing the claims of Scripture was not the only option available: Charles Hodge and his successors at Princeton Theological Seminary were catnip for conservative Presbyterians because they taught that the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures could be rationally and factually demonstrated.⁷⁸ One consequence of these various shifts is that they distanced major denominations from the idea that historic creeds such

⁷⁶ Nevin, *Antichrist*, p. 52.

⁷⁷ David Bebbington, ‘Theology’, Chapter 13 of this volume.

⁷⁸ See Paul Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (Oxford, 2011).

as the Westminster Confession should police biblical criticism. If the insistence that ministers be mighty in the higher criticism of the Scriptures was faltering by the early twentieth century, then other pressures were to blame: the rise of an 'institutional church' which called for ministers to be administrators more than scholars; competition for divinity schools from modest institutions designed to prep battle-ready evangelists; the rise of mass publishing and leisure, which were sponsored by Dissenters but which in serving up distractions undermined the intense 'popular Biblicism' on which their religion depended.⁷⁹ For all the heat generated by higher criticism, it is unlikely that it decisively swayed the destinies of Dissent in and of itself.

CURRENTS OF RADICALISM

Dissenters in the long eighteenth century had often been remarkable for their radicalism, whether that was a by-product of religious heterodoxy, millenarian eschatology, or the Covenanting ecclesiology of Scotland and Ulster. The Dissenting chapel, with its pulpit eloquence and reliance on self-organizing congregations, had been a nursery of radical politicians, especially in combination with marginalized or insurgent social groups.⁸⁰ Both in Britain and its Empire, the mechanisms of the Evangelical Revival, such as itinerancy and the camp meeting, encouraged the development of oppositional attitudes among Dissenters by disrupting parochial and national hierarchies. Although concentrated on saving souls rather than transforming societies, missionary societies, often the first national organizations developed by Dissenters, often sided with enslaved or colonized peoples against their owners or imperial overlords, particularly, as Andrew R. Holmes and Ian Randall's chapters in this volume remind us, in the West Indies.⁸¹ It was not so much the proto-humanitarianism of early missionaries that explained their stand as the

⁷⁹ S.J.D. Green, 'A People Beyond the Book? Seeborn Rowntree, the Decline of Popular Biblicism, and the Fate of Protestant England, c.1900–1950', in Ledger-Lomas and Mandelbrote, eds., *Dissent and the Bible*, pp. 256–76.

⁸⁰ J.C.D. Clark, *English Society, 1688–1832* (2nd edition, Cambridge, 2000); W.H. Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists: Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s* (Oxford, 1978); Philip Lockley, *Visionary Religion and Radicalism in Early Industrial England* (Oxford, 2013); Ian McBride, *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Oxford, 1998); Colin Kidd, 'Conditional Britons: The Scots Covenanting Tradition and the Eighteenth-century British State', *English Historical Review*, 117 (2002), 1147–76; James Bradley and Elizabeth Baigent, 'The Social Sources of Late Eighteenth-Century English Radicalism: Bristol in the 1770s and 1780s', *English Historical Review*, 124 (2009), 1075–108.

⁸¹ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago, IL, 2002); Andrew R. Holmes, 'Evangelism, Missions, and Foreign Missions', Chapter 16 of this volume; Ian Randall, 'Baptists', Chapter 2 of this volume.

evangelical view that national sins entailed divine retribution.⁸² They condemned the killing of aborigines by Australian settlers not only because they shared in Adam's descent but also because 'God most assuredly heareth the voice of our brother's blood'. As Randall argues, the anxiety of Baptists to make conversions made them principled champions of freedom of religion, prepared to lobby even the Sultan or the Tsar.⁸³ Dissenters were inured to the social odium involved in taking on vested interests. The Methodist missionary Lancelot Threkeld arrived in New South Wales with this declaration: 'I glory in this work because it is so much despised'. Though salaried by the colonial authorities, he denounced 'cold hearted, bloody massacres' of aborigines around Lake Macquarie and was dismissed for his pains.⁸⁴ The United States supplies examples of white missionaries whose identification with Native Americans extended to marrying into their tribes and resisting President Jackson's Indian Removal Act.⁸⁵ Many missionaries to Native Americans were of 'full-blood' or 'half-blood' status and used their dual understanding of native and Western cultures to defend native customs or even national sovereignty.⁸⁶ Oppositional humanitarianism was not confined to evangelicals: as befitted their self-understanding as 'theological Negroes', British Unitarians were ardent abolitionists, dead set against the West Indian Tory and Anglican plantocracy.⁸⁷

The willingness of Dissenters to be troublemakers stuttered over time. If faith in Pauline spiritual equality was constant, it translated ever less clearly into social, racial, gender, or economic equality. Explanations for the change often stress the difficulty Dissenters had in sustaining networks of solidarity and concern. For some scholars, the passionate identification of domestic publics with suffering slaves or emancipated peoples faded because they lost confidence in their potential to make them into good Christians or because other preoccupations crowded them out.⁸⁸ Luke Harlow's chapter notes that early northern anti-slavery opinion wanted freed African Americans shipped back to Africa; Andrew Holmes's that Canadian missionaries came to spend

⁸² See John Coffey, "'Tremble, Britannia!': Fear, Providence and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1758–1807', *English Historical Review*, 127 (2012), 844–81.

⁸³ Ian Randall, 'Baptists'.

⁸⁴ Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in our Hearts* (St Leonard's, New South Wales, 1998), pp. 41, 31, 66.

⁸⁵ Kidd, *Baptists*, pp. 108–10.

⁸⁶ Tash Smith, *Capture These Indians for the Lord: Indians, Methodists, and Oklahomans, 1844–1939* (Tucson, AZ, 2014); Joel W. Martin, 'Crisscrossing Projects of Sovereignty and Conversion', in Martin and Mark A. Nicholas, eds., *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2010), pp. 67–92.

⁸⁷ Anthony Page, 'Rational Dissent, Enlightenment and Abolition of the British Slave Trade', *Historical Journal*, 54 (2012), 741–72.

⁸⁸ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, chs 6–7; Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge, 2008).

more time on settlers than on First Peoples. American chattel slavery exposed the difficulty evangelicals had in reconciling spiritual with secular equality. When Protestant ministers in the American south married into local elites, they lost their animus against slavery. As the Methodist abolitionist Peter Cartwright explained, early nineteenth-century preachers ‘taken from comparative poverty’ had not been ‘able to own a negro’, but embourgeoisement made them ‘personally interested in what is called slave property’.⁸⁹ The national structures of Protestant denominations were too weak to allow abolitionist northerners to pull self-interested southerners with them into abolitionism. They were compelled to soft-pedal their critique for fear of provoking secessions, describing slaveholding as a social problem rather than a personal sin; incompatible with modern society rather than flagrantly unbiblical.⁹⁰ When northerners did speak out, the result was secessions, which merely exacerbated the moral isolation of the south.⁹¹ As Kling argues, for instance, among Presbyterians that rift actually closed a schism: having split from their northern counterparts over slavery, New School and Old School Presbyterians in the South threw their lot in together as the Presbyterian Church in the United States.⁹²

Given these failings, transnational denominational connections were important in sustaining moral urgency. If waves of moral outrage could not pass from north to south, they pulsed across the Atlantic instead. It was of course ambiguous how much pressure co-religionists could apply. Though British Baptists memorialized American Baptists on slavery, Francis Cox had fluffed opportunities to speak against it on his American tour, muttering that slavery was a question of ‘internal policy’ which it would have been as ‘injurious as it would have been indelicate’ to condemn.⁹³ Yet on home ground, the British made denominational fellowship into a tool of suasion. The Free Church of Scotland ostentatiously refused funds from slaveholding Americans after the Disruption, the General Assembly of the Irish Presbyterian Church similarly reminding their American co-religionists that slaveholding was a ‘dark and deadly stain on the escutcheon of evangelical Protestantism’.⁹⁴ It was an Irish Presbyterian, Isaac Nelson, who exhorted the Evangelical Alliance not to deal

⁸⁹ Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, the Backwoods Preacher* (London, 1862), p. 64.

⁹⁰ Molly Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin: The Fight against Slavery and the Rise of Liberal Protestantism* (Oxford, 2012), chs 2 and 3.

⁹¹ C.G. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War* (Macon, GA, 1985); Douglas Strong, ‘American Methodism in the Nineteenth Century: Expansion and Fragmentation’, in Jason Vickers, ed., *Cambridge Companion to American Methodism* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 71–4.

⁹² Kling, ‘Presbyterians’.

⁹³ Cox and Hoby, *Two Baptists*, pp. 71, 111.

⁹⁴ See Iain Whyte, ‘Send Back the Money!’: *The Free Church of Scotland and American Slavery* (Cambridge, 2012); Holmes, ‘Religion, Anti-Slavery’, p. 388.

with slave holders. Though unable to persuade the Alliance in Britain to sever connections with its tainted American branch, his was a classic act of dissent from unscriptural or unjust institutions and it cheered northern abolitionists.⁹⁵ British members of ardently abolitionist minorities such as the Quakers and Unitarians were notably active in raising money and good wishes. If personal and denominational networks were suitable for conveying moral concern about slavery and war, then their radical charge could leak away. The anti-slavery sentiment encouraged by Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* easily collapsed into sentimentalism.⁹⁶

The humanitarianism of Dissenters, which grew more than it receded in the later nineteenth century, was unlikely to favour radicalism because it required collaboration with national and imperial states to achieve its ends and often became very paternalist as a result, with the slow, perhaps coercive civilizing of native peoples widely accepted as a precursor to their Christianization. Canadian missionaries piqued themselves on getting fur-clad natives into coats and trousers and away from whisky-soaked potlatches, which they said were defended only by 'intellectual whites'.⁹⁷ The demarcation of foreign 'mission' as a separate sphere of Christian work and the tendency in the mission field to claw back power from native to white missionaries expressed in many fields a newly hierarchical sense of Christian civilization.⁹⁸

This shift should not be overdrawn. Non-whites unhappy with racial condescension could, for instance, always resort to the oldest Dissenting trick: separation. Jay Case notes in Chapter 8 of this volume notes that the habit of secession among black American Methodists dated back to the 1790s, while the Civil War unleashed an 'African American Great Awakening' among breakaway black churches. Kling and Bill Leonard's chapters chart similar secessions among American Presbyterians and Baptists.⁹⁹ In late nineteenth-century British Africa, Cruickshank notes that efforts by white missionaries to take back control of native churches generated independent 'Ethiopian' churches, which in classic Dissenting style soon had to brave state harassment.¹⁰⁰ The willingness of many Dissenters to dissent from one another, to engage in 'cultural dissent', or to just be considered weird explains why their

⁹⁵ Daniel Ritchie, 'Abolitionism and Evangelicalism: Isaac Nelson, the Evangelical Alliance, and the Transatlantic Debate over Christian Fellowship with Slaveholders', *Historical Journal*, 57 (2014), 421–46.

⁹⁶ Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Cornell, 2012), ch. 2.

⁹⁷ J.P. Hicks, ed., *From Potlatch to Pulpit: Being the Autobiography of the Rev. William Henry Pierce, Native Missionary to the Indian Tribes of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia* (Vancouver, British Columbia, 1933), p. 127.

⁹⁸ Morris Davis, 'Methodism and Race', in Vickers, ed., *Methodism*, pp. 281–95.

⁹⁹ Case, 'Methodists and Holiness in North America', Chapter 8 of this volume; Kling, 'Presbyterians', Chapter 7 of this volume.

¹⁰⁰ Cruickshank, 'Colonial Churches'.

transformation from awkward squad to establishment was rarely complete.¹⁰¹ Dissenters prized conscience so highly that many would never hand their consciences to denominational or imperial agencies for safe-keeping. When the Dissenting churches of South Africa cheered on the British army in the Boer War, for instance, the London Baptist John Clifford denounced them for their ‘faithless, cowardly’ conduct.¹⁰² While many later nineteenth-century British Dissenters trusted that systematic investigation of slums could eradicate poverty, radicals argued that they needed not just to know about the poor, but to be poor themselves, renouncing wealth or at least creature comforts in Dissenting acts of quiet martyrdom. Reading a French Protestant life of St Francis emboldened Mary Neal and Emmeline Pethick to break from the Methodist West London Mission—an institution already the centre of radical female activism—and to live like and with the poor, in imitation of Christ, just off the Euston Road.¹⁰³ Experiments in later nineteenth-century living were facilitated by the ease with which Dissenters tapped their organizational flair to build new communities. The ship owner’s daughter Muriel Lester blended Tolstoy’s *Kingdom of God is Within You* with the modernist critique of dogma to transform her Baptist beliefs into a revolutionary gospel of cross-class love at Kingsley Hall in East London.¹⁰⁴ Though courting charges of ethical narcissism, these renegades from existing denominations ensured that not all Dissenters were conformed to the world. In the early twentieth century they trained many of those who were prepared to cock a snook at the state, by questioning its wars or refusing, after 1914, to fight for it.

DEFENDING AND REVIVING THE FAITH

If the moral radicalism of Dissent remained liveliest when spanning borders, then Dissenters also defended and revived their faith across them too. Bebbington’s chapter shows that whether Calvinist or Arminian, Dissenting theologies had a dense evangelical undergirding, with a strong emphasis on clarity, rationality, and appeals to fact. Enlightened apologetics continued to

¹⁰¹ Case, ‘Methodists’.

¹⁰² Greg Cuthbertson, ‘Pricking the “Nonconformist Conscience”: Religion against the South African War’, in Donal Lowry, ed., *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester, 2000), p. 173.

¹⁰³ Ellen Ross, ‘St. Francis in Soho: Emmeline Pethick, Mary Neal, the West London Wesleyan Mission, and the Allure of “Simple Living” in the 1890s’, *Church History*, 83 (2014), 843–83.

¹⁰⁴ Seth Koven, ‘The “Sticky Sediment” of Daily Life: Radical Domesticity, Revolutionary Christianity, and the Problem of Wealth in Britain from the 1880s to the 1930s’, *Representations*, 120 (2012), 47, 52–3.

be worked out, as they always had been, through collaboration with intellectual partners around the world. The 'literary sociology' of visits and correspondence among Dissenters was not so much supplanted in the nineteenth century as supplemented by institutions, the most important of which were journals, divinity halls, training colleges, and conferences, with their secular liturgies of platform addresses and conversazione.¹⁰⁵ Colleges were often remembered as monuments to national pride, but, as Ledger-Lomas shows, they were often founded, reformed, or staffed by traffic in people and ideas. As with universities, that traffic followed 'distinct axes of travel' that were ethnic and denominational and bypassed London as often as running through it.¹⁰⁶ The connections between Scotland's universities and theological colleges, Princeton Seminary, and Presbyterian institutions in Canada and Australia were one example, which helped Dissenters take threats to biblical and theistic faith in their stride.¹⁰⁷ Thus Free Church and United Presbyterian teachers in Scottish institutions largely resolved to regard Darwinian evolution as either theologically indifferent or capable of absorption into teleological frameworks, and also attempted to understand the Bible and Christian theology as products of teleological evolution. These apologetic strategies benefited those who travelled along denominational pathways to Scotland to learn them. Many Canadian Presbyterians were not much perturbed by Darwin because their leaders had been trained to repeat Scottish arguments that the historical investigation and defence of Scripture was distinct from the theologically neutral issue of how evolution worked.¹⁰⁸ These chains of confidence might rattle or snap when Dissenters felt overwhelmed by forces posed against them. The slurs against theology in John Tyndall's Belfast address of 1869 so enraged Ulster Presbyterians that they stubbornly dissented from attempts by other Presbyterians to seek accommodation with Darwin. In the United States, Southern Methodists and Presbyterians defenestrated Darwinian college teachers for 'tadpole theology' that threatened to revive speculation about the polygenesis of humanity and thus divisive debates about slavery. The intellectual circuits connecting Dissenters in the English-speaking world were therefore prone to burning out or rerouting. Commenting on the Free Churchman William Robertson Smith's trial for heresy, Robert Watts of

¹⁰⁵ Tessa Whitehouse, 'Godly Dispositions and Textual Conditions: The Literary Sociology of International Religious Exchanges, c. 1722–1740', *History of European Ideas*, 39 (2013), 394–408.

¹⁰⁶ Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World, 1850–1939* (Manchester, 2013), p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Vaudry, 'Canadian Presbyterians and Princeton Seminary, 1850–1900', in Klempa, ed., *Burning Bush*, pp. 219–38.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Gauvreau, 'Presbyterianism, Liberal Education and the Research Ideal: Sir Robert Falconer and the University of Toronto, 1907–32', in Klempa, ed., *Burning Bush*, pp. 39–51; Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal, Québec and London, 1991).

Belfast's Assembly College commented acidly that 'I am greatly pleased to find that our young men have turned their eyes to Princeton instead of Edinburgh'.¹⁰⁹

What went for the defence and articulation of the faith was true of its revival. The most thriving branches of nineteenth-century Dissent were the product of revivals which had leapt across denominations and then across continents. If the global diffusion of revival was partly a consequence of the missionary movement, it was also a product of economic expansion as British economic migrants trailed spiritual jump leads back home. Migration patterns meant that a Highlands model of Presbyterian revival, with its emphasis on strict control and decorum, could be found as late as the 1857 revival in Moore County, North Carolina.¹¹⁰ The revivalism of Congregationalists began with their arrival in New England and had its longest afterlife in the Canadian Maritimes, where it had been carried by a splinter group, the Separate Baptists. These developments invite us to see nineteenth-century evangelical revivals less as national phenomena than the product of Dissenting networks crossing and hybridizing with one another, with local conditions vital in determining the end product.¹¹¹ The 1875 Moonta revival in South Australia followed the arrival of many 'intensely Methodistical' Cornish emigrants to its mines, but its staying power depended on the cooperation of urban Baptist and Bible Christian churches with techniques of their own, such as extensive use of Moody and Sankey's hymnody and a prominent role for women. Because Methodists were dominant but not pervasive in this corner of South Australia, local conditions were uniquely propitious for the splicing of Methodist with other Dissenting traditions.¹¹² In revival as well as in the defence and application of the faith, the dynamism of nineteenth-century Dissent turns out to rest on its portability as well as on its ability to make a virtue of pluralism on the ground.

'OUR INHERITANCE': DISSENTING TRADITIONS AND NATIONAL CULTURES

'We are neither a recent, nor a feeble nor an exhausted race. The Puritan and Evangelical churches contain by far the majority of the English-speaking peoples...we belong, too, to the larger and greater Church of England,

¹⁰⁹ David Livingstone, *Dealing With Darwin: Place, Politics, and Rhetoric in Religious Engagements with Evolution* (Baltimore, 2013), ch. 1, pp. 109–10, 77, ch. 5.

¹¹⁰ Bebbington, *Victorian Religious Revivals: Culture and Piety in Local and Global Contexts* (Cambridge, 2012), ch. 1.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, ch. 2.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, ch. 8.

which comprehends the pious and faithful people in whatever communion they may live, or by whatever denomination they may be called'.¹¹³ Alexander Martin Fairbairn was in expansive mood when he delivered the address that inaugurated Mansfield College, Oxford and its sandstone Gothic buildings in 1886. 'Tradition cloaked radicalism' at Mansfield—nowhere more so than in the stained glass of its chapel, which featured saints and doctors from Athanasius and Augustine to Elizabeth Fry, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Thomas Binney. Fairbairn had long disliked the idea that Dissenters should call themselves such. The terms 'dissent' and 'nonconformist' were 'foolish and insolent', 'used as if they denoted an attitude to the Catholic Church of Christ, when all they denote is an attitude to a civil institution'.¹¹⁴ Yet Fairbairn hardly believed in forgetting the Dissenting past. Quite the opposite: his Mansfield address established against prevailing condescension that 'the Puritan was a progressive man', defined not by 'negations' but a pure love of learning.¹¹⁵ Fairbairn's rhetoric breathed confidence in 'our inheritance', imagining it not as a sectarian possession, but as integral to the past and future of Britain and the English-speaking world. He was arguing against the charge that Dissenters were too philistine and introverted to participate in national culture, which had attained its most wounding expression in Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1868). Arnold's gibes stung Dissenters because as Larsen's chapter in this volume indicates, they had long fretted over the titular question of Thomas Binney's tract, *Is it Possible to Have the Best of Both Worlds?*¹¹⁶ Could they reach for social respectability, material comfort, or literary culture without losing hold of the practices that had led individuals to salvation?

It was not hard then or now to establish that Arnold's Dissenters had a culture. His conviction that 'Hebraism' crippled their taste hid from him their sophisticated religious aesthetic. Arnold had his dreaming spires, but as Robert H. Ellison's chapter in this volume reminds us, they had their pulpits. They took pride in the 'nervous', forceful English that poured forth from them; their 'pulpit princes' lovingly refined the art of preaching.¹¹⁷ As Morgan argues, they tinkered obsessively with the act of worship, pruning ragged extempore prayers and introducing liturgies. Nor did Dissenters lack a sense of visual beauty. Welsh Dissent was often faulted for landing the Welsh with

¹¹³ *Mansfield College, Oxford: Its Origin and Opening, October 14–16, 1889* (London, 1890), p. 133.

¹¹⁴ Clyde Binfield, "'We Claim our Part in the Great Inheritance': The Message of Four Congregational Buildings", in Keith Robbins, ed., *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America, c.1750–1950* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 206, 211.

¹¹⁵ *Mansfield College*, p. 117.

¹¹⁶ Timothy Larsen, 'Congregationalists', Chapter 1 of this volume.

¹¹⁷ Robert H. Ellison, 'Preaching and Sermons', Chapter 15 of this volume.

'but a darkened eye to see and enjoy the beautiful in art'.¹¹⁸ Yet close study of its chapels establishes that apparently Spartan tabernacles might be viewed as display cases for the congregations who filled them, living images of the God who created them as well as the audience for His word. The Welsh excelled in visualizing the verbal: they engraved Hebrew names of chapels (Beth-el, Salem) on their porticoes in massive font or scrolled texts from Scripture along the walls, ultimately turning their chapels into 'palace[s] of massive visibility'.¹¹⁹ This was compatible with a continued insistence that, as the Calvinistic Methodist David Jones put it, 'culture cannot produce life . . . there is no union for sinful man save in union with Him who is the Fountain of Life'.¹²⁰ Dissenters did not object to materiality as such; only when it unbalanced worship. In Roman Catholic or Ritualist services, matter was out of place: incense or candles led minds from God. Yet elsewhere it could be divine, for 'The earth was the Lord's and the fulness thereof' (Psalm 24:1). Thomas Binney was deeply impressed by Prince Albert's decision to have those words engraved on the rebuilt Royal Exchange and was one of many Dissenters to hail the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park as a 'Monument of Christianity', an anticipation of the prophesied unity of nations through peaceable exchange.¹²¹ Even an anti-Ritualist zealot such as Spurgeon did not fear the pleasures of the senses: a cigar-smoker who died on holiday in the South of France, he incorporated arresting visual aids into his preaching, such as a multi-coloured 'Wordless Book'.¹²²

Even if Dissenters had cultures of their own, the question remains how far they could participate in, even shape, the culture of their societies. A tangible expression of their wish to do so was their architecture. Throughout the nineteenth-century Anglo-world, Anglicans sought an architectural style which was English and ecclesiologically correct, and which proclaimed its apostolic authority over and against Dissenters and Roman Catholics. They found it in Gothic.¹²³ And yet 'Imperial Gothic' provoked a response wherever Dissenters encountered it. Having on economic as well as theological grounds settled for plain meeting houses, Dissenting traditions in the Eastern United

¹¹⁸ John Harvey, *The Art of Piety: The Visual Culture of Welsh Nonconformity* (Cardiff, 1995), p. 35.

¹¹⁹ John Harvey, *Image of the Invisible: Visualization of Religion in the Welsh Nonconformist Tradition* (Cardiff, 1999), pp. 1–20.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹²¹ Thomas Binney, *The Royal Exchange and the Palace of Industry; or the Possible Future of Europe and the World* (London, 1851), pp. 6–7; Geoffrey Cantor, *Religion and the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 200–4; Joseph Stubenrauch, *The Evangelical Age of Ingenuity in Industrial Britain* (Oxford, 2016), ch. 6.

¹²² Dominic Janes, 'The Wordless Book: The Visual and Material Culture of Evangelism in Victorian Britain', *Material Religion*, 12 (2016), 26–49.

¹²³ Alex Bremner, *Religious Architecture and High Anglican Culture in the British Empire, 1840–1870* (New Haven, CT, 2013).

States adopted the Anglican insistence that a church must look like a church. By the later nineteenth century, places such as Copley Square in Boston were architectural arenas, in which Unitarian, Episcopalian, and Congregational churches traded classical, Romanesque, and polychromatic Ruskinian punches. If denominational competition created such sites, the net winner was Christianity, as city skylines bristled with towers and spires.¹²⁴ Nor did a drift towards visual uniformity in church architecture abandon Dissenting principles. If the look of Presbyterian, Methodist, or Baptist churches betrayed a bourgeois love of comfort and a romantic sense of God's presence, then they also remained preaching boxes, with chancels flattened to make stages and naves reconfigured as comfy auditoria.¹²⁵ The Church of England similarly made the running among Canadian, Australian, and South African Dissenters, who emulated the parish churches and cathedrals commissioned to overawe them.¹²⁶ Canada's wooden meeting houses gave way to 'Carpenter's Gothic', while after initial doubts its Methodists put up 'Cathedrals' such as Toronto's Metropolitan Wesleyan Methodist Church (1872) whose lofty towers were a visual statement of their ambitions. As in the United States, Dissenters Protestantized Gothic: ampitheatral seating and revenue-raising galleries remained faithful to an understanding of worship as congregational and scriptural rather than sacramental.¹²⁷

Divergence from these norms marked a refusal to conform to an evangelical as much as a cultural mainstream, whether it was Quakers whose plain chapels and schools were criticized as a 'negation of architecture' or the Canadian Children of Peace, a millenarian sect whose leader commanded them to build a replica of the Temple—for which task, like Solomon, they allowed themselves seven years.¹²⁸ In Britain too, the willingness to stand out against that pattern betrayed sectarian stubbornness. The Brethren were most unusual in hiring hotels or even Masonic halls for meetings and sneering at the elaborate Gothic churches put up by others.¹²⁹ As Timothy Larsen's and Janice Holmes's chapters in this volume note, 'Dissenting Gothic' allowed

¹²⁴ Peter Williams, *Houses of God: Region, Religion, and Architecture in the United States* (Urbana, IL, 2000).

¹²⁵ Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-century America* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 7–11, pp. 67–9, ch. 6.

¹²⁶ See Barry Magrill, *A Commerce of Taste: Church Architecture in Canada, 1867–1914* (Montreal and Kingston, 2012); Peter Richardson and Douglas Richardson, *Canadian Churches: An Architectural History* (Willowdale, Ontario, 2007); Brian Andrews, *Australian Gothic: The Gothic Revival in Australian Architecture from the 1840s to the 1950* (Carlton, Victoria, 2001); Dennis Radford, 'Christian Architecture', in Elphick and Davenport, eds., *South Africa*, pp. 327–36.

¹²⁷ Westfall, *Two Worlds*, pp. 145, 154; Semple, *The Lord's Dominion*, pp. 337–8.

¹²⁸ Richardson and Richardson, *Canadian Churches*, pp. 196–7.

¹²⁹ Tim Grass, *Gathering to His Name: The Story of the Open Brethren in Britain and Ireland* (Milton Keynes, 2006), p. 186.

Congregationalists and Methodists to pose as leaders in Christianizing the city. Once attacked by historians as a misuse of financial resources, it is plausible to see Gothic church building as expanding rather than constraining Dissenting self-expression.¹³⁰ The architect James Cubitt, the doyen of 'Non-conformist church building', wrote in 1892 that the 'freshness of old English architecture' would deliver them from the 'trite and the feeble'.¹³¹

If architecture suggests that Dissenters could adopt and master mainstream values to enter the public sphere and shape how it looked, then in other ways Arnold was half right: at least in Britain, many aspects of Dissenting life could be called a subculture, only not one that was arid or impenetrable. Rather it represented the sacralization of a *habitus* to which all nineteenth-century people subscribed: the cult of home. Nineteenth-century Dissenters reprinted and read the books in which their ancestors urged that both men and women should make their homes into a church.¹³² If their early modern preoccupation with 'family religion' was not new, what had changed was the ability to give material expression to that desire. Industrial and commercial advances enriched Dissenters and improved the diversity and cost of consumer goods, filling houses with spiritual stuff. The potteries of Staffordshire, a hotbed of Methodism as well as an industrial heartland, produced enormous quantities of such goods: plates marked 'God is Love' or 'Prepare to Meet Thy God', which turned every mantelpiece into a pulpit, or porcelain figurines of Dissenting heroes such as Moody and Sankey, Gladstone, or Lincoln.¹³³ As Noll notes, illustrated and family Bibles were prized as objects of consumption in Dissenting homes. The Bible was a prop to the paterfamilias or godly mother charged with preparing children for conversion or—as more developmental concepts of religion took over—to rear them in the faith. Their plates acquainted families with fine art traditions, while their idealized landscapes of the Holy Land encouraged them to identify it with their land and so to sacralize both.¹³⁴

To be a Dissenter was then even more than for most Protestants to domesticate the sacred and to sacralize the domestic. Sarah Williams and Janice Holmes both note how Methodists typified the ability of Dissenters to

¹³⁰ Larsen, 'Congregationalists'; Clyde Binfield, 'Architecture: A Representative Focus', in Pope, ed., *T & T Companion to Nonconformity*, pp. 257–84.

¹³¹ James Cubitt, *Popular Handbook of Nonconformist Church Building* (London, 1892), pp. 74–5, 4.

¹³² Scott Mandelbrote, 'A Family Bible? The Henrys and Dissenting Readings of the Bible, 1650–1750', in Mandelbrote and Ledger-Lomas, eds., *Dissent and the Bible*, p. 38.

¹³³ Harvey, *Image*; John H.W. Briggs, 'Nonconformity and the Pottery Industry', in David Bebbington and Timothy Larsen, eds., *Christianity and Cultural Aspirations* (Sheffield, 2003), pp. 47–77.

¹³⁴ Eitan Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture: Palestine and the Question of Orientalism, 1799–1917* (Oxford, 2005); Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (London, 1998), ch. 3.

create cosy subcultures, at pained remove from theatre and alehouse. Williams quotes William Kent's recollection that Methodists belonged to a 'whole sub-society' and W.H. Lax's that they had 'introduced to the world a specific type of family life'.¹³⁵ The convertibility of religion and family life assisted Dissenting migrants in fitting into their new ecclesiastical homes and was a lingua franca in which to talk to other evangelicals, Protestants, and Christians.¹³⁶ In early nineteenth-century Ontario, family connections blurred with denominational ones, the enforced informality of cottage class meetings empowering 'mothers in Israel' as teachers whose influence dwindled once chapels went up and salaried ministers arrived.¹³⁷ Morgan notes that even as Dissenting worship became more formal and elaborate, its heart still lay in Bible, prayer, missionary, and women's meetings: lay, domestic, and feminized events in which individuals pursued holiness with others.¹³⁸ Not that this culture was monolithic. Kent and Lax made their claims about Methodism, not 'Dissent'. There could be sharp divisions in Dissent about where to strike the balance between the genders in family life and religious practice. The Quakers pushed an insistence on male and female spiritual equality much further than most Protestants contemplated, while denominational rows over who wore the trousers also produced rebel subcultures. Catherine Booth's Salvation Army and its street-preaching young women shocked not just society but also the Methodists who had produced it.¹³⁹

Dissenting homes were not only distinctively pious, but supplied a basis for public policy. Historians now see the home as a springboard rather than a prison for their aspirations. Dissenting philanthropy and activity spread their home life as widely as possible, with Dissenters convinced that it sufficed to demonstrate its virtues to rough workers or to unregenerate native peoples for it to be adopted. Chapters throughout this volume note that the general exclusion of women from assuming preaching roles within Dissent went with their increasing encouragement to assume activist roles, not just by raising money for domestic and foreign missionaries or by marrying them, but acting as them. The Australian Presbyterian Women's Missionary Association's journal was called *Ministering Women*, while America's Presbyterian board of foreign missions reported more women than men in the field as

¹³⁵ Williams, 'Gender', Chapter 19 of this volume.

¹³⁶ Charles Cashdollar, *Spiritual Home: Life in British and American Reformed Congregations* (University Park, PA, 2000), xii.

¹³⁷ Marguerite Van Die, 'Revisiting "Separate Spheres": Women, Men and Religion in Mid-Victorian Ontario', in Nancy Christie, ed., *Households of Faith: Family, Gender and Community in Canada, 1760–1969* (Montreal and Kingston, 2002), pp. 238–42.

¹³⁸ Morgan, 'Spirituality'.

¹³⁹ Pamela Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley, CA, 2001).

early as 1877.¹⁴⁰ For women to minister like this or to run Sunday schools was an extension of their domestic activity. Temperance societies around the British world, in which Dissenting women were heavily represented, worked on the assumption that the best preservative against drink was mothers training other mothers to steel children against this 'gorged yet hungry monster', which fed off the 'tears of many scores of heart-broken families'.¹⁴¹ So strong was this conviction in the Canadian Woman's Temperance Union that they memorialized Queen Victoria about keeping the hedonistic Prince of Wales on a tighter leash.¹⁴² For Dissenting missionary societies, the public partnership between the missionary and his wife did not just enable their work, it was their work; it preached Christianity. Writing at the end of the century, the Congregationalist Silvester Horne claimed that 'the spectacle of a true Christian home [was] the most powerful, concrete argument for Christianity possible' and the influence of a missionary's wife 'simply incalculable'.¹⁴³

It was then the domestic lives and the family religion of Dissenters which supported their aspirations to reshape public and national cultures. What went for family religion was true of the family silver: the memories that were Dissenting tradition. By the late nineteenth century, history writing had become the most potent means of national and imperial identity formation. Although the development of historical scholarship has often been understood as a secularized science, in England at least a strong faith in the Church still supplied leading historians with the spine of their narratives about the national past.¹⁴⁴ Were Dissenters similarly able to progress from perpetuating the memory of past wrongs to inserting themselves in the national narrative? Throughout the century, denominations across the English-speaking world devoted much energy to their pasts. Even avowedly non-denominational groups like Churches of Christ published histories and the effort was commensurately greater among tidily organized denominations such as the Presbyterians.¹⁴⁵ A.H. Drysdale's *The History of the Presbyterians in England: Their Rise, Decline, and Revival* (1889) typically claimed to be 'though a *Sectional*...not...a *Sectarian* history. Written, no doubt, under deep and slow-formed convictions which the Author has not been careful to conceal, he has made every effort not to allow these to warp his judgment or

¹⁴⁰ Anne O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers: Women and Religion in Australia* (Sydney, New South Wales, 2005), p. 47; Kling, 'Presbyterians', Chapter 7 of this volume.

¹⁴¹ Semple, *Lord's Dominion*, pp. 67–8.

¹⁴² Cook, *Through Sunshine*, ch. 4, p. 115.

¹⁴³ Quoted in Williams, 'Gender', Chapter 19 of this volume.

¹⁴⁴ James Kirby, *Historians and the Church of England: Religion and Historical Scholarship, 1870–1920* (Oxford, 2016).

¹⁴⁵ Kerrie Handasyde, 'Pioneering Leadership: Historical Myth-Making, Absence, and Identity in the Churches of Christ in Victoria', *Journal of Religious History*, forthcoming.

embitter his style'.¹⁴⁶ Yet it remained thoroughly internalist, positing 'principles' of Presbyterianism, then evaluating their implementation, through 'inceptive', 'formative', 'repressive', 'irrepressible', and even 'transitional and spasmodic' periods, ending with a rather bathetic 'period of reorganization'.¹⁴⁷ This was a chart of Presbyterian life-signs, not a history, and it sought to chalk up victories over other denominations, making for instance an involved attempt to prove John Wesley had been a sort of Presbyterian.¹⁴⁸ In Britain's colonies the acquisition of dominion status, royal Jubilees, or just the end of a century encouraged a particularly boosterish tone in such works.¹⁴⁹ If John Carroll, the doyen of Canadian Methodist historiography, initially imparted a wistful tone to the genre that dwelt on the disappearance of the heroic 'old style itinerant', then in William Gregg's later telling, Methodism's history was a progression from 'small beginnings' to vast achievements under the watchful eye of the 'Divine Head who has blessed the labours of His servants'.¹⁵⁰ The proliferation of church history posts in colleges encouraged the production of such histories. Albert Newman, a professor of church history at Toronto's McMaster University, began his *History of Baptist Churches in the United States* by explaining how their apostolic principles had survived centuries of misunderstanding to gain a 'firm hold on the middle classes of the [American] nation'.¹⁵¹

If the emphasis on the spectacular virtues of one's denomination in such works left little play for critical historical imagination, then Dissenters could move beyond sectarian to wider perspectives. The Congregationalist John Stoughton's multi-volume history of English religion charted its progression towards 'catholic charity'. The last work in the series—its preface signed from the Athenaeum Club, to which Stoughton had been elected by Matthew Arnold—hailed the gradual arrival of Protestants at a shared 'sweet reasonableness'.¹⁵² That message came naturally to Stoughton, whose optimism about Britain's prospects had found an apt symbol in the Crystal Palace.¹⁵³ While his politics tended towards emollience, crusading Congregationalists

¹⁴⁶ A.H. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England: Their Rise, Decline, and Revival* (London, 1889), p. v.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. x–xi.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 592–3.

¹⁴⁹ Kling, 'Presbyterians'; Ian Breward, 'Australasian Church Histories Before 1914', in M. Hutchinson and E. Campion, eds., *Revisioning Australian Colonial Christianity: New Essays in the Australian Christian Experience, 1788–1900* (Sydney, New South Wales, 1994), pp. 41–59.

¹⁵⁰ William Gregg, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the Dominion of Canada* (Toronto, Ontario, 1885), p. 18; Semple, *Lord's Dominion*, pp. 55–6.

¹⁵¹ Albert Newman, *A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States* (New York, 1894), p. 504.

¹⁵² John Stoughton, *Religion in England from 1800 to 1850: A History, with a Postscript on Subsequent Events*, 2 vols (London, 1884), I: p. v; II: p. 438.

¹⁵³ John Stoughton, *The Palace of Glass and the Gathering of the People: A Book for the Exhibition* (London, 1851).

displayed the same anxiety to anchor Dissent to inclusive pasts. Charles Silvester Horne's successful *A Popular History of the Free Churches* claimed the whole 'Puritan tradition'—meaning simply 'a spiritual interpretation of Christianity and the Christian Church'—for the Free Churches, terms designed to play down differences between Dissenting denominations.¹⁵⁴ His last chapter argued that Free Churchmen were heirs not just to this tradition but even to 'broad church' Anglicanism. Horne argued that they had capitalized on freedom by seeking to emancipate all religious people from the grip of the state, creating a 'more Christian England', in which a spiritual democracy undergirded the political democracy then coming into being.¹⁵⁵ Horne was an inveterate opponent of attempts to privilege church schools, but envisaged Dissent not as a minority interest but as a pioneer in advancing freedom throughout English history.¹⁵⁶

American and colonial writers likewise felt that denominational histories were not only part of national and imperial master narratives but defined them. William Henry Withrow's works for Methodists traced the growth of their church in North America from a sapling to a 'vast Banyan tree'.¹⁵⁷ Yet his *Religious Progress in the Nineteenth Century* (1900) logged contributions from all confessions on one global balance sheet. As originators of the 'great revival', the Wesleys and their successors had 'the seal of Divine approval'.¹⁵⁸ Yet anti-slavery, missions, philanthropy, and youth movements were an aggregated Protestant effort, producing the 'most wonderful century in the history of the world' and preparing the 'Western nations' to bring the 'drowsy nations in the Orient' to Christianity through 'a new Crusade, not of war but of peace'.¹⁵⁹ Withrow's chauvinism built on his 'rational patriotism'.¹⁶⁰ In *A Popular History of the Dominion of Canada: From the Discovery of America to the Present Time* (1877), he presented former religious enemies as unwitting collaborators in forging a prosperous nation. Though a fierce anti-Romanist, he allowed that Jesuits had purged Canada of 'savage manners and unholy pagan rites' and presented the conquest of French Canada not as a confessional triumph but as a step towards its liberalization.¹⁶¹ His conclusion cited recent Anglican, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches in Toronto as among the

¹⁵⁴ Charles Silvester Horne, *A Popular History of the Free Churches: Popular Edition* (London, 1904), p. vii.

¹⁵⁵ C. Silvester Horne, *A Popular History of the Free Churches* (London, 1903), p. 426.

¹⁵⁶ On Horne, see Clyde Binfield, *So Down to Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity, 1780–1920* (London, 1977), ch. 9.

¹⁵⁷ W.H. Withrow, *Makers of Methodism* (New York, 1898), p. 13; W.H. Withrow, *Barbara Heck: A Tale of Early Methodism* (Toronto, Ontario, 1893), p. 293.

¹⁵⁸ Withrow, *Religious Progress in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto, Ontario, 1902), p. 260.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 462.

¹⁶⁰ William H. Withrow, *A Popular History of the Dominion of Canada from the Discovery of America to the Present Time* (Boston, MA, 1878), p. 5.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 257–8.

gratifying signs of the nation's material progress since confederation.¹⁶² Other Dissenting historians felt the same. Exulting over the development of St John, Moses Harvey hoped that in future the 'distinctions of English, Scotch, and Irish, Protestants and Catholics, will merge into the common name of Newfoundlanders... the great rivalry will be as to who can turn to the best advantage the gifts of Providence, and most effectually advance the best interests of a free, united, and happy people'.¹⁶³

Harvey's hosannas chime discordantly with the historiography of British Dissent, which emphasizes its disintegration from the later nineteenth century. While the Church of England and Roman Catholicism's staying power lasted deep into the twentieth century, stalling membership totals for historic Dissenting denominations made them canaries for secularization.¹⁶⁴ Yet particularly in the United States, Dissenting traditions experienced buoyant membership totals and continued growth. Even the stodgy Presbyterians and Congregationalists managed to double their numbers from 1870 to 1890, keeping just ahead of population growth.¹⁶⁵ Can we reconcile these divergent trajectories? An answer might start with the deepening bifurcation evident between the centrally controlled denominations, whose leaders regarded the modernization of societies as a force for Christianization, and breakaway groups, which advocated a radical doubling down in the search for individual salvation. Were mainstream denominations wasting capital on the provision of leisure and philanthropy, as historians often argue? The Brethren thought so, with one of their writers condemning the 'dramatic entertainments, raffles, numerous mountebank tricks and performances, kissing and other questionable practices' on offer in their churches.¹⁶⁶ Case highlights in his chapter the Holiness evangelists who broke with what they saw as fat and complacent Methodists in their yearning to receive the Second Blessing.¹⁶⁷

The tension between sectarian and denominational perspectives generated divergent, if sometimes overlapping, forms of transnationalism. On the one hand, newly 'national' free churches, whose denominational statesmen had stitched them together from splinter churches, sent representatives to international jamborees to discuss the remoralization of nations and the evangelization of the world.¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, many evangelicals lost confidence in social differentiation, economic growth, or the expanding natural sciences and in the ability of denominations to direct these developments into Christian channels. The great revivalists of the later nineteenth century addressed themselves to wobbling members of the evangelical subculture. Though

¹⁶² Ibid., pp. 577–8. ¹⁶³ Harvey, *Newfoundland*, pp. 154–5, 157.

¹⁶⁴ See particularly S.J.D. Green, *The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, c.1920–1960* (Cambridge, 2011), chs. 1 and 2.

¹⁶⁵ Kling, 'Presbyterians'.

¹⁶⁶ Grass, *Brethren*, p. 229.

¹⁶⁷ Case, 'Methodists'.

¹⁶⁸ Phyllis Airhart, 'Ordering a New Nation and Reordering Protestantism, 1867–1914', in Rawlyk, ed., *Protestant Experience*, pp. 98–100.

sometimes appealing to political radicals, their social conservatism was reinforced by premillennial eschatology. Transatlantic revivalism in the later nineteenth century was privatized and individual conversion decoupled from social change.¹⁶⁹ If Moody and Sankey's tours of Britain could be co-opted by existing denominations, then itinerant Holiness evangelists such as William Taylor were represented a new shake of the secessionist dice. Nearly everything major denominations counted as progress they reckoned failure: sclerotic committees and lumbering conferences would never win the world for Christ. Instead, they were self-starting, self-supporting agents of the gospel who would go to wherever the spirit listed.¹⁷⁰ Their activities were significant in sowing the seeds of Pentecostal churches which offered both a renewed literalism in the reading of Scripture and a liberating, unmediated relationship with Christ. Over the twentieth century, they would decisively shift the balance of global Christianity from north to south. If nineteenth-century Dissent did stall in its British heartland, then its dynamic heterogeneity meant that it could at least diagnose its own shortcomings and in the new century find new worlds to conquer.

¹⁶⁹ Holmes, 'Missions'.

¹⁷⁰ Case, 'Methodists'.

Part I

Traditions within Britain and Ireland

Congregationalists

Timothy Larsen

The nineteenth century was a very good century for Congregationalism in England and Wales. It was a time of significant numerical growth; of exercising leadership on behalf of Protestant Dissenters generally; of growing acceptance, success, and cultural achievement in the wider world; and of a buoyant sense of confidence. The period of growth began in the second half of the eighteenth century, carried on throughout the nineteenth, and had not yet stalled in the early years of the twentieth. In both England and Wales during the Victorian age, Congregationalism (also called Independency) was the largest body of Old Dissent—a position of influence magnified in Wales, both by being a greater percentage of the population as a whole, and by the fact that, as Thomas Rees reported in 1883, ‘The Welsh are now emphatically a nation of Nonconformists.’¹ The best calculations that can be made from the Religious Census of 1851 indicates that there were 655,935 people attending a Congregational worship service in England on census Sunday, and 132,629 people in Wales.²

The nineteenth century was also a time of impressive growth and development for Congregationalism in Scotland: it began the century with fourteen congregations, but grew to be around a hundred churches strong by the mid-Victorian era.³ As a drop in a Presbyterian ocean, however, Congregationalism

¹ Thomas Rees, *History of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales* (2nd edn., London, 1883), p. 452.

² Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (Oxford, 1995), p. 28. Watts calculates this at 3.88 per cent of the population of England—the highest percentage for an Old Dissenting body, and second only to the Wesleyan Methodists (5.46 per cent) among all nonconformists. The Church of England was 20.19 per cent. In Wales, Congregationalists were 13.11 per cent, second only to Calvinist Methodists (15.88 per cent), and both beating out the established Church (11.14 per cent).

³ Harry Escott, *A History of Scottish Congregationalism* (Glasgow, 1960), pp. 75–6, 96. Those interested in Independents in Scotland should also attend to the numerous publications of William D. McNaughton, including his work of reference, *The Scottish Congregational Ministry, 1794–1993* (Glasgow, 1993).

collectively was not very influential north of Hadrian's Wall, although individual Scottish Congregationalists certainly were. Congregationalism in Ireland was so small in both relative and absolute terms as to be irrelevant to understanding the currents of Irish religious history in the nineteenth century: it can be credited with surviving but not thriving. Having ceased to function for over a decade, when the Congregational Union of Ireland was revived in 1861, it comprised twenty small congregations.⁴ Moreover, Congregationalism in Ireland received significant support from Britain and was often viewed as an English import. Local churches often received financial support from the Irish Evangelical Society, which was run by Congregationalists from London, and which viewed Ireland as just as much a mission field 'as Tahiti or Hindostan'.⁵

EVANGELICALISM AND MISSIONS

Evangelical revivals were a key catalyst for growth in all these lands. The original Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century—the one associated with John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, Howell Harris, and Selina, Countess of Huntingdon—was the crucial prompt which put Congregationalism in England and Wales on its upward trajectory.⁶ It has been estimated that English Congregationalism grew by 78 per cent in the period 1760 to 1810.⁷ Likewise, the first half of the nineteenth century was a time of 'tremendous increase' for Welsh Congregationalism: 'Nothing like it had been seen before, and nothing like it has been seen since'.⁸ Even insider accounts written by Victorian Congregationalists seemingly invariably gave credit for this to the evangelical revival, no rivalry with Methodism standing in the way of this candid recognition. For example, James G. Miall used 'the Methodist Revival' as a key turning point in the history of Yorkshire Congregationalism.⁹ Likewise, to take a more recent, scholarly assessment, R. Tudur Jones has observed that Welsh Independents 'are as indebted to the great revival of the eighteenth

⁴ James Miller Henry, 'An Assessment of the Social, Religious and Political Aspects of Congregationalism in Ireland in the Nineteenth Century' (unpublished PhD thesis, Queen's University Belfast, 1965), p. 153.

⁵ Albert Peel, *These Hundred Years: A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1831–1931* (London, 1931), p. 153.

⁶ K.D.M. Snell and Paul S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 93.

⁷ R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662–1962* (London, 1962), p. 168.

⁸ R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*, ed. Robert Pope (Cardiff, 2004), p. 149.

⁹ James G. Miall, *Congregationalism in Yorkshire: A Chapter of Modern Church History* (London, 1868). (The very chapter titles mark the course of time by presenting Congregationalism as it was before and after 'the Methodist revival'.)

century as are the Methodists themselves'.¹⁰ Scottish Congregationalism was fanned into flame by 'the Haldane Revival' of the early nineteenth century: 'it may be justly claimed that they [Robert and James Haldane] did for Scotland what Wesley and Whitefield had done for England.'¹¹ Even beleaguered Irish Congregationalism received a badly needed boost from the revival of 1859. The congregation at Coleraine (Co. Londonderry), for example, added fifty-five new members—these fruits of this time of refreshing thereby outnumbering the preexisting thirty-seven members; the Straid church (Co. Antrim) jumped from ninety-eight to 182 members; and so on.¹² Congregationalism's incorporation into the wider evangelical movement may be symbolically illustrated by the fact that for much of the nineteenth century the *Evangelical Magazine* was under Congregational management. As the century wore on, however, Independents would give leadership to efforts to break free from the perceived limitations of some traditional features of evangelicalism, a desire and programme put on display in the musings of a leading Congregational minister, R.W. Dale: *The Old Evangelicalism and the New* (1889).¹³

One evangelical marker that would flourish throughout the nineteenth century was a commitment to missions—both foreign and home. To the Baptist Missionary Society (founded in 1792) goes the honour of being the first such effort, but the second one was the London Missionary Society (LMS), which was founded in 1795. Imbued with the spirit of evangelicalism in another way as well, it was officially non-denominational: nevertheless everyone understood that its lifeblood came from the Independents and, although it was genuinely non-denominational in its early years, its *de facto* Congregationalism became more pronounced as the nineteenth century unfolded. As the LMS was a large, well-funded organization, the Congregationalists can certainly be credited with being highly active in the cause of foreign missions. A goodly share of the heroic missionaries who captured the imagination of the British public were Congregationalists, including John Williams, the missionary to the South Seas who was widely celebrated even before he received a martyr's crown; and Robert and Mary Moffat, missionaries in southern Africa. Indeed, the missionary who generated the greatest interest and excitement during the Victorian age, David Livingstone, was a Scottish Congregationalist. Moreover, Michael A. Rutz has argued convincingly that the missionary concerns of Congregationalists often prompted them to become champions of the rights of indigenous

¹⁰ Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*, p. 110.

¹¹ Escott, *History of Scottish Congregationalism*, p. 45. (This is an official history published by the Congregational Union of Scotland. Part Three is 'The Haldane Revival'.)

¹² Henry, 'Congregationalism in Ireland', p. 263.

¹³ R.W. Dale, *The Old Evangelicalism and the New* (London, 1889).

people in opposition to the colonial exploitation pursued by their own government and compatriots.¹⁴ The Home Missionary Society was founded in 1819, again on a non-denominational basis although animated by Congregationalists: in 1840, it was officially incorporated into the Congregational Union of England and Wales. From the very beginning, some thought that this work should provide the very *raison d'être* of the Congregational Union, answering the question of what work the union was pursuing with the noble reply: 'Evangelizing the towns and country districts.'¹⁵ The tremendous chapel-building effort that Congregationalists undertook in the nineteenth century was also at least partially motivated by a commitment to home missions: it reflected a desire to raise up a witness for the gospel in parts of the country that were deprived or neglected. Congregationalists also founded and supported innumerable charitable organizations that took at least part of their motivation from a missionary impulse. The most famous of such efforts today is the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) which was founded in 1844 by the Congregational layman George Williams, and which, in the nineteenth century, was explicitly committed to evangelism.¹⁶

POLITY AND UNION

Congregationalism or Independency, of course, has as its distinctive mark a particular view of church government. In contrast to the Episcopal and Presbyterian models of polity, Congregationalists maintain that a local congregation has absolute spiritual freedom under Christ and does not submit to any other human authority besides its own membership. As the Declaration of the Faith, Church Order, and Discipline of the Congregational, or Independent Dissenters put it: 'They believe that the New Testament authorises every Christian church to elect its own officers, to manage all its own affairs, and to stand independent of, and irresponsible to, all authority, saving that only of the Supreme and Divine Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ.'¹⁷ In the 1870s and 1880s, R.W. Dale increasingly sounded the alarm that Congregationalists had been losing their grip on their distinctive convictions and

¹⁴ Michael A. Rutz, *British Zion: Congregationalism, Politics and Empire, 1790–1850* (Waco, TX, 2011).

¹⁵ Peel, *These Hundred Years*, p. 111.

¹⁶ Clyde Binfield, *George Williams and the Y.M.C.A.: A Study in Victorian Social Attitudes* (London, 1973). For a study which documents both its former commitment to Christian conversion and the YMCA's gradual shedding of this goal, see Dominic Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure: Sport, Recreation and the Crisis of Victorian Religion* (Woodbridge, 2010).

¹⁷ Peel, *These Hundred Years*, p. 73. This document, adopted in 1833, was the touchstone statement for the Congregational Union of England and Wales in the Victorian era.

practices because of the 'undenominational temper' they had imbibed from participating in the evangelical movement.¹⁸ He therefore wrote *A Manual of Congregational Principles* (1884) and together with another minister, J. Guinness Rogers, went on a tour to inculcate Congregational convictions.¹⁹ Indeed, Dale became so overheated on this matter that he went so far as to say that he was willing to be executed for Congregationalism and thereby bear witness to its precious truths through martyrdom. The flight of fancy is particularly bizarre given that Dale was also saying at this time that he was willing to accept into church membership someone who denied the divinity of Christ, thereby apparently making his Congregationalism much more a matter of life and death than his Christology.²⁰ In a Welsh context, R. Tudur Jones has also observed that the evangelical revival tempted Independents to downgrade their distinctive ecclesiology to merely 'a matter of convenience'.²¹

As much as figures such as Dale and Rogers lamented this trend, however, it is highly likely that it was integral to Congregationalism's remarkable success in the nineteenth century. For many Christians who knew their own religious identity simply in terms of a broad category—Reformed or Dissenter or even just evangelical or Protestant—Congregationalism became a generic place of worship that had its own house in order and where one could happily settle down to build and plant. It did not demand that one defend a peculiar doctrine or practice which was perplexing or untenable to many of one's relations, friends, or neighbours and it was not tainted by embarrassing extravagances of emotion, or ritual, or authoritarianism, and so on. Indeed, Congregationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was unusually good at harvesting crops raised by ministers from other denominations. Whole congregations that had been gathered by Wesleyan Methodism, or the Countess of Huntingdon, or George Whitefield (including the great Moorfields Tabernacle, Tottenham Court Chapel, and Bristol Tabernacle) migrated into the Congregational fold.²² What was true for disaffected or restless congregations—and even ordained ministers—was even truer for individuals just looking around for a place of worship to call their own. This generic quality was so pronounced that in Wales the term 'Dissenters' was commonly used to mean Independents.²³ Likewise, Clyde Binfield has recently made afresh the case that in England

¹⁸ Dale, *Old Evangelicalism*, pp. 16–17.

¹⁹ R.W. Dale, *A Manual of Congregational Principles* (London, 1884).

²⁰ Alan Argent, 'Dale and Congregationalism', in Clyde Binfield, ed., *The Cross and the City: Essays in Commemoration of Robert William Dale, 1829–1895*, Supplement to the *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society* 6 (1999), 36–7, 40.

²¹ Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*, p. 143.

²² Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford, CA, 1999), p. 58; Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, pp. 150–1.

²³ H. Elvet Lewis, *Nonconformity in Wales* (London, 1904), p. 105.

nineteenth-century Congregationalists were and should be viewed as the 'representative Nonconformists'.²⁴ This point is also negatively confirmed by the control groups of Scotland and Ireland. The rise of Scottish Congregationalism in the early decades of the nineteenth century was fuelled by people and congregations embracing it as a safe, nondescript option for evangelicals, but it then plateaued when the Free Church of Scotland (which was founded in 1843) usurped this role.²⁵ Ireland, for its part, was a place where being a Protestant, by itself, made it necessary to go through life defending one's distinctive religious beliefs. In such a context, the best way was often perceived to be to stand for truth in all its particularity in bold defiance of the objections of others. Irish Congregationalism, therefore, was more poached than poacher, losing members to the Presbyterians, and even to the Baptists.²⁶

Nothing in their distinctive principles precluded Congregational churches from having fellowship with one another and from cooperating together in united action. Independent ministers living in the capital were already gathering together in the seventeenth century, and this association was formalized in 1727 with the founding of the London Board of Congregational Ministers. In the nineteenth century, congregations began to band together in county unions. The Cheshire Congregational Union, for example, was founded in 1806.²⁷ The Congregational Union of Scotland was formed in 1812, with its impetus being home missions.²⁸ The Congregational Union of Ireland was formed in 1829. It would seem that the very fact that Congregationalism was weaker in Scotland and Ireland made them realize their need for mutual support sooner. The great body that would shape Congregational life in both Britain and Ireland, however, was the Congregational Union of England and Wales, founded in 1831. Susan Thorne has argued lucidly that the LMS paved the way by getting Congregationalists accustomed to united action.²⁹ Despite its inclusive name, the Anglocentric nature of the Congregational Union of England and Wales meant that most of its co-religionists in Wales did not take much interest in it. In 1872, Welsh-speaking Congregationalists founded *Undeb yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg* (the Union of Welsh Independents).³⁰

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Congregational Union of England and Wales waxed stronger and stronger, and Congregational activities became progressively more centralized. Every step of the way, officials explicitly

²⁴ Clyde Binfield, 'Nonconformist Architecture: A Representative Focus', in Robert Pope and D. Denis Morgan, eds., *T & T Clark Companion to Nonconformity* (London, 2013), p. 259.

²⁵ Escott, *History of Scottish Congregationalism*, p. 106.

²⁶ Henry, 'Congregationalism in Ireland', especially pp. 179, 273.

²⁷ F. James Powicke, *A History of the Cheshire County Union of Congregational Churches* (Manchester, 1907).

²⁸ Escott, *History of Scottish Congregationalism*, pp. 94–5.

²⁹ Thorne, *Congregational Missions*, p. 70.

³⁰ Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*, p. 203.

restated their commitment to Congregational distinctives, but while local freedom technically reminded intact, the truth was that, in practice, a lot of it had been functionally surrendered for the benefits of cooperation. Common funding for home missions was not going to be spent on a minister deemed unfit, which resulted in a system that had affinities with a regional presbytery needing to approve a candidate. Likewise, from the candidate's perspective, not to belong to the union was not to be on the list of ministers, which was a surefire way to be unemployable. Albert Peel's retrospective summary in 1931 was apt: 'For a hundred years the Congregational Churches have been trying to discover how to unite freedom and fellowship and keep the advantages of both.'³¹

CONGREGATIONAL WOMEN

Women are frustratingly invisible in the standard records and histories of nineteenth-century Congregationalism. The most obvious reason for this was their formal exclusion from almost all public offices in the denomination. While some of these restrictions were starting to break down towards the end of the century, for most of the nineteenth century, women were not allowed to be ministers, elders, or even deacons. Moreover, they were not allowed to be Congregational Union delegates, or even to speak in its assemblies. The delegates at the annual assembly in 1853 were thrilled when a celebrity Congregationalist from America, the novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe, was brought into their midst as a guest. Nevertheless, despite her exquisite gift for words, she was required to look on mutely while her husband gave a speech on her behalf.³² After reading heaps of Congregational records, one starts to become paranoid and suspect a conspiracy to suppress the names of women. When George MacDonald was called in 1850 to be the minister of Trinity Congregational Church, Arundel, he reported to his father: 'there is a very old lady still alive, though in her dotage, who was principally the means of forming the Church.'³³ If even a contribution as dramatic as founding the very congregation to which one is a minister does not warrant evoking a person's name while she is still alive and a church member, what hope could there be for faithfully departed Congregational women? *The Congregational Two Hundred, 1530–1948*, written by a British Congregationalist, published in London, and reaching chronologically into a period when women were ministers, nevertheless included only one woman from Britain or Ireland in its worthy

³¹ Peel, *These Hundred Years*, pp. 408–9.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

³³ Greville MacDonald, *George MacDonald and His Wife*, with an introduction by G.K. Chesterton (London, 1924), p. 138.

200: the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (who deserves to be counted as a Congregationalist but, as she did not even attend an Independent congregation for most of her adult life, was hardly a major labourer in this vineyard).³⁴ In such a desert, one becomes grateful for James Sherman's *The Pastor's Wife: A Memoir of Mrs. Sherman of Surrey Chapel* (1849) (and presumably, in the main body of the work, the reader can discover her name!).³⁵ And the hope that a son will not forget his own mother is not disappointed, so we also have *The Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat* by John Moffat.³⁶

To return to the debit side, even the magnificent generosity as a widow of Enriqueta Augustina Rylands, especially the founding and funding of the impressive John Rylands Library, did not result in a biography or memoir: in *The Congregational Two Hundred*, not only does she not have her own entry, but her achievements were not even thought to warrant making the entry on her husband a joint one. Every now and then, however, a female Congregationalist was mentioned in dispatches. The official history of one of the most influential Independent churches in Britain, Carrs Lane, Birmingham, is one long account of the doings of its leading men, but it does tack on to an account of a (male, of course) deacon, a tribute to his daughter, Elizabeth Phipson. She is credited with 'all sorts of local service', but her inclusion seems to have been mainly inspired by the human interest generated by her longevity: she joined the membership rolls on her own confession of faith in 1825 and served faithfully until her death in 1907.³⁷ The first significant form of public Christian ministry to open up to British Congregational women was serving as foreign missionaries, and Carrs Lane also paid tribute to one of its own, Edith Coombes (elsewhere 'Coombs'), who was martyred during the Boxer Rebellion.³⁸ Welsh Independency did not forget Nansi Jones, whose spiritual leadership during revivals was noted; or Margaret Jones, famed for memorizing numerous books of the Bible.³⁹ These examples are not meant to be exhaustive, of course, and the names of many more women are present in the printed primary sources from the period (as opposed to the official histories). Using the obituaries in Congregational or non-denominational magazines, for example, Linda Wilson compiled a database of the lives of sixty nineteenth-century Congregational women, ranging alphabetically from Maria Atkings to Sarah Maria Williams (both of whom, as it happens, are

³⁴ Albert Peel, *The Congregational Two Hundred, 1530–1948* (London, 1948). For her religious identity, see Linda M. Lewis, *Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Spiritual Progress: Face to Face with God* (Columbia, MO, 1998).

³⁵ James Sherman, *The Pastor's Wife: Memoir of Mrs. Sherman of Surrey Chapel* (London, 1849).

³⁶ John Moffat, *The Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat* (London, 1885).

³⁷ Arthur H. Driver, *Carrs Lane, 1748–1948* (Birmingham, 1948), pp. 51–2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

³⁹ Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*, pp. 121, 155.

accounts of finding Christ and then dying young).⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the volume on Carrs Lane is being all too truthful when it concedes: 'the real history is doubtless hidden in the lives of obscure saints who have no memorial.'⁴¹

Their near invisibility is all the more inexcusable because women were actually the backbone of nineteenth-century Congregationalism. More women than men were attending Congregational worship services. Indeed, perhaps only a third of those present were men: it is true that the congregation was staring at a man in the pulpit, but he was looking back at rows upon rows of pews filled predominantly with bonneted sisters in the Lord.⁴² It has been even more clearly established that two-thirds of the membership of Congregational churches were women, a percentage that was 'amazingly consistent across time, geography, and class'.⁴³ Membership does have its privileges, and it was a rare area where Congregationalism was leading the way on women's rights and opportunities. While local practices varied, well before the nineteenth century some congregations included voting as part of the rights of women members, and more and more did so as the century progressed, thus placing Congregationalism decidedly in advance of civic society in terms of female suffrage. In 1831, leading Congregationalists—including John Pye Smith, Robert Halley, Robert Vaughan, Andrew Reed, and Thomas Binney—helped to decide a case which turned on the legitimacy or otherwise of a local church that had dwindled to be composed exclusively of women. Ruling in the women's favour, these ministerial arbitrators accepted the arguments of the congregation's counsel who had reminded them: 'Every member has a right to vote in what concerns the whole body, sisters as well as brethren. It is a distinguishing feature of Congregational church-government, that in this respect no difference is made between the sexes.'⁴⁴ Women were also the force behind the social life of the congregations, including the popular institutions of the church bazaar and tea meeting. They were the main energizing power behind works of service and innumerable charitable and outreach efforts and organizations. They also became increasingly important as fundraisers. Many of these efforts converged on foreign missions, where women carved out their own space to such an extent that by the late nineteenth century there were scores of Congregational women in the field who were

⁴⁰ Linda Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality amongst Nonconformists, 1825–1875* (Carlisle, 2000). (I am drawing here from Appendix 1: Women's Obituaries which is usually arranged by denominational identities.)

⁴¹ Driver, *Carrs Lane*, p. 65.

⁴² Elaine Kaye, 'Daughters of Dissent 1840–1917', in Elaine Kaye, Janet Lees, and Kirsty Thorpe, *Daughters of Dissent* (London, 2004), p. 2.

⁴³ Charles D. Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home: Life in British and American Reformed Congregations, 1830–1915* (University Park, PA, 2000), p. 118.

⁴⁴ Timothy Larsen, *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Contexts of Victorian Theology* (Waco, TX, 2004), p. 18.

being supported by ladies' auxiliaries back home.⁴⁵ Susan Thorne goes so far as to assert: 'the foreign mission field was a middle-class woman's preserve.'⁴⁶

CLASS AND CULTURE

The conventional wisdom was long that Victorian Congregationalism was predominantly middle class. Even in 1962, Tudur Jones reported, in a chapter covering the period 1815–50, that 'the Congregational Churches were in the main middle-class'.⁴⁷ More systematic analysis, however, has revealed that there were actually more Congregationalists from the lower classes.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it is indisputable that Congregationalism in nineteenth-century England had a reputation for being middle class. Some made this presumed trait a point of pride. Robert Vaughan asserted in 1838 that 'Congregationalists belong mostly to the Middle Classes' before going on to boast on the strength of this claim: 'We do not scruple to say, that we look with some pleasure on this manifest aptitude of our system to commend itself to that part of the community which all wise men regard as the most sound.'⁴⁹ The popular preacher Thomas Binney famously asserted that ministering to the middle classes was Congregationalism's 'special mission'.⁵⁰ What is most telling, however, is that even those who did not wish it to be so nonetheless assumed that it was true. Algernon Wells, secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, chided the denomination in 1848 for its 'essentially middle-class character', decrying the failure to reach the masses that this (presumed) fact exposed.⁵¹ Likewise, at the end of the century, the Reverend Morlais Jones rebuked those who complacently thought that when a once middle-class neighbourhood went into decline, then it was time for Congregationalism to depart and leave the work to the Methodists or the Salvation Army.⁵²

In other words, Congregationalism unquestionably had a middle-class image: in the same way that some luxury brands are not primarily bought by the rich but are invariably associated with them in people's minds, so Congregationalism was linked in the Victorian imagination with the middle-class way of life. Independents saw their contribution to evangelicalism as bringing an emphasis on order, decorum, and a learned ministry, and thus this

⁴⁵ Kaye, 'Daughters of Dissent', p. 12.

⁴⁶ Thorne, *Congregational Missions*, p. 108.

⁴⁷ Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, p. 228.

⁴⁸ Watts, *Dissenters: II*, pp. 597, 718–76. For awareness of this fact in more recent studies, see Thorne, *Congregational Missions*, p. 59.

⁴⁹ Robert Vaughan, *Religious Parties in England* (London, 1839), pp. 97–8.

⁵⁰ *Congregational Year Book* for 1848, p. 9.

⁵¹ Peel, *These Hundred Years*, p. 204.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 357.

tone was set already in the late eighteenth century and was fuelled by an implied contrast with more exuberant alternatives.⁵³ Nevertheless, even the ideal of a learned ministry should not be misconstrued as a standard faithfully maintained: 30 per cent of Congregational ministers serving churches in 1850 had never attended a college.⁵⁴ Still, the emphasis was sufficiently strong that a thorn in the side of the denomination throughout the nineteenth century was that it actually had an oversupply of ministerial training colleges. In 1855, for example, the official total according to the Congregational Union of England and Wales was thirteen.⁵⁵ Even the tiny band of Irish Congregationalists made the ill-judged decision to try to maintain their own college: the Dublin Theological Institution was founded in 1815, closed in 1828, reopened in 1832, and permanently dissolved 'about the year 1848'.⁵⁶ The climax of this drive towards greater respectability came in 1886 when the Congregational institution in Birmingham moved to Oxford and reopened as Mansfield College, giving Congregationalists the distinction of being the first Protestant Dissenters to found their own Oxbridge college.⁵⁷ Moreover, Mansfield's buildings were designed by the architect Basil Champneys, whose work was so up to the dreamy grandeur of this ancient seat of learning that it would lead on to commissions from Oriel and Merton.

Architecture became a major way that Congregationalists signalled their rising cultural aspirations. No longer as preoccupied with rejecting anything that might have a whiff of the medieval or the Catholic, Independents became enthusiastic champions of what came to be called 'Dissenting Gothic'.⁵⁸ Albion Congregational Church, Ashton-under-Lyne, even commissioned William Morris and Sir Edward Burne-Jones to design its coloured windows.⁵⁹ All of these trends converged in London. There, large congregations were energized by the pulsing presence in their midst of ambitious young men set on rising in the world. They were served by a pastor who was addressed with the title 'Doctor', thus signalling their pride in a learned ministry.⁶⁰ And the Doctor and his climbing congregants would sometimes determine together to build an extravagant Gothic edifice for themselves. Moreover, Congregationalism was much more prominent and better represented in the metropolis

⁵³ In a delightful surprise, however, to Independents goes the credit for pioneering the 'Welsh *hwyl*' shouting style of preaching: Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*, p. 120.

⁵⁴ Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, p. 235.

⁵⁵ *Congregational Year Book* for 1855, p. 304.

⁵⁶ Henry, 'Congregationalism in Ireland', pp. 103–7.

⁵⁷ Elaine Kaye, *Mansfield College, Oxford: Its Origin, History, and Significance* (Oxford, 1996).

⁵⁸ Clyde Binfield, *So Down to Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity, 1780–1920* (London, 1977), ch. 7.

⁵⁹ Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, p. 297.

⁶⁰ Timothy Larsen, 'Honorary Doctorates and the Nonconformist Ministry in Nineteenth-Century England', in David Bebbington and Timothy Larsen, eds., *Modern Christianity and Cultural Aspirations* (London, 2003), pp. 139–56.

than in many other parts of Britain. A study at the start of the twentieth century found that over 10 per cent of the worshipping population of London was attending a Congregational church.⁶¹ When the journalist James Ewing Ritchie did a series on the great London preachers, he included sketches of more Congregationalists than any other denomination (including even the Church of England). And he did not profile a single Methodist. The statistics he presented showed that there were more Congregationalists than Methodists (or any other body except Anglicans) in the capital.⁶² Whatever might have been statistically more likely overall, when people thought of a Congregational minister and his flock, they were more likely to think of a showcase cause such as Dr Newman Hall in the neo-Gothic splendour of Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road, London, rather than a small, decidedly lower-class congregation gathering together in a barn-like structure in some provincial village.

Middle-class cultural leadership was also indicated in other ways beside architecture. Valentine Cunningham has observed that Congregationalists were reading, and then writing, novels before other evangelical Dissenters.⁶³ Congregationalists were also behind the *British Quarterly Review* (1845–86), a journal that aspired to be a Dissenting version of the *Edinburgh Review* or *Quarterly Review* and, in truth, was impressively learned and cultured. Congregational laymen were also on the rise in other ways. In the mid-Victorian era, there were far more Members of Parliament who were Congregationalists than there were from any other Dissenting body.⁶⁴ The Independents were also adorned with highly wealthy businessmen who employed large numbers of workers and who became philanthropists, serving on the boards of innumerable Congregational and non-denominational evangelical causes and charitable endeavours. Such efforts were beginning to be recognized on occasion with a knighthood—Sir Titus Salt and Sir Francis Crossley were particularly striking examples. Aspiring Congregationalists drew inspiration from one particular scriptural insight on this matter: ‘Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings’ (Proverbs 22:29). Other Victorian Congregationalists who were knighted include Edward Baines, Charles Reed, and George Williams.

This aspiring aspect of the Victorian Congregational ethos was epitomized by Thomas Binney’s *Is It Possible to Make the Best of Both Worlds?* (1865). A brisk bestseller, the copy to hand was published in 1870 as part of the

⁶¹ Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, pp. 319–20.

⁶² James Ewing Ritchie, *The London Pulpit* (London, 1854), p. 26. (It should also be noted that Ritchie himself was a Congregationalist.)

⁶³ Valentine Cunningham, *Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent and the Victorian Novel* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 58–9.

⁶⁴ David W. Bebbington, *Congregational Members of Parliament in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2007).

seventeenth edition.⁶⁵ ‘The great Dr Binney’ was himself one of those fashionable preachers of a large London congregation (Weigh House) that was composed of a disproportionate share of young men determined to make their mark. It is also telling that the book began as a YMCA address (and with Sir Edward Buxton serving as chairman). Right down to its question title, the book is uncannily reminiscent of Clement of Alexandria’s attempt to reassure the wealthy Christians of the Roman Empire that their worldly status need not endanger their spiritual prospects: *Who is the Rich Man Being Saved?* Binney’s tract is an unabashed middle-class manifesto. It is worth quoting it at length to get its true flavour:

Because once there were no carpets, nor curtains, nor rosewood chairs, nor beautiful engravings, to be seen in the houses of certain classes, (or further back, indeed of *any*), that is no reason why it should be thought wrong to have them now. Because a deal table may serve the purposes of a table as well as a mahogany one, that is no reason why a religious man should have nothing but deal. . . . There is no harm in our wives or daughters having two or three silk gowns in wear at once, if our means permit it, though their great-grandmothers might have been content with one for their life-time. In the same way improvements in the elegant and imitative arts bring many things within the reach of the middle classes. . . . If God ‘gives a man power to get wealth,’ in this nineteenth century of ours, in which material are cheapened, and, when beautifully wrought into various objects of use or ornament, come, in these forms, so within the reach of numbers as to be general and customary possessions,—why, the man in question, however spiritual or devout he may be, need not be supposed to do wrong by availing himself of the advantages of the day he lives in. If he can keep a carriage,—*let* him keep it; and let him *call* it a carriage . . . he will get no harm, and should not be thought to sin, by surrounding himself with what is customary in his class.⁶⁶

THEOLOGY AND THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE

This culturally attuned side to Congregationalism had its direct corollary in theology. Congregationalists were at the forefront of evangelical Dissenters in being willing to modify traditional religious beliefs out of a sense that modern thought was on the move and that it was vital for the Christian faith to keep up with the times by moving with it. Three major sites of readjustment were Calvinism, biblical criticism, and eternal punishment. It was possible to get out too far ahead without adequate back-up and end up a casualty on the plains of

⁶⁵ T. Binney, *Is It Possible to Make the Best of Both Worlds? A Book for Young Men* (17th edn., London, 1870).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 120–2.

progress. This repeatedly happened to cohorts of forward-thinking students at Congregational colleges. Nine students were expelled from Glasgow Theological Academy in 1844 for failing to give sufficiently reassuring answers to such probing questions as: 'Do you hold, or do you not, the necessity of a special influence of the Holy Spirit, in order to the regeneration of the sinner, or his conversion to God, distinct from the influence of the Word or of Providential circumstances, but accompanying these means, and rendering them efficacious?'⁶⁷ Perhaps the most famous of such ejected would-be ministers was the novelist William Hale White (penname: Mark Rutherford), who was one of three students dismissed in 1851 from New College, London, for their advanced views on biblical inspiration.⁶⁸ Faculty members were not always safe either. Notably, Samuel Davidson, a professor at Lancaster Independent College, was forced to resign in 1857 because his acceptance of German biblical criticism had alarmed conservatives.⁶⁹

Many of the figures who were leading the way to a more liberal theology—or at least were seen as mediating influences helping evangelicalism adapt to the new intellectual climate—came to be some of the most prominent and well-respected Congregationalists of their day.⁷⁰ When the minister T.T. Lynch was forcefully attacked in 1855 for allegedly retreating from orthodox theological views, one of his most vocal defenders was J. Baldwin Brown. The year before, Ritchie had lauded Lynch as exactly the kind of preacher most needed in the metropolitan pulpit, one who is 'abreast of the age, who can sympathise with its pulsation'.⁷¹ When Brown was elected chairman of the Congregational Union for 1878 it was therefore apparent which side was winning. Brown's presiding address was fittingly entitled, 'Our Theology in Relation to the Intellectual Movement of our Times'.⁷² A parallel case is that of Edward White. His rejection of eternal punishment in favour of conditional immortality in his *Life in Christ* (1846) initially made him into a heterodox figure in the eyes of many of his co-religionists. The trend, however, was in the direction he was pursuing, and White was elevated to the chairmanship of the Congregational Union in 1887.⁷³ R.W. Dale was certainly a mediating, if not forward-leading force, as was the most respected Congregational theologian

⁶⁷ Escott, *Scottish Congregationalism*, p. 109.

⁶⁸ Michael Brealey, *Bedford's Victorian Pilgrim: William Hale White in Context* (Milton Keynes, 2012).

⁶⁹ Willis B. Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1954).

⁷⁰ Mark Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation: Evangelical and Liberal Theologies in Victorian England* (Milton Keynes, 2004); Dale A. Johnson, *The Changing Shape of English Nonconformity, 1825–1925* (New York, 1999).

⁷¹ Ritchie, *London Pulpit*, p. 104.

⁷² Peel, *These Hundred Years*, p. 268.

⁷³ Edward White, *Life in Christ* (London, 1846); Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, pp. 248–9.

of the late nineteenth century, A.M. Fairbairn. It is instructive to observe that one of the most theologically liberal voices in late nineteenth-century Congregationalism was also one of the denomination's most popular preachers, Dr Joseph Parker, who ministered in the purpose-built, architecturally imposing City Temple, London.⁷⁴ A fine example of Independents giving intellectual leadership came early in the Victorian age when John Pye Smith, Tutor in Divinity at Homerton College, mapped out a way to think about the new discoveries of natural science from an orthodox Protestant perspective, *On the Relation between the Holy Scriptures and Some Parts of Geological Science* (1839).⁷⁵ Or, to go forward to the end of the nineteenth century, a particularly full-blooded articulation of the tendency to refocus theology on Christ's incarnation rather than his atoning work on the cross was *Reconciliation by Incarnation* (1898) by D.W. Simon, principal of United College, Bradford.⁷⁶ The general trend from mid-century onwards was towards eschewing doctrinal precision altogether on the grounds that Christianity was about 'Life', not dogma.⁷⁷

English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish Congregationalists all participated in a move away from the Calvinist verities of their forebears. This was often marked with a self-descriptor such as 'moderate Calvinism', but such terms were usually employed out of a desire not to allow the break with the past to seem too decisive and abrupt. This particular issue was most central in Scotland, the stronghold of Calvinism. By providing an alternative that many were quietly longing for, Scottish Congregationalism's departure from the old Calvinist faith was actually key to its growth and success as a movement. James Morison's affirmation of universal rather than limited atonement led to his presbytery suspending his ministry. He launched out afresh and established a new denomination, the Evangelical Union which, towards the end of the century, merged into the Congregational Union of Scotland. The official history of Scottish Congregationalism has an entire part (four chapters) entitled, 'The Revolt from Calvinism'.⁷⁸

A lot of these trends converge in the life of the novelist George MacDonald. As an eminent literary figure, he represents Congregationalism's strong interest in and engagement with culture. Raised in a devoutly Calvinist milieu in Aberdeenshire, the 565-page biography written by his son makes rejecting Calvinism central to George MacDonald's entire life story.⁷⁹ Beginning in 1848, MacDonald trained for the Independent ministry at Highbury College,

⁷⁴ William Adamson, *The Life of the Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.* (Glasgow, 1902).

⁷⁵ John Pye Smith, *On the Relation between the Holy Scriptures and Some Parts of Geological Science* (New York, 1840).

⁷⁶ D.W. Simon, *Reconciliation By Incarnation* (Edinburgh, 1898).

⁷⁷ Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, p. 4.

⁷⁸ Escott, *Scottish Congregationalism*.

⁷⁹ MacDonald, *George MacDonald*.

London (there were no fewer than five Congregational ministerial training institutions in the capital at that time!), and was called to Trinity Congregational Church, Arundel, in 1850. The failure of this pastorate became in family lore—and indeed the wider mythology of the times—a tale of narrow-minded, old-fashioned, conservative lay leaders attacking the new, more warm-hearted and liberal Christian thought of a forward-looking thinker. In truth, however, it seems clear that MacDonald was unwilling or unable to minister effectively to his congregation: reading his letters from the time, one sometimes even wonders if he secretly regretted his choice of vocation and was unconsciously sabotaging his own ministry. Nevertheless, it is emphatically true that he embraced the new Romantic theology wholeheartedly with its rejection of eternal punishment and its emphasis on the perfect love that casts out all fear. He went on to become a disciple, friend, and parishioner of a leading Anglican voice for liberal theology, F.D. Maurice. Despite making the Church of England his spiritual home, the contacts with the Congregational world were never completely severed: tellingly, his son Bernard became a lecturer at Mansfield College.⁸⁰

POLITICS AND DISSENT

Above all, Congregationalists emerged during the nineteenth century as the political leaders of Protestant Dissent as a whole. This cause was fired with righteous indignation because Congregationalists believed that an established church was a violation of the headship of Christ and the spiritual freedom of the Church, and therefore their protest was rooted in theology. An important and influential articulation of this view was made by the Glasgow minister and professor of systematic theology at Congregational Theological Hall, Ralph Wardlaw, in his *National Church Establishments Examined* (1839).⁸¹ Such high ground allowed preachers to see attacking the Church of England as part of their spiritual calling rather than as descending into party politics. Thomas Binney notoriously pronounced that the established church ‘destroys more souls than it saves’.⁸² Congregationalists of different stripes on other matters of doctrine found common ground in their theological opposition to state churches. In the context of Wales, R. Tudur Jones wrote revealingly that ‘As Congregationalists have

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 535.

⁸¹ Ralph Wardlaw, *National Church Establishments Examined* (London, 1839).

⁸² E. Paxton Hood, *Thomas Binney: His Mind, Life and Opinions* (London, 1847), pp. 18–22 (an entire chapter entitled ‘The Famous Sentence’ on this quotation).

defined their standpoint so consistently and at such length in opposition to the Anglican Church, we had better examine it in some detail.⁸³

Independents were in the vanguard of leadership for the distinctively political agenda of Dissenters.⁸⁴ The Congregational minister, Edward Miall, founded the *Nonconformist* newspaper to agitate for this cause, and then, in 1844, the Anti-State Church Association (later known as the Liberation Society), which became the leading pressure group for disestablishment. He also thereby became the hero of students in the Congregational colleges and rising young Dissenting ministers. The influential full-time secretary of the Liberation Society, J. Carvell Williams, was also an Independent. And both Miall and Williams would join the swelling ranks of Members of Parliament who were Congregationalists. The 'prophet' of political Dissent in Wales, Henry Richard, MP for Merthyr Tydfil, was also an Congregationalist.⁸⁵ The sense of the manifest injustice of having an established church was even greater in Wales as four-fifths of the worshipping population were Nonconformists.⁸⁶ Beside disestablishment, Congregationalists gave leadership on the political struggle against all the Nonconformist grievances such as church rates, exclusion from Oxford and Cambridge universities, and restrictions around the rites of passage of birth registrations, marriages, and burials. These grievances also aroused political indignation to a fervent pitch among Dissenters as manifestly unjust. Nevertheless, part of the rub was clearly related to the cultural aspirations of Congregationalists. As Miall tellingly remarked, 'We go about the world with a label on our backs, on which nothing more is written than the word "Fool". Nobody hinders us, we may walk where we please; but the brand is upon us, and we cannot forget it.'⁸⁷ Clyde Binfield has observed that the political struggle of Nonconformists was also 'a fight for social recognition'.⁸⁸

It is hard to recapture the passions that the Dissenting cause enflamed in the nineteenth century. Many Christians emphatically and passionately knew themselves to be Dissenters who were relatively indifferent about which Nonconformist denomination they made their spiritual home. In such an environment, Congregationalism reaped considerable, tangible benefits for being widely recognized as the quintessential Dissenting denomination.

⁸³ Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*, p. 4.

⁸⁴ D.W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870–1914* (London, 1982); Timothy Larsen, *Friends of Religious Equality: Nonconformist Politics in Mid-Victorian England* (Woodbridge, 1999).

⁸⁵ Lewis, *Nonconformity in Wales*, p. 106.

⁸⁶ D. Densil Morgan, 'Nonconformity in Wales', Pope and Morgan, eds., *T & T Clark Companion*, p. 40.

⁸⁷ Arthur Miall, *Life of Edward Miall* (London, 1884), p. 70.

⁸⁸ Binfield, *So Down to Prayers*, p. 27.

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2

Baptists

Ian Randall

In 1835, the *Baptist Magazine* asserted ‘that the dissenters are on the increase; that by far the greater portion of religious instruction is disseminated through the kingdom by voluntary agency, and not by state endowments, and that every new species of Christian effort has been originated by dissenters’.¹ Although the claims are extravagant, this was a period of remarkable Baptist advance. In the mid-eighteenth century, Baptists in England and Wales were in touch with rather fewer than 20,000 people, whereas at the time of the Religious Census of 1851 they were attracting over half a million worshippers.² In 1863 Joseph Angus, Principal of Regent’s Park College in London, noted that the population of England had doubled in the period 1800 to 1863, while Baptist churches and Baptist membership had increased fourfold. In Wales, growth had been even more rapid.³ In Ireland, Baptist advance was to come later: 1895 saw the formation of the Baptist Union of Ireland, with a membership of under 2,500.⁴ Baptists in Scotland saw significant growth, from 442 members at the beginning of the nineteenth century to 15,137 members, in 113 churches, in 1900.⁵ This chapter investigates the factors contributing to British Baptist advance, and the leading features of its development in the nineteenth century.

¹ *The Baptist Magazine*, 1835 (27), p. 547.

² J.H.Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot, 1994), pp. 248, 264.

³ Joseph Angus, *The Baptist Denomination in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1863), pp. 3–5. For Baptists in Wales see T.M. Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists* (Swansea, 1977).

⁴ See Joshua Thompson, *Century of Grace: The Baptist Union of Ireland: A Short History, 1895–1995* (Belfast, 1995).

⁵ Brian Talbot, *The Search for a Common Identity: The Origins of the Baptist Union of Scotland, 1800–1870* (Carlisle, 2003), p. 1.

CHURCH LIFE AND MINISTRY

The *Baptist Magazine* spoke of religious instruction by 'voluntary agency', and although the primary reference was probably to Dissent's massive involvement in Sunday Schools, the language of 'voluntary societies' was being used to describe Baptist church life. In 1839 Joseph Angus, then aged twenty-three, wrote a prize-winning 'Essay on the Voluntary System', defending the Free Church position against the Established Church on the basis that Free Churches rightly adopted the principle of 'free trade'.⁶ Angus quoted John Locke's definition of the church as 'a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him and effectual to the salvation of their souls'. Angus's ecclesiology apparently involved no theological principles, but stressed 'oneness of faith and feeling', and members approving of 'the objects of the society'.⁷ A more important book by Angus on the church, however, followed two decades later, and represented his mature thinking. Again it was a prize essay. Here the church was 'an independent association of equals'—congregationalism—but voluntarism was now defined Christologically, as 'the willing submission of the heart and of the life to Christ, and the after-devotion of will to His cause'.⁸

These views were promoted by leading pulpiteers. Alexander McLaren had an outstanding ministry in Manchester from 1858. His careful and cogent biblical addresses were in marked contrast to many Baptist sermons in which 'a medley of biblical texts' was used or texts were employed to 'controvert a particular theological tenet'.⁹ In London it was Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 'the prince of preachers', who to a large extent defined the Victorian period as an era of prominent preachers. J.C. Carlile, author of one of the biographies of Spurgeon, suggested that Spurgeon belonged to the category of people who 'have turned the current of religious history into fresh channels'.¹⁰ At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Elephant and Castle, London, which was built for Spurgeon's congregation and opened in 1861, Spurgeon regularly preached each morning and evening to over 5,000 people. During his pastorate over 14,000 people were baptized and joined the church. Spurgeon's sermons also had a powerful international impact. By 1899 at least 100 million copies had been produced, in twenty-three languages.¹¹

⁶ Joseph Angus, *The Voluntary System* (London, 1839), p. 22.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 194.

⁸ Joseph Angus, *Christian Churches: The Noblest Form of Social Life; The Representatives of Christ on Earth; The Dwelling Place of the Holy Spirit* (2nd edn., London, 1879), pp. 17, 21.

⁹ Ian Sellers, 'Other Times, Other Ministries: John Fawcett and Alexander McLaren', *Baptist Quarterly* [BQ], 32 (1987), 189.

¹⁰ J.C. Carlile, *C.H. Spurgeon: An Interpretative Biography* (London, 1933), p. 30.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 236–7.

Spurgeon and other Baptists argued strongly for their view of baptism. In 1865, Joseph Angus, as Baptist Union President that year, noted that Baptists had recently had to make clear that baptism was not 'efficacious' to salvation, or 'essential' to it, or even 'contributive' or 'preliminary'.¹² He was referring to a sermon on 'Baptismal Regeneration' by Spurgeon, which strongly denounced Anglican baptismal theology and practice.¹³ Angus, in common with many other Victorian Baptists, refused to call baptism a 'church ordinance', describing it as 'an individual duty, just as faith is'. His argument was that those who believed were 'bound to be baptized, even though there be no church they can join'.¹⁴ F.B. Meyer, the leading Baptist at the interdenominational Keswick Convention, similarly separated baptism from membership. 'Perhaps no other Baptist minister', it has been suggested of Meyer, 'immersed so many members of other denominations, including clergymen of the Church of England'.¹⁵ When local Anglicans were coming in large numbers to be baptized at Meyer's church in Lambeth, the Parish Church's Rector had to install his own baptistry, in order, Meyer commented wryly, 'to keep even'. Meyer claimed he taught his Anglican neighbour how to baptize by immersion and lent him baptismal 'vestments'.¹⁶

In their thinking about the Lord's Supper, Baptists disagreed about whether baptism was a necessary condition for receiving Communion. Robert Hall, who had been minister of St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge, powerfully advocated an 'open table' for all believers in his *On Terms of Communion* (1815). Joseph Kinghorn of Norwich replied with *Baptism a Term of Communion at the Lord's Supper* (1816). Controversy continued, with the 'open' view gradually gaining ground.¹⁷ On the meaning of the Supper, many Baptists saw it as a 'memorial', as an 'ordinance', rather than as a 'sacrament', but Spurgeon took a 'high' view: preaching at Communion in the Tabernacle in 1861, he declared in dramatic style, 'O sacred Eucharist, thou hast the dew of thy youth'.¹⁸ Spurgeon had intense experiences at Communion and used the language of 'real presence' of Christ at the Table,

¹² Joseph Angus, *Baptists: Their Existence a Present Necessity, a Conscientious Conviction, a Representative and a Defence of Important Spiritual Truth* (London, 1865), p. 3. For more see I.M. Randall, 'Conscientious Conviction': *Joseph Angus (1816–1902) and Nineteenth-Century Baptist Life* (Oxford, 2010).

¹³ For Spurgeon on baptism see articles by Peter Morden, 'C.H. Spurgeon and Baptism', Parts 1 and 2, BQ, 43 (2009 and 2010), 196–220 and 388–409.

¹⁴ Angus, *Baptists: Their Existence a Present Necessity*, pp. 21–2.

¹⁵ M. Jennie Street, *F.B. Meyer: His Life and Work* (London, 1902), p. 85.

¹⁶ I.M. Randall, *Spirituality and Social Change: The Contribution of F.B. Meyer (1847–1929)* (Carlisle, 2003), p. 61. Meyer was minister at that time of Christ Church, Lambeth, a Congregational Church.

¹⁷ Briggs, *English Baptists*, pp. 61–7. For more see Michael Walker, *Baptists at the Table: The Theology of the Lord's Supper Among English Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot, 1992).

¹⁸ 'The Lord's Supper', *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 50 (1904), Sermon No. 2872, 1 Cor. 11.26, delivered in autumn 1861, p. 101.

stating, 'we firmly believe in the real presence of Christ which is spiritual and yet certain'.¹⁹ Like Spurgeon, Meyer advocated weekly Communion, introducing this in his influential ministries at Melbourne Hall, Leicester, and then at Regent's Park Chapel, London. Meyer's love of the natural world (in line with the Romantic notions popular at Keswick) is evident: to eat the bread of the 'Sacrament' and meditate on Christ was to 'incorporate Him into our texture'; just as to eat everyday bread was to absorb the influence of heaven and earth, rain and soil.²⁰

Baptists increasingly emphasized an educated, College-trained ministry.²¹ Bristol Baptist College was joined by other English colleges: Rawdon College, Leeds (1804), Stepney, later Regent's Park (1810), the Pastors' (Spurgeon's) College (1856), and Manchester College (1866). In Wales there was Abergavenny Academy (1807) and Llangollen Institute (1862), while the Irish Baptist College began in Dublin in 1892 and the Scottish College in Glasgow in 1894. Most colleges emphasized not only ministerial formation but also—increasingly—academic achievement. In 1865 Angus reported on the very good results in examinations at Regent's Park compared to other affiliated colleges of London University.²² However, in the 1890s J.H. Shakespeare, then minister in Norwich, and later the powerful Union General Secretary, argued that the main work of a College was to make preachers, and he continued: 'Nothing can condone its offence if it mocks the churches with theologians, essayists, Hebraists, Dryasdusts, and men with brilliant degrees, but who cannot preach.' Shakespeare spoke scathingly of the 'ceaseless strife to stand well in the examinations'.²³ Angus challenged the assertion that Colleges could 'make' good preachers. 'The true preacher', he argued, 'is God-made.' He continued: 'All we have to do is to train to greater efficiency the godly men who profess to have a call to the ministry, and whose pastors and churches recommend them, often after much enquiry and deliberation, as possessing gifts and graces for that work.'²⁴

Angus was correct in referring to 'men' as ordained Baptist ministers, but the end of the century saw the recognition of the ministry of women as Deaconesses. Meyer was the prime mover in this development, which owed

¹⁹ C.H. Spurgeon, 'Mysterious Visits', in *'Till he Come': Communion Meditations and Addresses by C.H. Spurgeon* (London, 1894), p. 17. For more, see Peter Morden, 'Communion with Christ and his People': *The Spirituality of C.H. Spurgeon* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 165–89.

²⁰ *Baptist Times*, 12 November 1909, 811.

²¹ For analysis, see Anthony R. Cross, *To communicate simply you must understand profoundly: Preparation for Ministry among British Baptists* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2016).

²² *College Report*, 1865, in R.E. Cooper, *From Stepney to St Giles: The Story of Regent's Park College, 1810–1960* (London, 1960), p. 63.

²³ See Peter Shepherd, *The Making of a Modern Denomination: John Howard Shakespeare and the English Baptists, 1898–1924* (Carlisle, 2001); J.H. Shakespeare, 'The College and the Ministry', *The Baptist Magazine [BM]*, 83 (1891), 71.

²⁴ Joseph Angus, 'Our Colleges, with Special Reference to Regent's Park', *BM*, 83 (1891), 304.

something to Lutheranism and Anglicanism. A house was secured for the use of Baptist Deaconesses in 1890 and in announcing this Meyer invited 'Christian ladies' who were willing to contribute £60 per annum towards their own maintenance—as Deaconesses—to write to him. A number of Baptist women responded. Initially the 'sisters' (as they were called) were drawn from wealthy families, since they had to support themselves financially.²⁵ Later, churches employing Deaconesses were asked to pay for their upkeep. In 1894 the Baptist Deaconesses' Home and Mission was formally launched. Four sisters and a lady superintendent began their work, concentrating on the needs of the poor in Leather Lane, Holborn, and Gray's Inn, London. This outreach was described, in dramatic terms, as a doorway 'through which some of the saintliest women in our churches can descend into the slums, carrying the lamp of the Gospel'.²⁶

MISSION AND EVANGELISM

During the 1820s and 1830s, there were many active Baptist evangelists in Britain. In the early 1830s the Baptist Home Missionary Society (BHMS), which dated from the late eighteenth century, was supporting over thirty, with the number growing rapidly. Charles Hill Roe, an Irishman, the travelling secretary of the Mission, drew from the methods of the American revivalist, Charles Finney, and also from the Welsh 'evangelist system', in which ministers visited other churches to encourage revival, while Thomas Pulsford led BHMS outreach in the north of England in the 1840s.²⁷ But there were difficulties of funding and doubts about the revivalist strategy. In 1865 the BHMS combined with the Baptist Irish Society, which dated from 1814. In 1882 the two home missions became formally part of the outreach of their denominational bodies.²⁸ Scottish Baptist home mission was indebted to George Barclay, minister of Irvine Baptist Church, who with his protégé, Christopher Anderson, minister of Charlotte Baptist Chapel, Edinburgh, founded the Scotch Itinerant Society in 1808. Work with other Scottish leaders, such as Robert and James Alexander Haldane, led to the Baptist

²⁵ N. Morris, *Sisters of the People: The Order of Baptist Deaconesses, 1890–1975* (Bristol, 2002), ch. 1.

²⁶ Doris M. Rose, *Baptist Deaconesses* (London, 1954), pp. 6, 8, 10.

²⁷ Derek J. Tidball, 'English Baptists and Home Missions', in Martin Wellings, ed., *Protestant Nonconformity and Christian Missions* (Milton Keynes, 2014), pp. 28–9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 30–1, and Maurice Dowling, 'Irish Baptists: Home Mission and Denominational Home Rule in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in I.M. Randall and A.R. Cross, eds., *Baptists and Mission* (Milton Keynes, 2007), p. 56.

Home Missionary Society for Scotland, founded in 1827. Twenty to thirty agents were employed annually between 1830 and 1870.²⁹

In England, John Howard Hinton, Union Secretary from 1841 to 1866, called for the 'vast slumbering' Baptist body to awake: he lamented ministerial energies being absorbed in pastoral work, with preaching of the gospel relegated to a 'secondary and less important role'. Hinton published *Individual Effort and the Active Christian*, outlining his aspirations for evangelism. His stress on the responsibility of the individual was in line with the thinking of the age.³⁰ While Hinton was seeking to influence the Union, F.B. Meyer set his sights on the wider Free Church community. When Meyer was in York in the 1870s, the arrival of the American evangelist, D.L. Moody, dramatically altered Meyer's perspective, leading him to envisage 'a wider, larger life, in which mere denominationalism could have no place'.³¹ He moved to Victoria Road Baptist Church, Leicester, but his methods of evangelism were unacceptable, and a breakaway congregation was formed in 1878, which built Melbourne Hall as its meeting place. In ten years this highly evangelistic new church, which Meyer insisted did not stress denominationalism, grew from 77 to 856 members.³² Meyer gave enthusiastic backing to the idea of Free Churches working together in evangelism. In October 1897 the first issue of *The Free Churchman* appeared, with Meyer as editor. Meyer would become Secretary of the Free Church Council and always argued that Free Churches were a powerful spiritual and evangelistic force.³³

A very significant contribution to Baptist evangelism was made by students from Spurgeon's Pastors' College. In the early decades of the College's life, this took place to a large extent through students leaving College and starting new Baptist congregations in growing urban centres. It was reported in 1872 in *The Sword and the Trowel* (Spurgeon's magazine) that over the preceding fifteen years 20,000 people had been added to the membership of churches where former students of the Pastors' College were ministers.³⁴ Over half the new churches founded within the denomination from 1865 to 1887 resulted from the activities of Spurgeon and his students.³⁵ An article in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1879 spoke of how 'numbers of young men, inspired by the teaching of

²⁹ Talbot, *Search for a Common Identity*, pp. 159, 160. See also D.W. Lovegrove, 'Particular Baptist Itinerant Preachers During the Late 18th and Early 19th Centuries', *BQ*, 28 (1979), 127–41.

³⁰ Tidball, 'Home Missions', pp. 34–8.

³¹ *Baptist Times*, 7 April 1927, 329; F.B. Meyer, *The Bells of Is: Or, Voices of Human Need and Sorrow* (London, [1894]), p. 17.

³² See I.M. Randall, '"Incarnating the Gospel": Melbourne Hall, Leicester, in the 1880s as a Model for Holistic Ministry', *BQ*, 35 (1994), 393–406.

³³ *The Free Churchman*, November 1897, 22. See E.K.H. Jordan, *Free Church Unity: A History of the Free Church Council Movement, 1896–1941* (London, 1956).

³⁴ *The Sword and the Trowel* [S and T], May 1872, 240.

³⁵ M. Nicholls, *C.H. Spurgeon: The Pastor Evangelist* (Didcot, 1992), p. 99.

Mr. Spurgeon, went out into the villages and hamlets, preaching a crusade against indifference', and observed that they were 'warmly welcomed by the people to whom they spoke'.³⁶ Lord Shaftesbury, the most prominent evangelical social reformer of the nineteenth century, was enthusiastic about Pastors' College evangelists he heard speaking at services in theatres, approving their colloquial style.³⁷ Spurgeon wanted preachers to avoid complex theological issues 'of little concern to that godly woman, with seven children to support by her needle, who wants to hear far more of the loving kindness of the God of providence than of those mysteries profound'.³⁸

No history of Baptists in the nineteenth century can be properly focused, John Briggs argues, unless it underlines Baptist commitment to world mission.³⁹ Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) work developed in various ways across continents: in India, the West Indies, the Congo and China. Joseph Angus, while secretary of the Society visited France, and BMS mission started there at the invitation of the French, led by John Jenkins and John Jones from Wales.⁴⁰ Almost a quarter of the ministerial students trained at Regent's Park under Angus went abroad as missionaries. Joseph Angus's wife Amelia was Foreign Secretary of the Ladies Association of the Baptist Missionary Society for the Support of Zenana Work and Bible Women in India.⁴¹ In 1871 Joseph Angus gave a major address to the BMS on 'Apostolic Missions', which emphasized that over the last hundred years the Bible had been translated for the first time into more than 150 languages, spoken by more than half the globe. For Angus, this was 'as mighty a work has been done in these last hundred years as in any hundred since the beginning of the Gospel'.⁴² A.T. Pierson, the missionary statesman, suggested that it was from Angus's address that the motto 'The World for Christ in our Generation' (often expressed in Student Volunteer Movement circles as 'The Evangelization of the World in this Generation') was drawn.⁴³

Spurgeon was one Baptist leader who had in mind the possibility of considerable numbers of African Americans going to Africa as missionaries.

³⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 9 May 1879, cited by W.Y. Fullerton, *C.H. Spurgeon: A Biography* (London, 1920), p. 228.

³⁷ Robert Shindler, *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit: The Life and Labours of C.H. Spurgeon* (London, 1892), pp. 142–3.

³⁸ C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students* (London, 1906), pp. 72–8.

³⁹ Briggs, *English Baptists*, p. 293.

⁴⁰ Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1992* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 213, 216.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 231. For more on the Zenana Mission see Karen E. Smith, 'Women in Cultural Captivity: British Women and the Zenana Mission', *Baptist History and Heritage*, 41 (2006), 30–41.

⁴² Joseph Angus, *Apostolic Missions: The Gospel for Every Creature. A Sermon First Preached before the Baptist Missionary Society, April 26th, 1871* (2nd edn., London, 1892), p. 8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

In 1874, he commented on how the African-American Jubilee Singers had filled the Metropolitan Tabernacle and raised enough money while in Britain to build a university, which Spurgeon hoped would send out to Africa 'an army of preachers and teachers'.⁴⁴ In 1878, Thomas Johnson and Calvin Richardson, two African Americans who had come to England and trained at Spurgeon's Pastors' College, went to West Africa with the BMS.⁴⁵ Johnson became well known through his telling of his remarkable story in *Twenty-Eight Years a Slave*. The BMS already had a Black missionary in West Africa, Joseph Jackson Fuller, a Jamaican, serving in Cameroon.⁴⁶ After their arrival in West Africa, Mr and Mrs Johnson and Mr and Mrs Richardson spent time in Sierra Leone, and Liberia, and then settled in Cameroon. Soon, however, illness struck Mrs Johnson. A fever she contracted led to her death. Johnson thanked the Metropolitan Tabernacle for support in his loss and concluded, 'Yours truly, for Africa'.⁴⁷ Johnson's future was in fact in the United States, but the Richardsons continued in Cameroon, reporting on initiatives in spreading the gospel, such as distribution among traders of copies of Spurgeon's sermons that Mrs Spurgeon had sent.⁴⁸

Baptists also campaigned for freedom to preach the gospel in areas where it was restricted. Edward Steane was the most prominent British Baptist to take up the cause of gospel liberty across Europe from the 1850s to the 1870s. After studies at Bristol Baptist College and Edinburgh University, Steane became pastor in Camberwell. His prodigious energy meant he was able successfully to combine this role with other significant responsibilities: a secretary of the Baptist Union, editor of the *Baptist Magazine*, a secretary of the Evangelical Alliance (formed in 1846), and editor of the Alliance's paper, *Evangelical Christendom*.⁴⁹ The Alliance's 1849 Conference, held in Glasgow, addressed issues of religious liberty. Plans were agreed for Sir Culling Eardley, a leading Alliance figure, Charles Cowan, a Scottish MP, Steane, and Baptist Noel, who left Anglican ministry and became a Baptist that year, to investigate issues of religious freedom in Italy.⁵⁰ Noel was to travel extensively alongside Steane in defence of evangelical minorities.⁵¹ At an Alliance Conference in Dublin in 1863, the vigorous James Henry Millard, then joint secretary with Hinton of the Baptist Union, informed delegates about Baptists in Russia whose witness was resulting in severe oppression. He asked Conference members to support the Baptist Union and the German Evangelical Alliance

⁴⁴ *S and T*, April 1874, 192.

⁴⁵ *S and T*, April 1874, 192. For background on the 'Black Atlantic' endeavour see D. Killingray, 'Black Baptists in Britain 1640–1950', *BQ*, 40 (2003), 69–89.

⁴⁶ Stanley, *Baptist Missionary Society*, p. 109.

⁴⁷ *S and T*, January 1880, 42–3.

⁴⁸ *S and T*, February 1886, 92.

⁴⁹ *Evangelical Christendom* [EC], 1 June 1882, 165–7. Steane was its editor from 1847 to 1864.

⁵⁰ For Baptist Noel see D.W. Bebbington, 'The Life of Baptist Noel', *BQ*, 24 (1972), 389–411.

⁵¹ Briggs, *English Baptists*, p. 234.

in approaching Russian government officials about freedom for Baptists, and this was agreed.⁵²

These international efforts also involved lobbying non-Christian Turkey.⁵³ Against the background of executions of Muslims who had turned to Christianity, it was agreed in 1855 that an approach should be made to the Sultan for 'the establishment of real religious freedom' in the Turkish Empire. The Evangelical Alliance highlighted that it was 'still a capital offence for a Turk to make a profession of Christianity', but made clear that it did not want 'to oppose such an evil in the spirit of the crusaders upholding the Cross in the East by exterminating the Crescent!' The statement continued: 'In entreating your Majesty to adopt this course, we are unanimous in desiring that the whole of Europe should practise what the Allied Powers would enjoin on Turkey.'⁵⁴ Steane was astounded when in February of the following year the Sultan's edict allowed 'all forms of religion' to be 'freely professed', and proclaimed that 'no subject shall be hindered in the exercise of the religion that he professes, nor shall be in any way annoyed on this account'. Steane wrote in his preface to the publication of the edict that this 'extraordinary' document was a 'triumph' for the cause of religious liberty.⁵⁵ The outcome in practice was mixed, although equality remained the official position of the Ottoman Empire, but the whole venture was tribute to the intermingling of libertarian and missionary impulses in nineteenth-century Baptist thought and activity.

WORKING TOGETHER

Despite the individualism of the period, Baptists made advances in working together. Associations had characterized seventeenth-century Baptist life, but the first national Union, the General Union of Baptist Ministers and Churches, was not formed until 1813, designed for Particular Baptists. The meeting in 1812 that agreed to form a Union attracted sixty English Baptist ministers, perhaps one-sixth of the total. Among those from outside London were Andrew Fuller, secretary of the BMS, John Sutcliff from Olney, and John Ryland from Bristol. London, Northamptonshire, Bristol, and Kent were

⁵² Evangelical Alliance Executive Council Minutes, 4 November 1863. See I.M. Randall and David Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance* (Carlisle, 2001), p. 93.

⁵³ I.M. Randall, *Religious Liberty in Continental Europe: Campaigning by British Baptists, 1840s–1930s* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 11–12.

⁵⁴ *EC*, 9 (1855), 299.

⁵⁵ 'Religious Liberty in Turkey: Firman and Hati-Sherif by the Sultan, Relative to Privileges and Reforms in Turkey', in *Evangelical Christendom*, 10 (1856), 117–21.

important areas of Particular Baptist strength. No representatives came from the north, yet there were nineteen Baptist churches in Lancashire and twenty-nine in Yorkshire. Travel had perhaps been a major difficulty. Two of the influential leaders of the new Union were London ministers: John Rippon of Carter's Lane and Joseph Ivimey at Eagle Street. Ivimey also wrote what became a standard history of Baptists. Among the primary aims of the Union were cooperation, developing the best methods for teaching in Sunday Schools, support of mission at home and abroad, encouraging the Colleges, and contributing to the Particular Baptist Fund and Widows' Fund. An explicitly Calvinistic basis of faith was adopted, echoing the 1689 Particular Baptist Confession of Faith.⁵⁶

The Union was re-organized in 1832 and subsequently described as a Union of Baptist ministers and churches 'who agree in the sentiments usually denominated evangelical'. This was designed to make possible cooperation with the New Connexion of General Baptists. As Briggs comments: 'Evangelicalism, with its powerful missionary concern, was parent to the desire for greater unity.'⁵⁷ The aims of the Union were unity, information, and advance. The 1832 Reform Act plus the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts meant that there was a new spirit of acceptance of Dissent in the nation: the stage seemed set for advance. It was not that all Baptists wished to work in the new Union. Strict Baptists emerged as a separate body, with such leaders as William Gadsby (in Manchester), John Warburton, and John Kershaw. These Baptists not only practised strict communion, but were high Calvinists, denying 'free offers' of the gospel and so-called 'duty faith'. Their main magazine was *The Gospel Standard*, which began in 1835. By editing it, J.C. Philpot became the most erudite advocate of Strict Baptist distinctiveness.⁵⁸ Within the Baptist Union, too, there were tensions over open and closed Communion and open membership. Also, out of nearly 2,000 churches about a quarter were not linked with local Associations. However, in 1868 the *Baptist Magazine* noted a change in the denominational spirit: 'The isolation which has so long characterized our body is yielding fast to a general growth of Christian love.'⁵⁹

Movements of revival assisted unity and growth. In the period beginning in 1857 there was a transatlantic revival, often associated with the year '1859'.⁶⁰ United prayer meetings of Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Independents, and Baptists were held in Ireland, one—at which Baptist Noel

⁵⁶ Ernest Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History* (London, 1959), pp. 15–27.

⁵⁷ Briggs, *English Baptists*, p. 107.

⁵⁸ For Strict Baptists see Kenneth Dix, *Strict and Particular: English Strict and Particular Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot, 2001).

⁵⁹ *Baptist Magazine*, November 1868, 689.

⁶⁰ See Ian Randall, *Rhythms of Revival: The Spiritual Awakening of 1857–1863* (Milton Keynes, 2010).

was a speaker—attracting 20,000 people.⁶¹ In Wales, Baptists were similarly involved. In March 1859 David Morgan, the leading figure associated with the revival in Wales, preached at Bethel Baptist Church, Cayo, and although Morgan found it difficult, the Baptist minister saw it as a remarkable service in which Morgan's appeals were extraordinarily powerful. Up to eighty people asked for baptism and the first to be baptized was Timothy Richard, who became one of the most outstanding missionaries in China of his generation. Brian Stanley describes him as 'an original and controversial missionary thinker without parallel in the [Baptist Missionary] Society's history'.⁶² Some Baptist churches, however, lost members in this revival period. For example, William McLean, a Baptist in Peterhead (in the North-East of Scotland), left his church as a result of a local awakening and established a Brethren assembly.⁶³

The formation of interdenominational bodies was another important feature in enabling Baptists to work with others. The British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) was of great significance. In an address delivered in 1803, a year before the formation of the BFBS, John Rippon spoke in 'ecumenical' terms of the progress of evangelical faith, noting advances in the Church of England and among Dissenters and Methodists, while reserving—in words that echoed William Carey—his most effusive words for 'these eminent *Missionaries*, the MORAVIANS'.⁶⁴ Baptists became involved in the Bible Society and also, later (and not without debate about cooperation with Anglicans), in the Evangelical Alliance. Such cooperation could at times cause tensions, for example in the case of a *contretemps* between Edward Millard, a Baptist who was BFBS overseer in Vienna, covering the Austrian Empire, and an Irish Presbyterian missionary, Dunlop Moore. In May 1870, Moore wrote to the President of the BFBS, Lord Shaftesbury, to say he had been a missionary in India and worked with the Bible Society there, but that he could not accept the fact that in Vienna the BFBS did not have the 'unsectarian character which is the design of its supporters'. He alleged that, principally through Millard, it had become 'mixed up with Baptist propaganda'. Millard made a robust response and in June wrote to the London Secretaries of the BFBS to thank them for their vindication of his position.⁶⁵

⁶¹ John Weir, *Irish Revivals: The Ulster Awakening: Its Origin, Progress, and Fruit* (London, 1860), pp. 151–3.

⁶² Stanley, *Baptist Missionary Society*, pp. 180–1. For Wales see Thomas Philips, *The Welsh Revival: Its Origin and Development* (Edinburgh, 1989 edn.).

⁶³ Neil Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland, 1838–2000: A Social History of an Evangelical Movement* (Carlisle, 2002), p. 83.

⁶⁴ J. Rippon, *A Discourse Delivered at the Drum Head*, pp. 37–8, cited by Ken Manley, 'Redeeming Love Proclaim': John Rippon and the Baptists (Carlisle, 2004), pp. 252–3.

⁶⁵ Edward Millard, Report to British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) Secretaries, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, pp. 236–7; Edward Millard to BFBS Secretaries, 30 June 1870, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, p. 283.

The main challenge to Particular and General Baptists, who remained as separate bodies, was whether they could find a way to unite. There was talk of union with the New Connexion from 1857. As the main New Connexion spokesman, John Clifford insisted that the Connexion would not accept Calvinism as a basis. Clifford defended what he called his 'scriptural, broad, and anti-Calvinistic creed'.⁶⁶ His theology, which centred upon the Kingdom of God, was an expansive—'broad'—one. Clifford had been a factory worker in Nottingham, then studied for ministry at the New Connexion Midland College, Leicester. In 1858 he became pastor of Praed Street, London. The congregation moved to a larger building, in Westbourne Park, which Clifford made a centre for progressive thought and social initiatives. Spurgeon, the most prominent representative of Calvinistic doctrine, spoke warmly in 1874 of the New Connexion, suggesting: 'It may be said that we have gone down to these brethren [General Baptists] quite as much as they have come up to us, and this is very possible; if truth lies in the valley between these two camps, or if it comprehends both, it is well for us to follow it wherever it goes.'⁶⁷ S.H. Booth, Secretary of the Baptist Union from 1877, was a central figure in progress towards union, and in 1891 the New Connexion merged with the Particular Baptists. McBeth considers that this merger 'spread General Baptist Christology throughout the denomination'—he appears to mean a tendency towards Unitarianism.⁶⁸ Yet the uniting of the two streams of Baptist life was rather, as John Briggs puts it, an exercise in 'Evangelical Ecumenism'.⁶⁹ The move clearly expressed an instinct for wider fellowship.

THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

The writings of several Baptists in the early nineteenth century enhanced the scholarly standing of the denomination. Theological contributors included Andrew Fuller, Robert Hall, John Foster, and Joseph Hughes. Samuel Taylor Coleridge called Hughes, the secretary of the BFBS, a 'worthy and enlightened man'.⁷⁰ Angus, at Regent's Park, was influential throughout the middle decades of the century. He prepared for the Religious Tract Society his *Bible Handbook* (1853), which was very extensively used in the English-speaking world and translated into French, Italian, Welsh, Armenian, and Hungarian.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Briggs, *English Baptists*, p. 117.

⁶⁷ *S and T*, January 1874, 52.

⁶⁸ H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN, 1987), p. 517.

⁶⁹ J.H.Y. Briggs, 'Evangelical Ecumenism: The Amalgamation of General and Particular Baptists in 1891', *BQ*, 34 (1991), 99–115 and 160–79.

⁷⁰ Briggs, *English Baptists*, p. 160.

⁷¹ Joseph Angus, *The Bible Handbook: An Introduction to the Study of Sacred Scripture* (London, 1854).

Briggs notes that although this work 'only timidly relates' to issues of biblical criticism, Angus voiced certain criticisms of inaccuracies in the King James Version of the Bible.⁷² His interest in this issue, together with his known scholarship, meant he was invited to join with scholars engaged in the production of the Revised Version of the Bible. Angus served in the New Testament team with Anglicans such as J.B. Lightfoot and B.F. Westcott. Angus was also given the task of overseeing the USA–British coordination of the revision process. The teams worked for ten years, from 1870, to produce the Revised Version of the New Testament. Following the completion of this time-consuming task, Angus wrote a commentary on Hebrews for a volume in Philip Schaff's *International Commentary on the New Testament*, which used the Revised Version text.⁷³ Angus was concerned to promote a theology which was scholarly and solidly biblically grounded.

Although Angus probably represented the theological position of most Baptists—a moderate evangelical one—Spurgeon became concerned that liberal theology was increasing in the denomination. It is not that Spurgeon was on the lookout for errors to attack. He warned in an address in 1874: 'Don't go about the world with your fist doubled up for fighting, carrying a theological revolver in the leg of your trousers.'⁷⁴ But in 1886 he struck a gloomy note, stating: 'Our day-dreams are over: we shall neither convert the world to righteousness nor the church to orthodoxy... I fear that both church and world are beyond us; we must be content with smaller spheres. Even our own denomination must go its own way.'⁷⁵ Warnings about a theological 'Down Grade', especially among Nonconformists, appeared in *The Sword and Trowel* in 1887.⁷⁶ Spurgeon's struggle, he said in April 1887, was against those 'who are giving up the atoning sacrifice, denying the inspiration of Holy Scripture, and casting slurs upon justification by faith'. In August 1887 he wrote in similar vein: 'The Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into a fiction, and the resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren and maintain a confederacy with them.'⁷⁷

Spurgeon increasingly accused the Baptist Union of harbouring people who were abandoning the evangelical faith, and in October 1887 he withdrew from the Union. In announcing this he spoke of 'the wretched spectacle of

⁷² Briggs, *English Baptists*, p. 190.

⁷³ Philip Schaff, ed., *The International Revision Commentary on the New Testament: Based Upon the Revised Version of 1881* (New York, 1882).

⁷⁴ *S and T*, March 1874, 101–5.

⁷⁵ *S and T*, June 1886, 255–7.

⁷⁶ See M.T.E. Hopkins, 'Spurgeon's Opponents in the Downgrade Controversy', *BQ*, 32 (1988), 274–94; M.T.E. Hopkins, 'The Down Grade Controversy: New Evidence', *BQ*, 35 (1994), 262–78.

⁷⁷ *S and T*, April 1887, 195–6; *S and T*, August 1887, 397.

professedly orthodox Christians publicly avowing their union with those who deny the faith', alleging that such Unions were beginning to look like 'Confederacies in Evil'. His own position was now 'independency', although 'tempered by the love of the Spirit which binds us to all the faithful in Christ Jesus'.⁷⁸ This was a major crisis for the Union. Joseph Angus joined with two other Baptist leaders, Charles Williams and John Aldis, to write to *The Freeman* on 18 November 1887 stating that the Union had been and was evangelical.⁷⁹ William Landels of Regents Park Chapel also came to the Union's defence. Angus considered that a proper response would be a declaration outlining the evangelical beliefs of the Union. A draft document drawn up by Angus was discussed with Spurgeon in December 1887, but many Baptist Union Council members were unhappy that this appeared to be an imposed creed.⁸⁰ Further discussions took place involving Spurgeon's brother, J.A. Spurgeon (who had studied under Angus), and at the Baptist Assembly in April 1888 the declaration—similar in wording to the Evangelical Alliance's statement of faith, although noting a variety of belief among Baptists about eternal punishment—was overwhelmingly agreed as expressing the doctrines 'commonly believed by the Churches of the Union'.⁸¹ This episode did not draw Spurgeon back into the Union but nonetheless illustrates its moderate evangelical theology.

Who, then, did Spurgeon think had embraced liberal theology? One possibility is Samuel Cox, who was minister of Mansfield Road, Nottingham, from 1863 to 1888, who contributed to Baptist thinking about the 'larger hope'—the possibility that the whole human race might eventually be saved. Cox wrote *Salvator Mundi: Or is Christ the Saviour of All Men?* (1877). He was the founding editor of *The Expositor*, and in this role he introduced to Britain ideas about textual criticism being promulgated in Germany. Yet Cox and Spurgeon seem to have been good friends.⁸² The three ministers most often associated with Spurgeon's Down Grade concerns were W.E. Blomfield, J.G. Greenhough, and James Thew, all of whom had trained at Rawdon College. David Bebbington has noted that one of Spurgeon's scrapbooks drew attention to offending remarks by Greenhough, who said: 'Our preaching of hell wins none but the base and cowardly'.⁸³ But there were those of Spurgeon's own College circle who had similar doubts about preaching eternal punishment. One former Pastors' College student, R.P. Javan, from New Basford, Nottingham, refused in the aftermath of the Down Grade to pronounce in favour of eternal torment. He was supported by another

⁷⁸ *S and T*, November 1887, 560.

⁷⁹ *The Freeman* [TF], 18 November 1887, 759.

⁸⁰ Mark Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation: Evangelical and Liberal Theologies in Victorian England* (Carlisle, 2004), p. 209.

⁸¹ Payne, *Baptist Union*, pp. 140–2.

⁸² Briggs, *English Baptists*, pp. 167–70.

⁸³ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1995), p. 146.

former student, G.W. Tooley, who argued that Spurgeon had previously seen those with a 'larger hope' as 'rash' or 'too broad', whereas now they were condemned.⁸⁴

Spurgeon expected considerable numbers of ministers to leave the large London Baptist Association (LBA), as he had done after leaving the Union, and forming 'a body and a rallying point in London'.⁸⁵ Many London ministers had been trained at the Pastors' College. In the light of this, the Association held a special meeting. An LBA committee was set up to produce a statement of belief. This group included Joseph Angus, Clifford, and Meyer. Commenting on the approach of the committee, Clifford said that he had been surprised by the unanimity of doctrinal opinion belonging to supposedly opposing members. Meyer, for his part, talked about the 'heartly good feeling' in the committee.⁸⁶ As with the Union statement, the LBA declaration which the committee formulated restated traditional evangelical doctrines.⁸⁷ The LBA formally adopted it as its theological standpoint and division was averted.

Ernest Payne, at the end of his discussion of the Down Grade, notes that in the face of what could have been a very serious schism in the Union, the churches and Union leaders 'showed themselves determined to maintain the structure of corporate life which had been built up'. Regarding the theological situation, he comments on 'changing ways of thought and expression', but argues that churches and leaders did not doubt the general loyalty of the denomination to 'evangelical religion'.⁸⁸ Although controversy was dying down following the Baptist Assembly of 1888, prior to the 1889 Union meetings there was an attack on John Clifford in the conservative weekly, *The Baptist*, based on a newspaper report of one of his speeches. Some of Spurgeon's followers, like Spurgeon himself, undoubtedly felt bitter about the failure—as they saw it—of a great many evangelicals to support Spurgeon. Meyer came quickly to Clifford's defence.⁸⁹ When Spurgeon's death in 1892 prompted more reflection on the theological controversies in which he had been embroiled, Meyer, who always sought to find ways to reconcile people, wrote in a tribute that in his opinion depression had clouded something of Spurgeon's clear vision and had meant that he looked at faults in the denomination as they were presented to him by 'weaker and narrower minds'.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ See letters from R.P. Javan and G.W. Tooley, cited in I.M. Randall, 'Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Pastors' College and the Downgrade Controversy', in K. Cooper and J. Gregory, eds., *Discipline and Diversity* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 366–76.

⁸⁵ *S and T*, December 1888, 652.

⁸⁶ *TF*, 28 September 1888, 637; 19 October 1888, 702; 11 January 1889, 19.

⁸⁷ *TF*, 19 October 1888, 689.

⁸⁸ Payne, *Baptist Union*, p. 143.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁹⁰ *TF*, 5 February 1892, 86.

BAPTIST SPIRITUALITY

There was a strong strand in Baptist spirituality which advocated active effort in the living of the Christian life. This can be seen in Hinton's *Active Christian* and also his *Means of a Religious Revival*, in which he stressed human instrumentality in revival.⁹¹ Spurgeon, alongside his conviction of God's sovereignty and also his intense spirituality, stressed action. He spoke in 'A Revival Sermon' in 1860 of contemporary evidence for 'life' and 'vigour'. 'Everybody seems to have a mission', he pronounced, 'and everybody is doing it. There may be a great many sluggards, but they do not come across my path now. I used to be always kicking at them, and always being kicked for doing so. But now there is nothing to kick at—every one is at work—Church of England, Independents, Methodists, and Baptists.' Typically, Spurgeon was looking for more, hoping that through 'God's ploughmen and vine dressers' there would be further power—'that God will bless us, and that right early'.⁹² It was also Spurgeon's belief that genuine spirituality was worked out in ordinary life rather than in any experience detached from it. Thus students at the College were boarded in ordinary households, not with the wealthy, thus being 'kept in connection with the struggles and conditions of everyday life'.⁹³

Joseph Angus, following a similar approach, spoke in 1862 about the church as 'the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit'. For him, the Spirit's work in the church was to be seen in what he called 'the personal devotedness of every member', with each member contributing to the whole. 'The Christian church', said Angus, 'is based on the consecrated activity of all its members. The scope it gives to individual development, and the power for good it brings into play, fit it for the great work to which the church is called.' This work was 'to give the Gospel to the world'.⁹⁴ In these statements, Angus highlighted the priority he gave to spiritual experience. But Angus also recognized that churches could suffer divisions and jealousy and could forget the secret of their true strength, which Angus delineated as 'piety, spirituality, holiness, the special presence, the recognised and incessant presidency, of their Lord'.⁹⁵ In an address to the Baptist Union Autumn Annual Meetings of 1863, Angus argued that the 'success' of churches was 'proportionate to the presence and grace of the Holy Spirit'. Christians were called to be holy and to make others holy, all through the power of the Spirit.⁹⁶ Angus identified himself with the widespread cry in the mid-nineteenth century: 'We need more of the Spirit.'

⁹¹ Tidball, 'Home Missions', p. 35.

⁹² C.H. Spurgeon, 'A Revival Sermon', *The New Park Street Pulpit*, 6 vols (new edn., London, 1964), VI: p. 84.

⁹³ *S and T*, April 1870, 149.

⁹⁴ Angus, *Christian Churches*, p. 59.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–2.

⁹⁶ Joseph Angus, *Christian Churches: Their Success Proportionate to the Presence and Grace of the Holy Spirit* (London, 1865), p. 3.

His advice to Baptist church members was to study God's truth, to 'keep your hearts in contact with it', and to '[g]et out of it more of the power that is already latent there'.⁹⁷ The priority for Angus of an active, communal spirituality grounded in Scripture could not have been more clearly expressed.

There was, however, a new influence on Baptist spirituality in the 1880s. In 1887 a letter from Meyer appeared in *The Freeman*, suggesting the formation of a 'prayer union' of Baptist ministers. Meyer explained that he had met with ministers, across the country, who were 'anxiously seeking more spiritual power to meet the unrest and worldliness of our times'. Without mentioning the Keswick Convention, Meyer was clearly referring to ministers associated with that holiness ethos. 'From these wider circles', he continued, 'I turn to the body with which most of the ministers who read these pages are connected'. The Keswick circles were 'wider' because Keswick was interdenominational. Meyer's suggestion was that Baptist ministers 'earnestly desirous of more of that power which is promised' formed a bond of union. Meyer concluded by asking those wishing to pray for each other each Sunday to send a postcard to him. He would then arrange a meeting. Meyer was aware of potential reactions against this proposal to set up a union within the Union.⁹⁸ Initially the idea was welcomed, although in September 1887 *The Freeman* printed a slightly more guarded comment, warning that it was doubtful if spiritual power could be defined. However, it expressed pleasure that a considerable number of ministers had responded to Meyer's initiative.⁹⁹ At this stage few Baptists were involved in Keswick, which was predominantly Anglican. It was thus Meyer's Baptist Ministers' and Missionaries' Prayer Union (as it was named) which introduced it to the wider denomination.

Whereas there was a stress on activism in much Baptist spirituality, Keswick emphasized the 'rest of faith'. The Prayer Union organized conferences, or 'retreats' (a word at that time not normally used outside Catholic or Anglo-Catholic circles), covering such typical Keswick Convention themes as 'confession and consecration' or 'power for service'. From a membership at the end of 1887 of 268, numbers gradually increased. By September 1888, when a three-day conference was held in London, there were 357 members, about 100 of whom attended. Membership was 770 by 1896 and although it did not grow much larger, this was significant in the context of a total of about 2,000 Baptist ministers.¹⁰⁰ When the Prayer Union first came into being, George Wainwright, a Baptist minister from Manchester, was the Secretary. In 1889, an official denominational call was issued to Baptists to spend a day in prayer for the 'outpouring of the Spirit of God'.¹⁰¹ Two Prayer Union speakers

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

⁹⁸ *TF*, 20 May 1887, 336.

⁹⁹ *TF*, 30 September 1887, 629.

¹⁰⁰ *TF*, 12 July 1888, 474; 2 December 1887, 801; 14 September 1888, 604–5; 25 September 1896, 505.

¹⁰¹ *TF*, 4 October 1889, 641; 25 October 1889, 705.

in 1890 were David Davies of Brighton and W.P. Lockhart of Liverpool, both well known in the denomination. An enthusiastic supporter wrote to *The Freeman* in 1890 to say that a quiet spiritual revolution was taking place. The Prayer Union was, it was claimed, bringing under its influence 'the entire ministry of our denomination'.¹⁰² By 1896 Congregational ministers were joining with Baptists in the Quiet Days, or retreats, which were reported as becoming quieter every year.¹⁰³ A contemplative approach to spirituality had taken root in Baptist life.

Marianne Farningham, who was one of the leading female Baptists of the nineteenth century, is an example of someone who was activist in her approach—she was deeply involved in educational work and in varied aspects of public life, for example as a popular lecturer—and who then encountered a different, arguably deeper strand of spirituality. Linda Wilson draws the threads of Farningham's life together in exploring what was the foundation for all her action and writings: a relationship with Christ. A significant event in her spiritual journey was the huge Brighton Convention of 1875, which paved the way for the Keswick Convention. Farningham found the Brighton meetings, with their stress on deeper consecration, fresh and helpful, especially the addresses by an American Quaker, Hannah Pearsall Smith. Farningham wrote about 'a spirituality based on serving Christ, but full of anxiety and fear, being changed into one of joyfulness and trust in God'. This sense of liberation remained with her throughout her life.¹⁰⁴

A final strand of spirituality that was influential in the nineteenth century was Wesleyan holiness. This affected Oswald Chambers, later best known for the classic work, *My Utmost for His Highest*. In 1897, when he was on the staff of a small Bible College in Dunoon, Scotland, Chambers, whose father was a Baptist minister, heard Meyer speak about the Holy Spirit. Chambers recalled: 'I determined to have all that was going and went to my room and asked God simply and definitely for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, whatever that meant.' Contrary to his expectations of spiritual blessing, Chambers then had, as he described it, no conscious communion with God for four years. Although continuing as a popular evangelical teacher, he considered this period—a 'dark night of the soul'—to have been inner hell on earth. It was through a Wesleyan holiness organization, the Pentecostal League of Prayer, which stressed entire sanctification, that Chambers found spiritual freedom. His decisive experience, according to his testimony, was that following a League of Prayer event, '[b]y an entire consecration and acceptance of sanctification at the Lord's hands, I was baptized with the Holy Ghost'.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² *TF*, 9 May 1890, 306.

¹⁰³ *The Freeman*, 25 September 1896, 505.

¹⁰⁴ Linda Wilson, *Marianne Farningham: A Plain Woman Worker* (Milton Keynes, 2007), p. 195.

¹⁰⁵ 'B.C.' [Biddy Chambers], *Oswald Chambers: His Life and Work* (London, 1933), pp. 28, 78, 79.

SOCIO-POLITICAL ACTION

Campaigning by Baptists for social change was increasingly in evidence as the century progressed. Baptists sought equality for Nonconformists in areas such as education and political involvement. However, they were not simply concerned about their own rights. They wanted to apply their conscience to a range of issues.¹⁰⁶ In 1830, Benjamin Godwin of Bradford called for the immediate abolition of slavery in British territories. He argued that gradual abolition, which was widely favoured, would 'never put an end to the crying sin of Britain and planters'.¹⁰⁷ The condition of slaves had been highlighted by BMS missionaries in Jamaica such as William Knibb, who with his wife, Mary, had been shocked to discover the brutal treatment of slaves by planters and was ashamed that he belonged to a nation that was indulging in such atrocities. Planters, for their part, became irritated at such criticisms, and a new Slave Law was passed in Jamaica 1826 to restrict the activity of preachers there.¹⁰⁸ In 1830, Knibb supported a deacon in his congregation, Sam Swiney, a slave, who had been sentenced to whipping and hard labour for having led a prayer meeting. Knibb clashed with the magistrates and with George Bridges, the local Rector, who defended the slave owners and for whom Dissenting missionaries were dangerous enemies of the established order.¹⁰⁹

Knibb became politically disruptive through his crucial evidence to Britain's political leaders about how British landowners were treating slaves.¹¹⁰ There was an intensified colonial backlash against the missionaries following a slave revolt led by a Baptist deacon, Sam Sharpe, in 1831, and in the following year, back in Britain, Knibb addressed a large meeting at Exeter Hall in London. BMS leaders had been wary about being drawn into political campaigning, and Knibb stated that his cause was not political but religious and moral. He continued:

there is nothing more delightful than to stand forward as the advocate of the innocent and persecuted; and when I consider that on the present occasion I appear before an assembly of my countrymen on behalf of the persecuted African, I find in the fact a reward for all the sufferings, in character and person, which I have endured in the cause as a missionary for the last eight years. . . . All I ask is, that my African brother may stand in the family of man; that my African

¹⁰⁶ D.W. Bebbington, 'The Baptist Conscience in the Nineteenth Century', *BQ*, 34 (1991), 13–24.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁸ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago, IL, 2002), pp. 98–100.

¹⁰⁹ Stanley, *Baptist Missionary Society*, pp. 74–5; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 101–2.

¹¹⁰ See E.A. Payne, *Freedoms in Jamaica: Some Chapters in the History of the Baptist Missionary Society* (London, 1933).

sister shall, while she clasps her tender infant to her breast, be allowed to call it her own.¹¹¹

Knibb's position was that God 'views all nations as one flesh' and as a result slavery should be abolished, preferably before the death of William Wilberforce. Knibb's address was greeted with deafening applause. He went on to mobilize public opinion across the country and also gave evidence to Parliamentary committees. Reluctance by the BMS to enter politics was overcome. Freedom came, and very large numbers of freed men and women joined Baptist chapels in Jamaica.¹¹²

At home, local Baptist churches were actively involved in social ministry. Bloomsbury Chapel had a mission in Seven Dials, where the missionary G.W. McCree did effective work among the destitute and starving.¹¹³ The Bloomsbury minister, the outward-looking William Brock, encouraged London Baptists to emerge from what he termed their 'obscure sanctuaries' and take a higher profile in city life.¹¹⁴ In 1859, John Clifford was talking about the Praed Street Baptist Church in London, where he was the minister, as existing to 'save souls and bodies' and to increase 'social good'.¹¹⁵ The idea of the 'Institutional Church' was promoted by Clifford and others, with Melbourne Hall in Leicester, for example, organizing eighty-three widely varied meetings in the building each week.¹¹⁶ From the 1880s and under the inspiration of the Wesleyan leader Hugh Price Hughes, the Baptist Forward Movement furthered the practical and social work of Baptist chapels in poor areas. One Baptist project was the provision of a lodging house for men in a street off High Holborn. At the end of 1890 Dr Percy Lush, an elder at Regent's Park Chapel, was engaged in medical mission and was seeing thirty or forty patients a week.¹¹⁷

In the later nineteenth century, many Baptists were hopeful that the Liberal Party could help them to achieve their aspirations for a society blessed not only by equality but also by temperance and moral purity. Several Baptists were elected as Liberal MPs by constituencies in England and Wales. Probably the best known was Sir Morton Peto, of Bloomsbury Chapel.¹¹⁸ The socially aware 'Nonconformist Conscience' that many Baptists affirmed attempted to

¹¹¹ J.H. Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb, Missionary in Jamaica* (London, 1847), pp. 154–5.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 155–6; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 113–15.

¹¹³ For the Seven Dials Mission, see Faith Bowers, 'Religion Amongst the Proprieties of Life: George M'Cree and the Bloomsbury Domestic Mission', *BQ*, 33 (1989), 29–37.

¹¹⁴ For Brock and Bloomsbury see Faith Bowers, *A Bold Experiment: The Story of Bloomsbury Chapel and Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 1848–1999* (London, 1999).

¹¹⁵ David Thompson, 'John Clifford's Social Gospel', *BQ*, 31 (1986), 202–3.

¹¹⁶ *Worship and Work*, October 1885, 2.

¹¹⁷ *TF*, 20 September 1889, 613; 12 December 1890, 820.

¹¹⁸ D.W. Bebbington, 'Baptist Members of Parliament, 1847–1914', *BQ*, 29 (1981), 51–63.

apply moral principles to public life.¹¹⁹ The industrial disputes of 1888–9, particularly the London Dockers' Strike, prompted Clifford to assert that Christian brotherhood would, in his view, gain by the strike, a view informed by his growing commitment to the social gospel.¹²⁰ Local Free Church Councils multiplied in the 1890s, with social affairs one of their central concerns. From 1896, when the National Council representing the Free Churches was formed, political issues became more prominent. The Council became for a time the voice of the Nonconformist Conscience, specifically calling for an infusion of public life with evangelical faith. The early twentieth century, however, would see the gradual waning of the political aspirations of Baptists and other Nonconformists.

CONCLUSION

The nineteenth century was a century of advance for Baptists in Britain on a number of fronts. The Baptist community had gifted leaders who shared a common vision for mission and evangelism. There were differences of opinion among Baptists on a number of issues, but the overall picture was one of Baptists working more closely with each other and with other evangelicals. Baptist life could have suffered serious division when Spurgeon, the best known Baptist minister in the Victorian era, resigned from the Union, but the bonds holding Baptists together were strong enough to survive this shock. The commitment of Baptists was to evangelical theology, but this was not taken to mean that everyone had to agree on all disputed points. There was a widespread desire for authentic spirituality, which was found in different evangelical traditions. Finally, Baptists wished to see their spiritual vision and the implementation of this making a difference in the world. At least in the nineteenth century, they could feel that their desire was being fulfilled.

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¹¹⁹ See D.W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics 1870–1914* (London, 1982).

¹²⁰ I.M. Randall, 'The Social Gospel: A Case Study', in John Wolfe, ed., *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain, 1780–1950* (London, 1995), p. 158.

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Quakers

Thomas C. Kennedy

The British Society of Friends entered the nineteenth century in the grip of quietist practices that had dominated Quakerism for a hundred years. After the passage of the Toleration Act (1689) and the death of its founding prophet George Fox (1691), the Society had gradually ceased the aggressive proselytizing that reflected its early radical and egalitarian rejection of war, 'hireling priests', 'steeple houses', oaths, titles, and honours in the quest 'to turn people from darkness to leadings from Light of Christ Within', their central religious principle.¹ Turning inward and largely ceasing to attract new converts, Friends had adopted peculiarities of worship, dress, speech, marriage, and lifestyle. Quaker religious organization was based on dozens of semi-autonomous monthly meetings for worship and business under the auspices of London Yearly Meeting (LYM), which issued *Minutes* and *Epistles* for the spiritual and practical guidance of local meetings. The quaintly named Meeting for Sufferings, a committee formed to mitigate the effects of early persecution, emerged as an executive committee, handling questions and concerns between annual London gatherings. At every level, Quaker meetings were presided over by a Clerk who, after hearing the opinions and suggestions of those present, would determine 'the sense of the meeting' without a vote.² Under the influence of powerful elders and overseers exercising close disciplinary authority, Quakerism became a 'hermit-like society' of peculiar people, living in the world but not of it. Still, for all their separation from worldly folk, Quakers remained Dissenters

¹ John L. Nickalls, ed., *The Journal of George Fox* (London, 1952), p. 34.

² The standard works on early Friends are William Charles Braithwaite's two volumes in the Rowntree Series, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (2nd edn., Cambridge, 1955) and *The Second Period of Quakerism* (2nd edn., Cambridge, 1961). Irish Friends are less well served by historians, but Maurice J. Whigham's *The Irish Quakers: A Short History of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland* (Dublin, 1992) is a useful survey.

of the extreme sort. They would not swear oaths; they would not do 'hat honour' to any person, however exalted by men; they would not recognize sacred days or events; they would not perform military duties; they would not pay tithes to the Established Church and accepted restraint of their property rather than pay church rates. Still, Friends, widely recognized for honesty and fair dealing, often prospered in business and manufacturing. As John Wilhelm Rowntree, a leader in the transformation of late nineteenth-century Quakerism, put it, Friends turned from the 'apostolic vision of the Kingdom of God to the prose of Quietism and Commerce'.³

The Gurneys of Norwich were one highly successful Quaker banking family. Elizabeth, born in 1780, the third daughter of John and Catherine Gurney, seemed destined to follow the solid matronly life of a wealthy Quaker woman. After she married Joseph Fry, another banker, in 1800 and moved to London, Elizabeth Fry began to live the quiet, respectable life of a Quaker wife and mother. She did eventually give birth to eleven children and fulfilled her religious duties as a minister in her local meeting. But the influence of two visiting Friends, William Savery from America and the Frenchman Stephen Grellet, added a new dimension to her life. At their urging, she began to visit London's notorious Newgate Gaol. Appalled by the crowded, unsanitary, immoral conditions she found there, especially among women and the children brought into prison with them, she embarked on a life-long quest to raise the physical and moral standards of British prisons. After founding an organization to aid female prisoners at Newgate, Fry wrote influential expository books on the horrors of prison life. Her testimony before a Parliamentary Committee gained the attention of Home Secretary Robert Peel, who introduced a Gaols Act (1823) with the object of creating minimum standards for all British prisons. This proved to be only the barest start for prison reform, but Elizabeth did not cease her efforts on behalf of prisoners, the homeless, and orphans. Among Elizabeth Fry's admirers, while she lived, were Queen Victoria and King Frederick William IV of Prussia. After her death in 1845, Elizabeth Fry was honoured as the 'Angel of Prisons', a shining example of Christian living for her fellow Quakers and the British nation.⁴

³ John William Rowntree, 'The Outlook', *Present Day Papers (PDP)*, II, 1899, 9. Most instructive for post seventeenth-century Friends are Rufus M. Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 2 vols (London, 1921) and Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (New York, 1988), a valuable updating of earlier works. John Punshon, *A Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers* (London, 1984) is insightful and accessible. Two books by Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge, 2007) and *The Liturgies of Quakerism* (Aldershot, 2005), are excellent guides.

⁴ A good biography is Jane Rose, *Elizabeth Fry* (London, 1980).

A REASONABLE FAITH? EVANGELICALISM, THE INNER LIGHT, AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF QUAKERISM

In a *Portraiture of the Society of Friends* (1806) Thomas Clarkson described Quakers as a community unaffected by the political, social, and intellectual currents of British society.⁵ But, even as Clarkson wrote, serious tensions were stirring among Friends drawn by the opposing currents of the Evangelical Revival and enlightened rationalism. An early example of this budding conflict came in Ireland in 1798. Abraham Shackleton, a pious schoolmaster, expressed the opinion that Scriptural passages depicting God as commanding the Hebrews to slaughter their neighbours demeaned a righteous Divinity and drew Friends away from the pursuit of truth through the Inward Light.⁶ When he refused to rescind these views, he was disowned by his monthly meeting. This Irish schism led London Yearly Meeting to refuse a travelling ministry to an American Friend, Hannah Barnard, who seemed to support Shackleton's position by questioning some biblical accounts. Barnard was also eventually disowned by her American meeting.⁷ These incidents brought to the fore a question that produced the central theological struggle among British Quakers throughout the nineteenth century: should the infallible Bible or leadings from the Light be the primary means for guiding Friends to eternal salvation?

From the beginning of the century, the vital message of the Evangelical Revival began to penetrate the 'hedge' that Friends had created around their lives and faith. Influential works by Henry Tuke, *The Faith of the People Called Quakers* (1801), and John Bevan, *A Defence of the Christian Doctrine of the Society of Friends* (1805), caused many Quakers to embrace doctrines and beliefs becoming fashionable within the mainstream of Dissenting British Protestantism. According to evangelical Friends, Christian salvation was necessarily based upon the belief in Christ's bloody and atoning sacrifice as set out in the infallible Bible. In contrast, traditional or conservative Friends believed that biblical literalism was 'the worship of texts', which deviated from the beliefs and practices of early Friends. Evangelicals responded that

⁵ Cited by Edward Grubb, 'The Evangelical Movement and Its Impact on the Society of Friends', *Friends Quarterly Examiner* [FQE], 58 (1924), 8.

⁶ The Inward Light, or the presence of a Divine seed in every human being, was a distinguishing feature of early Quakerism.

⁷ See Wigham, *Irish Quakers*, pp. 67–70; Mollie Grubb, 'Abraham Shackleton and the Irish Separation, 1797–1803', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* [JFHS], 56 (1993), 262–71 and David Maxey, 'New Light on Hannah Barnard, A Quaker "Heretic"', *Quaker History* [QH], 78 (1989), 61–86.

conservative meetings for worship waiting upon the Light generally led to wasted hours of empty silence.⁸ So, within the Quaker community sometimes bitter conflicts erupted to determine the authentic beliefs of the Society as moulded by George Fox and 'the first publishers of the truth'. Three of the most significant of these upheavals originated in Manchester.⁹

A leader of the growing Quaker evangelical element was John Joseph Gurney, a younger brother of Elizabeth Fry who was privately educated by Anglican evangelical tutors. Gurney's powerful travelling ministry eventually convinced a majority of both British and American Friends to adopt what Rufus Jones later called 'a complete system of evangelical theology'.¹⁰ British Quakers were also seriously affected by the Hicksite Separation of 1827, centred on Philadelphia. Elias Hicks, an influential New York Friend, was attacked by both American and British Gurneyites for his outspoken depreciation of the Scriptures and his unyielding attachment to views of the early Quaker theologian, Robert Barclay, who believed that Friends grew in spiritual life and power by waiting in silence upon leadings from the Light.¹¹ Hicks and his followers accused Gurneyites of devaluing the Inward Light by substituting Christ's Atoning sacrifice as revealed by unvarnished and irrefutable Holy Scripture.

In Britain, the backwash of this seething controversy burst forth in January 1835 with the publication of *A Beacon to the Society of Friends* by Isaac Crewdson, a weighty Manchester Friend. Claiming he wished to rescue Quakerism from stifling quietism and creeping Hicksite agnosticism, Crewdson attacked Barclay's *Apology* for its depiction of the Light as independent of and superior to the Holy Bible. In effect, he questioned not only the authority of the Inward Light but also the entire content of conservative ministry as devoid of biblical truth and without legitimacy in Christian practice.¹² Crewdson's aggressive assault on the authenticity of the Light set off a furious row that

⁸ Edward Milligan, "'The Ancient Way': The Conservative Tradition in Nineteenth Century Quakerism", *JFHS*, 57 (1994), 74–101.

⁹ See Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism, 1860–1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community* (Oxford, 2001). Other secondary sources for nineteenth-century Friends include Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers* (London, 1970); Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, pp. 127–229; and Edwin Bronner, *'The Other Branch': London Yearly Meeting and the Hicksites, 1827–1912* (London, 1975). Roger C. Wilson, *Manchester, Manchester and Manchester Again: From 'Sound Doctrine' to a 'Free Ministry'—The Theological Travail of London Yearly Meeting Throughout the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1990) is a brief but insightful study by a former Clerk of London Yearly Meeting.

¹⁰ Jones, *Later Periods*, I: pp. 501–2.

¹¹ See Robert Barclay, *An Apology for True Christian Divinity: Being an Explanation and Vindication of the Principles and Doctrines of the People Called Quakers* (Philadelphia, PA, 1908), a defence of the Inward Light and other early Quaker practices, especially in contrast to Calvinist ideas like predestination.

¹² See Jones, *Later Periods*, I: pp. 490–2 for a very critical summary of Crewdson's arguments and Mollie Grubb, 'The Beacon Separation', *JFHS*, 56 (1993), 190–8.

carried from Manchester to London Yearly Meeting. Eventually, when Crewdson refused the request of a visiting committee to withdraw the *Beacon* from circulation, he was suspended from his ministry. After still more fractious debate, Crewdson and several dozen of his followers resigned from Friends and began practising 'water baptism' and other outward sacraments abjured by early Quakers. In time, most of these dissidents drifted off into some evangelical sect, but their loss was long lamented by evangelical Friends who believed Crewdson had been cruelly and unnecessarily driven from their Religious Society.¹³

While English Friends were distracted by theological altercations, Ireland's tiny, largely conservative Yearly Meeting, having successfully survived a brief disruption by puritanical 'White Quakers', was met by a far more serious challenge, the Great Irish Potato Famine.¹⁴ Numbering just over 3,000 souls amidst a population of eight million, Irish Friends acquitted themselves with distinction in their courageous efforts to provide relief for their starving countrymen. With assistance from British and American Friends, Irish Yearly Meeting established a Central Relief Committee which organized aid ranging from soup kitchens in cities to the distribution of seed for grain crops and dispersal of food supplies for starving peasants. While the British Government was widely attacked and deeply despised for its inadequate response to massive suffering and starvation, Irish Quakers were much honoured and long remembered for unstinting services on behalf of their largely poor and overwhelmingly Catholic fellow citizens.¹⁵

Following the Beacon Separation, London Yearly Meeting was increasingly dominated by evangelicals who stressed the scriptural soundness of early Quakers, denying their spiritual ancestors had ever given 'undue prominence to 'inward illuminations'. But while most British Friends moved closer to mainstream Protestant Dissenters, they retained the cultural context that separated Quakerism from other religious bodies. Conservatives continued to concentrate on 'dwelling deep', silently awaiting illuminations from the Light, but only the evangelical wing brought any spark of freshness into Quaker worship. Still, neither evangelical zeal nor conservative avoidance of

¹³ For example, see Robert Barclay, *The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth* (3rd edn., London, 1879), pp. 571–8. The *Beacon* controversy is summarized in Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 26–31.

¹⁴ Whigham, *Irish Quakers*, pp. 80–2. White Quakers, who rejected all forms of decoration, including black Quaker attire, established a communal farm in the Irish countryside for about fifteen years during the 1830s and 1840s.

¹⁵ For a brief but incisive account of the failure of British Famine relief efforts and the lingering bitterness of Irish people at home and abroad, see Alvin Jackson, *Ireland: 1798–1998* (Oxford, 1999); also Christine Kinealy, *A Death-Dealing Famine: The Great Hunger in Ireland* (London, 1997). Helen Hatton, *The Largest Amount of Good: Quaker Relief in Ireland, 1654–1921* (Buffalo, NY, 1993), provides a detailed account of Irish Quaker charitable work.

'creaturely activity' brought many newly 'convinced' Friends into their small and diminishing Society.¹⁶

Alarmed by the continuing decline in Quaker ranks, an anonymous Friend offered a prize of a hundred guineas for the best essay on 'The Causes of the Decline of the Society of Friends'.¹⁷ The attraction of this reward drew well over a hundred entries. From among these, a panel of non-Friends chose *Quakerism, Past and Present* by twenty-five-year-old John Stephenson Rowntree. His essay was a broad-based attack on the restricted vision and mundane thinking of both evangelical and conservative Friends. Quakers, Rowntree said, needed to open their minds to the realities of the modern world and to the Bible as a guide for right living rather than a rigid set of rules. The mediocrity of most Quaker ministry, the limitations of their educational pursuits, and the rigidity of their *Discipline* constricted Quaker spiritual influence and civic participation in British society. Rowntree especially cited provisions for the disownment of Friends who married non-Quakers outside the meeting as a 'deliberate...act of suicide'.¹⁸ His book had immediate influence. Despite conservatives' cries against a 'torrent of innovation', by 1860 plainness of dress and speech were made optional and in the next year a completely revised *Christian Doctrine, Practice, and Discipline* was issued, containing, among other changes, provisions for Friends to marry non-Quakers within their meetings.¹⁹

Even as British Quakers modified their *Discipline* to compromise with the modern world, that world was producing new challenges to their long-sheltered Society. Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1860) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) were sweeping away comfortable nostrums of human ancestry. The infallibility of Scripture and its literary and plenary inspiration were much questioned, in part due to the influence of German works of higher criticism. Among John Stephenson Rowntree's criticisms of Friends' social order was the lack of recreational and educational possibilities for younger Quakers, especially those in larger cities surrounded by many worldly temptations. To meet

¹⁶ On Census Sunday in 1851, 14,016 souls attended morning worship within the confines of London Yearly Meeting. Quaker membership in the later seventeenth century has been estimated at 60,000. See Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, p. 190.

¹⁷ The donor was probably George Sturge, a wealthy Birmingham Quaker. See John S. Rowntree to Norman Penney, 10 October 1905, MSS Port. 8/133, Library of the Society of Friends (LSF), London.

¹⁸ John Stephenson Rowntree, *Quakerism, Past and Present: Being an Inquiry into the Causes of its Decline in Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1859), pp. 51, 65–7, 98–104, 153–8. Quakers who were married to non-Friends outside their meetings were 'disowned' from membership in the Society of Friends.

¹⁹ Calls for changes in Quaker marriage procedures were already underway in the late 1850s, but Edward Milligan, 'Quaker Marriage Procedure', a lecture to the Annual Conference of the Institution of Population Registration, Carlisle, June 1993, pp. 6–7, gives J.S. Rowntree credit for finally moving Yearly Meeting to widen marriage regulations.

this obvious need, a Manchester Friends Institute was established in 1858 as 'a congenial place of resort for . . . young people'. In addition to its club room, library, and tea meetings, the Manchester Institute strove to become 'an active centre of social and intellectual life' by sponsoring a regular series of lectures on relevant but supposedly non-controversial topics, although talks on even the most seemingly innocent topics often roused heated debate.²⁰ These presentations proved to be very popular among younger Friends. In April 1861, the Institute's Lecture Committee on short notice asked David Duncan, a fortyish local merchant, to lecture on a topic of his choosing. Duncan, a former Presbyterian who had come into Quakerism by marriage, was much admired for his intellectual prowess, especially by young people in Manchester's Mount Street Meeting. He was granted permission to discuss *Essays and Reviews*, a theological collection by seven liberal Anglican, mostly clerical authors. This controversial work had been widely criticized, but Duncan defended its authors not only for discussing modern scientific ideas and recent higher criticism of biblical texts but also for embracing traditional Quaker views on the importance of inner religious life, apart from creedal dogma and outward texts.²¹

When London Yearly Meeting gathered in May 1861, some Friends rose to accuse Duncan of 'infidelity' for defending the notorious *Essays and Reviews*. Duncan did not respond but his friend Joseph B. Forster, Secretary to the Committee of Manchester Institute, published a ringing defence asking Friends to open their minds to new ideas.²² After this initial onslaught, calm ensued and the Manchester Institute's lecture series continued to thrive. Both Duncan and Forster remained champions of intellectual freedom, spreading provocatively liberal, modernist, and anti-evangelical ideas among highly receptive young admirers in the Manchester area. However troublesome such views were to hidebound Friends in both the evangelical and conservative camps, a number of moderate evangelical Quakers believed that extreme ideas about biblical infallibility and emphasis on the Atonement as a bloody sacrifice

²⁰ Frederick Cooper, *The Crisis in Manchester Meeting: With a Review of the Pamphlets of David Duncan and Joseph B. Forster* (Manchester, 1869), p. 2 and Thomas Tonge, 'Fifty Years Ago', newspaper cutting from *Manchester City News*, 3 August 1921, vol. VV/74, LSF.

²¹ David Duncan, *Essays and Reviews: A Lecture Delivered at Manchester Friends Institute on the 12th of the 4th Month, 1861* (Manchester, 1861). Several works detail the Duncan controversy including opposing contemporary views by 'Duncan's bulldog', J.B. Forster, 'David Duncan and his Reviewer', *British Friend*, 2 September 1861, 224–5 and by his outspoken opponent Frederick Cooper, *Crisis in Manchester*, (Manchester, 1869), pp. 2–40. More recent work is Wilson, *Manchester*, pp. 20–6 and Thomas C. Kennedy, 'Heresy-Hunting Among Victorian Quakers: The Manchester Difficulty, 1861–73', *Victorian Studies*, 34 (1991), 227–53.

²² See *British Friend*, May 1861, 116–17; A Friend, *Observations on a Lecture Delivered at the Manchester Friends' Institute by David Duncan, entitled 'Essays and Reviews'* (London, 1861), pp. 28–9; and J.B. Forster, 'David Duncan and His Reviewer', *British Friend*, September 1861, 224–5.

to appease an angry God ought to be modified.²³ Duncan, however, did not believe his advanced views should be subject to compromise. He was straightforward and earnest, but his self-assurance at times bordered on arrogance. One sympathetic Manchester Friend noted her uneasiness with his occasional boasting that 'no one dared to take him to task'.²⁴

In another lecture in 1863, Duncan not only embraced the principle of 'progressive revelation' which allowed modern thinkers to gain increasingly clear understanding of the Divine message but also attacked ideas of evangelical Friends which, he said, were 'fatal to all spiritual life and all faith in God and truth'.²⁵ Duncan's remarks failed to elicit direct attacks, but Manchester evangelical leaders did invite the distinguished, and moderate, Quaker historian Thomas Hodgkin to instruct possibly misguided local youth. Hodgkin's defence of the status quo evoked a storm of protest led by Duncan who blatantly declared that Quakerism's low status as a Church was reflected by the presence of 'a man with an ill-educated and illogical mind, professing to preach the glorious gospel'.²⁶

This outburst brought to Manchester the first of two visiting investigatory committees charged with discovering if Duncan and company were preaching 'unsound doctrine'. Appointed by Lancashire and Cheshire Quarterly Meeting, the initial committee pleaded with all parties for a peaceful settlement. Although their tepid report was strongly protested by leading evangelical Friends, no action was taken against Duncan. Such was not the case with a second visiting committee appointed by London Yearly Meeting after subsequent lectures in which Duncan attacked his critics as 'bigots' who worshipped the New Testament but failed to live up to its precepts.²⁷ The Yearly Meeting committee was led by Joseph Bevan Braithwaite, lawyer, biblical scholar, and weighty minister, often referred to by contemporaries as a sort of 'Quaker Bishop', who was resolved to keep the Society attached to sound evangelical doctrine.

The Committee chaired by Braithwaite visited Manchester several times, collecting information and interviewing numerous local Friends including David Duncan. In his last interview with the Committee, Duncan attacked

²³ For an account of Friends seeking compromise, see Edwin B. Bronner, 'Moderate Friends in London Yearly Meeting, 1857-1873: Precursors of Quaker Liberals', *Church History*, 59 (1990), 351-71.

²⁴ Mary Hodgson to Elizabeth [Green], 7 March 1864, Port. A 58, LSF.

²⁵ David Duncan, *Can an Outward Revelation be Perfect? Reflections Upon the Claim of Biblical Infallibility* (London, 1863), p. 23.

²⁶ Cooper, *Crisis in Manchester*, p. 4. Also see Fielden Thorp, *A Review of a Lecture 'On Liberty Read at the Manchester Friends Institute'* (London, 1867) warning of the spread of 'universal scepticism'.

²⁷ See David Duncan, *National Life: A Lecture Read at Manchester Friends' Institute, 22 April 1870* (London, 1870) and John Woolman, *A Paper Read at the Friends' Institute, Manchester, 20 Jan. 1871* (London, 1871).

its members for being 'shut up in narrow, sectarian, literal views' and stormed out of the meeting room. After the Committee judged Duncan guilty of heresy, his disownment, narrowly upheld by his Monthly Meeting, was pronounced on 13 July 1871. Duncan defiantly vowed to appeal this verdict in defence of liberty of thought for all British Friends. Less than a month later, though, he died suddenly of 'virulent small pox'. Relieved from having to face another gruelling struggle before Yearly Meeting, Braithwaite wrote in his private 'Journal' that Duncan's demise was 'a marvellous winding up of D.D.'s case.... How wonderful are the ways of Providence!'²⁸ An immediate consequence of the Duncan Affair was the resignation of fourteen Manchester Friends and a letter of 'unqualified protest' against the handling of Duncan's case by forty-two others, expressing the hope that their objections would bring a halt to attempts by some 'to fix a doctrinal standard of orthodoxy amongst us'.²⁹

The outcome of the Manchester Affair, followed by the much-disputed expulsion of another prominent Friend for heresy in 1873, signalled to moderate Friends that harsh reprisals by evangelical zealots were a serious threat to the well-being of their Religious Society. Thereafter, no other British Quaker was disowned for holding heretical opinions.³⁰ One sign of this growing concern was Yearly Meeting's refusal to endorse a *Declaration of Some Fundamentals of Christian Truth* promulgated by the Visiting Committee. Braithwaite was chagrined by this setback, but he maintained the *Declaration* in safe keeping for another time.³¹ The second Manchester crisis had been fitfully resolved, but, as Roger Wilson noted, what remained was the 'rejection of the role of thought in the life of the Society'.³² This anti-intellectualism was about to be challenged once again within the Quaker community.

One of the new voices protesting the continued 'timid submission' of Friends 'to the power of routine and custom' was another Manchester Friend, William Pollard. Pollard was concerned that evangelicals, rather than cutting the Society loose from 'isolation and quietism', seemed bent on steering Quakerism into the Protestant mainstream as if their Religious Society had nothing valid left to offer.³³ Shortly thereafter, Francis Frith, a Liverpool

²⁸ J.B. Braithwaite's 'Journals and Commentaries', 4 vols, MS. Vol. S 293-6, Ports. 17/89, B/39, 81/26, 13 August 1871, 197, pp. 200-1, LSF. For an account of the Visiting Committee's proceedings, see Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 69-84.

²⁹ Quoted in the *Manchester Friend*, 1/1, 15 December 1871, p. 2 and 11/6, 15 June 1873, p. 101. Edited by J.B. Forster, this lively dissenting Quaker journal had a brief run from 1871-3, 'bearing aloft the banner of... intellectual freedom'.

³⁰ For the disownment of Edward Trusted Bennett by London Yearly Meeting in 1873 see Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 80-5.

³¹ See Richmond Declaration, this chapter. Also see J.B.B., 'Journals', 28 January 1872, p. 215, LSF and Wilson, *Manchester*, pp. 48-9.

³² Tallack, *George Fox*, pp. 61-3 and Wilson, 'Friends in the Nineteenth Century,' *The Friends Quarterly* (FQ), 23 (1984), 353-63, 405.

³³ William Pollard, 'The Present Crisis in the Society of Friends,' *FQE*, (1875), 323-6.

Friend and pioneering photographer, published a tract which sought to differentiate between two 'utterly opposed... perfectly irreconcilable' beliefs, Quakerism, following the vision of George Fox, or evangelicalism, a 'manifestly... extreme creed' repeating the worst Calvinistic errors.³⁴

On the opening day of London Yearly Meeting in 1885, Braithwaite noted in his 'Journal' that he had read an anonymous tract entitled *A Reasonable Faith* which struck him as a 'a very shallow performance... It did not disturb my mind.'³⁵ In fact, the pamphlet that Braithwaite at least pretended to dismiss would soon become a *cause célèbre* that not only altered the tone of the ensuing Yearly Meeting but would, in time, be a major catalyst in the transformation of British Quakerism. As was his wont, Braithwaite dominated 1885 Yearly Meeting proceedings with extended, biblically based ministry, though he carefully avoided any specific reference to *A Reasonable Faith*. However, several of his evangelical allies made pointed references to the unsound features of the book and demanded that its anonymous authors identify themselves. One by one, William Pollard, Francis Frith, and William E. Turner rose to defend their work as an effort to give encouragement to Quakers who wanted to remain true Friends but could not accept evangelical interpretations of doctrines like the propitiatory Atonement or 'imputed righteousness'. After Turner had finished explaining his intentions, the debate ended with a wrenching statement by an elderly evangelical Friend who complained that the book was an attempt 'to sweep away the ground of his hope'.³⁶

What so disturbed Jonathan Grubb was *A Reasonable Faith's* assertion that the insistence by evangelicals on their interpretation of Scripture as the sole path to salvation effectively dismissed the most distinctive and distinguishing tradition of Quaker spiritual truth, the Divine inspiration of the Light as 'the primary source of all religious light and duty'.³⁷ Although the authors affirmed humanity's need for a personal Saviour, they believed that Christ's death was not a blood sacrifice but 'a supreme declaration of God's infinite love for sin-stricken souls'.³⁸ W.E. Turner later recalled many letters of grateful thanks he received from Friends who, driven to despair by 'distorted teaching' of evangelical doctrine, found solace in the views set forth in the three Friends' book.³⁹

³⁴ Francis Frith, *Evangelicalism from the Standpoint of the Society of Friends* (London, 1877), pp. 8, 27–8.

³⁵ J.B. Braithwaite, 'Journals and Commentaries', 7 June 1885, p. 189, LSF.

³⁶ The debate was summarized in *The Friend*, 6 June 1885, 142–4. The distraught evangelical Friend was Jonathan Grubb.

³⁷ *A Reasonable Faith: Short Religious Essays for 'the Times' by Three 'Friends'* (London, 1886 edn.), pp. 11, 19, 43–4, 100–1, 104–5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 31–3, 39–40, 44–5, 48, 59, 69.

³⁹ W.E. Turner to J.J. Green, 13 April 1907, Port. C 27, LSF.

While the debate elicited by *A Reasonable Faith* continued, a second volume, *The Gospel of Divine Help* by Edward Worsdell, added theological depth to anti-evangelical arguments. For Worsdell, God's saving gift of the Light was a spiritually refreshing means of reconciling sincere religious faith with reason and conscience for those who had absorbed the lessons of modern thought.⁴⁰ For Worsdell, evangelical insistence on the literal truth of biblical texts denied the right of human beings to employ the divine gift of reason in personally interpreting the Bible. He added that the propitiatory doctrine of the Atonement had the convenient advantage of imputing righteousness to those living not necessarily in imitation of Christ but only in conformity with a legalistic concept of Divine law. Worsdell argued that it was Jesus's life, not his death, that should be central to Christian experience. Quakerism, he believed, was an experiential religion in which the universal gift of the Light aided believers to follow Jesus's example.⁴¹

While liberal theology was beginning to make inroads into evangelically dominated London Yearly Meeting, American Gurneyite Friends were experiencing a very different sort of challenge. During the post-Civil War period in the United States, most Quakers west of Philadelphia had adopted advanced evangelical practices, including a system of appointed pastors who supervised 'programmed' meetings, largely ignoring silent waiting upon the Light. Further, under the influence of some powerful revivalist ministers, a large second experience Quaker Holiness faction, preaching immediate salvation achieved during emotional 'General Meetings', sprang up among hitherto staid and stolid Friends. As this revivalism spread, some Holiness leaders, not content with merely relinquishing traditional Quaker worship, wished to adopt outward rituals rejected by early Friends, including water baptism and the Lord's Supper.⁴² The disruptive influence of this Ordinance, or 'water party', moved Orthodox Friends to call an emergency World Conference at Richmond, Indiana in September 1887. Quakers who gathered at Richmond upheld the continued traditional prohibition against outward sacraments, but some of those present also wished to solidify the faith of Friends everywhere by issuing a 'Declaration of Faith' setting out the main body of Quaker beliefs. The chief compiler of this new body of accepted spiritual truth was J.B. Braithwaite. Almost single-handedly, Braithwaite set down what he called 'the authenticated documents of the testimony of Friends', which, not surprisingly, drew

⁴⁰ Edward Worsdell, *The Gospel of Divine Help: Thoughts on Some of the First Principles of Christianity* (London, 1886), pp. iii and 68–71. Worsdell was a long-time teacher at Friends' Bootham School in York, later employed at Rowntree Chocolate works.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11–14, 17, 29, 38–9, 51, 92, 108, 112–13, 115, 121, 151. Also see Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 106–10.

⁴² The best description of the Holiness movement among American Friends is Thomas Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800–1907* (Bloomington, IN, 1988), pp. 103–37. Also see Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, pp. 199–204.

heavily on the evangelical Declaration rejected by London Yearly Meeting following the Duncan affair in Manchester.

This 'Richmond Declaration' was endorsed by most evangelical American meetings, but when Braithwaite sought to obtain the approval of London Yearly Meeting, his Declaration was rejected as an attempt to impose the sort of rigid 'creed' Friends had always renounced.⁴³ Those who spoke against the Richmond Declaration included older, moderately evangelical Friends as well as younger people with advanced modernist views. Thus, among British Friends, the stern God of what the historian Boyd Hilton has termed the Age of Atonement had begun to make way for 'a kinder, gentler but infinitely more elusive Deity'.⁴⁴

Still, if the emerging proponents of more liberal theology celebrated a victory with the turning back of the Richmond Declaration, British evangelical Friends were far from vanquished. A glaring proof of their staying power was a long struggle over the activities of the Friends Home Missions Committee, created in 1882 and 'a fruitful source of friction'.⁴⁵ The idea for a Committee grew out of the success of the Friends' Adult School Movement established in the 1840s as a simple, faith-based system using the Bible as a primer to teach reading and Christian principles to the unlettered working classes. By 1870, 1,200 Quaker Adult School teachers were instructing over 15,000 pupils (a larger number than the entire membership of London Yearly Meeting) in the rudiments of literacy and Christianity. Friends were justly proud of their Adult Schools but remained puzzled by the minuscule number of pupils that this instruction brought into their Religious Society. Inspired by the American Quaker practice of holding General Meetings to draw in new converts, the Home Missions Committee wished to provide monetary support to allow Friends with 'a gift in Ministry' to settle in working-class districts and do full-time evangelical work. For its supporters the Home Missionary movement seemed a logical way to bring the blessings of Quakerism to a wider audience. Progressive Friends strongly disagreed, viewing this experiment as enhancing the growth of a 'separate clerical order' preaching a mainstream evangelical Protestant message and calling it Quakerism. Despite such criticisms, the Home Missionaries appeared to have wide support among British and Irish

⁴³ Irish Yearly Meeting was apparently not consulted concerning the Declaration, but Irish Friends, particularly in Ulster, increasingly embraced evangelical ideas and methods of worship, including General Meetings which 'renewed the spiritual experience of many.' See Wigham, *Irish Quakers*, pp. 91–100.

⁴⁴ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p. 118. Also see Joseph Rowntree, *Memorandum on the Declaration of Christian Doctrine Issued by the Richmond Conference, 1887* (York, 1888), an influential protest against acceptance of the Richmond Declaration.

⁴⁵ Edward Grubb, *Quakerism in England: Its Present Position* (London, 1901), p. 15. Also see John Wilhelm Rowntree and Henry B. Binns, *A History of the Adult School Movement* (London, 1903).

Friends. Still, continuing attacks on a 'paid pastorate' led to an 1892 Conference which ended in a compromise based on the use of private funds to support Home Missions work. Liberal Friends, however, were not to be deferred.⁴⁶ A showdown came at the momentous Yearly Meeting of 1893.

JOHN WILHELM ROWNTREE AND THE QUAKER RENAISSANCE

The major feature of the 1893 gathering was a long and heated debate on the 'State of the Society'. A crucial instance in that discussion was the contribution of John Wilhelm Rowntree, a member of the York chocolate family. Young Rowntree (he was twenty-four) made a fervent plea that older Friends should recognize 'the want of spiritual life amongst younger Friends' because they could not embrace the messages uttered in the ministry of their elders. Rowntree said he did not wish to cause pain to them but only asked that they recognize the difficulties that troubled his generation. This brief, moving statement was the beginning of Rowntree's leadership as 'spokesman for the newer life embodied in the Quaker Renaissance in Britain'.⁴⁷ John Wilhelm's message was endorsed by a number of younger Friends, including Braithwaite's son William Charles and Silvanus Thompson, a renowned physicist and future Fellow of the Royal Society who called the notion of the Atonement as a bloody sacrifice 'a piece of heathenism'. Better-educated Friends, Thompson concluded, could not base their spiritual lives on ideas not compatible with reason and leadings from the Light.⁴⁸ This combination of soft and hard chastisements surprised and shocked some older evangelical Friends, but it was a giant step in the transformation of British Quakerism which, in less than two decades, made it a stunningly different Religious Society.

This rapid transformation was led by a very unlikely prophet. After a youth troubled by illness, bad temper, and indifferent scholarship, only when John Wilhelm Rowntree entered the family chocolate business did he show signs of being an intellectual late bloomer and a spiritually insightful leader. Galvanized by the support he had received at Yearly Meeting, he resolved to create 'a deeper sense of responsibility and a warmer interest in the Society's

⁴⁶ See especially the anonymous pamphlet *Is There Not a Cause? The Society of Friends and the Late Home Mission Conference* (London, 1893). It was probably written by John William Graham.

⁴⁷ Quote from Elfrida Vipont [Foulds], *The Story of Quakerism* (2nd edn., Richmond, VA, 1977), p. 234. For Rowntree's statement see *The Friend*, 2 June 1893, pp. 48–9.

⁴⁸ Vipont, *Story of Quakerism*, pp. 351–3. For Silvanus Thompson see Jane Smeal and Helen G. Thompson, *Silvanus Philips Thompson, FRS: His Life and Letters* (London, 1920).

affairs' among younger Friends.⁴⁹ With William Charles Braithwaite, he organized a 'Yorkshire Movement', a sort of spiritual ginger group, to restore life and vigour to Northern Quaker meetings. John Wilhelm and his associates, including Edward Grubb, future editor of the *British Friend*, made such a startling impact wherever they visited that W.C. Braithwaite's fiancée, Janet Morland, could scarcely contain her praise of John's energetic leadership: 'He seems . . . more wonderful each time I see him, one is almost frightened by the rapidity of his growth.'⁵⁰

From the summer of 1893, the legend of John Wilhelm grew to near mythological proportions, exaggerated by his premature death in 1905. He was most certainly the acknowledged early leader in the rapid growth of liberal Quaker influence in London Yearly Meeting, but he was no plaster saint or knight errant. His attraction was as much his personal charm as his intellectual acuity. He remained spiritually driven, but his moods shifted from loving husband and life of the party to the dark depression brought on by an eye disease which threatened to blind him, coupled with lingering doubts about his own religious fitness.⁵¹ For all that, he never ceased his effort to bring modern ideas and spiritual stimulation to his beloved Society.

One of Rowntree's projects for improving the intellectual and spiritual condition of British Quakerism was the creation of a new journal called *Present Day Papers* as a repository for 'pressing social and theological questions'.⁵² While John Wilhelm made plans to launch his new periodical, some of his allies were planning for a general Friends gathering aimed at drawing the British Society of Friends into the modern world of liberal theology. Plans for what became the Manchester Conference of 1895 originated with the hitherto evangelically dominated Home Missions Committee, which had been infiltrated by progressive Friends who organized a programme featuring a long list of liberal speakers. William Charles Braithwaite set the Manchester Conference on its feet with an essay on 'Some Present-Day Aims of the Society of Friends', emphasizing the need for Quakerism to open its collective mind to new religious, social, and scientific thought in pursuing its historic mission to hasten the creation of the Kingdom of God on earth.⁵³

⁴⁹ John Wilhelm Rowntree, 'A Few Thoughts Upon the Position of Young Friends in Relation to the Society,' p. 3, typescript in LSF.

⁵⁰ Janet Morland to 'Mr. Braithwaite', 14 September 1893 and 18 March 1894, Braithwaite Family Papers (BFP) in possession of Richard Braithwaite, Cambridge.

⁵¹ See Thomas Kennedy, 'History and the Quaker Renaissance: The Vision of John Wilhelm Rowntree,' *JFHS*, 55/1-2 (1983 and 1984 issued in 1986), pp. 38-41 and Stephen Allott, *John Wilhelm Rowntree, 1868-1905, and the Beginnings of Modern Quakerism* (York, 1994).

⁵² John Wilhelm Rowntree to Lawrence Richardson, 17 October 1894, quoted in Joshua Rowntree, ed., *John Wilhelm Rowntree: Essays and Addresses* (London, 1906), p. xxi and JRW to J.B. Hodgkin, 13 December 1894, MSS Port 42/56, LSF.

⁵³ W.C. Braithwaite, 'Some Present-Day Aims of the Society of Friends', *FQE*, (1895), 322-37.

Publicity flyers for the Manchester Conference set out its chief objectives as dispelling public ignorance about the Society of Friends and strengthening 'the attachment of younger members to its work'. From the first address by Matilda Sturge, criticizing 'blind, almost idolatrous faith in the Bible' by Friends in 'the vice grip of dogmatic principles', to Dr Rendel Harris's call for Quakers to embrace 'the dazzling light of scientific knowledge', to Silvanus Thompson's plea that modern thought should aid the 'guidance of the divine light... [to] spiritual truth', the Conference was a nearly uncontested triumph for forces of liberal reform. Progressive Friends remembered the Manchester Conference as a critical advance towards a new spiritual consensus based upon a revival of the 'mystical, practical and experimental nature of Quakerism'. As John Wilhelm Rowntree told the Manchester Conference: 'Friends are not bound by creeds, and need not break with their great past to put themselves in touch with the present.'⁵⁴

While British Friends concentrated on spiritual reform and the creation of a more open and inclusive Religious Society, Friends in Ireland were dragged into a political controversy that troubled and divided them for two generations. When in 1886 the Liberal Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone introduced Home Rule legislation designed to create a largely self-governing Irish polity, most Irish Quakers abandoned their long-standing attachment to the Liberal Party and joined with anti-Home Rule Unionists. Opposition to Home Rule was centred in Ulster, the only Irish province with a majority Protestant population, where more than half of Irish Friends lived. Irish Quaker opposition to Home Rule was complicated by the threat of violent resistance from Ulster Unionists, who feared both the influence of radical Irish Nationalists and the supposed threat to their religious freedom posed by the Roman Catholic Church. Irish Quakers thus faced a distressing dilemma, caught between their loyalty to Great Britain and their Society's historic rejection of force. Most British Quakers, much to the consternation of their Irish brethren, maintained their commitment to Gladstone and the Liberal Party, reproducing a split between Ireland and the mainland that ran throughout British Dissent at this time. Home Rule bills were defeated in 1886 and 1893, but the Nationalist struggle for Irish autonomy continued, dividing not only Catholic and Protestant but also the unity of British and Irish Quakers.⁵⁵

In England, a decisive step in putting nineteenth-century Quakers in touch with their past was the meeting of John Wilhelm Rowntree and Rufus M. Jones, the two great movers and shakers of liberal British Quakerism, on

⁵⁴ Richenda Scott, 'Authority or Experience: John Wilhelm Rowntree and the Dilemma of Nineteenth-century British Quakerism', *JFHS*, 49 (1960), 86–7.

⁵⁵ See Howard F. Gregg, 'English and Irish Quakers and Irish Home Rule, 1886–93', in David Blamires, Jeremy Greenwood, and Alex Kerr, eds., *A Quaker Miscellany for Edward H. Milligan* (Manchester, 1985), pp. 83–9 and Eugenio Biagini, 'Politics and Social Reform in Britain and Ireland', Chapter 17 of this volume.

a walking tour in Switzerland in July 1897. The two men were immediately drawn together both personally and spiritually. Jones came to regard his new friend as 'the unique and inspiring leader of that epoch of our Quaker history'. Before they parted, they had decided to collaborate in a new and definitive history of Quakerism and to meet yearly to determine their mutual progress and to plot future plans.⁵⁶ This transatlantic friendship was crucial to the evolution of liberal British Quakerism in the final years of the nineteenth century. Beginning with their agreement about the centrality of the inward Light to Quaker faith and the need to understand the Bible in relationship to the Light, Rowntree and Jones forged the idea of a renaissance of Quakerism, based on a fresh and accurate understanding of the history of their Religious Society. The long-range goal of this historical undertaking was to effect a general revival of Quakerism by showing that the ideas and practices of early Friends were perfectly compatible with modern scientific discoveries and biblical criticism. Their most immediate concern was to improve both the nature and content of Quaker ministry without succumbing to the spreading American practice of paid pastors (hireling ministers) which Jones believed was 'eating the heart out of Quakerism in the States'.⁵⁷

Rowntree thought that the 'feeble' ministry in most of the English meetings he visited was inferior to that in other Dissenting denominations. He devoted an entire issue of *Present Day Papers* to the idea of creating a better informed, more dynamic ministry.⁵⁸ In his mind, the first step towards that goal was gathering large numbers of Friends at Summer Schools to hear the most advanced theological speakers, Quaker and non-Quaker, on topics like the proper methods of Bible study. This was accomplished in 1897 with the Scarborough Summer School, where over 600 Friends heard learned experts talk about 'Quakerism and the Bible'. The Scarborough gathering was such a success that a second Summer School attracted an even larger audience at Birmingham in 1899.⁵⁹

Finally, the Quaker chocolate magnate George Cadbury, an evangelical Friend, was charmed and convinced by Rowntree to donate Woodbrooke, his

⁵⁶ Rufus M. Jones, *The Trail of Life in College* (London, 1929), pp. 195, 197–8 and *John Wilhelm Rowntree* (Philadelphia, PA, 1942), pp. 1–9.

⁵⁷ A recent, comprehensive work on the influence of the Rowntree-Jones collaboration is Alice Southern, 'The Rowntree History Series and the Growth of Quaker Liberalism', *Quaker Studies*, 16 (2011), 7–73. Also see Kennedy, 'History and the Quaker Renaissance', pp. 35–56.

⁵⁸ John Wilhelm Rowntree, 'The Need for a Summer School Movement', in *Essays and Addresses*, p. 153 and 'The Problem of a Free Ministry,' in *ibid.*, pp. 111–34. Also see Rowntree to John W. Graham, 23 March 1899, Box 2, Rowntree Family Papers, in possession of Jean Rowntree, Stone-in-Oxney, England.

⁵⁹ See 'Scarborough Summer School', 4 pp., Woodbrooke Library, Birmingham and *Echoes From Scarborough, 1897* (London, 1898). The Birmingham Summer School was arranged by a Summer School Continuation Committee (SSCC), including John Wilhelm Rowntree, W.C. Braithwaite, and Birmingham chocolate magnate George Cadbury. SSCC, *Minutes*, First Annual Report, 1898, Woodbrooke Library, Birmingham.

former home in Birmingham, as the location for a permanent Summer School where Friends could undertake systematic study of theological texts and church history.⁶⁰ With monetary support from Cadbury, Woodbrooke opened in July 1903 featuring a series of lectures by Rufus Jones, an inauguration darkened by the news that Jones's son Lowell had died while his parents were en route to England. Despite this staggering loss, Jones carried on with his lectures and Woodbrooke has since remained a vital centre for Quaker studies.⁶¹

As Jones and Rowntree carried out their preliminary research for the ambitious history project, members of the newly founded Friends Historical Society helped to collect documents from the dusty archives of Yearly Meeting headquarters and provincial meeting houses throughout the country. Rowntree used some of this material to produce an essay on 'The Rise of Quakerism in Yorkshire', a deeply felt appreciation of George Fox's spiritual and organizational genius in leading Friends in their escape from the 'terrible shadow of predestination'.⁶² It was John Wilhelm's first and final venture into historical writing. After completing an essay that attempted to link the intellectual chasm between contemporary Friends and earlier generations, in February 1905 Rowntree set sail for one of his periodic meetings with Rufus Jones in America.⁶³ In mid-Atlantic he contacted pneumonia and was near death when the ship docked. He died in a New York hospital and a shaken Rufus Jones took his body back to the Haverford, Pennsylvania meeting house graveyard where it remains. John Wilhelm's death at thirty-seven was a severe shock to British Friends. After much weeping and memorializing, his family and closest associates determined that the best lasting monument to his memory would be the completion of the new history of Quakerism that he had envisioned. With financial support from the Rowntree family, Rufus Jones and William Charles Braithwaite took the task of completing what became known as the Rowntree Series of Quaker history.⁶⁴ Alice Southern believes that the Rowntree histories were intended not only as a tool for enhancing historical knowledge within the Society of Friends but also 'to affirm Quaker tradition' in the light of the new liberal theology that reforming Friends embraced.⁶⁵ Fifty years after the

⁶⁰ For Rowntree's role in convincing George Cadbury to join in his educational efforts for Friends, see Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 176–83.

⁶¹ See the programme for Jones's lectures on 'Present-Day Ideas of God and the Spiritual Life' in 'Summer School for Religious Studies', WL. Lowell Jones died suddenly from an allergic reaction to a diphtheria vaccination.

⁶² Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 2 September 1903, Box 4, Rufus M. Jones Papers, Haverford College Quaker Collection. 'The Rise of Quakerism in Yorkshire' is reprinted in Rowntree, *Essays and Addresses*, pp. 3–76.

⁶³ 'The Present Position of Religious Thought in the Society of Friends', *FQE* (1905), 109–22 and *The American Friend*, 25 March 1905, 192–205.

⁶⁴ William Charles Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* and *The Second Period of Quakerism*, remain standard works for early Quaker history. Jones, *Later Periods* completes the study of the Society of Friends up to its publication in 1921.

⁶⁵ Southern, 'Rowntree History Series', pp. 24, 53–4.

founding of Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, a Friend wrote that 'such stability and points of growth as the Society has possessed ... are due in large measure to the influence and teaching of the Friends whom John Wilhelm Rowntree inspired'.⁶⁶

PEACE AND GENDER EQUALITY

In the wake of the Manchester Conference, as liberal Friends acquired increased influence within London Yearly Meeting and in the Quaker press, two traditional principles, female equality and the Quaker peace testimony, became important aspects of British Friends' approach to the twentieth century.⁶⁷

George Fox's radicalism had included his teaching that with Christ's saving gift of the indwelling spirit of the Light for all, women and men were equal before God and should be before mankind. Many of Fox's earliest followers were women and Margaret Fell, the wife of his later years, was one of the most important and influential early Friends.⁶⁸ Females always made up a large percentage of recorded Quaker ministers, but after the seventeenth century women's role in the direction of the Society rapidly diminished. Throughout the Victorian period, women, a majority among Friends, remained relegated to separate and unequal status, subjected to a distinctly secondary role in the active life of the Society.⁶⁹ However, by the end of the nineteenth century strong advocates for female equality had begun to make inroads into the dominance of male Friends. In 1896 Yearly Meeting agreed, despite strong opposition led by J.B. Braithwaite, to a *Minute* confirming that women would henceforth be equal partners in all Meetings for Church affairs and that they should be eligible for membership in Meeting for Sufferings. Female Friends were also notable among law-abiding elements of the Women's Suffrage Movement, much to the distaste of some cautious and even anti-suffrage Friends.⁷⁰ Finally, in 1910 two women were appointed as Assistant Clerks of London Yearly Meeting. A decade later (1921) Mary Jane Godlee was named as first female Clerk of Yearly Meeting. Individual Friends worked diligently for women's equality both within their Society and throughout Great Britain, but George Fox and Margaret Fell might have blushed at the Quaker community's failure, as a Society, to play a more aggressive part in the struggle for female equality.

⁶⁶ Maurice A. Creasey and Harold Loukes, *The Next Fifty Years* (London, 1956), p. 22.

⁶⁷ Edward Grubb, a close colleague of John Wilhelm Rowntree, replaced William Turner as editor of the *British Friend* in 1901 and became the most prolific author of liberal Quaker theology. See James Dudley, *The Life of Edward Grubb, 1854-1939: A Spiritual Pilgrimage* (London, 1946).

⁶⁸ See Bonnelyn Young Kunze, *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism* (Stanford, CA, 1994).

⁶⁹ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 211-22. ⁷⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 228-36.

On the other hand, the revival of the Friends' peace testimony was a central feature in the emergence of a transformed Society during the years before 1914. In 1661 George Fox and other prominent early Friends issued a 'Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent People called Quakers', rejecting 'all wars and strife and fighting with outward weapons'.⁷¹ For the next 250 years most, though not all, Friends remained at least nominally committed to this peace testimony.⁷² Yearly Meeting regularly condemned all Britain's wars and Friends refused to serve in any military capacity. These pacific sentiments were widely recognized and generally respected, even by wartime British governments. Of course, Friends' anti-war stance was eased by the fact that the British Parliament never enacted compulsory military service. By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a slowly rising tide of Quaker protests against Britain's persistent colonial conflicts, but when some leading Quakers openly supported the war against the Boers in South Africa, Friends with strict pacifist principles expressed outraged indignation. John Wilhelm Rowntree believed that this 'wretched war' had cast a pall over Friends' long-standing peace testimony: 'we need to seize upon the opportunity this war gives us for a restatement of our principles... Our testimony against war... must not be a mere testimony against the use of armed force—it must cut at the roots of war.'⁷³ Indignation over the ruthless tactics of British forces against the Boer civilian population gave rise to a Quaker 'Memorial to the Government', condemning 'methods by which the deplorable war in South Africa is being prosecuted'.⁷⁴

Reaction against the Anglo-Boer War gave rise to increased anti-war activism, especially within the Young Friends Movement, a spiritual and recreational body organized after the death of John Wilhelm Rowntree and inspired by his example. The young men and women who attended Young Friends conferences and protested against attempts to militarize British education and to introduce compulsory military training were the generation which in 1914 would face a surpassing challenge to Quaker pacifist traditions, the Great War. While not all Friends held fast to the peace testimony, when after 1914 London Yearly Meeting faced what one shattered Friend called 'A Ghoulish Terror of Darkness', British Quakers staunchly confronted the wartime State.⁷⁵ Even after conscription was imposed for the first time in

⁷¹ See Nickalls, ed., *Fox*, pp. 398–404.

⁷² Peter Brock, *The Quaker Peace Testimony, 1660–1914* (York, 1990) is the definitive study of this period.

⁷³ Rowntree, *Essays and Addresses*, p. xxxii and *The Friend*, 26 January 1900, pp. 56–7.

⁷⁴ The 'Memorial', issued by Meeting for Sufferings, was reprinted in *The British Friend*, January 1901, p. 9.

⁷⁵ But see Brian David Phillips, 'Friendly Patriotism': British Quakerism and the Imperial Nation, 1890–1910' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1989), pp. 67–8 for a critical assessment of the Quaker involvement in the meetings and conferences of what he calls the European 'high-life' peace circuit which, as Phillips shows, did more to highlight prominent individuals than 'to testify against the sinfulness of fighting with carnal weapons'.

British history, London Yearly Meeting remained true to the resolve of George Fox and the early Children of Light never to 'fight with carnal weapons against a carnal man'. It was a great Quaker Dissenting tradition, one well worth preserving.

During the course of the nineteenth century, British Quakerism was gradually transformed from a tiny, self-isolated body of peculiar people into a spiritually riven, socially active, and still proudly Dissenting community of believers. The British Society of Friends entered the twentieth century strongly liberal in its religious practices and passionately confident in its mission, and its ability, to create the Kingdom of God on earth and 'to make all humanity a society of Friends'.⁷⁶

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⁷⁶ 'To Friends and Fellow-Seekers', All Friends Conference, *Official Report*, p. 201.

Unitarians and Presbyterians

Michael Ledger-Lomas

Louis Leopold Martial Baynard de Beaumont Klein was the most elaborately named Unitarian minister in nineteenth-century Britain. A Frenchman who fought against the Prussians in 1870 before studying theology at the Sorbonne, he became a Catholic priest in 1884. A mere ten years later, though, he had seceded from Rome, married the daughter of an Irish peer, and turned up as the minister of a Unitarian church in Kentish Town, North London, before moving to Ullet Road Chapel, Liverpool. His somersaults did not end there. He resigned in 1903 and left the ministry, having lost a dispute over introducing a liturgy at Ullet Road. He prudently shed the Germanic ‘Klein’ during the Great War, later writing for the Swedenborg Society, before dying in obscurity at Cambridge in 1934.¹ His example demonstrates how hard it is to pin down nineteenth-century ‘Unitarianism’, a term which describes at once the heretical denial of the Trinity and the deity of Christ; a denomination that inherited chapels from English and Irish Presbyterianism and created its own institutions; or simply what Klein called a ‘reverent freedom in human thought’, which attracted numerous religious seekers. Around a third of nineteenth-century Unitarian ministers were, like Klein, reared in other traditions.²

This chapter emphasizes the complexity of nineteenth-century Unitarianism by analysing its development alongside that of Presbyterian Dissent throughout the United Kingdom. Presbyterianism was not just—as Unitarians often suggested—a pupa for Unitarian butterflies. Presbyterian Dissenters grew in numbers, confidence, and organization throughout the period. Whereas Unitarians were asking in the last year of Queen Victoria’s reign

¹ Annie Holt, *Walking Together: A Study in Liverpool Nonconformity, 1688–1938* (London, 1938), pp. 229–33; Louis de Beaumont Klein, ‘From Roman Catholic to Unitarian’, in E.W. Lummis et al, *Types of Religious Experience* (London, 1903), p. 83.

² R.K. Webb, ‘Views of Unitarianism from Halley’s Comet’, *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society* [TUHS], 18 (1986), 186.

whether ‘the chill of the eighteenth century [is] still paralyzing our limbs’, orthodox Presbyterians benefited greatly from participation in the Evangelical Revival, which transformed the fortunes of Old Dissent.³ As the following sections of this chapter demonstrate, the Revival widened divergences between Unitarians and orthodox Presbyterians on organization and mission, Scripture, the state, and Christianity’s viability in an industrializing, urbanizing, and thoroughly class-ridden society.

NUMBERS AND DENOMINATIONAL ORGANIZATION

To the despair of Unitarians and the joy of their enemies, there were never many of them. The 1851 Religious Census recorded that they attracted only 50,100 attendances or 37,000 attendants.⁴ Unitarian observers mourned that in 1903 only as many adults worshipped in their London chapels as there had been ejected ministers in 1662. Another way of expressing that decline is to note that there were half as many adults at Unitarian morning services in 1903 as in the 1830s, though admittedly in twice the number of chapels. Statistical stasis was evident in the Unitarian ministry. The 173 ministers in England and Wales in 1835 had only increased to 207 by 1910.⁵ Given that Unitarians often claimed to be Presbyterians, these ebbing life signs also testify to the longer-term decline in the fortunes of Presbyterian Dissent in England. In England and Wales, the 185,400 old Presbyterian Dissenters of 1720 had shrunk to 60,000 in 1800, rallying only modestly to 80,000 in 1840. The Presbyterian Church of England could count only 76,071 communicants by the end of the century.⁶

Outside England, though, Presbyterian Dissenting sheep far outnumbered Unitarian goats. There were 185,000 communicants of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 1840 and still 106,630 in 1900. Welsh Calvinist Methodists, often classed as a Presbyterian church and named as such from 1928, numbered 52,600 in 1848 and 158,114 by the century’s close. Welsh Unitarians by contrast often experienced indifference or hostility outside what the orthodox called the ‘black spot’ of Cardiganshire. As late as 1886, the builders

³ ‘Sleeping or Conquering?’ *Christian Life* [CL], 13 January 1900, 18.

⁴ Clive Field, ‘Counting Religion in England and Wales: the Long Eighteenth Century, c.1680–1840’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 63 (2012), 704.

⁵ R.K. Webb, ‘Views of Unitarianism from Halley’s Comet’, *TUHS*, 18 (1986), 180–95, 183–5.

⁶ Field, ‘Counting’, p. 710; Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert, and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford, 1977), p. 132.

of Cardiff's first Unitarian church were presented with dark warnings of coming struggles along with their commemorative silver trowel.⁷ In Scotland, the inability of the Church of Scotland to satisfy evangelical zealots continued to generate new forms of Presbyterian Dissent. The 1843 Disruption swelled the already large number of Presbyterian Dissenters, with James Johnston estimating in 1874 that 790,000 adherents of the Free Church joined 485,000 United Presbyterians, 25,500 Reformed Presbyterians, and 9,500 members of the United Original Secession. By contrast, he heaped 'Socinians' with 'fifteen or more heterodox sects' that numbered fewer than 10,000 in total.⁸ Obligated to scale the north face of Calvinism, Scottish Unitarians often needed English funds and personnel to keep going.

Unitarians struggled to decide if they wished to regard themselves as a denomination or just as Presbyterians with distinctive, brave theological opinions. This was a complicated matter, because while many chapels and trusts (such as Dr Williams's Trust) were Presbyterian foundations, others were created or served by dissident churchmen such as Theophilus Lindsey or converts from Calvinistic Independency such as Joseph Priestley, Thomas Belsham, and Joshua Toulmin. These jumbled origins were masked in organizations founded to propagate Unitarian doctrines: the Unitarian Society for promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue by the Distribution of Books (1791), the Unitarian Fund (1805), and the Association for the Protection of the Civil Rights of Unitarians (1819), with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association (BFUA, 1825) to coordinate them all.⁹ Its aggressive defence of Unitarian causes reflected the influence of its founding secretary Robert Aspland, who retained the polemical instincts of the General Baptist he had once been, as well as the impact of public controversies with Trinitarians. Left to their own devices, Unitarians often shied away from aggressive statements of their opinions. Henry Solly's parents, who attended the Old Meeting, Walthamstow, would have been appalled had anyone called it 'Unitarian'; a college friend of Solly's got blank looks when he asked locals the way to the 'Unitarian chapel'.¹⁰ Public controversies in Manchester, Liverpool, or Glasgow would make such reticence impossible. Half seminar, half tournament, conducted in packed chapels or through newspapers, they

⁷ Ibid., pp. 148–9; 'Cardiff Unitarian Free Christian Church', *Christian Reformer* [CR], 30 October 1886, 524. On Welsh Unitarians see D. Elwyn Davies, *'They Thought for Themselves': A Brief Look at the Story of Unitarianism and the Liberal Tradition in Wales and Beyond its Borders* (Llandysul, 1982).

⁸ James Johnston, *The Ecclesiastical and Religious Statistics of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1874), pp. 8–12.

⁹ H.L. Short, 'The Founding of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association', Supplement, *TUHS*, 26 (1975–78), 1–23.

¹⁰ Henry Solly, *'These Eighty Years': Or the Story of an Unfinished Life*, 2 vols (London, 1893), I: p. 55.

made national names of firebrands such as the ‘devil’s chaplain’ George Harris or scholarly types such as James Yates and James Martineau.¹¹

Harris’s combativeness had an unfortunate consequence. Congregational Dissenters who saw themselves as the true heirs to orthodox Presbyterianism were stung by his gibes into litigation designed to establish that Unitarians had no right to trusts (most famously, Lady Hewley’s) or to chapels founded at a time when Unitarian opinions were still illegal. The Manchester Congregationalist George Hadfield suggested they had committed ‘intentional parricide’, sneering that the venerable Cross St Chapel was filled with Continentals, Jews, and Scotch ‘Strangers’—and nary a Presbyterian.¹² That erstwhile Dissenting allies now sought to pillage their resources contributed to the sense that Unitarians were a sect ‘everywhere spoken against’: convinced they were lined up in Hadfield’s sights, some Cross Street members resolved to emigrate to Texas if the Lady Hewley case was lost. Not until Peel’s Dissenting Chapels Act (1844) made twenty-five years’ possession the test of ownership rather than fidelity to trust deeds did they feel secure in the law’s neutrality.¹³

The BFUA thought that tighter central control would help Unitarians to lock shields against these encompassing threats. Yet an influential fraction alleged that ‘Unitarianism does not imply anything of the nature of an ecclesiastical polity’: Unitarians were instead to ‘infuse...gospel freedom’ into every existing church.¹⁴ If Peel’s Act delighted the BFUA’s stalwarts and freed them to create Unitarian district societies up and down the country, then two of its leading critics, Martineau and John James Tayler—significantly enough professors at Manchester New College (de facto but not de jure Unitarian) and leading lights in the Lancashire and Cheshire Presbyterian Association—argued that ‘Sectarian Theology’ should give way to a ‘Presbyterian’ organization, such as the English Presbyterian Association formed to contest the Hewley case.¹⁵ They argued that the essence of English Presbyterianism had been not synodical government or loyalty to the Westminster Confession, but a catholic spirit that refused to make intellectual agreement the principle of church fellowship. The periodicals that sympathized with their position argued that abandoning the rebarbative ‘Unitarian’ name would precipitate the formation of ‘new affinities’ with liberal Anglicans and Dissenters. The foundation of Liberal Christian or Free Christian churches

¹¹ Charles Wicksteed, ‘The Liverpool Unitarian Controversy of 1839’, *Theological Review*, 14 (1877), 85–106 evokes the theatrical aspect.

¹² *The Manchester Socinian Controversy* (London, 1825), pp. xvi–xxix.

¹³ Frank Schulman, *Blasphemous and Wicked: the Unitarian Struggle for Equality* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 111–12, 116.

¹⁴ John Gordon, ‘Unitarianism’, *Prospective Review*, 8 (1846), 535, 538.

¹⁵ Alan Ruston, ‘Locked in Combat: James Martineau and the Unitarian Association’, *TUHS*, 22 (2002), 371–83; C.G. Bolam, Jeremy Goring, H.L. Short, and Roger Thomas, *The English Presbyterians: from Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism* (London, 1968), pp. 266–8.

was one indication of this mood, which Martineau's 'Free Christian Union' (1867–70) sought to institutionalize. The Union flopped, but Martineau kept at it, championing a National Conference of Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian, and Other Non-Subscribing Congregations (1882) as a rival to the BFUA; pleading again in 1889 for the rebranding of Unitarians as 'English Presbyterians'; and advocating a federated Church of England, with reverent theists like himself as flying buttresses to an establishment made roomier by the repeal of the Act of Uniformity.¹⁶

What made these 'Liberal Christian' or 'Presbyterian' labels controversial was the condescension with which Martineau and his followers regarded Unitarianism's founding heroes. The long-suffering Unitarians of Warrington were disgusted when in 1855 their minister Philip Pearsall Carpenter—a vegetarian, teetotal pacifist—lectured them on the superiority of the Presbyterian to the Unitarian name.¹⁷ A decade later, T.W. Chignell told his Exeter congregation that Unitarianism was along with all *isms* to be swallowed up by the 'great tidal wave' of German theology.¹⁸ These sallies struck critics as a form of false shame. One wealthy benefactor of chapels would not fund those that blushed at a 'Unitarian' title—or featured stained glass.¹⁹ Robert Spears—a convert to Unitarianism—championed this perspective as co-secretary (1867) and general secretary (1870) of the BFUA, then as crusading editor of *The Christian Life* newspaper. Bankrolled by the Lawrences, a dynasty of London house builders, he planted 'Unitarian' churches all over London.²⁰ Spears's approach was dominant by the century's close but Martineau's hopes lingered, finding exotic expression in the Society of Free Catholics.²¹

While Unitarians pored over their family tree, Presbyterian Dissenters sought to build scriptural and national churches whose tight structures had been purged of heterodox or erastian elements. In Scotland, the Free Church created during the Disruption in 1843 would absorb the Original Secession in 1852 and the Reformed Presbyterians in 1876, before uniting with the United Presbyterian Church—itself formed in 1847 from the United Relief and Secession Churches. Irish Presbyterians expelled William Bruce and his heterodox followers from their ranks at the Synod of Ulster (1829) and then

¹⁶ Michael Ledger-Lomas, 'Unitarians and the Contradictions of Liberal Protestantism in Victorian Britain', *Historical Research*, 83 (2010), 486–505; James Martineau, 'The National Church as a Federal Union', *Contemporary Review*, 51 (1887), 408–33.

¹⁷ Russell Lant Carpenter, ed., *Memoirs of the Life and Work of Philip Pearsall Carpenter* (London, 1880), pp. 150–60.

¹⁸ John Bowring, 'Mr Chignell and the Unitarian Name', *Inquirer*, 8 June 1867, 356–7; *Inquirer*, 15 June 1867, 370–1.

¹⁹ P.W. Clayden, *Samuel Sharpe: Egyptologist and Translator of the Bible* (London, 1883), p. 232.

²⁰ *Memorials of Robert Spears* (Belfast, 1908).

²¹ Elaine Kaye, 'Heirs of Richard Baxter? The Society of Free Catholics, 1914–1928', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 58 (2007), 256–72.

recruited conservative Seceders to create the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (1840). They left behind a mess of synods grouped together as the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians and Other Free Christians. While Unitarian associations did exist in Ireland, non-subscribers were just that, defined not by shared Unitarian doctrine (many were Arians) but by reluctance to sign any creed that employed non-scriptural language. English Presbyterians were the most confused about their identity. The decision to form the Presbyterian Church in England (1836) from orthodox chapels and 'Scotch churches' was a response to the controversies initiated by Harris over the Presbyterian legacy. Given the new church's tartan tinge, some Scottish commentators were shocked when it sided with the Free Church in the Disruption and declared autonomy from the Church of Scotland.²² The defection of the National Scotch Church in Regent Square, London to its ranks was a coup that supplied the English with pugnacious ministers and professors for its newly founded Presbyterian College. Ministering to a floating population of young Scots and Ulster Scots, with *Ecclesia Scotia* engraved on its façade and with even its ownership unclear until the congregation bought it at auction in 1859, it was the headquarters of a denomination camped on rather than rooted in England.²³ The 1876 merger with United Presbyterian congregations in England permitted a change to a more forthright name: the Presbyterian Church of England. The burst of antiquarian scholarship that followed was meant to present the new church as thoroughly English, but English Unitarians still dismissed them as Scottish 'settlers'.²⁴

FOREIGN MISSIONS

Unitarians and Presbyterians agreed that it was important to expand their denominations, but had sharply contrasting attitudes to foreign missions. Unitarians disdained the evangelical missionary societies that they were not welcome to join. Rather than roving abroad, they preferred to luxuriate in freemasonry with existing liberal Protestant communities. As the Saxon merchant Friedrich Koehler wrote on his departure from Liverpool to the Unitarian minister John Hamilton Thom, his friends 'would feel pleasingly

²² Andrew MacGeorge, *The Free Church: Its Principles and Pretensions Examined, with Special Relation to the Attitude of the English Presbyterian Church towards the Church of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1873), pp. 3–5.

²³ John Hair, *Regent Square: Eighty Years of a London Congregation* (London, 1899), pp. 199, 328.

²⁴ *The Presbyterian Church of England: A Memorial of the Union, June 13th 1876* (London, 1876); A.H. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England: Their Rise, Decline and Revival* (London, 1889); 'Rev. A.H. Drysdale's Romance', *Christian Life*, 22 September 1890, 455.

surprised to learn that in England to which they are used to look up as a barren country where religion is petrified under the barren larva of dogmatical tenets or occasionally shooting forth in fearful blasts of a visionary enthusiasm, there are still many strenuous advocates of Christian views'.²⁵ A decade later, one observer baldly asserted that 'the spread of Rationalism in Germany is to a large extent the triumph of Unitarian Christianity'.²⁶ Liberal preachers and theology professors in Germany, France, and Holland or even solitary lecturers for rational Christianity in papal Rome could count on their sympathy or funds. Unitarians took pride in such catches as Joseph Blanco White, a renegade Spanish priest who had briefly dined in Anglican Oxford.

The Unitarian quest for kindred spirits ranged outside Christianity. If Harriet Martineau's prize-winning essay for the BFUA (1831) on how to convert Jews remained a dead letter, then assimilated German Jews in Manchester joined Cross St Chapel down to the thirties. The *Manchester Guardian* claimed that they 'did not much care to attend [the synagogue]. They took seats in the Socinian Chapels and some even in Christian Churches'—Socinians and Jews supposedly agreeing on the humanity of Jesus, even while differing on his Messiahship.²⁷ Assimilation slowed thereafter, but affinities developed between Reform Judaism and Unitarianism, both claiming that they welcomed the fearless pursuit of the historical Jesus, while Robert Travers Herford emerged by the early twentieth century as a sympathetic student of Pharisaic Judaism.²⁸

The most striking instance of Unitarian hospitality to other faiths was their interest in the East. The Hindu reformer Rammohan Roy's foundation of the Calcutta Unitarian Committee and defiance of evangelical missionaries riveted Unitarians. His use of Christian rhetoric did not make him a Christian, but Unitarians hailed him on his visit to Britain as another Abraham, one of those monotheistic seekers led to 'lands they little thought to visit—to a mental path they little expected to trace'.²⁹ When he died in 1833—in the care of a Unitarian doctor—he ended up in the Dissenting section of a Bristol cemetery, just as White's Unitarian friends buried him at Renshaw St, Liverpool and published a biography to refute Anglican claims that his intellectual restlessness was symptomatic of mental instability.³⁰ The eagerness of Unitarians to

²⁵ Friedrich Koehler to J.H. Thom, Rathbone deposit, Liverpool Sydney Jones library, XIII.1.123.

²⁶ John Rely Beard, *Unitarianism Exhibited in its Actual Condition: Illustrative of the Rise, Progress, and Principles of Christian Anti-Trinitarianism in Different Parts of the World* (London, 1846), p. 252.

²⁷ Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry, 1740–1845* (Manchester, 1976), p. 93.

²⁸ Claude Montefiore, 'Unitarianism and Judaism in their Relations to Each Other', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 9 (1897), 248.

²⁹ W.J. Fox, *A Discourse on the Death of Rajah Rammohun Roy* (London, 1833), p. 8.

³⁰ Lynn Zastoupil, 'Defining Christians, Making Britons: Rammohun Roy and the Unitarians', *Victorian Studies*, 44 (2002), 215–43.

see Hindus as their avatars survived Roy. They choreographed a visit to Britain by Keshub Chunder Sen, Roy's successor as head of the Brahmo Samaj, and mounted a yearly deputation to India to keep in touch with his movement.³¹

If Unitarians welcomed the global permeation of their opinions, then orthodox Presbyterians were determined to spread not just Christianity, but also the synodal structures which guaranteed its orthodoxy. English Presbyterians regarded foreign missions as 'the first proof' of their church's vitality. The declaration of their Church's independence meant that its Foreign Missions Committee absorbed funds once remitted to Scotland. Its yearly income had climbed from £89 in 1848 to £9,258 18s 6d by 1872. If the rate of return on their expenditure was underwhelming, with only 4,946 adults in full communion with the Chinese mission church in 1896, then missions did strengthen solidarities in the Presbyterian family.³² The Missions Committee's convener was James Hamilton, who led Regent Square out of the Church of Scotland, while its first missionary, William Chalmers Burns, was likewise from the Free Church.

Other Presbyterian churches not only supplied the English church with missionaries but matched it in parading their pristine ecclesiology abroad. The Welsh Calvinistic Methodists founded their Missionary Society at Liverpool in 1840, forming their first Indian Presbytery in 1867. With the Disruption pending, the founders of the Free Church had courted the 'Scottish ecclesiastical ambassadors to the Jews and the Gentiles'. After the nail-biting wait for an exchange of letters with India, all the Church of Scotland's missionaries joined them. This triumph threatened financial disaster for a Free Church struggling to replace churches, manses, stipends, and colleges forfeited during the Disruption. By 1847, the missionary accounts were in deficit to £3252 14s 6d and even after extraordinary effort the thrifty Scots faced a yearly deficit of £2400. Instead of retrenching their efforts, they tightened the bureaucracy that supported them, with Alexander Duff leading a fundraising tour in 1851 that produced 616 fundraising associations by 1872. These networks were boosted by missionary print, the *Missionary Record* selling 34,000 copies by 1871.³³ In Ireland, pride in Presbyterian ecclesiology, mingled with eschatological excitement, explained the Presbyterian Church's decision to send two missionaries to India and to create a Foreign Mission in the very year of its formation.³⁴ The missions of Britain's Presbyterian Dissenters were therefore an expression of shared pride in 'the natural order of the Presbyterian system',

³¹ Sophia Collet, ed., *Keshub Chunder Sen's English Visit* (London, 1871), pp. 19–20.

³² James Johnston, *China and Formosa: The Story of the Mission of the Presbyterian Church of England* (London, 1897), pp. 3, 193, 357.

³³ Robert Hunter, *History of the Missions of the Free Church of Scotland in India and Africa* (London, 1873), pp. 20–6, 30–1, 41.

³⁴ Andrew R. Holmes, 'The Shaping of Irish Presbyterian Attitudes to Mission, 1790–1840', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 57 (2006), 720–1.

which suited the ‘common sense of the Chinese’ as it had ‘our Saxon fathers’.³⁵ That pride facilitated cooperation: Irish Presbyterians who went to Manchuria at the urging of Burns joined forces with the Free Church in 1890 to form one Presbytery, the future Synod of the Church of Manchuria.³⁶ As a minority seeking to make a dent in the Catholicism that surrounded them at home, Irish Dissenters were accustomed to inviting Scottish brethren to share the costs of spreading Presbyterianism.³⁷ These solidarities, at once domestic and global, found formal expression in the Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System (1875), a colonial and transatlantic talking shop that exchanged ideas about mission, explored ties with Continental Reformed churches, and built a common front against the menace of Romanism.³⁸

Presbyterians were as determined to convert Jews as they were heathens. The Free Churchman Alexander Moody Stuart told an early meeting of the Alliance that their superior love of the Old Testament made them ‘peculiarly fitted’ for this task.³⁹ Hebrew scholars such as ‘Rabbi’ John Duncan, who took their conversionism into the Free Church, did their best to flesh out that claim. One of Duncan’s converts was Adolph Saphir, a Jew from the Hapsburg Empire, who produced popular works of New Testament scholarship while serving as an English Presbyterian minister in South Shields, then around London.⁴⁰ The efforts of the Free Church’s Jewish Committee would culminate with the 1884 medical mission to Jews in Tiberias, while other Presbyterian churches had active Jewish committees.⁴¹

Women were central to the Presbyterian missionary enterprise. The Free Church inherited the Scottish Ladies’ Society for Promoting Female Education in India (1839), later amalgamated with an African branch, while in 1854 two of its Indian missionaries inaugurated a Zenana system.⁴² In 1877, the Synod of the English Presbyterian Church approved the deployment of unmarried women as missionaries and a Women’s Missionary Association (1878). As the title of its journal, *Our Sisters in Other Lands*, revealed, their work mobilized female solidarities, stressing such motherly duties as the struggle against infanticide.

³⁵ Johnston, *China*, p. 122.

³⁶ F.W.S. O’Neill, *The Call of the East* (London, 1919), p. 120.

³⁷ Holmes, ‘Shaping’, p. 730.

³⁸ W.G. Blaikie, ‘Introductory Narrative’, in *Report of Proceedings of the First General Presbyterian Council Convened at Edinburgh, July 1877* (Edinburgh, 1877), pp. 1–14. See Andrew Holmes, ‘Religion, Anti-Slavery, and Identity: Irish Presbyterians, the United States, and Transatlantic Revivalism, c.1820–1914’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 39 (2015), 393 on anti-Catholicism.

³⁹ *Presbyterian Council*, p. 153.

⁴⁰ See Michael Ledger-Lomas, ‘Evangelical Protestants, Jews, and the Epistle to the Hebrews in Mid-Nineteenth Century Britain’, *Jewish Historical Studies*, 47 (2015), 83–90.

⁴¹ James H. Wilson et al, *The Sea of Galilee Mission of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1895), pp. 30, 35.

⁴² Hunter, *Missions*, pp. 38, 76, 112.

THE BIBLE AND THEOLOGY

One of Unitarianism's late Victorian luminaries crisply defined it as 'founded on the conception of the single personality of the Deity in contrast to the orthodox doctrine of his triune nature'.⁴³ As Arian theology faded in England, anti-Trinitarianism became ever more closely involved with an insistence on the humanity of Jesus Christ, a denial that his death had been a sacrificial atonement for human sins and an Arminian insistence on the love of God and universality of salvation. The strongest argument of Unitarians for attacking orthodox doctrine was that it was false to Scripture.⁴⁴ Their critics replied that it was they who were the mutilators, with Coleridgean defenders of church establishments casting Unitarians as hardened 'Socinians' who cut out everything from Scripture which did not suit their understanding. Thomas Arnold echoed William Wilberforce in claiming that 'many . . . merely call themselves Unitarians, because the name of unbeliever is not yet thought creditable'.⁴⁵ Yet Unitarians considered themselves more remarkable for piety than scepticism. Wishing to follow Jesus in worship, they dreaded as idolatrous the worship of Jesus in the Book of Common Prayer.⁴⁶ These attitudes confirmed controversialists such as Lant Carpenter in their love of the New Testament and trust in its proof texts. Dismayed that the young Henry Solly proposed to go on a rambling holiday without a Bible, Carpenter pressed a copy upon him.⁴⁷

This naive love of a pure New Testament encouraged an interest in the lower critical and hermeneutical studies required to scrape away the Trinitarian glazes imposed on it in the King James Version. Thomas Belsham's *Improved Version of the New Testament* (1808) and translation of Paul's epistles (1824) was based on J.J. Griesbach's recension, which stripped out many of the Trinitarian clauses in the received text. Unitarians such as the Egyptologist Samuel Sharpe, the MP James Heywood, and the Belfast minister John Scott Porter championed the revision of the King James Version to take account of such discoveries and the Manchester College professor George Vance Smith was appointed one of its Revisers. Moreover, because Unitarians disowned a high Christology, they could welcome the study of the Old Testament as an ancient Oriental book, unimpeded by typological readings. The Manchester

⁴³ Joseph Estlin Carpenter, *Unitarianism* (London, 1922), p. 1.

⁴⁴ Simon Mills, 'Scripture and Heresy in the Biblical Studies of Nathaniel Lardner, Joseph Priestley, and Thomas Belsham', in Michael Ledger-Lomas and Scott Mandelbrote, eds., *Dissent and the Bible in Britain, 1650–1950* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 85–112.

⁴⁵ Arnold, quoted in John Seed, 'Theologies of Power: Unitarianism and the Social Relations of Religious Discourse, 1800–1850', in R.J. Morris, ed., *Class, Power, and Social Structure in British Nineteenth-century Towns* (Leicester, 1986), p. 115.

⁴⁶ Michael Ledger-Lomas, 'Unitarians and the Book of Common Prayer in Nineteenth-century Britain', *Studia Liturgica*, 43 (2013), 215–19.

⁴⁷ Solly, *Eighty Years*, I: p. 237.

College tutor John Kenrick was among the earliest British students of *Altertumswissenschaft* and its application to the Bible, while even those who set themselves up as conservative enemies of Germany acknowledged that the Old Testament contained legendary elements.⁴⁸

The Straussian higher criticism of the New Testament had a complex impact on these positions. The clashes between Unitarians and evangelicals over the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture now looked less important than their shared conviction that it was vital to defend the New Testament as a true history. The Manchester minister John Relly Beard may have been an incorrigible controversialist—condemned to a church wedding before the legalization of civil marriages, he and his bride handed in ‘a protest against such parts of the service as imply our credence in the unscriptural part of the Trinity’—but he was valued by the orthodox for publishing arguments against Strauss.⁴⁹ He was even anxious to throw a shield over the prophets, reassuring evangelicals who read the *British Quarterly Review* that Austen Henry Layard’s discoveries at Nineveh vindicated Isaiah.⁵⁰ The austerity of Priestleyan apologetics, which asserted merely that Jesus was a Messiah attested by miracles and resurrection, obliged its exponents to resist any challenge to the scriptural evidence for them. Yet flings at German rationalism disguised how quickly higher criticism attracted Unitarians. By the late thirties, students at Manchester College were already meeting to hear one of their precocious fellows translate Strauss’s *Das Leben Jesu* aloud.⁵¹

Exposure to Strauss nudged those whom James Martineau termed ‘mere anti-supernaturalists’—not least his sister Harriet—into abandoning Unitarianism for wholly secularized kinds of progressivism.⁵² W.R. Greg argued in *The Creed of Christendom* (1851) that because German criticism shook certainties in the existence of a personal God, a future life, and the worth of intercessory prayer, it was more important to improve this world than to wait for the next. Yet James Martineau and his colleague Tayler, the ‘English Schleiermacher’ who had directed Greg to his sources, argued that Germany’s challenge to miracles and the historicity of the gospels merely obliged students to revere in Jesus a man whose divine mission could not be established by

⁴⁸ See e.g. John Kenrick, *An Essay on Primaeval History* (London, 1846); Edward Higginson, *The Spirit of the Bible; or, The Nature and Value of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures Discriminated, in an Analysis of their Several Books*, 2 vols (London, 1853–5).

⁴⁹ Herbert McLachlan, *Records of a Family, 1800–1933: Pioneers in Education, Social Service and Liberal Religion* (Manchester, 1935), pp. 6, 11; John Relly Beard, *Strauss, Hegel, and their Opinions* (London, 1844).

⁵⁰ John Relly Beard, ‘Nineveh and the Bible’, *British Quarterly Review*, 18 (1849), 399–442.

⁵¹ Carpenter, ed., *Memoirs*, p. 17.

⁵² J. Estlin Carpenter, *James Martineau: Theologian and Teacher* (London, 1905), p. 185; Valerie Dodd, ‘Strauss’s English Propagandists and the Politics of Unitarianism, 1841–1845’, *Church History*, 50 (1981), 415–35; R.K. Webb, *Harriet Martineau: A Radical Victorian* (London, 1960), pp. 284–5.

external proofs, but the traces of whose holy personality still spoke to the conscience as an exemplar of moral perfection. Their brilliant, seemingly sceptical solution to the age's quest for religious authority was to relocate the 'seat of authority' from a disintegrating historical text to the enduring conscience. Their critical reverence for Jesus reminded many of the Incarnational theology of Frederick Denison Maurice, the son of a Unitarian minister, a Trinitarian who yet revered a brotherly Christ. Octavia Hill's drift into the church began with her obsessive attendance on Maurice's sermons at Lincoln's Inn, while Richard Holt Hutton's defection from the Unitarian ministry was triggered when Solly introduced him to Maurice. Appalled by the Church's treatment of Maurice, Unitarians also organized in support of Bishop Colenso, who combined his opposition to atonement theology with radical higher criticism.⁵³

Affinities between Unitarianism and the 'Broad Church'—then as now a hazy term—did not make for firm alliances. Martineau's refusal to allow that Christological language could be more than a beautiful metaphor cramped his conversations with liberals in established churches, who in turn sniffed at sects.⁵⁴ Stopford Brooke was a hero to late nineteenth-century Unitarians because his defection from the Church of England and willingness to occupy their pulpits was so rare. Most churchmen would have answered W.H. Fremantle's daring question, 'Is a Unitarian entitled to Christian fellowship?' with a thunderous no.⁵⁵ When Vance Smith took communion in Westminster Abbey with the other Revisers of the King James Bible, horrified clergy of the Church of England tried to have him thrown off the project, leading Unitarians to mock or condemn their fright.⁵⁶

Nor was Martineau's position within Unitarianism stable. In 1857, conservatives embarrassed by his and Tayler's embrace of higher criticism tried to block their promotion at Manchester New College. From the mid-fifties to the late sixties, this anxiety triggered disputes over whether the educational and denominational institutions of a 'creedless' movement could demand that ministers affirm their faith in the Messiahship and resurrection of the historical Jesus. Although Martineau went on publishing major works into his nineties, the Unitarians who put up chapels or ran bazaars to pay for them preferred the pugnacious biblicism of Spears to his gaunt intellectualism—so

⁵³ David Young, *F.D. Maurice and Unitarianism* (Oxford, 1992); C. Edmund Maurice, ed., *The Life of Octavia Hill as Told in Her Letters* (London, 1913), pp. 43, 62; Solly, *These Eighty Years*, II: pp. 268, 272–3; Gerald Parsons, 'Friendship and Theology: Unitarians and the Colensos, 1862–1865', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, 22 (2000), 97–110.

⁵⁴ *Inter Amicos: Letters Between James Martineau and William Knight, 1869–1872* (London, 1901), pp. 24–6.

⁵⁵ W.H. Fremantle, 'Is a Unitarian Entitled to Christian Fellowship?' *CR*, 2 (1886), 129–38, 193–204.

⁵⁶ John Scott Porter, *Convocation and Bible Revision* (London, 1871), pp. 11–17.

memorably evoked in his 1873 portrait by George Frederick Watts. When he died in the first year of the new century, the *Christian Life* dredged up the contretemps of 1857 and suggested that Unitarianism's stumbling development had vindicated his opponents. Yet Martineau was also outpaced by younger thinkers unhappy with confining 'religion' to a Christian envelope. This dissatisfaction reflected the entanglement of British and American Unitarianism: many Britons had been impressed by Theodore Parker's crusading, abolitionist absolute religion, while Moncure Conway imported a similar creed to London as minister of South Place Chapel.⁵⁷ These developments appalled Spears, who resigned from the BFUA when it resolved to distribute Parker's writings, but the trend towards defining Unitarianism as just one strand of theism among many continued. Martineau's popular *Ten Services for Public Prayer* (1879), which provided Unitarians with theistic rather than biblical compositions for use in worship, was one symptom of that trend, as was the decision of the Hibbert Trustees to divert funds towards lectures in comparative religion.

Irish Unitarianism was disrupted by similar quarrels, in which heterodox Presbyterians who agreed that the Westminster Confession was of lesser authority than the Bible fell out over how to define the latter's authority. John Scott Porter, who combined sound scholarship with loud opposition to Strauss and Parker, lambasted Presbyterians who dabbled in the 'New Theology'.⁵⁸ He belonged to the Northern Presbytery of Antrim, which had split from the Presbytery of Antrim when it had been joined by refugees from the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster, who had been forced out from it by their attachment to Parker. Such confusing antics confirmed orthodox Presbyterians in Ireland and elsewhere in believing that Unitarian attempts to depreciate 'creeds' in the name of the Bible were specious. They argued that Unitarian heresy was not the fruit of Presbyterianism but a symptom of its decay, when rogue ministers in Hanoverian times had thrown off the safeguards of the Westminster Confession in studying the Bible. Though infallible, the Bible's language was prone to misunderstanding and it was vital to let the Confession police its study. Presbyterian conversation about biblical criticism thus tended to concern less its lawfulness than its compatibility with the Confession and could have unpredictable outcomes. Free Church scholars and those from Scottish splinter churches were initially remarkable for their granitic intolerance of doubt about the inspiration or infallibility of the Scriptures. Yet the Confession remained a house with many mansions. If the Free Churchman R.S. Candlish was aggressively ignorant of German universities, then the United Presbyterians John Cairns and John Eadie were among the first of many to study at them. Later nineteenth-century ecclesiastical

⁵⁷ Ian Mackillop, *The British Ethical Societies* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 47–52.

⁵⁸ John Scott Porter, *The New Theology* (London, 1863).

politicians such as the Free Churchman Robert Rainy or J. Oswald Dykes of the Presbyterian Church of England viewed the Westminster Confession as a big tent rather than a strait gate, which was quiet on the exact degree of verbal and historical accuracy to be expected from the Scriptures. They often took higher critics who claimed to be believers at their word. The Free Churchman William Robertson Smith famously lost his heresy trial, but Marcus Dods won his.⁵⁹

Scholars in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland were likewise guided by the Confession's teaching on inspiration but were also subject to unusual political and confessional pressures. Ahead of the Scots in founding chairs in biblical criticism, they yearned for a harder defence of inspiration than the Confession allowed and found it in Princeton College's rehearsal of external evidences. That stance could be compatible with advanced scholarship. Samuel Davidson, later dismissed from an English Congregational college for doubting the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, started life as a professor of biblical criticism at the Belfast Academical Institution, while a later professor, Josias Leslie Porter, was an industrious topographer of Scripture. Yet Irish Presbyterians would be discomfited by radical higher criticism. Embedded in a community that viewed the Bible as their bulwark against Catholicism and which increasingly privileged fiery revivalism over expert noodling, scholars long flinched from Robertson Smith's 'believing criticism'.⁶⁰

CITIZENSHIP AND THE STATE

The poetess who welcomed a possible invasion of England by Napoleon, because he would 'overturn the government' and 'destroy the Church and the aristocracy', illustrates the depth of Unitarian estrangement from a monarchical and Trinitarian state at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁶¹ With Unitarians not admitted to legal toleration until the 1813 amendment of the Blasphemy Act, their hostility to 'corruption' was as political as it was theological.⁶² George Harris wanted Unitarians to put a spoke in the 'wheels of antichristian hierarchies [that] have been made to crush alike the intellect and

⁵⁹ J. Oswald Dykes, 'Authority of Holy Scripture', in Dykes, ed., *Some Present Difficulties* (London, 1873), pp. 56–7; Colin Kidd and Valerie Wallace, 'Biblical Criticism and Scots Presbyterian Dissent in the Age of Robertson Smith', in Mandelbrote and Ledger-Lomas, eds., *Dissent and the Bible*, p. 239.

⁶⁰ Andrew Holmes, 'The Common Sense Bible: Irish Presbyterians, Samuel Davidson, and Biblical Criticism', in Mandelbrote and Ledger-Lomas, eds., *Dissent and the Bible*, pp. 176–204; Holmes, 'Biblical Criticism', p. 352; Edwin Aiken, *Scriptural Geography: Portraying the Holy Land* (London, 2009), ch. 4.

⁶¹ Anne Plumptre, reported in Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence* (Cambridge, 2011 edn.), pp. 298–9.

⁶² See Stuart Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism, 1770–1814* (Basingstoke, 2003).

the hope of man'. By teaching the sinfulness of human nature, orthodox theologians enabled despotism, for 'what are the rights which belong to a condemned and loathsome criminal?'⁶³ Feeling themselves to be themselves 'theological negroes', Unitarians had campaigned against the slave trade on the grounds that a bishop was a planter at prayer.⁶⁴ As 'friends of peace', they petitioned against the French wars, which violated the 'divine providence' that linked nations in profitable commerce.⁶⁵

Yet because Unitarians regarded their liberalism—another name for freedom of thought—as flourishing in stable societies, they preferred the Whiggish negotiation of concessions from the state to rabble-rousing. If the Unitarian missionary Thomas Fyshe Palmer was transported from Scotland to Australia, dying far from home as a martyr to liberty, then Thomas Belsham's preaching at Essex St Chapel dwelt on the 'excellence and stability of the British constitution', especially after the legislation of 1813.⁶⁶ This gradualism did not exclude activism. Unitarians shook the 'Babel pile of corruption' by working for the emancipation of Catholics and passage of Parliamentary reform and many served as liberal mayors after the Municipal Corporations Act (1835).⁶⁷ W.J. Fox made the *Monthly Repository* a clearing house for such anti-aristocratic causes as the Anti-Corn Law League, while Solly and some Welsh ministers declared for Chartism.⁶⁸ Yet many Unitarians would become estranged from evangelical Dissent by refusing to follow its mounting obsession with the church-state connexion. Martineau's circle did not accept disestablishment as synonymous with freedom, regarding Independent chapels as nurseries of oppression. With no war cry to offer the provincial and Dissenting electorate that grew with each Reform Act, their influence dwindled. The fifteen Unitarian MPs of 1834 were synonymous with Dissenting representation in Parliament; the ten elected in 1910 were a fraction of the 130 Dissenting MPs elected in that year.⁶⁹

Yet rather than emphasizing the cooling and shrinking of Unitarian dissidence, it would be more accurate to stress here their passionate conviction that

⁶³ George Harris, *Christianity, Universal Liberty: A Thanksgiving Sermon* (2nd edn., Glasgow, 1832), pp. 12, 16.

⁶⁴ Anthony Page, 'Rational Dissent, Enlightenment and Abolition of the British Slave Trade', *Historical Journal*, 54 (2012), 741–77.

⁶⁵ J.E. Cookson, *The Friends of Peace: Anti-War Liberalism in England 1793–1815* (Cambridge, 1982), chs. 2 and 3; Thomas Belsham, *The Providence of God Over-ruling the Issues of War and Conquest* (London, 1807).

⁶⁶ Thomas Belsham, *Reflections and Exhortations Adapted to the State of the Times* (London: J. Johnson, 1802), pp. 11, 23; *The Progress of Intellectual, Moral, and Religious Improvement during the Present Reign* (London, 1814), pp. 1, 23.

⁶⁷ Harris, *Christianity*, p. 8.

⁶⁸ Dodd, 'English Propagandists', pp. 423–4; Francis Mineka, *The Dissidence of Dissent: the Monthly Repository, 1806–1838* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1944).

⁶⁹ Webb, 'Comet', p. 183.

Christian involvement in politics must foster education, morality, and equality, concerns which sat ill with crude suspicion of the state. The necessarian philosophy and associational psychology of Unitarian activists such as Thomas Southwood Smith and Joshua Toulmin Smith made them see the state as an instrument to 'maximize the potential for self-direction' through investment in education and sanitation, while John Bowring forced free-trading nostrums on backward countries from the mouths of naval cannon.⁷⁰ The state did not imply here a remote, centralized entity. While some Unitarians advocated Continental-sounding compulsory state education and Southwood Smith worked for the General Board of Health, Toulmin Smith founded the Anti-Centralization Union to oppose the enfeeblement of free Saxons by central power.⁷¹ For Toulmin Smith, it was local rather than national government which trained citizens, a preference shared by men such as Abel Heywood, an early mayor of Manchester who paid for its statue of Oliver Cromwell.

Civic radicalism extended into foreign policy. Toulmin Smith and other 'vestry radicals' thrilled to Lajos Kossuth's struggle for Hungary's liberties against Vienna. South Place Chapel supplied Unitarianism with its armchair generals: William Ashurst's Muswell Hill Brigade, named for the London suburb where its members lived, or the Italophiles who met at Peter Taylor's house in Notting Hill Gate. They argued that elite diplomacy and pacific unilateralism variously betrayed Europe's oppressed peoples, reserving a special place in their heart for Italians. When asked her religion, Ashurst's daughter Emilie even stated: 'I am a Mazzinian'.⁷² Unitarians also desired a speedy end to American slavery. The Irish were foremost in pressurizing American counterparts into declaring against it, while ministers in Liverpool and Bristol spirited away escaped slaves.⁷³ Nor was bellicosity confined to the advanced Unitarians whose Christ spoke Italian. While Martineau was a tepid abolitionist, his belief that the nation state was no mere guarantor of material prosperity but the 'corporate expression of a people's mind' caused him to back nations that squared up against overweening power, whether Turks withstanding Russia in the Crimea, Italians seeking freedom from Austria, Southerners in the American Civil War, or Prussians at war with Napoleon III.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Ben Weinstein, "'Local Self-Government is True Socialism': Joshua Toulmin Smith, the State and Character Formation', *English Historical Review*, 78 (2008), 1193–1228; David Todd, 'John Bowring and the Global Dissemination of Free Trade', *Historical Journal*, 51 (2008), 373–97.

⁷¹ Weinstein, 'Toulmin Smith'.

⁷² Margot Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848–74* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 160–3.

⁷³ Douglas Stange, *British Unitarians Against American Slavery, 1833–1865* (Rutherford, NJ, 1984), esp. chs. 3–5.

⁷⁴ James Martineau, *National Duties and other Sermons and Addresses* (London, 1903), p. 22; 'International Duties and the Present Crisis', *National Review*, 1 (1855), 209–34; Carpenter, *Martineau*, pp. 344–5, 427–8.

The concern with individual character still stymied enthusiasm for some forms of state intervention. Martineau strongly opposed free schooling. Southwood Smith's granddaughter Octavia Hill opposed old-age pensions or unemployment relief as liable to weaken individual character, even as she carved public gardens and model housing from slums. Other Unitarians embraced a modernized state. H.W. Crosskey was Martineau's disciple in theology, but as a minister in Birmingham he joined the Unitarian screw manufacturer Joseph Chamberlain in demanding secular state education rather than continuing privileges for church schools. Crosskey was representative of many Unitarian ministers active in liberal politics, who despaired of reforming an increasingly clerical Church and instead embraced disestablishment.⁷⁵ In mixing municipal socialism with opposition to Home Rule, Chamberlain and Crosskey also represented a new acceptance of the imperial, activist state. The *Christian Life* opposed Home Rule as likely to weaken the Empire and printed dire warnings from Irish ministers that Home Rule meant Rome rule.⁷⁶ At the same time, the patriotism of most leading Unitarian ministers remained more humanitarian than ethnocentric, involving fervent, often lonely solidarity with suffering Armenians, Irish, and Boers. In March 1900, 147 Unitarian ministers signed an address deploring the South African War.⁷⁷ If the policies Unitarians derived from their patriotism shifted, its spikiness was constant.

By the later nineteenth century, a growing number of Unitarians insisted that the state must enfranchise women. This was no speedy development. Unitarians were always more likely than other Protestants to question the biblical texts from Genesis and Paul that frowned on women power and had always produced female political writers. Then again, historians have now established that most churches did. Nor were Unitarian patriarchs more welcoming to the 'politicianess' than evangelicals.⁷⁸ Even Harriet Martineau initially defined female education's aim as training 'a race of enlightened mothers'.⁷⁹ Yet as advocates of Pestalozzian pedagogy, Unitarians were reluctant to put limits on education, viewing it as an exercise in developing

⁷⁵ See the symposium, 'A National Church', *CR*, 1 (1876), 129–53, 193–209.

⁷⁶ A.G. [Alexander Gordon], 'Ireland', *CL*, 16 January 1886, 31.

⁷⁷ George G. Armstrong, *Richard Acland Armstrong: A Memoir, with Selected Sermons, and an Introductory Letter* (London, 1906), pp. 112, 184; Eugenio Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876–1906* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 35, 75, chs. 5, 7; 'Unitarians and the War', *CL*, 3 March 1900, 105.

⁷⁸ Anthony Page, "'A Great Politicianess': Ann Jebb, Rational Dissent, and Politics in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Women's History Review*, 17 (2008), 743–65; Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists: Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement, 1831–51* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 21–30; Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women's Rights* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 121.

⁷⁹ 'Discipulus' [Harriet Martineau], 'On Female Education', *Monthly Repository*, 18 (1823), 78.

mental powers.⁸⁰ The classes run by James Martineau or William Gaskell in Manchester trained writers and activists, while more formal institutions followed, such as Bedford College in Bloomsbury, whose founding patrons were philanthropic Unitarians such as Elizabeth Reid and Anna Swanwick.⁸¹ From teaching women to exercise mental command, it was a short step to demanding legal rights or the suffrage. Many of the 'early feminists' who militated against the Contagious Diseases Acts or demanded married women's property acts and suffrage came from South Place, Muswell Hill, or the radical law: Ashurst's daughters Emilie, Matilda, and Caroline; Caroline's husband, the solicitor and cabinet minister James Stansfeld or the chivalrous solicitor William Shaen. An 'ardent teetotaler, a convinced homoeopathist, and an opponent of vivisection' who advocated Italian independence, defended Colenso, and helped to indict the thuggish Governor Eyre, Shaen felt impelled to bring about 'harmony between the moral nature of man' and modern society.⁸²

If Unitarians were then not so much hostile to the state as concerned that it should promote freedom for all classes and both genders, then orthodox Presbyterians were determined that it respect the covenant between Christian church and state envisaged in the Westminster Confession.⁸³ That made many Presbyterians 'quasi-Dissenters', more concerned that the state should not meddle in a church's affairs than to proclaim dogmatic hostility to establishments. The non-Intrusionist party in Scotland triggered the Disruption to protect rather than destroy the national church and only after Peel's government spurned their anti-Erastian scruples. Thereafter, a weighty fraction of the Free Church continued to proclaim against the 'unscriptural figment of voluntarism, borrowed from the French Revolution' and refused to contemplate a merger with the voluntarist United Presbyterians.⁸⁴ English Presbyterians who admired the Free Church nonetheless avoided the political company of Liberationists in their own country. That the Free Church did in the end unite with the United Presbyterians (1900) and advocate disestablishment owed much to the erudite diplomacy of the new church's first moderator, Robert Rainy, whose writings presented voluntarism as a sacred bequest from the Covenanters.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760–1860* (London, 1998), pp. 182–6.

⁸¹ Mary L. Bruce, *Anna Swanwick: A Memoir and Recollections* (London, 1903), pp. 41–2; Carpenter, *Martineau*, pp. 272–3; Rosemary Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury* (London, 2012), ch. 8.

⁸² Gleadle, *Early*, chs. 2–3; Philip Wicksteed, 'William Shaen', *CR*, 3 (1886), 223, 226.

⁸³ Colin Kidd, 'The Scots Covenanting Tradition and the Eighteenth-century British State', *English Historical Review*, 117 (2002), 1147–76.

⁸⁴ James Begg, *The Ecclesiastical and Social Evils of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1871), p. 14.

⁸⁵ Stewart Brown, 'The Controversy over Dean Stanley's Lectures on the Scottish National Church, 1872', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 31 (2001), 145–72.

Irish Presbyterians also accepted that the state should support Protestant churches. Apart from a few members of Scottish secessionist churches, most defended their *Regium Donum*, a state subsidy for ministerial and professorial stipends, and even lobbied for its increase. One observer noted sourly that they viewed its grants as a 'perpetual annuity...created against the public'.⁸⁶ Dismissing allegations from voluntaries that it was English 'hush money', they presented it as a tribute to Presbyterianism's missionary activities in Ireland.⁸⁷ Indeed, the General Assembly joined other Irish Protestants in opposing the 1869 Disestablishment of the Irish Church, one of whose provisions was to squelch the *Regium Donum*. Yet the insistence that the British state support Protestantism did not blind Presbyterians to its deficiencies. The Scottish Disruption recalled them to a shared covenanting, radical past. Many ministers never accepted the 'Tory Presbyterianism' of Henry Cooke, who had sought to purge the Presbyterian Church of Whiggery as well as of heterodoxy. They endorsed liberal MPs who resisted threats to their church's independence and backed tenants against Anglican landlords. If mounting anxieties over Roman Catholic nationalism pushed these latter-day Covenanters into opposing Home Rule, then they did so in pragmatic language that English and Scottish Nonconformists could endorse. Moreover, a sizeable fraction of the General Assembly backed Gladstone's plans.⁸⁸

CHRISTIANITY, CLASS, AND THE CITY

Visiting relatives at Seaforth near Liverpool in 1844, Jane Welsh Carlyle shuddered at having to mix with Unitarians 'with faces like a meat axe'.⁸⁹ Her friend James Anthony Froude, obliged to tutor Manchester Unitarians after forfeiting his Oxford fellowship, was no more complimentary. 'Vulgar and insolent', they were remarkable only for the 'gracelessness of their manner'.⁹⁰ These critiques had a class edge, presenting Unitarians as machine-tooled gentlemen whose boasted culture barely concealed their heavy greed. It is true that Unitarians in Leeds, Manchester, and London constituted an

⁸⁶ George Mathews, *An Account of the Regium Donum, Issued to the Presbyterian Church of Ireland* (Dublin, 1836), p. 33.

⁸⁷ 'A Voluntary', *The Irish Regium Donum: Its History, Character, and Effects* (London, 1865), p. 16.

⁸⁸ Andrew Holmes, 'Covenanter Politics: Evangelicalism, Political Liberalism and Ulster Presbyterians, 1798 to 1914', *English Historical Review*, 125 (2010), 1; David Hempton and Myrtle Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society 1740–1890* (London, 1992), pp. 171–81.

⁸⁹ Jane Welsh Carlyle to Thomas Carlyle, 17 July 1844, in Charles Richard Sanders, Kenneth J. Fielding et al., eds., *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, 39 vols to date (Durham, NC, 1984–2011), XVIII: p. 141.

⁹⁰ Waldo Dunn, *James Anthony Froude: A Biography*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1961–3), I: p. 167.

intermarried chunk of the urban middle classes, who profited handsomely from the relentless commercialization and industrialization of society. Elsewhere, merchant princes were admittedly thin on the ground: when Solly arrived as a minister in Yeovil, the 'carriage families' had gone, leaving a 'pleasant wine merchant', a small builder, and workers in the glove trade.⁹¹ Nonetheless, classless Unitarianism was a contradiction in terms. Treated as a 'theological leper' by Yeovil, Solly was more galled to be patronized by rich members of his flock; he ended up mixing with the glove-makers. Where there were predominantly working-class congregations, as in the north, they worshipped in chapels laid on by their employers.⁹² Central to the history of nineteenth-century Unitarians was their struggle to square the 'vital importance of preaching the truths of Unitarian Christianity to the poor' with the fact that this Unitarian Christianity was tailored to the economic activities and refined sensibilities of urban capitalists.⁹³

The materialist necessarianism of early nineteenth-century Unitarians certainly looked like a recipe for indifference to the casualties of urban capitalism. Yet a Unitarian historian rightly noted that they lived at 'high moral tension', eagerly patronizing the statistical societies, literary and philosophical societies, reading rooms, mechanics institutes, and Sunday schools which spread knowledge of the divine laws of nature and economy.⁹⁴ Having visited the Continent for business and intellectual polish, Unitarians such as the Liverpool banker and art historian William Roscoe persuaded contemporaries that the arts could ennoble and stabilize cities. That tradition was carried on by Unitarian aldermen such as Philip Rathbone in Liverpool and William Kenrick in Birmingham—who pushed skinflint colleagues into spending on municipal galleries—or patrons such as the paper manufacturer Thomas Wrigley, whose paintings stocked Bury Art Gallery (1897).⁹⁵ Unitarians invested not just in beauty, but in the beauty of holiness: with the tenure of their chapels secured, Unitarians remodelled them or built new ones as Gothic piles to touch hearts and minds.⁹⁶ Thomas Madge applauded Martineau's Hope St Chapel, Liverpool (1849) as 'more graceful and becoming than the red-brick parallelograms' favoured by 'our Presbyterian forefathers'.⁹⁷ A preoccupation

⁹¹ John Seed, 'The Role of Unitarianism in the Formation of Liberal Culture 1775–1851: A Social History', unpublished PhD thesis, Hull 1981, 206–43; Solly, *These Eighty Years*, I: pp. 334, 337.

⁹² R.K. Webb, 'The Background', in Leonard Smith, ed., *Unitarian to the Core: Unitarian College Manchester, 1854–2004* (Lancaster, 2004), p. 14.

⁹³ This argument owes much to John Seed, 'Unitarianism, Political Economy and the Antinomies of Liberal Culture in Manchester, 1830–50', *Social History*, 7 (1982), 1–25.

⁹⁴ J. Estlin Carpenter, *Unitarianism: An Historic Survey* (London, 1922), p. 36.

⁹⁵ I owe this point to the late Giles Waterfield.

⁹⁶ Leonard Smith, 'Unitarians and the Gothic Revival: Church-building 1837–1899', *TUHS*, 17 (1980), 81–7.

⁹⁷ *CR*, 5 (1849), 749.

with useful knowledge, oil paintings, and pointed arches might confirm suspicions that Unitarians were chilly brain boxes, willing to treat the poor to 'Zoological Gardens or to the Polytechnic' but not to regard them as equals.⁹⁸ It is true that not many mechanics came to mechanics institutes, Solly lamenting that the 'mythical Dodo has long represented [them] in those severe temples of learning'.⁹⁹ Unitarian employers had to help down their rational medicine with spoonfuls of paternalist sugar.¹⁰⁰ The model mill of the flax-spinning Marshalls in Leeds not only boasted excellent lighting but was designed as an Egyptian temple in an elegant nod to their raw materials. John Morley noted of the Greg family and their model mill at Bollington that they put the 'sedulous cultivation of their own minds' second to the well-being of their workers.¹⁰¹

None of this was enough to satisfy some leading Unitarian ministers, who from the thirties onwards urged that culture must challenge the principles of a manufacturing economy rather than merely allaying its evils. William Ellery Channing's warning from across the Atlantic that a 'savage horde' was springing up 'in the very bosom of civilisation' as wealth became 'the chief idol of a commercial people' was widely heeded.¹⁰² Martineau brooded that the mechanical understanding of society made 'each man ... a screw or pinion of the whole, locked into a system that holds him fast or whirls him on, and having no longer a separate symmetry and worth'.¹⁰³ He and others championed the adoption of Joseph Tuckerman's Domestic Mission for use in British cities, reflecting a fear that in the 'vast Babel of our material civilization' congregations fobbed off the poor with 'mere eleemosynary institutions' rather than fellowship.¹⁰⁴ Travers Madge, the son of a minister who worked himself to death running a non-sectarian community in Manchester's backstreets, exemplified this effort.¹⁰⁵ Together with Mary Carpenter's industrial schools, such initiatives sought to convince others—perhaps Unitarians themselves—that they conceded nothing to evangelicals or Roman Catholics in their love of the poor. It was a pretty tough love. As Martineau told the London Domestic Mission, workers should adopt 'habits of providence, which, as a rule characterize the middle classes'.¹⁰⁶ Against this, some thought that Unitarian preachers should spring from rather than parachute into popular districts.

⁹⁸ 'Unitarians and Domestic Missions', *Inquirer*, 2 June 1855, 337.

⁹⁹ Henry Solly, *Working Men's Clubs and Institutes: An Answer to the Question, Why are they Wanted?* (2nd edn., London, 1865), p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Watts, *Gender*, pp. 182–6.

¹⁰¹ John Morley, 'W.R. Greg: A Sketch', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 48 (1883), 113.

¹⁰² Le Breton, ed., *Correspondence*, pp. 112, 202, 205.

¹⁰³ Martineau, 'Christian Self-consciousness', in *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, 2 vols (London, 1847), II: p. 99.

¹⁰⁴ 4 June 1853, *Inquirer*, 363; 25 May 1867, 324–8.

¹⁰⁵ Brooke Herford, *Travers Madge: A Memoir* (London, 1867).

¹⁰⁶ *Inquirer*, 23 April 1853, 256.

Beard's belief that there need be no class barriers to *Bildung*, which he called 'self culture', led him to found the Unitarian Home Mission Board (1854) and College to train rankers rather than high-flyers for the ministry.¹⁰⁷ Solly retired from ministry to run the Working Men's Club and Institute Union, informing 'broadcloth' patrons that 'fustian' men must be allowed to satisfy the "Play" impulses of their nature'.¹⁰⁸

Ritual laments that Unitarians were hobbled by 'fastidiousness' never abated. The spiritual separation between rich and poor took a spatial turn, as chapels followed congregations to salubrious suburbs: Martineau's final chapel, Little Portland St (near Regent St), emptied out as its congregation drifted out of town, while Essex Chapel was turned into Essex Hall when the trustees sold up and moved their chapel to Notting Hill. In 1889, Manchester College moved from Bloomsbury to Oxford and put up a chapel with windows by Burne-Jones. Yet far from sounding a retreat from the city, Unitarians spoke of 'forward movement'. John Page Hopps, who lured thousands of workers to services at Leicester's Floral Hall by laying on music and potted plants, claimed that Unitarians were the 'real Salvation Army' for which cities were crying out.¹⁰⁹ Bazaars funded new, missionary chapels in emulation of evangelicals. The 1900 bazaar for the London Permanent Chapel Building Fund hit its target of £12,000, with its chairman, the radical industrialist Sir John Brunner, contributing £1,000.¹¹⁰

Refinement and social concern were never mutually exclusive. Philip Wicksteed, Martineau's successor at Little Portland St, made his name as a lecturer on Dante, but was no seraphic aesthete. He championed the University Extension movement and was addicted to Norwegian fjords and to chopping wood—his hero Gladstone's favourite relaxation. His preaching urged Unitarians to temper their preoccupation with individual salvation by adopting the holistic vision of Positivist sociology, a vision he also discerned in his heroes, Dante and Aquinas.¹¹¹ A leading economist, he believed that egalitarian economic exchange could avert Marxist class war. His patronage of the Labour Church movement, interest in land nationalization, defence of Henrik Ibsen, and publication of Sunday school literature were varied

¹⁰⁷ John Rely Beard, *Self-Culture: A Practical Answer to the Questions 'What to Learn?' 'How to Learn?' 'When to Learn?' etc.* (Manchester, 1859), iii; McLachlan, *Record*, 29; *Unitarian to the Core*.

¹⁰⁸ Henry Solly, *Working Men: A Glance at Some of Their Wants with Reasons and Suggestions for Helping Them to Help Themselves* (4th edn., London, 1865), pp. 6, 11.

¹⁰⁹ John Page Hopps, *A Memory and an Incentive: The Story of an Appeal to the People of Leicester* (London, 1909), p. 112.

¹¹⁰ "The Great London Bazaar", *CL*, 5 May 1900, 211–13.

¹¹¹ Philip Henry Wicksteed, 'Sociology and Study of Theology' [1888], in J. Estlin Carpenter and Philip Henry Wicksteed, *Studies in Theology* (London, 1903), pp. 283–300.

expressions of a 'practical' Christianity opposed to bigotry and privilege.¹¹² Wicksteed's career was one of many late Victorian experiments in social concern. In Liverpool, his friend Richard Acland Armstrong founded a Total Abstinence Society (having taken the pledge himself) and a Band of Hope and stirred up a municipal war on brothels and drink.¹¹³ If he preached fire and brimstone, then Henry Tate, the son of a Unitarian minister, spread sweetness and light, using his sugar cube fortune to endow the National Gallery of British Art on Millbank (1897) and to give libraries not only to Manchester College Oxford but also to Brixton and Streatham, his adopted home.

Orthodox Presbyterians conceded nothing to Unitarians in their preoccupation with taming the city. If most evangelicals regarded cities as a mission field, then Scottish Presbyterian Dissenters inherited Thomas Chalmers's vision of the city as 'Sodom', which corrupted many a 'Lot' from 'some quiet country place'.¹¹⁴ With the exception of the Highlands, the congregations of the Free Church and the smaller Presbyterian bodies were bourgeois and artisanal and had to consider how a religion of thrift and independence could be interpreted to the indigent poor. Yet dread of the city made for activism, not despair. Presbyterian Dissenters created countless visiting societies to bring atomized populations back into Christian solidarity—hopefully displacing the state from that task into the bargain.¹¹⁵ While such efforts concentrated on reforming individual conduct, they soon addressed the urban fabric required to make that conduct viable. The Free Church minister James Begg urged Scots to purge that 'great social gangrene, eating out the very vitals of society': the destruction of the 'family system' by poor housing. Christian families needed proper homes, not the 'mere extension of barrack accommodation'. The 'trim gardens' and 'brass plates' of Begg's Edinburgh Co-Operative Building Company's houses offered a glimpse of Presbyterianism's celestial city. With working men able to buy them by instalments, the 'possessory feeling' would support 'Christian principle'. In hosting endless repetitions of the 'Cottar's Saturday Night', the homes would guarantee social stability.¹¹⁶

Presbyterian hopes of reforming the city wobbled by the century's close. Investment in social reform involved a loss of intellectual initiative and authority as 'service' passed to professionals whose expertise ministers endorsed without being able to emulate. Of course the social gospel was not the only gospel. Presbyterians across the United Kingdom were moved and

¹¹² See Herford, *Wicksteed* and Philip Henry Wicksteed, *Is Christianity Practical?* (London, 1885).

¹¹³ *Armstrong*, pp. 99–101.

¹¹⁴ John McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit: Sermons*, 3 vols (London, 1891), III: p. 174.

¹¹⁵ Callum Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland Since 1707* (Edinburgh, 1997), pp. 25–7.

¹¹⁶ James Begg, *Happy Homes for Working Men, and How to Get Them* (London, 1866), pp. iv–v, 47, 61.

amazed by the Ulster Revival of 1859. The unfettered emotionalism of revivals chimed better with working-class culture than Calvinism's suspicious scrutiny of feelings. Yet if revivalists stumped manufacturing districts in Scotland's cities, they were starved of attention or resources by middle-class Presbyterians, who had moved homes and chapels to the suburbs.¹¹⁷ Only in Ireland, where the Protestant community was united in fears for its prosperity and survival, did the divisions of class and status that bedevilled Unitarians and Presbyterians elsewhere matter less.¹¹⁸ If there is one constant in Dissenting history, it is that adversity has its uses.

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¹¹⁷ Brown, *Religion*.

¹¹⁸ Hempton and Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism*, pp. 186–7.

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Methodists and Holiness

Janice Holmes

Methodism was originally conceived as a voluntary association, as a loosely connected network of religious clubs, each devoted to promoting holy living among its members. Its ideas and ‘methods’—the spiritual transformation of individuals supported by a disciplined community of like believers—were part of the wider Evangelical Revival sweeping across Europe and proved popular among the respectable working people of eighteenth-century Britain. In the early nineteenth century, Methodism had a sizeable following in England, had established small but promising branches in Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, and had laid the foundations of a hugely successful mass religious movement in America and farther afield. Building on this potential was not easy. Methodism had to contend with the problems that inevitably accompanied success: institutionalization and schism. And it had to contend with these in the changing context of an industrializing and what appeared to Methodists to be a secularizing Britain. By the end of the century, although fractured over issues of governance, lay leadership, and political orientation, British Methodism had become a respected denominational family and had embraced, after some hesitation, its part within British Dissent. Its distinctive theology had a formative influence on new, emerging religious movements, but like many other evangelical groups in Britain, it struggled in the closing years of the century to maintain its distinctive identity and presence.

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SCHISM

After a slow start in the mid-eighteenth century, Methodism experienced a period of rapid and significant growth between the 1780s and 1830s. From a figure of approximately 93,000 in 1800, by the early 1850s English Methodism

had increased to nearly 300,000 members.¹ According to the Religious Census of 1851 it had become, after the Church of England, the single largest denominational group in England and Wales. Of the 7.2 million people who were estimated to have attended church on census Sunday, approximately 1.5 million were Methodists, or 21 per cent.² If examined regionally, Methodism could be said to have had even greater reach. Geographical analysis of the census results shows that Methodism was strongest from central Northumberland, Leicestershire, and north Norfolk, and that it was particularly strong in Durham, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and north Lincolnshire. It was also strong in north and central Wales and in Cornwall and the south-west.³ In places like these, Methodism could represent upwards of 50 or even 60 per cent of the local church-going population.

Methodism's original structure was designed to operate on a much smaller scale. Local clubs, called 'societies', were managed by a group of 'local preachers' and other office holders. Societies were then clustered together into 'circuits', each of which was supported by a full-time worker, called a 'travelling' or 'itinerant' preacher. These men (for it was almost entirely men) were answerable to John Wesley and subject to his authority. Together they determined overall policy and strategy for the Methodist societies at an annual meeting called a 'Conference'. Local membership was regulated through attendance at a weekly 'class meeting' where the spiritual behaviour of members was closely scrutinized, subscriptions were collected, and membership 'tickets' were issued. This whole structure was designed to supplement, not replace, the work of the Church of England. Methodists, therefore, held their services outside of church hours, they did not ordain their preachers, and they did not celebrate communion or other sacraments.

As Methodism grew and acquired its own institutional identity, however, its leadership was obliged to adapt its structure to new opportunities and circumstances. A series of decisions, such as the opening of dedicated chapels and the issuing of preaching licences, reflected a growing desire for a distinct denominational identity. The decision to ordain Methodist preachers (for America in 1784, Scotland in 1785, and England in 1788) was followed by the adoption of more formalized leadership arrangements called the Deed of Declaration in 1784, a policy on the celebration of communion called the Plan of Pacification in 1795, and an early constitutional statement called the Form of Discipline agreed in 1797. Despite these measures, Methodism was still

¹ Different figures are often given, generally in the 89–94,000 range. This figure is taken from Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert, and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles Since 1700* (Oxford, 1977), p. 139.

² *Census of Great Britain, 1851. Religious Worship. England and Wales. Report and Tables, 1852–3 [1690]*, p. clvi (accessed online 23 October 2015).

³ K.D.M. Snell and Paul S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalem: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 167–9.

organizationally weak and it struggled to operate on a larger scale. In the early nineteenth century, a new denominational infrastructure was created with the establishment of centralized offices such as Conference Secretary, Connexional Editor, and legal adviser, sitting alongside the collective decision-making of Conference, District, and Quarterly Meetings.

One of the key architects of Methodism's new denominational arrangements was Jabez Bunting, a highly talented preacher and administrator who dominated the Methodist Conference for more than thirty years. He occupied, at various times, the positions of President (1820, 1828, 1836, 1844) and Secretary of Conference (1814–20, 1824–7) as well as serving as Connexional Editor, Secretary of the WMMS, and President of the Hoxton Theological Institution. He provoked strong opinions, both for and against, being variously referred to as 'the indispensable ecclesiastical statesman, the Methodist Pope, the Conference "buttoned up in a single pair of breeches", and "the power-drunk minister of Christ"'.⁴ He and his supporters, including the preachers Robert Newton and Thomas Jackson, espoused a centralized view of Methodism that sought to preserve decision-making power within the hands of the preachers and a select lay elite. They wanted to modernize and professionalize the denomination, while keeping it true to Wesley's legacy. Neither consultation nor significant concession was part of that vision.

Bunting's actions and the vision of Methodism that inspired them provoked no less than six secessions between 1797 and 1849. The sticking points were not about the finer points of Wesleyan theology. Instead, they focused on the denomination's spiritual methodologies and its governance arrangements.⁵ In the early nineteenth century, significant numbers of Methodists remained committed to the primary importance of evangelism and they resisted the efforts by travelling preachers and the Methodist leadership to try and contain this enthusiasm. Between 1807 and 1811, Hugh Bourne and William Clowes, both affluent and influential Methodist laymen from Staffordshire, objected to the constraints which they felt the Methodist leadership was placing on the enthusiastic preaching of the American revivalist Lorenzo Dow and the camp meetings he inspired. They and their supporters eventually seceded to form what became the Primitive Methodists. Similarly, William O'Bryan, an affluent farmer and lay preacher in north-east Cornwall, had started to conduct evangelistic services outside of his scheduled duties as a Wesleyan local preacher. Despite reprimands from the local Wesleyan leadership, he was widely supported (particularly by a local family, the Thornes) and eventually seceded with them to form the Bible Christians in 1815. Both secessions prioritized evangelism and growth over denominational consolidation and

⁴ D.A. Gowland, *Methodist Secessions: The Origins of Free Methodism in Three Lancashire Towns: Manchester, Rochdale, Liverpool* (Manchester, 1979), p. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

spiritual respectability. Both allowed a greater degree of lay leadership and in their early years gave women an enhanced ministerial role. They have been routinely described as attracting audiences from the illiterate and labouring classes. This depiction, however, has been challenged in some respects by recent research which suggests, at least for the Primitives, that the socio-economic profile of the secessions was not so highly differentiated along class lines. Primitive audiences differed only marginally from that of the Wesleyans, suggesting that it was method, approach, and priorities which separated these Methodists from the Wesleyan parent and not the greater emotional appeal of revivalism to the labouring classes.⁶ Although both the Primitives and the Bible Christians expanded beyond their original geographical base, the Primitives were numerically more successful. By 1851 they had a significant presence in Staffordshire, the Midlands, and along the east coast down into north Lincolnshire and were the only secession to even come close to Wesleyan numbers, scope, and reach.⁷

It was the nature of connexional governance that provoked the most bitter and fractious secessions. Lay representation, local autonomy, and the actions of the existing Methodist leadership were contentious issues which repeatedly divided Methodism in the years after Wesley's death. In 1797, for instance, Alexander Kilham, a Wesleyan preacher, objected to the failure of the Plan of Pacification to include sufficient representation for the Methodist laity. After considerable discussion and an eventual 'trial', he was expelled from the Conference and went on with his followers to form the Methodist New Connexion. In 1825, the trustees of the recently redesigned Brunswick Chapel in Leeds sought to introduce an organ into morning worship. When the local society rejected this unwanted innovation, the trustees appealed to the Conference who then overturned the ruling. Outrage over this seeming disregard for local decision-making quickly escalated into a full-scale secession, as thousands within the Leeds circuits formed themselves into a new group, the Protestant Methodists. Likewise, in 1833 the Wesleyan Conference appointed a committee to formulate plans for the education of itinerant preachers. When the committee publicly nominated Jabez Bunting as the 'President' of the proposed 'Theological Institution', Dr Samuel Warren, one of the members of the advisory committee, questioned the decision. When his objections were overruled, he launched an unsuccessful public protest campaign that became the basis for a wider secession movement, the Wesleyan Methodist Association.

⁶ Clive D. Field, 'The Social Composition of English Methodism to 1830: A Membership Analysis', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 76 (1994), 153–78; Kate Tiller, 'The Place of Methodism: A Study of Three Counties in 1851', in Peter Forsaith and Martin Wellings, eds., *Methodism and History: Essays in Honour of John Vickers* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 55–90; Sandy Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism* (Woodbridge, 2016), p. 153.

⁷ K.D.M. Snell and Paul S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 138.

The largest and most damaging secession was the result of the controversy which erupted when, between 1844 and 1849, a series of anonymous pamphlets, titled *Fly Sheets*, were circulated to all Wesleyan preachers. Widely attributed to the preacher and writer James Everett, they were a savage critique of the Wesleyan hierarchy and Bunting's leadership. They attacked the centralization of Wesleyan offices in London, the growing bureaucratization of its procedures, and the 'exclusiveness, favouritism and selfishness' shown in the appointment of officers.⁸ The pamphlets called for greater local control and more lay involvement in denominational affairs. They became the most visible, and most cutting, manifestation of a growing desire for reform within the Wesleyan polity. In a bold move designed to directly challenge these accusations, the 1849 Conference obliged all preachers to declare that they had not authored the *Fly Sheets*. Thirty-six of them refused; James Everett and two of his supporters, Samuel Dunn and William Griffiths, were expelled. This caused widespread outrage throughout the connexion and began a haemorrhage of society members across the country. Reform activists tried to negotiate a settlement with the Wesleyan leadership but these efforts failed. In 1857, reformers negotiated an alliance with the Wesleyan Methodist Association and together became the United Methodist Free Church. It is estimated that the Wesleyan connexion lost approximately 100,000 members during this period, half to the reformers and half to other denominations or elsewhere.⁹

Such ferocious battles over what appear to be procedural issues reflect the strength of the rival visions at play within this formative period in British Methodism. Bunting's ideal of a small ministerial elite governing a tightly controlled network of compliant societies, however, could not survive the expansion of Methodism's social base and the practical realities of a highly dispersed ecclesiastical structure. Methodism was, at its heart, deeply local. Itinerant preachers, stationed to circuits for limited three-year terms, could not develop a sustained influence. Instead, societies were maintained by an influential cadre of local preachers and society stewards.¹⁰ It was from within the ranks of these middling leaders that the strongest calls for a more democratic and inclusive approach emerged. It is no surprise, then, that the 'free' Methodism of the late nineteenth century adopted a greater independence for local societies, more room for lay decision-making, and a 'lower' approach to ministry.

⁸ Gowland, *Methodist Secessions*, pp. 16–17. For an extract from one of the *Fly Sheets* see David M. Thompson, ed., *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century* (London and Boston, 1972), pp. 134–6.

⁹ Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided: A Study in the Sociology of Ecumenicalism* (London, 1968), p. 225.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Milburn and Margaret Batty, eds., *Workaday Preachers: The Story of Methodist Local Preaching* (Peterborough, 1995), and Currie, *Methodism Divided*, pp. 44–53 highlight the local influence within circuit life.

VARIETIES OF METHODISM

The ideas that Methodism promoted—the evangelical emphasis on personal conversion, holy living, Bible reading, and evangelism—spread rapidly across Britain and Ireland. By 1800 there were long-established Methodist communities of varying sizes in each of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. But unlike England, where the Methodist message had taken off and flourished, growth in these Celtic regions was considerably more complicated. Methodism's cultural flexibility, so ably demonstrated in rural England and on the frontiers of rural America, was significantly curtailed by its inability to adjust to the distinctive historical and religious environments of the Celtic fringes.

Methodism in Wales emerged at the same time as it did in England and followed a very similar trajectory of clerical leadership, popular preaching, society formation, and associational organization. The Welsh leaders, Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland, however, repudiated John Wesley's emphasis on 'assurance' and the certainty of the conversion experience and took their movement in a Calvinist direction. Their efforts led to the eventual emergence of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism as a separate denomination in 1811. Within a very short time, the vast majority of the Welsh population shifted its allegiance to this movement. By the end of the nineteenth century, it had become an alternate establishment in Wales, forming the cornerstone of Welsh Dissent and leading the charge on educational reform and disestablishment of the Church of Wales. Welsh Calvinistic Methodism created a chapel-focused culture which provided a cradle-to-grave set of activities based around the shared values of self-improvement, edification, and moral purity. This religious environment became the bedrock of an emerging Welsh national identity.¹¹

As their name suggests, Welsh Calvinistic Methodists adopted a reformed theological position. This is reflected in their alternate title, official since 1928, as the Presbyterian Church in Wales. Many standard histories of Methodism do not include them.¹² Instead, most accounts concentrate on the Wesleyan community in Wales, a much smaller and more limited effort, divided by geography and language. Some English-speaking societies in the south can date their origins back to the work of Wesley, on one of his twenty-two trips

¹¹ Robert Pope, 'The Consistency of Faith: Calvinism in Early Twentieth Century Welsh Nonconformity', *Welsh Journal of Religious History*, 4 (2009), 55–69; Robert Pope, 'Welsh Methodists and the Establishment in the Nineteenth Century', *Welsh Journal of Religious History*, 6 (2011), 31–48; Glanmor Williams et al, *The Welsh Church from Reformation to Disestablishment 1603–1920* (Cardiff, 2007), pp. 165–221, 309–28; E.T. Davies, *Religion in the Industrial Revolution in South Wales* (Cardiff, 1965).

¹² The official Methodist history, Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George, and Gordon Rupp, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, 4 vols (London, 1965–88), excludes them. See Griffith T. Roberts, 'Methodism in Wales', in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, III: pp. 253–64. William Gibson, Peter Forsaith, and Martin Wellings, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to World Methodism* (Farnham, 2013), p. 4 does the same.

through the country. The largely Welsh-speaking Wesleyans in North Wales are the result of Thomas Coke and the Methodist Conference who appointed Welsh-speaking missionaries to the region in 1800. This work proved surprisingly successful; in 1851 Wesleyans had more than 15 per cent attendances in a swathe of registration districts across North Wales.¹³ The two branches, however, existed in 'almost complete isolation, and sometimes in mutual suspicion' of each other, and their contribution to wider Nonconformist life also seems to have been limited.¹⁴ Hampered by internal schisms and the failure to develop a local denominational infrastructure, they were also undecided about the necessity of disestablishing the Church of Wales, a position so wholeheartedly adopted by the rest of Welsh Nonconformity. Whereas Welsh Calvinistic Methodism became a crucial component of Welsh national identity by mid-century, Wesleyan Methodism in Wales struggled to rise above its imported origins.

Wesleyan Methodism in Scotland struggled with similar problems of cultural acceptance. Although Wesley visited Scotland twenty-two times between 1751 and 1791, his efforts, and those of the preachers he regularly sent there, had mustered only 1,100 members by the time of his death. Given the extent to which Calvinism and the Presbyterian system had permeated Scottish society, this was not an unexpected result. Scotland's particular circumstances led Wesley to consider granting Scotland separate connexional status, as he had done with America, but this was never implemented. Throughout the nineteenth century, Scotland continued to be administered as a 'district' like any other, via the London-based connexional leadership. Progress within the Scottish societies was indeed negligible. The itinerant system did them no favours, sending them poor-quality or probationer preachers who were frequently changed. Their finances were generally in disarray. The disastrous appointment of the preacher Valentine Ward, who, rather than rationalizing the Scottish debt, merely exacerbated it through ill-judged chapel-building speculations, meant that by the 1830s, Jabez Bunting was ready to put the entire work 'up for auction'.¹⁵ As Jonathan Crowther, another preacher stationed in Scotland, wryly recalled in 1817:

I informed Mr Wesley that I seriously doubted whether God ever intended the Methodists for Scotland 1. Because there was so little need for them, when compared with England and Ireland. 2. Because we are not suited to the genius and taste of the people of that country. 3. Because the number of our adherents was very small; and many of those were rather proselytes to our Doctrine and Discipline than converts from sin to holiness. 4. Because numbers of them would

¹³ Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, pp. 123–32.

¹⁴ Roberts, 'Methodism in Wales', p. 262.

¹⁵ A.J. Hayes and D.A. Gowland, eds., *Scottish Methodism in the Early Victorian Period: The Scottish Correspondence of the Revd Jabez Bunting, 1800–57* (Edinburgh, 1981), p. 6.

have gone to heaven though they had never seen us: and 5. Because some of them would go to hell after all we could do for them.¹⁶

Failure to grow was not, however, just because the Scots' 'genius and taste' was hostile to Methodism. Methodists were rarely obstructed in their services and there is reasonable evidence to suggest that they were able to pick up followers, particularly those who were converted in the local revivals which broke out in fishing villages and other small Scottish communities. Rather it was the English Methodist leadership who showed little understanding of or willingness to accommodate local circumstances and was resolute in its maintenance of the itinerant system, which most Scottish Methodists felt was a disruptive and counter-productive practice, and in its insistence on the class meeting as the standard for membership. Scottish Methodists repeatedly asked Conference for local exceptions to both these practices, most of which were routinely rejected.¹⁷

In a religious market like Scotland, such inflexibility could only be a disadvantage. The Wesleyans' Methodist rivals, like the Bible Christians, the Wesleyan Methodist Association, and the Primitive Methodists, all attempted to expand into Scotland, as did the Plymouth Brethren, Baptists, and other revival-minded movements. With so many options available to a limited pool of religious enthusiasts, the marginal efforts of the Wesleyans could be highly vulnerable to changes of heart or inter-denominational poaching. In 1836, for example, the Wesleyan society in Edinburgh almost collapsed because one local preacher had converted to the Unitarians and two others and eight trustees had gone over to the Wesleyan Methodist Association.¹⁸ In 1869, the Wesleyan Conference minutes bemoaned the fact that enthusiastic members in Scotland, disliking the class meeting and the discipline it required, frequently deserted them to become evangelists, Scripture readers, and urban missionaries in other denominations: 'we recruit from no church, but our sons serve in many'.¹⁹ In the late nineteenth century, Scottish Methodism maintained a steady presence, but the failure of the English leadership to adapt to local circumstances meant it was never able to successfully challenge the dominance of Presbyterianism.

Methodism fared rather better in Ireland, although that country posed its own distinct challenges. A disenfranchised Catholic majority and a powerful, but divided, Protestant majority ensured that religion formed a key component of long-established communal and ethnic rivalries. Methodism initially struggled to find a target audience and initially took root, not among the general population, which was Catholic and largely Irish-speaking, but among the sections of the population with English connections, such as the Anglo-Irish gentry, personnel within military garrisons, Church of Ireland bishops, and

¹⁶ Quoted in Margaret Batty, *Scotland's Methodists, 1750–2000* (Edinburgh, 2010), p. 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, chs. 2, 3, p. 118.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

European Protestant groups such as Huguenots and Palatines.²⁰ Its growth was slow and initially dispersed across the south and west of the country, but starting in the late eighteenth century, a series of powerful local revivals shifted Methodism's centre of gravity northwards, especially among the Protestant communities in south-west Ulster. By 1830, 47 per cent of Irish Methodists lived in the counties of Armagh and Fermanagh.²¹

Irish Methodists, and the English Methodists who supported them financially, were vocal in their opposition to Catholic rights and practices. Using their missionary and periodical networks, they shared inflamed accounts of the rebellion of 1798 and warned against granting any political concessions.²² In 1799, the English Conference appointed three Irish-speaking missionaries to consciously attempt to convert Catholics. Methodists supplemented this 'Second Reformation' activity with energetic involvement in the Evangelical Alliance, an organization set up in the 1840s to defend Protestantism. Methodists objected to Catholic Emancipation passed in 1829 and to an increase in the funding of a Catholic seminary at Maynooth in 1845. Such levels of suspicion made Irish Methodists less willing to separate from the Church of Ireland for fear of weakening the Protestant interest. It was not until 1816 that the main body of Irish Methodists agreed to separate communion services, and even then a significant minority rejected this decision. In 1818 they formed the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Society, led by Adam Averell, and maintained a separate yet dwindling membership until 1869, when the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland led some to reunite with the Irish Wesleyans in 1879 and others to return to the Church.²³ Methodist hostility towards Catholicism continued to fuel much of their evangelistic efforts and to inform their politics. For example, Irish Methodists were staunch unionists, passing resolutions against Home Rule in 1886 and signing in large numbers the Ulster Covenant in 1912.²⁴ New research has shown that, despite wider downward population trends in the late nineteenth century, Irish Methodism increased its share of the population as a whole. According to Morris, Methodism increased by 42.7 per cent between 1871 and 1901, suggesting that 'Methodism's vital evangelical and experiential brand of Christianity held a particular appeal' during the tense political times surrounding the Home Rule crisis.²⁵

²⁰ David Hempton, 'Methodism in Irish Society, 1770–1830', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 36 (1986), 124–9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

²² David Hempton, 'The Methodist Crusade in Ireland, 1795–1845', *Irish Historical Studies*, 22 (1980), 36.

²³ R.D. Eric Gallagher, 'Methodism in Ireland' in *A History of the Methodist Church*, III: pp. 232–51.

²⁴ Nicola Morris, 'Traitors to their Faith? Protestant Clergy and the Ulster Covenant of 1912', *New Hibernia Review*, 15 (2011), 16–35.

²⁵ Nicola Morris, 'Predicting a "Bright and Prosperous Future": Irish Methodist Membership (1855–1914)', *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, 2 (2010), 91–114.

COMMUNAL LIFE AND PIETY

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the customs and practices which had evolved under John Wesley came under pressure. Methodism moved away from its revivalist roots and became more of an established and respectable church. At the start of the nineteenth century, the Methodist message was communicated via travelling or itinerant preachers. Initially, these were Anglican ministers, but over time John Wesley started to licence and ordain lay men, and occasionally lay women, for this work of evangelism. If their message attracted any followers, these would be formed into a society, with locally based leaders—local preachers, circuit stewards, and class leaders—set apart to care for the group. Their message focused on the importance of living a more committed life of faith, and how that life needed to be cultivated through interaction with other believers, Bible reading, and prayer.

Who was attracted to this preaching and its vision of holy living? Critics and sympathizers alike have associated Methodism with the poor, the disenfranchised, and the marginalized. However, Clive Field's research has shown that Methodists were a denomination of the respectable working class, of skilled tradesmen, artisans, and craftsmen. In a study of over 80,000 Methodist members in the years prior to 1830, Field found that 'skilled manual workers formed the backbone of the Church'.²⁶ His conclusions about the early and mid-nineteenth century have been borne out by other studies, such as Kate Tiller's analysis of Methodism in the diocese of Oxford in 1851. By investigating the social status of the chapel stewards who signed the census returns for places of worship, she has shown that it was the crafts and trades which predominated among Wesleyan stewards. Alongside a group of substantial farmers, it was shoemakers, grocers, and bakers who ran Oxford Methodism. Primitive stewards had a similar, if slightly lower, social profile, with several bakers, a miller, higgler, tea dealer, carpenter, and three agricultural labourers represented.²⁷ More recent research by Calder into the occupational profile of Primitive Methodists confirms that its membership was not as poor as has been believed. His research shows that Primitive leadership was composed of wealthy farmers and craftsmen and that this was mirrored in the initial membership which only moved downmarket as the century progressed.²⁸

Methodists clearly became, slowly and steadily, more middle class over the course of the nineteenth century. Clive Field's analysis of the oral history data from forty-two chapels in the early twentieth century indicates that Wesleyans had moved decisively up the social scale and that Primitives had followed

²⁶ Field, 'Social Composition', p. 167.

²⁷ Tiller, 'Place of Methodism', p. 71.

²⁸ Sandy Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism* (Woodbridge, 2016), ch. 9.

them, if not to the same extent.²⁹ Increasing numbers of members and even more of the leadership were coming from the professional and business classes, and far fewer were represented among the labouring poor. Such social evolution was an inevitable result of Methodism's powerful message of self-improvement and self-restraint. Methodist literature is pervaded by the self-help message of wayward souls transformed into productive and prosperous society members.³⁰ Of course, such social mobility could have unintended consequences. As Steve Bruce's study of three mining communities in the Methodist heartland of county Durham between 1881 and 1991 shows, upward movement meant the decline of influence. In the early days of Durham's lead mines in Upper Teesdale, Methodism was an integral part of the wider local culture, was supported by employers, and functioned as an early trade union. But by the 1930s, as mines and their workers moved east and as Methodists emigrated, got better jobs, and stopped going down the pit, their influence declined until their chapels, and the culture which had accompanied them, could be described as a mere 'folk memory'.³¹

What was it about Methodism that made it so attractive to the common folk of England? The potential for personal transformation. Through an acceptance of the love and sacrifice of Jesus, Methodists argued, the cares and anxieties of this world could be exchanged for a new life, characterized by peace, joy, and confidence. Surviving accounts of this spiritual transformation, or 'salvation', are infused with a powerful sense of love and acceptance. In 1843, while listening to a preacher at a Primitive Methodist Sunday School in Salisbury, Louisa Moody was overwhelmed by her own 'depravity', so much so that 'she abhorred herself and repented before God'. In retirement she earnestly pleaded for salvation, till the 'glory of the Lord' was diffused through her soul, enabling her to exclaim 'O Jesus, my Saviour! I feel thou art mine!'³² In 1904 Albert Shakesby, a boxer and prize fighter, staggered into the Great Thornton Street Primitive Methodist Chapel in Hull after several weeks of agony and indecision where a service was just ending. He rushed up the aisle where the missionary and his wife spoke to him. He describes his 'burden' rolling away, and his 'blaspheming spirit' being 'turned out' so that Christ might enter his soul and that his 'strong will for evil' was now turned to good.³³ Scholars have tried to explain the popularity of this religious message.

²⁹ Clive D. Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism: Eighteenth–Twentieth Centuries', *British Journal of Sociology*, 28 (1977), 210–11.

³⁰ For just one example see Albert Shakesby, *From Street Arab to Evangelist: The Life Story of Albert Shakesby, A Converted Athlete* (Hull, 1910).

³¹ Steve Bruce, 'Methodism and Mining in County Durham, 1881–1991', *Northern History*, 48 (2011), 354–5.

³² Quoted in Linda Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality Amongst Nonconformists 1825–1875* (Carlisle, 2000), p. 69.

³³ Shakesby, *From Street Arab*, pp. 162–6.

E.P. Thompson controversially argued that it was ‘a ritualized form of psychic masturbation’, a way of releasing ‘energies and emotions which were dangerous to social order’.³⁴ Others have pointed to Methodism’s ability to address people’s deep emotional concerns. Phyllis Mack’s analysis of published conversion narratives shows how it offered a better life to people who were lonely, caught up in difficult personal relationships, or hounded by bad luck and failed opportunities.³⁵ For David Hempton, Methodism’s ‘strong belief in the achievability of personal and social holiness on earth as in heaven’ as a ‘self-adopted choice, not a state-sponsored obligation’ gave people the ‘tools’ they needed to manage their emotional well-being.³⁶ Methodism was popular because it advocated a positive approach towards personal and social change.

Methodism was also popular because its structures and institutions were designed to support and encourage its members in the maintenance of their spiritual lives. These structures were local and personal, although joined together and coordinated by a highly centralized executive. Methodist life was regulated by the weekly rhythm of society membership and its attendant meetings. Sunday services were significant events in this calendar. With services in the morning, afternoon, and evening, depending on location, they were a combination of structured liturgy and extempore speaking and praying. Communion services borrowed the liturgical forms of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, or John Wesley’s modification, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists*.³⁷ But evening services, intended for a broader audience, were more relaxed affairs, with congregational singing, extempore prayers, and a rousing sermon.³⁸

Most of these activities and services would have been organized and conducted by local leaders, selected by their peers to serve as financial advisers, building and maintenance experts, as well as spiritual pastors and advocates. ‘Local preachers’, for instance, were non-ordained lay people who led religious services within a society when the itinerant preacher was busy elsewhere. They were organized via a ‘circuit plan’, which listed every preacher’s appointments for the quarter. Local preachers were selected for their piety and speaking skills, not their educational attainments. When George Edwards,

³⁴ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1968), p. 405.

³⁵ Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 81.

³⁶ David Hempton, ‘International Religious Networks: Methodism and Popular Protestantism, c.1750–1850’, in Jeremy Gregory and Hugh McLeod, eds., *International Religious Networks* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 158–9 and ‘The People Called Methodists: Transitions in Britain and North America’, in William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* (Oxford, 2009), p. 72.

³⁷ Karen B. Westerfield-Tucker, ‘Methodist Worship’, in Charles Yrigoyen, Jr, ed., *T&T Clark Companion to Methodism* (London, 2010), pp. 240–5.

³⁸ Norman P. Goldhawk, ‘The Methodist People in the Early Victorian Age: Spirituality and Worship’, in *A History of the Methodist Church*, II: pp. 113–42.

an agricultural labourer from Norfolk, was invited in 1872 to begin exhorting in the Aylesham Primitive circuit, he could not read. His memoirs recount how his wife taught him his letters and how he 'became eager for knowledge'. Because he had no other money, he gave up smoking so that he could buy books for his sermons. 'It was a great sacrifice to me to give up smoking, for I did enjoy my pipe. I had, however, a thirst for knowledge, and no sacrifice was too great to satisfy my longing.'³⁹ There were few opportunities for local preachers like Edwards to gain more formal training. The Revd Thomas Champness set up the Joyful News Training Home for lay evangelists in 1889 and Cliff College was opened in 1903, but it was 1937 before a formal written examination was introduced. Methodist worship, although shaped by central directives, continued to derive its character and vitality from its local context.

Methodism was also distinctive in the leadership roles it assigned to women. Women had been key players in Methodism's eighteenth-century expansion, offering their homes and hospitality to Methodist preachers, providing financing for chapels, and, controversially, preaching in public. From the 1770s, John Wesley accepted the argument of several female acquaintances that they should be allowed to exercise the 'extraordinary call' they felt from God to commence a public preaching ministry. And so, for a while, women served as itinerant preachers within the Wesleyan connexion. In the nineteenth century, however, changing political, social, and denominational circumstances complicated Methodism's relationship to a public female ministry. The political instability of the revolutionary period, combined with a conservative leadership, meant that Wesleyan Methodism and the MNC moved decisively from 1803 to curtail female itinerancy. The more revival-minded Bible Christians and Primitive Methodists, however, supported the practice until the 1840s, when educational expectations and denominational consolidation changed their priorities and the number of female itinerants declined. Throughout the mid-nineteenth century, however, women continued to serve as local preachers. Evidence shows women preaching at services within the Primitives, Bible Christians, and even the Wesleyans. Jennifer Lloyd's survey of the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* between 1835 and 1865 found more than 500 references to 204 different women taking religious services. These services were mostly anniversaries, chapel openings, and special missionary services, leading Lloyd to suggest that women were particularly sought after as crowd-pleasers, and by extension, fundraisers. Some of these women, like Rose Wilson and Clarissa Buck, were able to translate this work into full-time careers as professional evangelists.⁴⁰ By the end of the century, progressive

³⁹ Quoted in Thompson, ed., *Nonconformity*, pp. 196–8.

⁴⁰ Jennifer Lloyd, *Women and the Shaping of British Methodism: Persistent Preachers 1807–1907* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 157–62.

Methodists of all persuasions had begun to think about using women in new ways. Within Wesleyanism, the Revd Thomas Champness in Rochdale and Thomas Clegg in Halifax had established evangelist training homes for lay women. Wesleyans and the UMFC set up orders of trained deaconesses. As middle-class, full-time, paid professionals, these women were considered part of the 'forward' strategy for reaching urban centres. In the 1890s, the Bible Christians and the Primitives began to appoint women as paid itinerants on the same terms as men.⁴¹ The status of women in nineteenth-century Methodism, therefore, was characterized not by irrevocable decline but by women occupying numerous and varied positions of spiritual leadership.

Outside of the formal Sunday services, Methodist life was structured by a range of other support services, including Sunday schools, prayer, and band meetings. Of these, the class meeting was the most important. It was intended to be a support group, enabling small group discussion of spiritual matters under the guidance of a leader. It was also the means for determining membership, as local leaders used attendance and performance at these meetings as measures of commitment and progress in a member's spiritual life. Critical opinions, however, were frequently expressed. In 1880, Joseph Barker, a former Methodist New Connexion preacher and critic of Methodism, recalled the class meetings he had attended when a young man in Bramley. They were led by 'G. ____ B. ____', a draper, who was:

a ready talker and a zealous Methodist. He was loud in his praying, rather bold in his manner, but very ignorant; and willing, for anything I could ever see, to remain so. He was a great preacher's man, and fond of little honours and would do anything to be well thought of or favoured by the preachers. He knew, too, that to be on good terms with the preachers was the way to get customers to his shop; and he was very fond of gain... He had abundance of respect for the richer members of his class... but, with the poorer members he could use as much freedom as you like. He would tell the poorer members to speak up; but he never told the richer ones to do so, though the richer ones were generally most prone to speak low. The rich members used generally to get into one corner by themselves, with the poor ones sat anywhere about the room.

And what did he do when the richer members refused to speak up? 'He did just like himself. When he knew that some would be thinking, Why does he not ask them to speak up? He would exclaim, "Glory be to God! They are as happy as queens here in the corner."' ⁴² Barker's account shows how classes

⁴¹ Janice Holmes, *Religious Revivals in Britain and Ireland 1859–1905* (Dublin, 2000), ch. 4; John Lenton, "'Labouring for the Lord": Women Preachers in Wesleyan Methodism 1802–1932: A Revisionist View', in Richard Sykes, ed., *Beyond the Boundaries: Preaching in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 58–86; E. Dorothy Graham, *Saved to Serve: The Story of the Wesley Deaconess Order, 1890–1978* (Peterborough, 2002).

⁴² Quoted in Thompson, ed., *Nonconformity*, pp. 49–50.

were intended to build close, intimate bonds between people sharing a similar religious journey. Unfortunately, the realities of poor leadership, human difference, and social status turned it into a trite, formulaic, and deeply resented reiteration of shallow platitudes. Despite this, the Wesleyan leadership resisted change throughout the 1880s; it was not until 1894 that they introduced a new category of 'church membership'.⁴³

The transformative power of the Methodist message and the strict discipline of its methods worked to create an all-encompassing Methodist world in which its members could flourish. On a personal level, it created a distinctive piety that rejected wider cultural trends and promoted the values of family, industry, and sobriety through Bible reading and connexional publications.⁴⁴ In places where Methodists formed a critical mass, like Yorkshire or Cornwall, Methodist piety had a wider cultural impact. In Cornish mining communities, where both the Bible Christians and the Wesleyan Methodists had a significant presence, Methodist rejection of popular pastimes like drinking and wrestling resulted in widespread communal support for their alternatives, such as temperance and teetotal activity.⁴⁵ Methodist-sponsored social events, such as Sunday school tea treats or parades, can likewise be interpreted as conscious efforts to occupy a secular public space and to 'put religion on display'. Methodists were staking a claim within the wider community for their model of religious respectability.⁴⁶ When nineteenth-century Methodists were confident and numerous, they could present a vibrant cultural alternative to the dog track and the public house.

One of the distinguishing features of the Methodist message was the commitment to spread it to new audiences. This was a crucial component of the evangelical doctrine which infused Methodist theology and a driving force behind the whole concept of the itinerant ministry. As such, it took a variety of forms: outdoor preaching, camp meetings, and revival services were common during the heroic age of Methodist expansion. In the early nineteenth century, these could be highly charged events, often resulting in numerous conversions. For an emergent Methodist leadership sensitive to their relationship with the state, these were destabilizing and dangerous and needed to be controlled, if not banned. But as the nineteenth century progressed, and as the early

⁴³ Henry D. Rack, 'The Decline of the Class-Meeting and the Problem of Church-Membership in Nineteenth-Century Wesleyanism', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* [PWHS], 39 (1973), 12–21.

⁴⁴ John Munsey Turner, 'Methodist Religion 1791–1849', in *A History of the Methodist Church*, II: pp. 97–112.

⁴⁵ John Rule, 'Methodism, Popular Beliefs and Village Culture in Cornwall, 1800–50', in R.D. Storch, ed., *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1982), pp. 48–70.

⁴⁶ David C. Harvey, Catherine Brace, and Adrian R. Bailey, 'Parading the Cornish Subject: Methodist Sunday Schools in West Cornwall, c. 1830–1930', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33 (2007), 44.

enthusiasm driving Methodism started to cool, so the commitment to evangelism became formalized and routine. Wesleyans tried to return to their early dynamism by creating the position of 'Connexional Evangelist' in 1858, by setting up training facilities for lay evangelists in the 1880s, and, in some limited circles, by returning to an earlier support for female evangelists. As some commentators pointed out, Methodists were now as far away as other Victorian denominations from reaching the real poor and unsaved. One sign was the resignation of William Booth as a Methodist New Connexion preacher and evangelist in 1861. Frustrated by his inability to reach the urban poor within existing denominational structures, he and his wife Catherine went on to form the Salvation Army.⁴⁷

Running alongside this commitment to home evangelism was the substantial Methodist contribution to foreign missionary activity. Lay enthusiasm for overseas missions stimulated the creation of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1818. By 1844, there were 382 missionaries at work and over 100,000 overseas converts.⁴⁸ This activity was not without controversy. In 1888 Henry Lunn, a Wesleyan Methodist missionary who had just returned from India, published four articles in the *Methodist Times* which were highly critical of the elitist approach and lavish spending of the WMMS. While a subsequent investigation refuted all charges, this incident did lay the foundation for changing Methodist attitudes towards overseas missions in the twentieth century.

METHODISM AND POLITICS

Methodism's attitude towards the state, particularly in the early part of the nineteenth century, was fundamentally shaped by the political instability of the 1790s and the Napoleonic wars. From the point of view of those worried about the British social and religious order, Methodism looked like a radical challenge to the spiritual work and mission of the Church of England. Its methods—itinerant preaching, outdoor settings, lay leadership, individual spiritual change—placed it in opposition to the long-established church frameworks for mediating private faith. And in the late eighteenth century, the legal status of religious groups who chose to operate outside of this established framework (in short, Dissenters) was precarious. Given that Methodism appeared to be growing rapidly, and among a potentially dangerous

⁴⁷ Pamela J. Walker, 'Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down': *The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley, CA, 2001).

⁴⁸ John Kent, 'The Wesleyan Methodists to 1849', in *A History of the Methodist Church*, II: pp. 213–75.

social class, some alarmists felt Methodism was little more than a loose cover for revolutionary activity. In 1811, for example, the Home Secretary Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth, introduced a bill designed to restrict the movements of itinerant preachers, individuals who he had been told were little more than ‘cobblers, tailors, pig-drovers’ and other ‘undesirables’.⁴⁹ Together with other evangelical Dissenters concerned about the crackdown on itinerancy, the Wesleyan leadership was able to mount a successful opposition to this bill, but not without considerable reassurances of their loyalty to the Crown.⁵⁰

Throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century, Wesleyan leaders repeatedly declared their patriotic support for the British state. Conference decisions to restrict a series of Methodist growth strategies, such as female preaching in 1803 and mass outdoor revival meetings in 1807, were intended to demonstrate Methodist bona fides by controlling public displays of religious enthusiasm and, by extension, their perceived subversive and destabilizing potential. When the North Shields teacher and local preacher William Stephenson spoke at a radical protest meeting in Newcastle in 1819, and refused to promise that he would not do it again, a central committee, composed of Bunting and others, expelled him from the connexion.⁵¹ For Thomas Allan, the Wesleyan connexional solicitor and policy expert, the protection of Methodism and its evangelical message was the priority. If curbing some of its revivalist enthusiasm was what the government required, it was a small price to pay.

Over time, however, these early denominational survival strategies evolved, at least for some Wesleyans, into a full-blown affiliation with the Tory interest. Although there was a ‘no politics’ rule within Wesleyanism—preachers were not to deliver political speeches and premises were not to be lent for political meetings—it was a rule that was widely bent, if not entirely broken. In 1835, a group of Tory Methodist laymen, with Jabez Bunting’s support, founded *The Watchman*, a weekly Methodist newspaper which articulated all the hallmarks of a classic Tory outlook, such as supporting the existing order, advocating the principle of religious establishments, basking in a ‘contented conservatism’, and opposing concessions to Roman Catholicism with particular fervour.⁵²

As the numerous secessions from Wesleyan Methodism from the 1820s to the 1850s demonstrated, this conservative enterprise sat at odds with a large proportion of the Methodist constituency. Throughout the nineteenth century, the bulk of the Wesleyan laity and almost all of free Methodism were

⁴⁹ David Hempton, ‘Thomas Allan and Methodist Politics, 1800–1840’, *History*, 67 (1982), 14–15.

⁵⁰ See Michael Rutz, ‘The Politicising of Evangelical Dissent, 1811–1813’, *Parliamentary History*, 20 (2001), 187–207.

⁵¹ David Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750–1850* (London, 1984), pp. 106–8.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 181–6. The quote is on p. 186.

reformist in their political views and Liberal in their party affiliations. Methodism's advocacy of both personal and social transformation, alongside its evangelistic methods and empowerment of lay people, had obvious radical implications. Rank and file Methodists were active in the early nineteenth-century antislavery movement.⁵³ Free Methodism had a particularly significant impact on the leadership and character of Chartism and many Methodists were deeply involved in the early trades union movement.⁵⁴ In a survey of the voting behaviour of electors in the 1841 general election, the *Wesleyan Chronicle* pointed out that 74.3 per cent of those claiming to be Wesleyans voted Liberal.⁵⁵

The tension between conservative and radical traditions within Methodism has spawned a vibrant, if now somewhat tired, historiographical debate. Élie Halévy argued as long ago as 1906 that in the politically unstable times of the 1790s–1820s, Methodism had prevented a popular revolution in England like that in France by operating as a conservative social force.⁵⁶ Since then other historians, like Hobsbawm, Gilbert, and Walsh, have highlighted Methodism's radical potential and the contribution it has made to working-class politics.⁵⁷ However, Methodism's conservative ethos cannot be ignored. And E.P. Thompson, although in no doubt that Methodism's popularity was part of a wider counter-revolutionary process taking place in the early nineteenth century, recognized that there was a radical dimension to its message.⁵⁸ Steve Bruce's study of Methodist decline in the mining communities around Durham in the century after 1850 makes a similar point. Durham Methodism did best when part of a dominant local infrastructure and when its ideas and values were supported by colliery owners and community institutions. Yet, because Methodism had organized itself much earlier than its labour counterpart and already had a trained cadre of local leaders, it also proved to be a highly effective recruiting ground for organized labour.⁵⁹ To borrow David

⁵³ Jennifer Woodruff Tait, 'The Methodist Conscience: Slavery, Temperance and Pacifism', in Gibson, Forsaith and Wellings, eds., *Ashgate Research Companion*, pp. 365–86.

⁵⁴ Robert F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Working-Class Movements of England 1800–50* (London, 1937); John Hargreaves, "'Hats Off": Methodism and Popular Protest in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the Chartist Era: A Case Study of Benjamin Rushton (1785–1835) of Halifax', *PWHS*, 57 (2010), 161–77; Robert F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Struggle of the Working Classes 1850–1900* (Leicester, 1954).

⁵⁵ Hempton, *Methodism and Politics*, p. 205.

⁵⁶ Élie Halévy, *The Birth of Methodism in England* (Chicago, IL, 1971, trans. Bernard Semmel of 1906 orig. pub.).

⁵⁷ E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Methodism and the Threat of Revolution in Britain', *History Today*, 7 (1957), 115–24; Alan D. Gilbert, 'Methodism, Dissent and Political Stability in Early Industrial England', *Journal of Religious History*, 10 (1978–9), 381–99; John Walsh, 'Élie Halévy and the Birth of Methodism', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 25 (1975), 1–20.

⁵⁸ Thompson, *Making*, pp. 411–30.

⁵⁹ Steve Bruce, 'Methodism and Mining in County Durham, 1881–1991', *Northern History*, 48 (2011), 337–55.

Hempton's framework of 'dialectical friction', Methodist politics could be both conservative and radical and these operated in a complex dialogue with each other.⁶⁰

Another aspect of Methodism's political ambivalence was its relationship to the Church of England. Because they had emerged out of the Church of England, Methodists did not really object to the notion of religious establishment, as other Dissenters did. While the push for a separate denominational identity emerged in the eighteenth century and most societies celebrated communion independently of the Church by the 1820s, research has shown that in rural areas there could be considerable co-existence. In South Lindsey, for example, Obelkevich has shown that Wesleyans avoided service clashes and continued to attend parish services well into the 1870s.⁶¹ Royle shows similar practices taking place in rural Yorkshire into the 1890s.⁶² In the revived, activist religious market of the nineteenth century, however, these old accommodations were difficult to sustain. For one thing, the Church of England was changing. New, energetic, and evangelical clergy were less accommodating of local Methodists and tried to retake lost ground.⁶³ The emergence of the Oxford Movement in the early 1830s and the subsequent growth of Ritualist and Anglo-Catholic ideas did much to sour relations between the two parties. High Church commentators called Methodists 'schismatics' whose ordinations were not valid and who practised a spurious theology of 'feeling'.⁶⁴ Methodists launched a robust defence of their position in a series of 'Tracts for the Times' (1839) and publicly lamented the 'grievous errors' they saw emerging in the Church. An official report from the 1843 Conference declared that 'we deeply condemn and deplore this alarming departure from the truth of the Gospel in doctrine and from its godly simplicity in divine worship and ecclesiastical observance'.⁶⁵ In 1878, J.H. Rigg, educationalist and theologian, could write that the relationship between Methodists and Anglicans was 'mutually repellent and exclusive'.⁶⁶

The disintegration of Methodism's traditional relationship with the Church of England accompanied a growing identification with the politics of Non-conformity and the Liberal party. This was a transition which affected the

⁶⁰ David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT, 2005), p. 7.

⁶¹ James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875* (Oxford, 1976), p. 214-15.

⁶² Edward Royle, 'When did Methodists Stop Attending Their Parish Churches: Some Suggestions from Mid-Nineteenth Century Yorkshire', *PWHS*, 56 (2008), 275-96.

⁶³ Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, p. 214; Henry D. Rack, 'Wesleyan Methodism 1849-1902', in *A History of the Methodist Church*, III: p. 217.

⁶⁴ Paul Avis, 'Anglicans and Methodists: On the Cusp of Unity?', *Ecclesiology*, 9 (2013), 85-105.

⁶⁵ *Minutes of the Wesleyan Conference, 1843*, quoted in Thompson, ed., *Nonconformity*, p. 116.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Avis, 'Anglicans and Methodists', p. 90.

Wesleyans most visibly. Free Methodism, in particular the MNC and the UMFC, had long been affiliated with Dissenting opposition to legal discrimination, church establishments, and Anglican control over education.⁶⁷ Wesleyans, however, had always been more ambivalent about their Dissenting status and they remained aloof from the militant Dissenting campaigns of the 1840s–60s.⁶⁸ By the 1870s, though, even Wesleyan allegiances were beginning to shift towards the Liberal benches. Much of this was the result of Hugh Price Hughes, a Wesleyan minister, director of the West London Mission and a leading voice within late nineteenth-century Liberalism. Hughes was driven by his belief that Christians had a moral responsibility to improve society, and that society ought to adopt a higher moral code. Using the weekly *Methodist Times*, of which he was the founder editor, Hughes promoted Liberal candidates and policies and sponsored high-profile moral campaigns. In 1885, he endorsed fellow newspaper editor W.T. Stead's controversial 'Maiden Tribute' investigation into white slavery, designed to strengthen British 'purity' legislation.⁶⁹ In 1890, when the affair between Charles Stewart Parnell, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and Catherine O'Shea was made public, Hughes's public criticisms were the catalyst behind the Liberal party's call for his resignation. While most Nonconformists supported Hughes's stance, his objections, now dubbed the 'Nonconformist Conscience', were an early indication of fractures in the political landscape. While Methodist support for the Liberals continued well into the twentieth century, their opinions were increasingly divided over the contentious issues of Irish Home Rule, the Boer War, and the rise of more radical political solutions in the form of the emergent Labour Party.

HOLINESS AND THE 'NEW' METHODISM

British society had by the late nineteenth century become more democratic and representative, more tolerant and pluralist, more urban and industrialized, and more affluent and leisured. The franchise had been greatly extended, parliament and local government had been considerably reformed, and standards of living had risen significantly. Fewer people lived in the country and more lived in the growing number of industrial and commercial centres like Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, and London. These trends influenced

⁶⁷ Timothy Larsen, *Friends of Religious Equality: Nonconformist Politics in Mid-Victorian England* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 18, 138, 255–6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 100, 152–3.

⁶⁹ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Hugh Price Hughes: Founder of a New Methodism, Conscience of a New Nonconformity* (Cardiff, 1999), pp. 143–8.

Methodism as well. Methodists were becoming more affluent and more of them were living in urban centres. More of them had grown up within the denomination. Many were leading members of their local community, with considerable economic and political influence. Their idea of Methodism and what it should look like once again took the denomination in a new direction.⁷⁰

In some respects, Methodism had never looked more confident. It had an almost national reach, with an extensive physical infrastructure. As part of Hugh Price Hughes's Forward Movement, large and imposing 'Central Halls' were constructed in strategic urban centres. Hosting a range of social welfare and community services, they became popular venues for respectable entertainments. The extent of Methodism's social reach was marked by the opening of the Central Hall Westminster in 1912. Designed by A.B. Rickards in a flamboyant, baroque style, its enormous self-supporting dome and white exterior contrasted markedly with the Gothic Westminster Abbey across the street. Intended to house Wesleyan central offices and to serve as a conference and meeting venue, its scale and luxury (the Great Hall had a capacity of 2,700) reflected Methodist confidence, if not actual triumphalism, at its height. But there were also signs of difficult times ahead. From the 1880s, membership figures across all of the Methodist denominations started to fall steadily. Free Methodism had struggled to gain recruits throughout the period, but by the 1880s even Wesleyan figures had started to decline. These national trends disguised the impact of internal migration patterns, hiding significantly sharper declines in northern areas, while in parts of the south-east and in London, membership remained in a steady state, or even increased.⁷¹ John Hargreaves's study of Methodism in late nineteenth-century Halifax illustrates many of these trends. He reveals the confident role Methodism played in the civic and political life of the town while at the same time pointing out a steady decline in members across each of the four Methodist denominations from the 1880s.⁷²

Methodism responded to these external and internal changes by broadening its theological foundations, modernizing its ecclesiological structures, and attempting new social initiatives. In particular, Methodism began to modify its distinctive brand of evangelicalism. As a product of the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century it had consistently emphasized the importance of a personal conversion experience, the authority of the Bible, and the centrality of the crucifixion in the forgiveness of sin. Lecturers, theologians, and public intellectuals, all products of the newly established Methodist training colleges, began to downplay traditional doctrines of eternal punishment and crucifixion

⁷⁰ Field, 'Social Structure', pp. 206–16.

⁷¹ Robert Currie, 'A Micro-Theory of Methodist Growth', *PWHS*, 36 (1967), 65–73.

⁷² John Hargreaves, 'Consolidation and Decline: Methodism in Halifax, 1852–1914', in *Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society*, 8 (2000), 133–49.

and emphasize the incarnation. These ideas were controversial. F. Scott Lidgett's Fernley Lecture to Conference in 1897 was censured for its failure to grant the centrality of the atonement.⁷³ George Jackson's appointment to a position at Didsbury College in 1913 was obstructed by conservatives, albeit unsuccessfully. Over time, however, these ideas were accepted into the Methodist mainstream. By the early twentieth century, Methodist theology had been 'transposed into a broadly liberal evangelical key'.⁷⁴

'Holiness' was another pillar of Methodist teaching that was also being modified to suit the needs of a new generation. 'The quest for personal improvement in the Christian life'⁷⁵ was a process John Wesley talked about a great deal. He argued that it was possible to achieve the perfect Christian life and to defeat sin here on earth and not just in heaven. Methodists called this state of being 'perfect love', 'entire sanctification', or 'full salvation'. For Wesley, it could be experienced only after many years of disciplined Christian living. When it did come, it was meant to feel like a second conversion, which is why it is sometimes called a 'second blessing'. Under the influence of the mid-century American revivalists James Caughey and Phoebe Palmer, it was reintroduced to Victorian Methodists in a modified form that made it easier and more accessible. This new language of holiness proved highly popular within Methodist circles and its methods and practices were widely distributed via religious journals, travelling speakers, and, most significantly, residential 'conventions', like the annual meetings Methodists sponsored at Southport, starting in 1885, or the more ecumenical meetings at Keswick, which had started in the mid-1870s. Holiness ideas quickly spread into the wider evangelical culture, leading to the formation of Holiness groups and denominations, such as the Salvation Army and the Faith Mission, and forming the foundation for the emerging Pentecostal movement of the twentieth century.

The softening of evangelicalism and the democratizing of the Holiness experience accompanied a growing preoccupation with social problems. From the 1850s, Wesleyans admitted that their focus on evangelism had slipped and that they needed to adopt new strategies to reach the unsaved and the poor. In 1856 they established the Home Mission, which employed ministers to carry out full-time mission work without the burden of circuit responsibilities. Over time, those involved in evangelistic work came to admit that their spiritual message would never be fully effective without a deeper consideration of the social condition of its intended recipients. There were growing calls for a 'Christian socialism'. Hugh Price Hughes was one of the most vocal exponents of these new ideas. He used the pages of the *Methodist*

⁷³ David Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* (Carlisle, 2000).

⁷⁴ Martin Wellings, 'British Methodism and Evangelicalism', in Abraham and Kirby, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, p. 163.

⁷⁵ Bebbington, *Holiness*, p. 1.

Times to call for his vision of a 'new Methodism', a Methodism that was actively engaged with the society around it, seeking to shape the laws and values of society and to 'sanctify the nation' by replacing the Church of England with a new church for the modern age.⁷⁶ This 'Forward Movement' called for new strategies to reach the urban poor and to transform society, for greater unity within Methodism and Nonconformity more broadly, and for a closer link between religion and politics, especially in the area of social morality. A strong moral code, the so-called 'Nonconformist Conscience', was meant to infuse all aspects of public life. Hughes's own West London Mission, established in 1887, encapsulated many of his innovations: a large central building providing both evangelistic services and extensive social services, with a settled minister to provide continuity and direction, and full-time paid female 'deaconesses' to act as professional support staff. Other Methodists were experimenting with similar, if not more radical ways to transform society. In 1890, influenced by the Anglican Toynbee Hall, J. Scott Lidgett established the Bermondsey Settlement, an opportunity for educated volunteers to carry out social and educational work in a deprived area of London.⁷⁷ Samuel Keeble, the writer and activist, articulated an advanced socialist understanding of Christianity, along with strong support for workers' rights, via his newspaper the *Methodist Weekly*, and publications such as *Industrial Daydreams* (1889).⁷⁸ As well-meaning as these ideas and individuals were, they were never as effective as their supporters hoped. They struggled with the scale of urban poverty and found that their message, now effectively stripped of its evangelical and Methodist distinctiveness, struggled to find an audience in the crowded philanthropic marketplace of the late nineteenth-century city.

Methodists also sought to grapple with the challenges of the late Victorian age by modernizing their denominational practices and strengthening, as they saw it, their denominational identity. From the 1880s, the Wesleyan Conference conceded a number of reforms over which it had previously proved intransigent. In 1878 it was agreed that lay members would be allowed to attend the annual Conference and in 1889 (extended in 1894), membership of a class meeting as a determinant of society membership was replaced with a much less onerous category of 'church membership'.⁷⁹ While this satisfied the desire of many middle-class lay Methodists to take a more active part in denominational governance (and at the same time allowed them to shed their growing dislike of the intrusive nature of the class meeting), it also

⁷⁶ Oldstone-Moore, *Hugh Price Hughes*, ch. 5.

⁷⁷ Rack, 'Wesleyan Methodism', pp. 138–41.

⁷⁸ R.F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Struggle of the Working Classes 1850–1900* (Leicester, 1954), pp. 148, 175, 216.

⁷⁹ Martin Wellings, 'Making Haste Slowly: The Campaign for Lay Representation in the Wesleyan Conference, 1871–8', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 53 (2001), 35–7.

resulted, once again, in watering down Methodism's distinctive features and making it look much like any other late Victorian Protestant church.⁸⁰ Methodist language and material culture began to reflect these modernizing trends. From the 1890s, in magazines and newspapers and on class tickets, communion ware, and public signage, the now quaint terms of 'society' and 'preacher' increasingly gave way to 'church' and 'minister'.

The harsh realities of a declining membership soon hit home. With resources spread across a number of organizations, and with the resulting inevitable duplication and inefficiencies, modernizing voices, keen to sustain Methodism's cultural impact, began to argue for denominational 'reunion'. As Robert Currie brutally points out, the desire to merge was the result of conflict and competition. Free Methodism, which effected a significant merger in 1907, was driven by its continued desire to reform Wesleyanism from within. The creation of the Methodist Church in Britain in 1932 was the climax of painful efforts to preserve Methodist influence, see off the Church of England, and kick start a new age of expansion. Canadian Methodists, who had negotiated a merger in 1884, had seen a brief period of post-union expansion, but in Britain reunion movements seem only to have created local discord and unhappiness while failing in any meaningful way to address the problems that confronted them. In essence, late nineteenth-century Methodism had spread itself too thin. Its 'cultural diffusion and ecclesiastical ambitions' were greater than its ability to 'recruit members and effectively disseminate its message'.⁸¹

Ending with such a negative portrayal of British Methodism would be to do this eighteenth-century religious movement a great disservice. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Methodism expanded dramatically. It consolidated its early successes within a tightly organized and highly centralized structure, transforming the emotional power of its message into a fierce commitment to evangelism and missionary outreach. This effort was particularly successful in the United States, which, by the end of the century, represented over 75 per cent of all Methodists. Foreign missionary activity had spread the movement still further, to include all six inhabited continents. By 2011, this world Methodist family incorporated seventy-six denominations in 132 countries with a combined membership of 76 million.⁸² There have been various initiatives which have sought to coordinate this activity. The first 'Oecumenical Methodist Conference' was held in London in 1881 and has continued to meet, from 1951, as the World Methodist Council. But British Methodism has been unable to replicate this numerical success in the twentieth century. Its membership figures continue to decline. Although it supports a core

⁸⁰ Rack, 'Class Meeting', pp. 16–21; Rack, 'Wesleyan Methodism', pp. 155–64.

⁸¹ Hempton, p. 199.

⁸² David Chapman, 'Methodism, Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations', in Forsaith and Gibson, eds., *Ashgate Research Companion*, p. 124.

membership, its international reputation is increasingly one based on its heritage legacy and its position as the historical site of Methodism's origins and initial success.⁸³

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⁸³ Thomas A. Tweed, 'John Wesley Slept Here: American Shrines and American Methodists', *Numen* 47 (2000), 41–68.

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Restorationists and New Movements

Tim Grass

One of the challenges facing the historian of nineteenth-century British Dissent is the sheer variety of movements that sprang up during the century and that do not fit within the larger denominational traditions. Some were purely local and left little written record; others had great hopes of making a significant impact on Christendom in Britain and beyond. Some of them are better served than others, historiographically speaking. Brethren in particular have been the subject of a number of studies in recent years, and other movements are seeing an upsurge of interest in their history as well as aspects of their theology and liturgical practice. However, they are frequently studied in isolation, a reflection of their own tendency to see themselves as *sui generis*, raised up by God and centre-stage in his purposes. They have often disparaged historical investigation and analysis, and often have little in the way of extant records on which a historian can draw. Even where records have been carefully kept, as in the case of the Catholic Apostolic Church, they may argue that non-members cannot grasp the spiritual significance of what was happening and hence cannot be allowed access to their archives. In examining these movements, therefore, this chapter seeks to tease out some significant commonalities between them and to locate them in the wider landscape of Dissent, something that not all of these movements have been happy to do for themselves.

But just how prominent were they in that landscape? For most, we lack official statistics for membership, ministry, or places of worship, and so comments on their strength and geographical spread are often somewhat anecdotal, but a serviceable starting-point is provided by the 1851 Census of Religious Worship.¹ In England and Wales, of the groups we shall examine

¹ There are, of course, many problems associated with data from this census. For one thing, a significant number of congregations belonging to groups such as the Brethren were not recorded, or not correctly identified; nevertheless, the figures are serviceable enough for the points being made here. The census was conducted in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man but not in Ireland.

here, there were 132 congregations self-identifying as Brethren (17,592 total attendances), the Catholic Apostolic Church reported thirty-two congregations (7,542), and mission halls such as the London City Mission or the Seaman's Bethels amounted to forty-eight congregations (5,458). In comparison, the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) recorded 222 congregations, with 35,626 attendances. Scotland reported no Brethren congregations (although some certainly existed), three Catholic Apostolic (588 attendances), one Campbellite and fourteen 'Christian disciple' (1,211), seven city missions (796), and twenty Mormons (3,237).² So in numerical terms we should not overstate their significance.

Some clarification of terms is in order at this point. 'Restorationist' refers here to those groups that sought to re-establish a form of church polity deemed to be that prescribed and exemplified in the New Testament. They believed that a comprehensive pattern of church order could be straightforwardly read off from the text but felt it impossible to achieve this within existing denominations, which were compromised by the imposition of extra-biblical tests of doctrinal orthodoxy, worldliness resulting from the union of church and state, failure to practise church discipline, one-man ministry, the unbiblical nature of aspects of the Book of Common Prayer, and the running of Dissenting congregations on worldly business lines. Some of the movements discussed here believed, however, that such restoration was primarily a divine gift, while others stressed human responsibility to obey the 'plain commands' of Scripture. Preoccupation with returning to the New Testament distinguished these Restorationist movements from those within Methodist or Presbyterian traditions, for example, which generally sought to reappropriate the distinctive emphases of those traditions.

To the extent that these movements looked back to the primitive era of the church, its earliest decades, for ecclesiological norms, they can also be termed 'primitivist'. However, some of them looked forwards as much as backwards, and their Restorationism was motivated by a conviction of the imminence of the Second Coming and the need for the church to be ready to meet its returning Lord. To complicate things somewhat, some who sought a return to 'primitive' spiritual experience, free from the accretions of clerically dominated Christian tradition, believed that restoration of primitive church order was neither possible nor the will of God in the contemporary context. They did not share the confident and somewhat rationalistic approach of those who viewed matters of faith and church life primarily in intellectual terms, but were imbued with the Romantic stress on the supernatural. This chapter will begin by reviewing a primitivist group before devoting the major part of its attention to the Restorationists. A third section will examine certain movements which

² See the summary statistics in Horace Mann, *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship in England and Wales [abridged]* (revised edn.; London, 1854).

formed local churches but which can best be categorized as pragmatist, since they were not so much concerned to establish a particular pattern of church life deemed to be scripturally prescribed as to reach those outside the churches and provide for their corporate spiritual nourishment.

It is especially important to note that the development of these movements did not take place in a theological vacuum any more than a cultural one.³ One or another of them shared significant commonalities with movements deemed by contemporaries not to form part of evangelical Protestant Dissent because of their non-Trinitarian theology, such as the Christadelphians and the Mormons. There was also contact between the two types of movement: thus members of the Churches of Christ joined what became the Christadelphians, and Mormons tried to win Catholic Apostolics. Even within movements considered here, theological instability surfaced on occasion, as we shall see.

PRIMITIVISTS: THE HUNTINGTONIANS

The Huntingtonians or Calvinistic Independents, named after the high Calvinist Dissenting preacher William Huntington, stressed the importance of 'experimental Christianity'.⁴ For them, the high Calvinist doctrines they professed were not merely intellectual constructs but truths applied powerfully to the soul through the working of the Holy Spirit. Ministry likewise was not a matter of college training but of manifest spiritual endowment. Thus in the epitaph he composed for his gravestone, Huntington described himself as a 'coalheaver', which he had been when he was converted, and prophesied that at the last day England would know that he had been a true prophet. His brand of Calvinism proved unacceptable to the religious world of his day, and his followers thus found themselves at odds with Calvinistic Dissent; they formed a number of congregations, principally in Kent and Sussex. There was considerable interchange between them and the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists. Although a new movement, the Huntingtonians owed much to the high Calvinist tradition of the previous century, and represent a link between it and the world of Dissenting Romanticism, which saw a resurgence of similar views.⁵

³ Particular attention is paid to the cultural setting in Timothy C.F. Stunt, *From Awakening to Secession: Radical Evangelicals in Switzerland and Britain 1815–35* (Edinburgh, 2000); idem, *The Elusive Quest of the Spiritual Malcontent: Some Early Nineteenth-Century Ecclesiastical Mavericks* (Eugene, OR, 2015).

⁴ See Kenneth Dix, *Strict and Particular: English Strict and Particular Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot, 2001), ch. 1.

⁵ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), p. 78.

RESTORATIONISTS

Early Irish Movements

Irish Evangelicals, as a minority of the Irish Protestant minority, could ill afford division; yet they seemed particularly prone to it. Perhaps the first such division was that which led to the formation of several 'Kellyite' congregations as a result of the secession from the Established Church of the Dublin clergyman Thomas Kelly in 1803. Inhibited from ministering by the Archbishop of Dublin, he sought to institute a church order on apostolic lines, advocating baptism of believers, recognition of the offices of elder and deacon, and a gathered rather than comprehensive understanding of church membership. John Walker, who ministered at Bethesda, a Dublin Anglican chapel, seceded the following year but the meetings he founded, known as Churches of God, were considerably more separatist than Kelly's (and hence longer lived, a few surviving into the twentieth century), separation being seen by him as a key element of apostolic church order which required tangible expression.⁶ Even before his secession, a group at Bethesda had been meeting regularly for prayer and a private celebration of the Lord's Supper.⁷ Walker was rigidly Calvinistic in his views, rejected ordination, and was regarded as holding a Sandemanian view of saving faith, as an intellectual assent to the truths of the gospel. His followers had nothing to do with other Christians except for proselytizing purposes, and the Lord's Supper formed their main weekly gathering.⁸ The Walkerites in particular were a radical movement founded on rational interpretation of the 'plain meaning' of Scripture. Although they began as a secession from Anglicanism, by 1818 Walker could report that over twenty Baptist ministers had joined his congregations, as well as a dozen former clergy.⁹

A congregation was formed in 1807 at Omagh in the north of Ireland by a local landowner, James Buchanan, which came to practise believers' baptism, plural lay leadership, and weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, working on the principle that 'we should not attend to any act of worship unless we saw it clearly ordered and practised by the first churches in the New Testament'.¹⁰

⁶ On these two groupings, see Grayson Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c.1800–1850* (Oxford, 2001), ch. 3.

⁷ Alexander Haldane, *The Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey, and of his Brother, James Alexander Haldane* (2nd edn., London, 1852), p. 343.

⁸ Tim Grass, *Gathering to His Name: The Story of Open Brethren in Britain and Ireland* (2nd edn., Troon, 2013), p. 20; Haldane, *Lives*, p. 508. The Scotch Baptist leader William Jones, who did much to introduce the writings of Alexander Campbell to Britain and Ireland, claimed that Walker's views were derived from Scotch Baptist writings: *Millennial Harbinger* 6 (1835), 299.

⁹ Cited in Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, p. 93.

¹⁰ *The Religious Belief of James Buchanan, British Consul to the United States of America, 1819–43* (Omagh, 1955), p. 9. Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, p. 94 suggests that this congregation was Walkerite, but admits that Buchanan was less separatist in his outlook.

Buchanan moved to New York in 1816 to take up an appointment as British Consul, forming what later became a congregation of the Disciples of Christ. In 1820, he published a compilation of correspondence with about two dozen other congregations (mostly Glasite or Scotch Baptist), *The First Part of an Epistolary Correspondence between Christian Churches in America and in Europe*. These seem to have been the result of lay initiative, and characteristic features included recognition of the sole authority of Scripture, weekly observance of the breaking of bread, mutual ministry, plural lay leadership, and abstinence from political involvement. The New York church concluded that their apparently spontaneous emergence was due primarily to the circulation of the Bible and an increase in literacy. Some Brethren saw them as precursors of their own movement, but apart from the original congregation any continuity at local level is impossible to establish.¹¹

The 'Western Schism'

The 'Western Schism', so named by its detractors, originated around 1815 as a result of the secession of several high Calvinist clergy of the Church of England, mostly in the south and west of England. They opposed the Church of England's union with the state and its lack of church discipline, and adopted the practice of believers' baptism by immersion.¹² Among them were George Baring of the banking family, James Harington Evans, and the layman Henry Drummond, a banker and politician who experienced evangelical conversion through the movement and who would later become an apostle in the Catholic Apostolic Church. An early base was provided by the widow Harriet Wall, who opened her houses at Albury Park in Surrey and then Everton in Hampshire for public gatherings and then house-parties for the movement's leaders. The network was never large, and its theology was notoriously unstable, some ministers associated with it temporarily espousing Sabellian views of the Trinity or a view of sanctification that left no room for good works or growth in grace and drew the charge of antinomianism. Well-connected leadership, provocative preaching, and itinerancy combined to ensure that the movement received plenty of publicity. A division in Exeter's main Baptist church in 1817 gave Baring a congregation to pastor, until he departed suddenly for the Continent in 1819, a move that may have been due to family

¹¹ *The Disciple*, 3 (1956), p. 525; cf. Harold H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren 1825–1850* (London, 1967), pp. 23–6; Neil T.R. Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland 1838–2000: A Social Study of an Evangelical Movement* (Carlisle, 2002), p. 9. Later Open Brethren reprinted Buchanan's compilation as *Letters Concerning their Principles and Order from Assemblies of Believers in 1818–1820* (London, 1889), at a time when their self-understanding was in a state of flux.

¹² See Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, ch. 4.

concern for the reputation of their banking house.¹³ Ironically, a later schism in his church produced a Brethren assembly, evidence of the volatile nature of these movements. More positively, Evans ministered from 1818 until 1847 in a chapel provided for him in John St, London. His open views regarding admission to communion influenced one whom he baptized, Robert Chapman, and through him the early Brethren in Bristol.

CHURCHES OF CHRIST

The grouping that became known as the Churches of Christ is one whose origins are better accounted for by polygenesis than monogenesis. Their chief British historian, David M. Thompson, makes the point that to begin with they had no common founder, origin, programme, or theological standpoint, nor did they support particular 'denominational' institutions. While there were certain recurring characteristics, such as the practice of believers' baptism and the weekly observance of communion, these were not unique to them. These churches cherished ideals which were common to a wide range of biblicist Protestants at that time, many of whom believed that unity could be restored on their basis. However, Scotch Baptists did provide significant theological input to the fledgling movement, most notably in the form of a view of faith which stressed rational response to the presentation of truth, as opposed to the more emotionalist conception then prevalent in Wesleyan circles.¹⁴ The first British congregation of the future movement seems to have been that formed at Dungannon, not too far from Omagh, in 1810.¹⁵

It seems to have been the stress of the American pioneer Alexander Campbell on believers' baptism as conferring remission of sins which precipitated a divergence from the Scotch Baptists after 1836.¹⁶ Thereafter the Churches of Christ came to be distinguished by the prominent role of evangelism, both in their church life and as furnishing a reason for churches to band together. They first came together as a distinct group in 1842, to discuss how they could cooperate for the purpose of evangelism. The congregations thus founded

¹³ Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, p. 120.

¹⁴ David M. Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall: A Short History of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland* (Birmingham, 1980), introduction. This did not exclude the dimension of personal trust in Christ, however: 'Haldane, Robert (1764–1842), and James Alexander (1768–1851)', in Douglas A. Foster et al, eds., *The Encyclopaedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004).

¹⁵ Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, p. 22.

¹⁶ The other American figure, Barton Stone, was much less significant for the development of the movement in Britain and Ireland. On Stone and his relationship with Campbell, see Douglas Foster, 'Restorationists and New Movements in North America', Chapter 11 of this volume.

stressed plural lay leadership, the centrality of communion in weekly worship, and the baptism of believers, which (as noted) they regarded as conferring spiritual regeneration. It was this last feature which set them apart from other outwardly similar groups such as the Brethren, and from Evangelicalism more generally.

British Churches of Christ developed somewhat differently from, and more loosely than, their American counterparts; Peter Ackers describes them as ‘a heterogeneous gathering of former Glassite [*sic*], Scotch Baptist and Independent congregations and individual Nonconformists, who rallied to Campbell’s plea for a “restoration” of primitive, “New Testament” Christianity’.¹⁷ Thompson, however, nuances this by arguing that at first no Scotch Baptist congregation became a Church of Christ; rather, members seceded to form new congregations, along with individuals from other denominational backgrounds, including many Methodists.¹⁸ The Churches of Christ flourished in industrial areas such as the West Midlands, Lancashire, and the Central Lowlands of Scotland. By the turn of the century they had 176 churches and over 11,000 members.¹⁹

Brethren

The first Brethren gatherings emerged during the late 1820s, linked by ties of personal acquaintance.²⁰ Dublin saw the emergence of one or more meetings involving Anglicans and Dissenters, among them the Church of Ireland clergyman John Nelson Darby. Another early centre was Plymouth, where a meeting was active by the early 1830s under the autocratic leadership of Benjamin Wills Newton. Other early centres included London and Hereford, and in Scotland there was a meeting in Edinburgh by 1838. In the earliest days, some Brethren gatherings appear to have functioned as ‘para-churches’, in that adherents attended their meetings but retained their existing religious allegiances. Darby himself was slow to secede formally from the establishment.

Although Brethren later became known for their strong advocacy of an eschatological understanding which featured a rapture of the saints to heaven,

¹⁷ Peter Ackers, ‘The “Protestant Ethic” and the English Labour Movement: The Case of the Churches of Christ’, *Labour History Review*, 58 (1993), 68.

¹⁸ David M. Thompson, ‘Developments in the United Kingdom and British Dominions to the 1920s’, in D. Newell Williams, Douglas Allen Foster, and Paul M. Blowers, eds., *The Stone-Campbell Movement: A Global History* (St Louis, MO, 2013), p. 95.

¹⁹ ‘A Brief History of the United Reformed Church’ (2016), http://moodle.urc.org.uk/pluginfile.php/3236/mod_resource/content/2/Intro%20Course%202016%20History.pdf, accessed 4 October 2016.

²⁰ See F. Roy Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement* (2nd edn., Exeter, 1976); Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland 1838–2000*; Grass, *Gathering to His Name*.

preceding a seven-year period of tribulation and followed by the visible return of Christ and an earthly millennium, it was never universally held among them. It is certainly fair to say that whatever their views, Brethren were eschatologically motivated in their work and witness. Perhaps the most important convictions motivating early Brethren pioneers were the attempt to realize the unity of all true Christian believers in the practice of regular church life, especially at the Lord's table; belief in the need to separate from the unbiblical traditions, restrictions, practices, and alliances which disfigured the religious world and hindered unity; and a desire to work out the implications of the sole (rather than supreme) authority of Scripture. From 1826 until the early 1840s, residential conferences at Powerscourt near Dublin and at various locations in England provided opportunities for 'chief men' to hammer out a common understanding of relevant issues and biblical passages.

Brethren ecclesiology started from the premise that all believers were *ipso facto* part of the body of Christ, and that unless they were guilty of some offence calling for church discipline, they had a right to be acknowledged as such. Local gatherings were therefore to receive all (and only) those whom Christ had received. The place where this unity was given pre-eminent expression was the Lord's Table, often called the 'breaking of bread'. Brethren could thus be regarded as holding a eucharistic ecclesiology. Under Quaker influence, a form of open worship soon became well-nigh universal, in which any (almost always male) believer could speak as moved by the Spirit. Ministry was seen as dependent on divine gifting, which was contrasted with human ordination. Thus Brethren, like several contemporary movements, were a lay movement. But there were various approaches to the question of leadership. In some assemblies, gifted brothers (not infrequently former clergy) functioned as unofficial pastors, while in others there were brothers recognized as having oversight, and in still others there was no formal leadership of any kind. This last approach was a function of the view put forward by Darby that the church on earth was irreparably ruined, and all that believers could do was recognize their condition and meet on the basis of Christ's promise in Matthew 18:20. Setting up churches now was no more acceptable to God than the attempt of an individual sinner to justify themselves. In each case, the first step to blessing was acknowledgement of the ruin. Darbyite Brethren could aptly be described as primitivist in that they rejected Restorationism but sought to realize an apostolic pattern of personal spiritual experience.

It was a clash in the late 1840s between Darby and Newton which split the movement into Open and Exclusive streams.²¹ Factors contributing to the division included personality clashes, discontent at Newton's autocracy and Darby's handling of the dispute, divergent interpretations of biblical prophecy,

²¹ See Jonathan D. Burnham, *A Story of Conflict: The Controversial Relationship between Benjamin Wills Newton and John Nelson Darby* (Carlisle, 2004).

and disagreement over Christology. Separation was inevitable because Darby had adopted a strongly connexionalist ecclesiology (if we may use the word, given his belief in the church's ruin), which required local meetings to act consistently with one another in separating from any deemed to be guilty of an offence calling for discipline. Open Brethren, whose ecclesiology was in many ways congregational, would receive all believers known to be sound in faith and godly in life, whatever meeting or church they came from, whereas Exclusives would not receive any from meetings which were believed to tolerate fellowship with those who held error. The latter developed a highly centralized outlook, and in time Darby's own meeting (Park St, Islington, in London) effectively led the way in matters of discipline.

Insistence on consistent action in disciplinary and other matters rendered Exclusives liable to a series of divisions from 1881 onwards, stricter brethren becoming progressively more introverted in their spirituality, a trend accentuated by the decline in accessions resulting from evangelism: for this stream, most new members were from families already within the meetings. Such proneness to schism was perhaps inevitable, given the insistence on the clarity of the Bible and the consequent demand for uniformity of opinion, mixed with changing understandings of key doctrines such as Christology as a result of the increasing light deemed to be shed on the meaning of Scripture and a setting aside of Christian tradition. Theological instability was, therefore, a serious problem among Brethren as it was in the 'Western Schism'. The Christological errors which took four centuries to emerge in the early church all surfaced among Brethren within seventy years, as F.F. Bruce demonstrated.²²

Exclusive Brethren fit ill under the label 'Restorationist', since a main plank of their ecclesiology was that the church on earth was irreparably ruined and that attempts to recreate it, to return to the first century as if eighteen centuries of religious decay had never occurred, were both wrong-headed (because such was not God's purpose for contemporary believers) and doomed to failure (because of human inability). It was precisely Darby's Calvinist understanding of personal spirituality noted above which, when applied to church life, ruled out such attempts.²³ However, their spirituality was markedly different from that of high Calvinists such as the Huntingtonians or the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists, and among thoroughgoing Exclusives the assembly came to be seen by the end of the century as the place where Christ was truly present among his people, and the breaking of bread as an anticipation of the heavenly communion.

²² F.F. Bruce, 'The Humanity of Jesus Christ', *Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship*, 24 (September 1973), 5–15.

²³ See Timothy George Grass, 'The Church's Ruin and Restoration: The Development of Ecclesiology in the Plymouth Brethren and the Catholic Apostolic Church, c.1825–c.1866' (PhD thesis, King's College London, 1997), pp. 101, 119, 193–4.

To some extent, Open Brethren experienced a measure of transformation as a result of the revivalist climate which ensued from the '1859 revival' and its successors. Sunday evening evangelistic services became the norm, Bible study lost some of its early prominence in favour of evangelistic activity of various types, and there was a harvest of converts whose lack of previous church involvement necessitated a shift in approach. In Neil Dickson's words, Brethren thinking about ministry as dependent on gift rather than ordination provided it with 'an ideology which enabled it to become downwardly mobile', which it did in this period.²⁴ Large parts of the movement became more populist in ethos, and effective leadership shifted from the Bible teachers to the evangelists and the publicists. Indeed, it can be argued that Open Brethren came to practise 'government by magazine', as periodicals emerged which came to be seen as laying down authoritative versions of Brethren faith and practice. By the late 1880s, there were divergent opinions among Open Brethren on questions concerning the boundaries of fellowship and the means by which assemblies could achieve a common mind on questions of disciplinary action. This led to the 'Needed Truth' division of the early 1890s, so named after its main magazine. The seceders adopted a strongly connexional system of church government, given legitimation by the assertion that their gatherings alone constituted the 'Church of God' (their preferred self-designation).

Among Open Brethren, it took some decades for overseas mission to assume a central place in their corporate life. One of the founders, Anthony Norris Groves, went out with several others, including F.W. Newman, to Baghdad in 1830, but several died or returned home. Groves himself exchanged this field of labour for India in 1836, which proved far more fruitful.²⁵ Gradually other missionaries went abroad, and George Müller's Scriptural Knowledge Institution (founded 1834) in particular supported evangelistic, educational, and medical work in Europe and elsewhere, as well as in Britain.²⁶ However, division had sapped the movement's energy, and a periodical established to inform and stimulate interest in mission, the *Missionary Reporter*, lasted only from 1853 to 1862, ceasing for lack of support. It was in 1872 that the *Missionary Echo* first appeared; this became *Echoes of Service* from 1885, and because its editors assumed the role of channelling funds overseas, they soon became *de facto* missionary society

²⁴ Neil Dickson, "The Church Itself is God's Clergy": The Principles and Practices of the Brethren', in Deryck W. Lovegrove, ed., *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism* (London, 2002), p. 226.

²⁵ E.B. Bromley, *They were Men sent from God: A Centenary Record (1836–1936) of Gospel Work in India amongst Telugus in the Godavari Delta and Neighbouring Parts* (Bangalore, 1937).

²⁶ See the annual *Report of the Scriptural Knowledge Society*, later *Brief Narrative of Facts relative to the (New) Orphan Houses... and the other objects of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad* (1834 onwards).

directors. The work grew exponentially: by 1900, the editors were in contact with over 400 missionaries.²⁷ In addition, individual Brethren played seminal roles in the emergence of Dissenting movements elsewhere, such as Lord Radstock, whose preaching and personal work in late nineteenth-century St Petersburg was a major factor in the emergence of the 'Evangelical Christians', sometimes known as *Radstockists*.²⁸

For many of these missionaries, eschatological expectation furnished a primary motive, as Groves explained in 1833: 'I consider the *testimony* of Jesus is to be published through every land, before the Bridegroom comes; this makes my heart feel an interest in heathens, that we may hasten the coming of the Lord.'²⁹ By contrast with many early Anglican and Dissenting missionaries, few expected the conversion of the world; rather, their hope was for the conversion of individuals from the world. Since the return of Christ was regarded as imminent, long-range planning rarely featured in their thinking. The civilizing dimension of later nineteenth-century mission was therefore not acknowledged as part of their remit (although it inevitably shaped missionary attitudes and practice, in relation to medicine for instance). Education and medical care were adopted as handmaids of the gospel, an outlook reflected in the outreach of assemblies at home and which was maintained in the face of broadening attitudes among other Nonconformists.

The Catholic Apostolic Church

The church's origins lie in the ministry of the Scottish theologian Edward Irving. He had gained a reputation as an outspoken preacher with a high view of the ministry and an increasing emphasis on biblical prophecy. His forthright denunciations of the contemporary religious world, and especially of its evangelical reaches, meant that he was left to plough his own furrow. From 1827, his advocacy of the belief that at the incarnation Christ assumed fallen human nature ensured that for many he was tainted with heresy. In 1833 he was therefore deposed from the ministry of the Church of Scotland. But before that, the charismatic gifts of tongues, prophecy, and healing had been restored, initially in the West of Scotland and then in Irving's congregation in London. The uproar which followed the manifestation of these gifts in its public

²⁷ See Frederick A. Tatford, *That the World may Know*, 10 vols (Bath, 1982–5); Tim Grass, 'The Development of Support for Overseas Mission in British Assemblies', in idem, ed., *Witness in Many Lands: Leadership and Outreach among the Brethren* (Troon, 2013), pp. 241–62.

²⁸ Edmund Heier, *Religious Schism in the Russian Aristocracy 1860–1900: Radstockism and Pashkovism* (The Hague, 1970).

²⁹ Journal for 13 December 1833, in Mrs Anthony Norris Groves, *Memoir of Anthony Norris Groves (Containing Extracts from his Letters and Journals)* (Reprint edn., Sumneytown, PA, 2002), p. 176.

worship led the trustees to lock him out of the church in 1832. He set up a new congregation elsewhere, with almost the whole of his membership.³⁰

It was not long before the ‘gifted persons’ began to pray and prophesy regarding the restoration of the office of apostle as the only solution to the divided and ruined state of the professing church. One by one, twelve apostles were called by prophecy and separated to their work on 14 July 1835. These were regarded as counterparts at the end of the Christian dispensation to the twelve called at its beginning, and as having been given to prepare the whole Christian Church to meet its Lord at his coming. Their first corporate act was to withdraw to Albury Park, now owned by Henry Drummond, for a year’s retreat, establishing a common understanding of Scripture and working out a pattern for the church’s ministry and worship—a kind of extended house-party, perhaps.³¹ During this period they also prepared several ‘Testimonies’ setting out their understanding of the state and prospects of Christendom and calling on the leaders of church and state, in Britain and throughout Europe, to accept the work of God through apostles. These were served on recipients in a manner reminiscent of legal documents.³²

By this time, however, Irving had died; he was never called as an apostle and does not appear to have found it easy to accept that he must now be subordinate to their leadership.³³ He himself was an angel (bishop in the Ignatian sense, with responsibility for a congregation). The movement also recognized the orders of priest and deacon, that of apostle being effectively superimposed on the threefold ministry as traditionally understood. But cutting across these orders was the ‘fourfold ministry’ or ‘borders’ of apostle/elder, prophet, evangelist, and pastor/teacher (cf. Eph. 4:11), seen as reflecting the make-up of human nature and thus as ministering effectively to it—form following function. An individual thus held the rank of angel, priest, or deacon, but at that level his ministry was shaped by the particular border for which he was deemed to be fitted. It was an elaborate structure, supported by a host of other ministries: acolyte, choir-member, deaconess, underdeacon, and so on. A high proportion of the members could thus play a formally recognized part in the church’s ministry, especially if they were male. Few had stipends, and there was for the most part very little in the way of training. Yet

³⁰ On Irving, see Tim Grass, *The Lord’s Watchman: A Life of Edward Irving* (Milton Keynes, 2011/Eugene, OR, 2012).

³¹ There had been earlier conferences for the study of biblical prophecy at Albury from 1826–30, but these contributed only indirectly to the establishment of the church.

³² Latter-Day Saints also used this method of disseminating their beliefs, but it has not been established whether either group took the idea from the other.

³³ On the Catholic Apostolic Church, see Edward Miller, *The History and Doctrines of Irvingism*, 2 vols (London, 1878); Columba Graham Flegg, *‘Gathered under Apostles’: A Study of the Catholic Apostolic Church* (Oxford, 1992); Tim Grass, *The Lord’s Work: A History of the Catholic Apostolic Church* (forthcoming, 2017).

the church was able to achieve a high degree of homogeneity of outlook, thanks to strong leadership given by the apostles. They oversaw the work's development, evaluated prophecies (these were taken down by scribes and transmitted to Albury at regular intervals), laid down doctrinal norms, and interceded for the whole Christian Church. Although the movement's initial intention had been to serve as a focus of unity for the whole of Christendom, over time its vision contracted and in practice it became just one more denomination. While Catholic Apostolics believed that a divinely revealed blueprint for church order was provided in Scripture, they differed from other groups discussed here by virtue of their belief that the interpretation of the New Testament in the light of the Old (which for Brethren and others meant looking for typological or allegorical foreshadowings of the saving work of Christ) could be extended to ecclesiology: the Pentateuch was believed to contain a complete church order in typological form, which became visible as a result of light shed by charismatic prophecy.³⁴

The movement underwent some significant developments following a crisis in 1840 which resulted in a clear determination by the apostles that they could not accept a conciliar model of church government in which their actions could be vetoed by others. The first was the introduction of liturgical worship, complete with vestments. This had begun in the late 1830s in a limited way, with the production of a lectionary and an outline order for communion, but several editions of a liturgy were printed from 1842, the final one appearing in 1880. This strengthened the church's homogeneity, although there were a few initial defections. The liturgy was translated from English for use elsewhere. Liturgical orders were provided for virtually every type of gathering for worship and for a wide range of occasional offices. Their chief architect was the apostle John Bate Cardale, who drew on Eastern and Western sources, as well as composing new material to reflect the denomination's distinctive beliefs and polity.³⁵

Another development was the introduction of the rite of sealing with the Holy Ghost by the laying on of apostles' hands, in 1847.³⁶ This was seen as equipping individual members for effective service and witness, and as conferring a higher blessing than that available through rites such as confirmation. It was a tangible and attractive 'membership benefit', and during the following six years membership grew by about a third. Growth continued, if not at the same pace, throughout the rest of the century. A number of serving Anglican clergy in Britain and the United States were sealed, but whereas in Britain they

³⁴ See, for example, Thomas Carlyle, *The Mosaic Tabernacle, in its Arrangement and Worship, as the Type of the Christian Church* (New York, 1857).

³⁵ See John Lancaster, 'John Bate Cardale, Pillar of Apostles: A Quest for Catholicity' (unpublished BPhil dissertation, University of St Andrews, 1978).

³⁶ A rite of sealing was also practised among the followers of Joanna Southcott, but it does not seem to have been regarded as equipping the recipient for ministry.

were generally allowed to continue in Anglican ministry if they so wished, in North America there were several cases of suspension.³⁷ A third development was the formal adoption from 1849 of the designation 'Catholic Apostolic Church', already in general use by the movement. The apostles were careful to point out that it should not be preceded by the definite article, as they were not claiming to be the whole of the catholic and apostolic church, simply that they were part of that without any sectarian overlay such as was inherent in denominational names.

The first of the apostles had died in 1855, and at first there was uncertainty about whether it was God's will to fill up the empty places and so perpetuate the ministry of apostles. While the movement continued to live in expectation of the Second Coming, it was becoming evident that this might not take place as quickly as had been expected. In the early 1860s, therefore, the church suffered a damaging division, with the party in Germany which affirmed that God was calling replacement apostles developing into what became the New Apostolic Church.³⁸ This established no congregations in Britain until 1948, but its relevance here lies in the impact that division had upon the self-understanding of the Catholic Apostolic Church globally. Perhaps partly in reaction to division, the remaining apostles categorically rejected both the idea that replacements might be called and the suggestion that they ought to lead the church in making plans for a time when none of them remained to lead it. The church's lifespan was thus inevitably limited. The last apostle died in 1901, since when no ordinations have been possible, no new members could be sealed, and congregations have gradually ceased to exist. By 2014, there was one remaining congregation in England and several dozen in Europe, mainly in Germany, Holland, and Denmark.

It is fair to say that in most countries, including the British Isles, the church grew through accessions of Christians from other churches rather than the conversion of those with no Christian allegiance. This reflects its sense of calling as a mission to Christendom rather than to the 'heathen'. Its evangelistic work, which was highly organized and led by full-time itinerant angel-evangelists, was directed at Christians. Public meetings were held at which speakers presented the church's analysis of the state of Christendom and its understanding of biblical prophecy in relation to future events, with acceptance of 'the Lord's work by restored apostles' presented as the only way of escape from impending divine judgement. Literature covered the same ground, and local congregations were expected to provide for the preaching of Sunday evening evangelistic sermons on a regular basis. By 1900, there were about 300 congregations in England (some of which would have been

³⁷ The same happened to several Roman Catholic clergy in Germany during the 1850s.

³⁸ On the division, see Johann Albrecht Schröter, *Die Katholisch-apostolischen Gemeinden in Deutschland und der 'Fall Geyer'* (3rd edn., Marburg, 2004).

sub-groups in a particular area meeting more or less occasionally) and a tenth of that number in Scotland.

In Britain the Catholic Apostolic Church was very much an urban denomination, apart from the congregation in Albury and a few others. Moreover, by 1900 its strength outside London lay chiefly in such areas as the West Midlands and the trans-Pennine belt, and official circulars constantly lament the insufficiency of its income to fund evangelistic work.³⁹ It never achieved much of a foothold in Wales or Ireland, but did have several strong congregations in Scottish cities.

Catholic Apostolic ecclesiology was the soil from which sprang this distinctive understanding of evangelism. The church affirmed the concept of Christendom, which it regarded as comprising all those baptized into the name of the Trinity, and recognized the status of existing Trinitarian churches, and it might therefore be thought to hold to a territorial understanding. However, while it was possible for children to be brought up within the church, membership in the fullest sense (conferred in the rite of sealing) was dependent upon conscious acceptance of the church's tenets and commitment to living and worshipping accordingly. In practice, therefore, Catholic Apostolic congregations functioned as gathered churches—demonstration models of what God wished to do with all Christian churches to prepare them to meet their returning Lord. Moreover, they distinguished between those Christians who accepted the apostles' message, and who would be caught up to heaven as 'firstfruits', and those who did not, and who would therefore have to endure the Great Tribulation before being saved—a kind of earthly purgatory, one might say.

Undenominationalism

A final manifestation of Restorationism to consider is undenominationalism, not to be confused with interdenominationalism. I would argue that interdenominationalism differed from undenominationalism in being 'para-church' rather than 'church' in orientation.⁴⁰ The Evangelical Alliance (founded 1846) was perhaps the supreme example of interdenominationalism to emerge during this period, bringing together Evangelicals from various backgrounds for fellowship and united action, but not claiming itself to be a churchly body. But for some, this was not enough; they wished to leave behind the old

³⁹ The church appears to have been even more strongly working class in make-up in Germany.

⁴⁰ See Tim Grass, 'Undenominationalism in Britain, 1840–1914', in Pieter J. Lalleman, Peter J. Morden, and Anthony R. Cross, eds., *Grounded in Grace: Essays to Honour Ian M. Randall* (London and Didcot, 2013), pp. 69–84.

denominational allegiances and restrictions, and to be free to follow out in the church setting what they believed to be the prescriptions of the New Testament. Undenominational thinkers sought a Christian fellowship which was purer than the mixed membership of most contemporary churches, because it was restricted to those who had experienced conversion, and broader than those restricted by the requirement to subscribe to denominational distinctives. Such congregations emerged in numbers from around 1840, most early ones being set up to provide for the continuing ministry of men seceding from the Church of England.⁴¹ Examples include what became Surrey Chapel, Norwich (1844), established by Robert Govett, and Bethesda Chapel, Sunderland (1845), founded for A.A. Rees. This type of undenominational church was normally newly founded, rather than seceding from an established denomination.

In some respects they were similar to Brethren: eschewing a distinctive label, often holding the Lord's Supper each week, and rejecting the need for formal ordination. However, they differed from most Brethren in upholding the permanent necessity of the pastoral office in local congregations. Some ministers and churches sat on the dividing line between the two constituencies: George Müller at Bethesda, Bristol, for example. His congregation was an integral part of the informal network which drew together early Brethren, yet it is clear from sympathizers and critics that Müller exercised a strong and acknowledged leadership in the church, along with his co-pastor Henry Craik. Moreover, when his preaching tours abroad were reported, he was often referred to as 'Rev.', and Brethren in the cities he visited sometimes complained that he neglected their fellowship for that of the wider evangelical world.

Following the revival of 1858–62, a second type of undenominational church appeared, in which the attempt was made to establish a pattern of church life which facilitated evangelism rather than focusing on the requirements of those already owning a particular denominational allegiance; denominational distinctives were seen as a hindrance to reception of the gospel. Examples include Henry Varley's West London Tabernacle (1860) and D.J. Findlay's St George's Cross Tabernacle, Glasgow (1874). Again, undenominational congregations of this type were new foundations, although they often took some years to develop from mission halls into churches. As the century wore on and new intellectual and theological challenges appeared, some undenominationalists came to place less emphasis on overcoming the barriers to fellowship presented by denominational allegiances and more on

⁴¹ John St Chapel in London under James Harington Evans shared the ideals of later undenominationalists but was associated with the Western Schism: see James Joyce Evans, *Memoir and Remains of the Rev. James Harington Evans, late Minister of John-Street Chapel* (London, 1852).

separating from theological apostasy.⁴² Thus a third variation on the undenominational theme appeared, although to some extent the concern for purity had always been present. Some new churches were founded, but others seceded from existing denominations. Of those Baptist churches which withdrew from the Baptist Union of Great Britain in the wake of the Down-Grade Controversy (1887 onwards), some maintained a Baptist identity more clearly than others, and it is not always easy to determine whether a particular congregation should best be viewed as undenominational or lower-case baptist. One distinguishing mark is that undenominational church government was often not so much congregational as quasi-episcopal, the founding pastor exercising a high degree of personal authority.

Pragmatists

From the second type of undenominationalism it is a small step to pragmatism, in which Scripture was seen not so much as containing a pattern of church order to be followed, but as proclaiming a message of personal salvation and sanctification. For the pragmatists, church order was dictated by the ends for which their groups were set up. In some respects, the Salvation Army also belongs here, although its roots were firmly within the Methodist holiness tradition (which likewise seems to have adopted a pragmatic approach to church order). Another pragmatist group was the Evangelical Union in Scotland, which ultimately merged with other Congregationalist movements, themselves heir (alongside the nation's Baptists) to the radical traditions of earlier Glasites, Bereans, and Haldanites.⁴³

Local Groups

Two groups may be offered as examples, although there appear to have been others. The first is the Peculiar People, who came from Wesleyan Methodist stock, being founded in 1838 under the leadership of James Banyard. They were concentrated in the south and east of Essex. Apart from their rediscovery of the theme of assurance of salvation, they became known for rejecting medicine in favour of belief in divine healing, although this caused schisms in 1855, 1872, and 1900. Their worship focused on spontaneous testimony, prayer, and singing, with little place for the exposition of Scripture; women as

⁴² This was certainly to the fore in the foundation of an umbrella body, the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, in 1922.

⁴³ See Harry Escott, *A History of Scottish Congregationalism* (Glasgow, 1960).

well as men took part.⁴⁴ A second group is the Society of Dependants, colloquially known as Cokelers, founded in 1850 by John Sirgood. They were known for their advocacy of celibacy as preferable to marriage, on the basis of 1 Corinthians 7:38. In an area which had hitherto proved barren soil for Dissent (West Sussex), they were severely persecuted, perhaps in part because they were mainly drawn from the agricultural labouring classes, and so their banding together, apart from the accepted institutions of church and society, might have been perceived as leading to labour unrest and social conflict. This experience may have fostered the development of their distinctive understanding of 'combination', a term earlier found in trade unionist thought. This involved economic sharing but also the subordination of the individual to the group as a member of Christ's body.⁴⁵ Opposition may also have been why, from the 1870s, the Cokelers opened general stores in several West Sussex villages, sometimes known as 'Combination Stores', which played a key role in local economic life, providing accommodation and employment for members who might otherwise have to endure unsympathetic employers. They too believed in divine healing and consequently avoided recourse to the medical profession. Their worship closely resembled that of the Peculiar People, with whom they appear to have had some links. Although their roots were Wesleyan, they produced their own body of hymnody, giving expression to a distinctive understanding of Christian life. How significant were such movements? On the wider scale, they were insignificant, but where they flourished they became a prominent part of the religious landscape. What they have in common with many (though not all) of the groups discussed in this chapter is their debt to local lay initiative as opposed to centralized planning for expansion, as well as their hunger for a felt religion: they represent, perhaps, a return to evangelicalism's Pietist roots.

Revivalist Interdenominationalism

Interdenominationalism brought together, usually for evangelistic purposes, evangelical members of various denominations (often successfully bridging the divide between church and Dissent). This was the outlook of many who founded town and city missions, such as the London City Mission (1835). Those involved had no wish to disown their denominational allegiances and saw no reason why these should hinder them from enjoying fellowship in the work of the gospel with believers from other denominations. (Not all

⁴⁴ See Mark Sorrell, *The Peculiar People* (Exeter, 1979).

⁴⁵ See Mick Reed, "'The Lord Does Combination Love': Religion and Co-operation Amongst a Peculiar People", in Stephen Yeo, ed., *New Views of Co-operation* (London, 1988), pp. 73–87; Peter Jerome, *The Story of the Loxwood Dependents: John Sirgood's Way* (Petworth, 1998).

evangelicals, of course, were happy to take such a course, fearing that it was subversive of church order.) Lay agents were employed, usually closer to the working classes in social terms than most clergy could be, especially in view of the rising social status of many Dissenting ministers and the declining role of evangelism in their ministry.⁴⁶

This trend received a powerful boost from the revival which affected much of the British Isles (as well as North America) from 1858–62, and especially from the attempts made to conserve the blessing it supposedly conferred and maintain its evangelistic outreach. A prime source of information about this constituency is R.C. Morgan's weekly, *The Revival*, commenced in 1859 to provide news about revivalist activity and renamed *The Christian* ten years later, by which time it was focusing increasingly on interdenominational unity.⁴⁷ The following decades saw the opening of countless mission halls, not all of them small or insignificant. Many offered a diet of worship and activity which was indistinguishable from that of evangelical Dissent, with the exception that they were far less likely (the researcher dare not say 'never') to observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, reflecting a contemporary evangelical tendency to downgrade the importance of the sacraments. In some areas such missions banded together, as in the Christian Unions in Ayrshire and Lanarkshire, which were able to sponsor full-time itinerant evangelists, as city missions did. What differentiated these from other evangelistic agencies was the founding of mission halls. Some of these slowly metamorphosed into churches, observing the ordinances, establishing a membership roll, and often calling pastors. In the case of the London City Mission, this happened in spite of its declared intention not to found churches. Slowly the missionaries turned into 'working-class pastors' with their own regular flock.⁴⁸ And when clusters of such congregations took on a distinctive identity and began to function as a network, with their own periodical and recognized leaders, one might say that we have reached the era of the 'interdenominational denomination'! A classic example would be the Evangelistic Mission of C. Russell Hurditch, founded in 1865. Some, but not all, of its congregations, many of which were in North-East London, came later to be listed in directories of Open Brethren assemblies. Other mission halls-turned-churches linked up with the Baptists.

⁴⁶ Donald M. Lewis, *Lighten their Darkness: The Evangelical Mission to Working-Class London, 1828–1860* (reprint edn., Carlisle, 2001), pp. 77–8.

⁴⁷ For the flavour of interdenominational revivalism, see George E. Morgan, 'A Veteran in Revival': R. C. Morgan, *His Life and Times* (London, 1909).

⁴⁸ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London, Third Series, Religious Influences, part 7: Summary* (London, 1902), p. 290; Lewis, *Lighten their Darkness*, p. 276. On the London City Mission, see Irene Howat and John Nicholls, *Streets Paved with Gold: The Story of London City Mission* (Fearn, 2003).

A distinctive genre of mission hall comprised those established to minister to particular occupational groups. The best known in Britain were those for railway workers (the Railway Mission was founded in 1881) and sailors (a somewhat looser network of seamen's or fishermen's Bethels existed, and there were others).⁴⁹ The British and Foreign Seamen's Friend Society and Bethel Union was founded in 1819, and the first purpose-built place of worship for mariners opened at Aberdeen in 1823.⁵⁰ From seamen's missions, several non-sectarian churches were formed in North America during the 1830s, but there was less impetus for this in Britain at that point.⁵¹ Ultimately, though, some did become fully fledged local churches, sometimes as a result of the decline in their original target group and the consequent broadening of their outreach and activity; perhaps also because it became clear that their converts could not be integrated successfully into existing, more middle-class churches and therefore required long-term provision.⁵²

CONCLUSION

Those of these groups that recorded their history often did so in a way which tended to read back into early days the clear sense of distinct identity which marked their mature development. However, we have seen that these groups developed in a shared milieu (which included movements later rejected as heterodox), that influences ran between them (often unacknowledged in the histories), and that it is often difficult to determine where one group ended and another began. They are like a chain of islands which in reality form part of one undersea mountain range. Furthermore, many local congregations were set up without any knowledge of others of like mind, only later linking up with them. This was certainly true for the Churches of Christ and the Brethren. Indeed, it is sometimes more helpful to view the origins of radical or Restorationist congregations through a local rather than a national lens. A related danger is that of seeking to construct a kind of radical tradition, which in its way risks distorting the evidence as much as attempts by nineteenth-century antagonists to locate one or more of these movements within a tradition of schism and heresy. Their pluriformity must not be understated. Nevertheless, there are certain issues which surface in most, sometimes all of them, as

⁴⁹ The first 'floating chapel' was opened in 1818, converted from a ship of the Royal Navy for worship conducted on an interdenominational basis: Roald Kverndal, *Seamen's Missions: Their Origin and Early Growth* (Pasadena, CA, 1986), ch. 8.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 202, 236.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 488.

⁵² Cf. Lewis, *Lighten their Darkness*, p. 149.

significant in their thinking, even if the way these were dealt with varied. We shall draw out some recurrent themes and approaches.

As far as theology proper is concerned, these movements were all highly suspicious of theological colleges, although some clerical founders had been theologically educated. Their particular theologies, however, varied widely. Some were Arminian in their understanding of salvation, others Calvinistic. Some expected the Second Coming imminently (while differing over the precise timetable); others interpreted biblical prophecy in very different ways, or gave little space to such matters in their thinking. 'Radical' is certainly not to be equated with 'millenarian'.

Personal spirituality, for most of these movements, was rooted in an experience of conversion, but Catholic Apostolics distanced themselves from this view, arguing for baptism as the beginning of the Christian life. The Churches of Christ combined the two, appealing for individuals to decide to follow Christ, but insisting that actual regeneration occurred in baptism. The Catholic Apostolics were charismatic within a sacramentalist mindset which, in spite of the roots of many of its early leaders, was explicitly distanced from contemporary evangelicalism; Brethren exhibited features of 'laundered charismaticism' within a more typically evangelical outlook; and most other movements treated here allowed for some measure of spontaneity in worship.⁵³

Most groups shared certain key ecclesiological features: the sole authority of the Bible (apart from any humanly composed creed or statement of faith), the centrality of communion (also known as the Lord's Supper or the breaking of bread), baptism of believers by immersion, plural lay leadership, the practice of 'open worship' in which any (usually male) member could take part, and (for most) the independence of local congregations, although not all adopted a congregational church order. However, the Catholic Apostolic Church, which also claimed to be restoring New Testament church order, provided a partial exception: it affirmed the historic creeds, retained infant baptism, and its church order was strongly connexional, the restored apostles being its leaders. Yet it too provided opportunities for lay (or at least non-stipendiary) leadership in the ranks of its priests and deacons, and while its worship was liturgical, there was scope for any gifted member to contribute at certain prescribed points through speaking in tongues and prophecy. Exclusive Brethren, too, were connexional, rejected ordination, and in most of their sub-groups retained belief in infant baptism. Most of these movements believed in the 'gathered church', although Catholic Apostolics are harder to categorize, with gathered and territorial aspects to their ecclesiology.

⁵³ The phrase is Ian Rennie's: Ian. S. Rennie, 'Aspects of Christian Brethren Spirituality', in Loren Wilkinson and J.I. Packer, eds., *Alive to God: Studies in Christian Spirituality Presented to James Houston* (Downers Grove, IL, 1992), p. 201.

These movements usually began with secessions from existing churches, by no means all Anglican. Some were led by former clergy (the Dublin groups and most undenominational chapels), others owed their origins to lay activity (Huntingtonians, Churches of Christ, Peculiar People, Dependants), and in yet others both played a part (Brethren, Catholic Apostolics). The act of secession helped to shape their agenda, giving them (initially) something against which to define themselves. Those who believed in the gathered congregation found themselves driven to seek visible means of expressing the separation of believers from the world. Cokeler women wore distinctive bonnets to chapel on Sundays; some Brethren eventually began to ask those who were not in fellowship to sit towards the rear of the room, 'behind the board' instructing them to do so, a practice anticipated by the Walkerites' 'marked separation'.

The issue of separation highlights the tension felt by these groups between the two New Testament ideals of unity and purity (or faithfulness to the apostolic pattern). Among Brethren, various responses to this were evident, and it was not always the Exclusives who were most exclusive in their attitude to other evangelical Christians: one of the most restrictive streams was the Churches of God (not to be confused with the Walkerites), which emerged from Open Brethren in the 1890s. Of the other movements, the Churches of Christ tended in Britain to dwell primarily on purity (in the sense of restoring New Testament church life) and the American movement's interest in the search for Christian unity was much less important to them. Catholic Apostolics largely outgrew their early negative attitudes to existing churches, although recurrent warnings were sounded about the development of sectarian pride. Undenominationalists, as we have seen, tended to shift their emphasis over time from unity to purity.

Where groups regarded the New Testament as a pattern-book for contemporary church life, women were rarely allowed to engage in public ministry, apart from in the Catholic Apostolic Church, which allowed them to speak in tongues and prophesy, forms of speech which did not exist in the other movements. However, outside the regular congregational routine, and in times of heightened religious sensibility, women sometimes engaged in revivalist preaching. This was the case, for instance, among Scottish Brethren in the 1860s.⁵⁴ Justification was found in evidence of divine blessing on the ministry of those so engaged. However, where groups regarded the Bible primarily as a handbook for personal spiritual life, women appear to have been somewhat freer to speak, as among the Dependants and the Peculiar People (in any case, formal preaching played little role in the worship of either group).

⁵⁴ See Neil Dickson, 'Modern Prophetesses: Women Preachers in the Nineteenth-Century Scottish Brethren', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 25 (1993), 89–117.

It used to be a commonplace that the smaller Nonconformist 'sects' were attractive primarily to members of the working classes, with the Catholic Apostolic Church as an exception. However, the picture needs to be more nuanced. On the one hand, there was a very significant middle-class element to (for instance) the Brethren, from which many of its leading Bible teachers were drawn; on the other hand, the Catholic Apostolic Church was far more of a working-class movement than has generally been recognized hitherto.⁵⁵ Yet even here there were limits: during the 1830s, difference in social class between the apostles and the prophets appears to have been an aspect of the limitation in scope placed upon the latter's ministry, and the church nicely distinguished between the equality of all members as members, which applied in worship, and the social dealings which members had with one another, in which the usual proprieties were to be observed. Furthermore, few movements apart from the Churches of Christ were democratic in their social ethos, even if they affirmed the freedom of the Spirit to gift those of no status in this world, and none contributed to political Nonconformity during this period. Indeed, Brethren shared with Catholic Apostolics and many undenominationalists a marked social conservatism which interpreted the rise of democracy in eschatological terms as 'power from below'. All the same, within the radical congregation each member was, in theory at least, on the same level.

In a reflection of much evangelical mission in Christianized regions overseas, these groups frequently aimed their home outreach at members of other denominations, whom they regarded as (at best) needing to be shown the way of the Lord more perfectly or (at worst, and more often) as unsaved. Brethren, Churches of Christ, and Catholic Apostolics alike regarded their movement as occupying the apostolic centre ground, on which alone true unity was capable of being realized. It was not enough that an individual was indeed recognizable as a genuine believer; they needed to be led out of 'Babylon' (Rev. 18:4) lest they share in its downfall. Outreach thus centred on attempts to persuade other Christians to leave their existing sectarian allegiances and throw in their lot with them, although Catholic Apostolics came to argue that their separate existence was a regrettable necessity and to encourage those accepting their message to remain in their existing churches. Arguments could be intellectual (as with the Churches of Christ, whose approach continued that of older Scottish groups, notably the Sandemanians) or, if not emotional, certainly supernaturalist (as with Catholic Apostolics, who appealed to the miracles of healing and prophecy seen among them as proofs of the divine origin of their work). Brethren found themselves somewhere between the two, there being a strong element of cerebral argument in their appeal to Christians among 'the sects' but also a conviction that in their distinctive mode of worship the Spirit

⁵⁵ For a case study, see Jane W. de Gruchy, 'The Catholic Apostolic Church in Bradford, 1872–1882', *Local Historian*, 36 (2006), 29–41.

was present and free to act in a manner not seen elsewhere. Some Brethren achieved notoriety for their practice of 'fishing' outside denominational places of worship when people were arriving or leaving.

As far as overseas mission was concerned, emigration was probably the most important factor in the initial spread of these movements; it was certainly significant for the development of Brethren, Catholic Apostolics, and Churches of Christ, and some undenominational leaders undertook major preaching tours abroad, most notably George Müller. Later evangelicals might wonder why movements with a professed commitment to replicating apostolic church order were so slow to follow the apostolic pattern of going to all nations with the gospel, but by the 1860s all the main Restorationist movements were working overseas, although the Catholic Apostolics restricted their focus to Christendom, continuing to preach to professing Christians as at home. For groups with a congregational church order, mission support was a major reason for the development of quasi-denominational structures.

Such groups soon acquired a reputation for falling out with one another: this was partly because of the commitment of many of them to divine revelation understood in terms of propositional truth, but partly also due to their sense of their own mission. In some cases, zeal came to be channelled into Bible study and pamphleteering rather than evangelism. While much of Dissent shared in the revivalist atmosphere of the second half of the nineteenth century, groups as diverse as the Huntingtonians and the Catholic Apostolics distanced themselves from what they saw as humanly worked-up emotionalism, which was no substitute for the working of the Holy Spirit according to divinely revealed order in personal spirituality and church life. More moderate evangelicals, including more moderate members of these movements, feared the impact that a passion for theological minutiae would have on the cause of vital religion. Nevertheless, most of these communities proved enduring features of the British religious landscape, even down to the locally concentrated Peculiar People. They explored aspects of Christian thought and church life which attracted widespread interest and belated appreciation among twentieth-century evangelicals.

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Part II

Traditions Outside Britain and Ireland

Presbyterians and Congregationalists in North America

David W. Kling

Given the twinning of Presbyterians and Congregationalists in this chapter, the focus is on those elements shared by their Reformed heritage as well as those that made each denomination distinct.¹ Presbyterians constituted a variety of branches but here attention is given to the main branch, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (formed 1789) and its various permutations. The general trajectory of nineteenth-century Presbyterianism and Congregationalism in the United States is one that tracks from convergence to divergence, from cooperative endeavours and mutual interests in the first three or four decades of the nineteenth century to an increasingly self-conscious denominational awareness that became firmly established in both denominations by the 1850s. With the regional distribution of Congregationalists in the North and Presbyterians in the mid-Atlantic region and the South, the Civil War intensified their differences, while also dividing Presbyterians into antislavery northern and pro-slavery southern parties. By the post-Civil War period, these denominations had for the most part gone their separate ways, although, apart from the southern Presbyterians, they faced a similar host of social and intellectual challenges to which they responded in varying ways. In general, Presbyterians maintained a conservative theological posture whereas Congregationalists accommodated themselves to the challenges of modernity.

¹ For recent histories of Congregationalism, see J. William T. Youngs, *The Congregationalists* (New York, 1990); John Von Rohr, *The Shaping of American Congregationalism, 1620–1957* (Cleveland, OH, 1992). For Presbyterianism, see Lefferts A. Loetscher, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* (4th edn., Louisville, KY, 1983); Randall Balmer and John R. Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians* (Westport, CT, 1993); James H. Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* (Louisville, KY, 1996); D.G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 2004); Bradley J. Longfield, *Presbyterians and American Culture* (Louisville, KY, 2013).

In contrast to the nineteenth-century history of Presbyterian and Congregational churches in the United States, the Canadian story witnessed divergence evolving towards convergence and from self-conscious denominationalism towards ecclesiastical cooperation. The history of Reformed Dissent in Canada is complicated because it was dominated by Presbyterians from Scotland where allegiance to Calvinist standards of doctrine and church order was matched by serious differences concerning church establishment. Scottish Presbyterians brought to Canada three conflicting patterns: churches authorized and endowed by the state, churches superior to the state yet in an integrated Christendom, and churches completely disentangled from the state.² Particularly when set alongside developments in the United States, this Canadian history (taken up at the end of the chapter) highlights the complexity that accompanied British Dissent as it migrated out into the wider world.³

PRESBYTERIANS AND CONGREGATIONALISTS IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Throughout the colonial period and well into the nineteenth century, a lively and complex history characterized the relationship between Mid-Atlantic and Southern Presbyterians and New England Congregationalists. The source of this relationship was the Reformed tradition mediated through Puritanism in England and Presbyterianism in Scotland and Ireland and given written expression in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646). In Connecticut, where Presbyterian polity attracted Congregational leaders, the 'presbygational' Saybrook Platform (1708) addressed 'defects in the discipline of the church' by creating county consociations of ministers and laymen whose decisions in local disputes were binding.

During the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 40s, interactions between Congregationalists and Presbyterians had accelerated as itinerants moved throughout the colonies, uniting as well as dividing Reformed communities with their emotion-filled, popular preaching on the necessity of the New Birth. More enduring was the influence of Jonathan Edwards and his disciples upon Presbyterian life during the last half of the eighteenth century. Pro-revival New Light Edwardsians and New Side Presbyterians (which included the

² John S. Moir, "Who Pays the Piper...": Canadian Presbyterianism and Church-State Relations', in William Klempa, ed., *Burning Bush and a Few Acres of Snow: The Presbyterian Contribution to Canadian Life and Culture* (Ottawa, Ontario, 1994), pp. 67–82.

³ I am indebted to the General Editor, Mark Noll, who authored the entire section on Canada.

New England-born element and Scots-Irish Log College men) found common cause in their shared theology, piety, and defence of revivals. Edwards was the primary magnet of attraction. Jonathan Dickinson, the greatest intellectual among colonial Presbyterians, maintained a regular correspondence with Edwards. Aaron Burr, the guiding light of New Jersey Presbyterianism, was converted during an Edwardsian revival in Connecticut, later married Edwards's daughter, and was the force behind Edwards accepting the presidency of the New Side-supported College of New Jersey. Indeed, Presbyterian ministerial training was shaped decisively by New England Congregational clergy. Given the absence of an American Presbyterian college, New England's Yale (less so Harvard) provided the New Side with a large percentage of graduates. By the 1758 reunion of pro-revival New and anti-revival Old Side Presbyterian parties, the majority of clergy serving the Presbyterian Church came from New England. In addition, as tensions between the colonies and Britain heated up in the 1760s, the Presbyterian synods of New York and Philadelphia and the Congregational churches of Connecticut had made plans 'to unite their endeavors and counsels for the spreading of the gospel and preserving the religious LIBERTIES of the churches'. A shared fear of Anglicanism led to an annual joint convention of representatives that met up until the American Revolution, foreshadowing the Plan of Union (1801).

In the last two decades of the eighteenth century, countervailing forces checked Edwardsian influences within Presbyterianism. Waves of Scots-Irish immigrants transformed the character of Presbyterianism, seriously eroding the New England influence. John Witherspoon, recruited from Scotland to preside over Princeton, was cool to Edwardsian theological refinements, and he succeeded in purging the college of this so-called New Divinity. Yet the New Divinity theological agenda remained a moving force within Presbyterianism and persisted as a source both of spiritual revitalization and internal controversy during the first third of the nineteenth century.

THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC

Presbyterians and Congregationalists arrived in colonial America as Dissenters; however, they soon exercised a religious and cultural dominance that would extend well into the first half of the nineteenth century. Congregationalism was the established state-supported religion in the colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, and although Presbyterianism never became government-supported, it exerted such a powerful religious and cultural influence that by the end of the colonial era it was probably 'the most influential

single denomination in the country'.⁴ In 1776 these two Reformed groups represented the two largest denominations in America. Congregationalists constituted 20.4 per cent of all religious adherents, Presbyterians 19 per cent. By 1850, however, their share of adherents had dropped precipitously—Congregationalists to 'near total collapse' at 4 per cent and Presbyterians to 11.6 per cent. If one measures the strength of religious groups by numbers alone, Congregationalists and Presbyterians were the 'losers' in the race for converts insofar as they could not keep pace with the growth rates of other Protestant denominations, especially the Baptists and Methodists.⁵ Yet throughout the nineteenth century Congregationalists and Presbyterians expanded geographically, increased in absolute numbers, expended tremendous resources and energy in spreading the Gospel at home and especially abroad (no other denominations could match their foreign missionary efforts in the first half of the century), created enduring institutions, and continued to dominate formal religious thought. 'The religious character of North America', concluded the historian Philip Schaff in 1854, though not without Reformed bias, 'is predominantly of the Reformed or Calvinist stamp.'⁶

Several developments in the closing decades of the eighteenth and first decades of the nineteenth century contributed to a sea change not only in the fortunes of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism but of American religious life in general. First, the legal shift in religious authority in the Western world from 1750–1850 broke apart the *corpus christianum*. In the United States the dissolution of the unity of church, state, and society accelerated in the years following the American Revolution. As state-sponsored religion crumbled under the weight of First Amendment sentiments, Americans fashioned an alternative vision of religion's place in the social order that enabled populist churches, denominational institutions, and voluntary societies to flourish. Although Congregationalists in New England long resisted severing official church–state ties, during their bitter disputes over disestablishment they were nevertheless busy developing new strategies and creating voluntary institutional bodies to address specific religious concerns. Lyman Beecher, the architect and indomitable champion of voluntary evangelical societies, epitomized these new possibilities. Initially, he viewed the official separation of church in Connecticut in 1818 as 'as dark a day as ever I saw. The injury done to the cause of Christ, as we then supposed, was irreparable'. But he soon concluded that it was 'the best thing that ever happened to the

⁴ Loetscher, *Brief History of Presbyterians*, p. 80.

⁵ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churaching of America, 1776–1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1992), p. 55.

⁶ Philip Schaff, *America: A Sketch of Its Political, Social, and Religious Character*, ed. Perry Miller (Cambridge, MA, 1961), p. 93.

state of Connecticut. It cut the churches loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God'. Some claimed 'that ministers have lost their influence', but in fact, argued Beecher, 'By voluntary efforts, societies, missions, and revivals, they exert a deeper influence than ever they could.'⁷ The American model of voluntarism ignited powerful religious energies that profoundly reshaped the nature of religion throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, and Congregationalists and Presbyterians would play leading roles in harnessing this religious energy in institutional expressions.

Second, the shift in the legal standing of religion was accompanied by a perceptual shift in evangelical self-understanding. In 1790 no one could have predicted that evangelicals would become a cultural shaping force in America. In the aftermath of the American Revolution, the infant nation was beset by a host of political, social, economic, and religious ills that threatened its fragile health. 'Infidelity' became the catch-phrase for all that was wrong with America. Threatened by imported intrusions of British deism and French revolutionary thought or the home-grown variety expressed in the anti-supernatural writings of Ethan Allen, Elihu Palmer, and especially Thomas Paine, American clergy responded. In its pastoral letter of 1798, the Presbyterian General Assembly expressed alarm over the 'dissolution of religious society' and 'an abounding infidelity which in many instances leads to atheism'.⁸ In Connecticut, the Congregational pastor Nathan Perkins offered a sweeping view of infidelity's triumph, citing 'a variety of causes', including the corruption of morals during the War, the horrors of the French Revolution, and 'the loose, infidel, and atheistic publications scattered over this country'.⁹ Prospects for the success of evangelical religion looked dire. Some took solace in the long view of God's providential designs, 'certain that the changes and revolutions which take place in the world, will', wrote the Massachusetts Congregationalist, the Revd Alvan Hyde, 'in some way or other, advance the Redeemer's kingdom'.¹⁰ In the short view, however, nothing but a revival of religion would save the republic from imminent disaster.

⁷ Barbara M. Cross, ed., *The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1966), I: pp. 252–3.

⁸ E.H. Gillett, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, 2 vols (Philadelphia, PA, 1864), I: p. 297.

⁹ Nathan Perkins, *Two Discourses on the Grounds of the Christian's Hope* (Hartford, CT, 1800), pp. 38–9.

¹⁰ Alvan Hyde, 'The Purpose of God Displayed in Abasing the Pride of Nations', in *Sermons on Important Subjects, Collected from a Number of Ministers in some of the Northern States of America* (Hartford, CT, 1797), p. 289.

THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING

These threats, well founded or not, were soon countered by signs of spiritual revival. By the first decade of the nineteenth century, evangelicals faced the future with considerably more confidence than a decade earlier. 'The long expected day is approaching', declared the Congregationalist-led American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in its first address to the public in 1810. 'A new scene, with us, is now opening. . . . The Lord is shaking the nations . . . and unprecedented exertions are making for the spread of divine knowledge, and the conversion of nations.'¹¹ This 'shaking' and 'conversion' abroad grew out of the Second Great Awakening (c. 1790–1835), a series of spiritual eruptions that reconfigured the American social and religious landscape so profoundly that it is often considered the most significant revival in the history of the United States. The Awakening was no respecter of persons. Middle class or working class, young or old, white or black, rural or urban—the Awakening embraced people of all conditions.¹² Perhaps its most salient feature was the populist upsurge of revivalist Baptists and Methodists, who displaced the once culturally and numerically dominant Congregationalists and Presbyterians. By 1850, these 'upstarts' represented over 50 per cent of all religious adherents in the United States. The absolute numbers of Congregationalists nearly tripled but their share of the religious market plunged. Presbyterians had more success as their numbers kept pace with the growth of the population whose numbers were nearly doubling every twenty years (1800 = 5.3 million; 1820 = 9.7 million; 1840 = 17 million). The expansion of United States territory kept pace with this burgeoning population, doubling in size towards the west by 1820 and doubling again in the 1840s. By mid-century, the Continental United States stretched from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific coast. A booming population and ever-expanding frontier challenged all religious bodies in the young republic to exploit existing communication strategies and invent new ones for reaching the American people. The orally delivered sermon remained the primary means of communicating the gospel message, but not far behind (and eventually to surpass it) it was an explosion of printed materials including Bibles, tracts, magazines, hymnals, and devotional works.¹³

In all three main theatres of revival—the western frontier (the Cumberland Valley), New England, and western New York—Congregationalists and/or

¹¹ *First Ten Annual Reports of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, with other Documents of the Board* (Boston, MA, 1834), pp. 13, 14.

¹² Daniel Walker Howe reviews the evidence in *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York, 2007), pp. 187–90.

¹³ On the explosion of print, see Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880* (Stanford, CA, 1999); and David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (New York, 2004).

Presbyterians were primary actors. Congregationalists made their mark in New England, while also supplying missionary evangelists to the Midwest; Presbyterians conducted revivals throughout the Atlantic region and in the South. A spiritual stir at the Presbyterian Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia in 1787 that spread as far west as Kentucky is often taken as the launching of the southern awakening, but the Cane Ridge revival in Kentucky in August 1801 (sometimes called 'the Great Revival') heralded the beginning of mass conversions and provides a useful marker for the Awakening on the frontier.

The Great Revival owed its genesis to the Presbyterian minister, James McGready, whose stirring evangelical Calvinist preaching to Scots-Irish and Scottish Presbyterian congregations resulted in revivals in North Carolina and Logan County, Kentucky. McGready played a role in popularizing the camp meeting—itself a revision of Presbyterian 'sacramental occasions' or holy fairs—when he organized the successful Gaspar River camp meeting revival in July 1800.¹⁴ The following August, the Presbyterian Barton Stone, who attended the Gaspar River meeting, followed McGready's lead and organized a week-long camp meeting at Cane Ridge. An interdenominational affair, the revival at Cane Ridge was a defining moment in American Christianity.¹⁵ Attended by up to 10,000 people, the revival displayed raw emotion and physical manifestations, including 'jerks', 'barking', dancing, falling, and singing, never before witnessed on such a massive scale.

Although Cane Ridge would come to define the direction of southern evangelicalism, Presbyterians repudiated its excesses. They continued to make institutional gains, but their growth was limited by two factors: an insistence on a trained ministry whose numbers could not, however, keep up with the increase in population and internal conflicts that resulted in the separations of the Cumberland Presbyterians and the restorationist Stone-Campbell movement. Indicative of a trend throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, Methodists in Kentucky grew exponentially from 2,000 to 21,000 between 1800 and 1820, whereas Presbyterians increased slightly from 2,000 to 2,700.¹⁶

In New England, precisely when and where the Awakening began among Congregationalists is uncertain, but reports of scattered revivals surfaced in the early 1790s.¹⁷ By the turn of the century, hundreds of revivals had spread throughout New England, most notably to northwestern Connecticut, western Massachusetts, and into the sparsely settled regions of Vermont and New

¹⁴ Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scotland and the Making of American Revivalism* (2nd edn., Grand Rapids, MI, 2001).

¹⁵ Paul K. Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost* (Madison, WI, 1990).

¹⁶ Longfield, *Presbyterians and American Culture*, p. 56.

¹⁷ See David W. Kling, *A Field of Divine Wonders: The New Divinity and Village Revivals in Northwestern Connecticut, 1792–1822* (University Park, PA, 1993).

Hampshire. In addition to churches, colleges became hotbeds of revival. Beginning in 1802, under the ministrations of President Timothy Dwight, successive revivals visited Yale College. Soon other New England colleges such as Williams, Amherst, Hamilton, Union, and Dartmouth followed, experiencing waves of revival through the 1830s.

Led primarily by 'New Divinity' or 'Edwardsian' pastors—the self-designated heirs of Jonathan Edwards—the awakening in New England was largely the effort of settled ministers who organized extensive 'concerts of prayer', led common or 'circular' fasts, and allied for prayer, mutual encouragement, regular pulpit exchanges, and team preaching or revival tours. So successful were their efforts that by the 1830s the Edwardsian theological and cultural influence dominated the region.¹⁸ Some ministers such as Edward Dorr Griffin, Timothy Dwight, Lyman Beecher, Asahel Nettleton (who saw as many as 20,000 conversions), and Nathaniel William Taylor excelled in revivalist preaching, but all Edwardsians defended and promoted revivals and heartfelt, 'affectionate', or 'experimental' religion as a legitimate expression of the Holy Spirit. Theologically, the Edwardsians revised Reformed theology into a handmaiden of revival and missionary outreach by insisting on the necessity of the new birth, calling for immediate repentance, exhausting all 'means of grace', and advocating the unlimited sufficiency of the atonement. Much of this revision centred on recalibrating the relationship between divine grace and human activity. Increasingly, though not without debilitating and dividing the Edwardsian movement, the theology of conversion among Edwardsians shifted towards a heightened emphasis on the human will and human initiative in salvation.

Charles Finney, the greatest revivalist of the antebellum awakening, was more a product than the creator of revival. Born in Connecticut and raised in the small towns in central New York, Finney apprenticed briefly for the legal profession in Adams, New York, when a dramatic conversion in 1821 changed the course of his life. Finney soon became a rising star within Presbyterian and Congregationalist circles. A gifted speaker with an intuition for publicity, Finney toured the Burned-Over District of New York and the major cities on the East Coast from 1825 to 1835, reaching thousands with the message of the new birth. At the 1830–1 revival in Rochester, Finney reached the height of his evangelistic career and gained international fame. An estimated 100,000 to 200,000 new members were added to church rosters in Rochester and outlying areas. The largest single-year percentage increase in church membership

¹⁸ See Douglas A. Sweeney, 'Nathaniel William Taylor and the Edwardsian Tradition: A Reassessment', in Stephen J. Stein, ed., *Jonathan Edwards's Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation* (Bloomington, IN, 1996), p. 141; idem, *Nathaniel Taylor, New Haven Theology, and the Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, 2003), pp. 29–45.

among Presbyterians in the nineteenth century, the 15 per cent recorded in 1832, was largely the result of Finney's efforts.¹⁹

Although Finney formulated his theology in Edwardsian language, his controversial 'new measures' and theological revisions challenged Reformed practices and orthodoxy. Impressed by Methodist successes, he made extensive use of 'protracted meetings', called the convicted to the 'mourners' bench' or 'anxious seat' (related to the earlier 'altar call'), and permitted women to testify in public meetings. Finney's aggressive evangelism also connected personal conversion, 'disinterested benevolence', and 'entire sanctification' to social renovation, including support for temperance and abolition. Extending Edwardsian theological revisions even further, he rejected such traditional Calvinistic teachings as the imputation of Adam's sin and the doctrine of Christ's limited atonement. While not denying the sinfulness of all persons, he highlighted free moral agency and insisted that Jesus died for all. Aided by the Holy Spirit, penitent sinners can 'change their own hearts'. Finney also argued that revival is 'not a miracle', but essentially a human activity and the result of 'the right use of the constituted means'.²⁰ His views of revival as a humanly calculated, predictable event represented a radical and controversial turn from the traditional understanding that God alone awakens sinners to new life. Finney quit full-time evangelism in 1835 to become a professor at and eventually the president of Oberlin College and a year later also left the Presbyterian fold for the more decentralized and theologically freer Congregationalists.²¹

HARNESSING THE AWAKENING: VOLUNTARY SOCIETIES, MISSIONS, AND EDUCATION

The Second Great Awakening resulted not only in the conversions of thousands of individuals, but expressed itself institutionally, providing the impetus for nationwide social and political reform, and displaying an activism and energy perhaps unparalleled in American history. Given a theological rationale inspired by Samuel Hopkins's notion of 'disinterested benevolence' (an obligation to help others irrespective of personal benefit), hundreds of

¹⁹ Herman C. Weber, *Presbyterian Statistics: Through One Hundred Years, 1826–1926* (Philadelphia, PA, 1927), p. 67.

²⁰ Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, MA, 1960), p. 13.

²¹ Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1996). Much of the above material on the Second Great Awakening is drawn from David W. Kling, 'Second Great Awakening', in Michael McClymond, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religious Revivals in America*, 2 vols (Westport, CT, 2007), II: pp. 384–9.

para-church and voluntary organizations harnessed the spiritual energy of the awakening into a massive effort to reform society, Christianize the nation, and extend the evangelical message around the world. Congregational and Presbyterian clergy and lay people joined together in the first decades of the nineteenth century to form the backbone of a millennial-infused 'Evangelical United Front', with its 'interlocking directories' of corporate boards of authority.²² Drawing from English precedent, Congregationalists and Presbyterians founded and staffed dozens of voluntary societies to promote missions, moral reform, education, Bible reading, and prison reform, including leadership of the ABCFM, the American Bible Society (1816), the American Sunday School Union (1824), the American Tract Society (1825), the American Home Missionary Society (1826), the American Education Society (1826), and the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance (1826). With budgets and influence rivalling the federal government, these societies had a powerful presence in American society.²³

Indeed, their proliferation indicates an expanded view of the church, one that included not only the salvation of souls but also the redemption of society. Christianity was essential to the preservation of virtue, social order, and republican government. 'Liberty without godliness', observed Gardiner Spring, the Presbyterian pastor of Brick Church in New York City, 'is but another name for anarchy or despotism', because 'the religion of the Gospel is the rock on which civil liberty rests.'²⁴ The many voluntary societies filled the gap left by disestablishment, providing its members with opportunities to exercise civic responsibilities and ensuring that a *de facto* Protestant establishment extended the influence of Christianity throughout the nation. The church rather than the state became the engine of societal renewal.²⁵

Despite their millennial, republican fervour, however, Reformed clergy were hardly cheerleaders for a 'righteous empire', who gave uncritical endorsement to the spirit of the age. They vacillated between outbursts of millennial optimism and cries of national disintegration.²⁶ They protested the disregard

²² Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790–1837* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1960), p. 123.

²³ Foster, *Errand of Mercy*, p. 121. The standard accounts of these societies are Clifford S. Griffin, *Their Brothers' Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800–1865* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1960), and Foster, *An Errand of Mercy*. See also Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Revised edn., Baltimore, MD, 1980); Peter J. Wosh, *Spreading the Word: The Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY, 1994).

²⁴ Quoted in Fred J. Hood, *Reformed America: The Middle and Southern States, 1783–1837* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1980), p. 63.

²⁵ Ibid.; Jonathan D. Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy, 1783–1833* (New York, 2001).

²⁶ Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 2002), pp. 258–9.

for Sabbath observance (efforts to end movement of mail on Sundays proved fruitless) and bemoaned the inability to curb the rise in drunkenness. Many were dismayed by the liberal, materialist culture that emerged from 1830–60 and wary of confusing the Kingdom of God with the nation itself. Protestants attacked the exploitative commercialism of American expansion by questioning the morality of Manifest Destiny, the Mexican War, and the forced removal of Native Americans, and waged their own war on the ‘new infidelity’ of risk-taking, economic speculation, and openness to radical European thought.²⁷

The thousands of unchurched or wrongly churched people (principally, as they saw it, Roman Catholics) flooding frontier regions or amassing in growing cities were of particular concern to them. Both denominations commissioned individual missionaries throughout the colonial period but not until the end of the eighteenth century were effective organizational mechanisms put in place to extend the nascent spiritual awakenings to unchurched areas. In 1798, Congregationalists created the Connecticut Missionary Society ‘to Christianize the Heathen in North America, and to support and promote Christian knowledge in new settlements’; and in 1802 the Presbyterian General Assembly established a Standing Committee of Missions (replaced by a Board of Missions in 1816).²⁸ The long-standing Protestant animus towards Catholics reasserted itself by the mid-1820s, triggered by the thousands of Irish Catholics that poured into the nation’s urban areas and fanned out into western settlements. Apart from their opposition to the Catholic Church on theological grounds (more militant types labelled it the ‘Whore of Babylon’ and the ‘masterpiece of Satan’), Congregationalists and Presbyterians along with other Protestants linked Rome with despotic and monarchical governments, concluding that Catholicism and American republicanism were mutually exclusive. Major Reformed-led benevolent societies explicitly denounced the alleged errors of Catholicism, while Lyman Beecher warned of the threat in his *Plea for the West* (1835), declaring, ‘We must educate! We must educate!’²⁹

To ensure an educated citizenry and a trained ministry for the rapidly growing and moving population, Congregationalists and Presbyterians invested

²⁷ Mark Y. Hanley, *Beyond a Christian Commonwealth: The Protestant Quarrel with the American Republic, 1830–1860* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994).

²⁸ On the CMS, see James R. Rohrer, *Keepers of the Covenant: Frontier Missions and the Decline of Congregationalism, 1774–1818* (New York, 1995); on Presbyterian missions, see Clifford Merrill Drury, *Presbyterian Panorama: One and Fifty Year of National Missions History* (Philadelphia, PA, 1952), esp. ch. 2.

²⁹ Lyman Beecher, *A Plea for the West* (2nd edn., Cincinnati, OH, 1835), pp. 31–2; Leo P. Hirrel, *Children of Wrath: New School Calvinism and Antebellum Reform* (Lexington, KY, 1998), ch. 6.

in colleges and seminaries. Yankee culture was extended into western settlements by the creation of Congregational colleges, including Western Reserve University and Oberlin in Ohio, Illinois College, Beloit College in Wisconsin, and Grinnell College in Iowa. By mid-century, Presbyterians had the most colleges in the nation (twenty-five), including Lafayette in Pennsylvania, Maryville and Cumberland in Tennessee, Centre in Kentucky, and Davidson in North Carolina. Ministerial preparation moved increasingly from an apprenticeship model (i.e., college education followed by study with a pastor) to advanced theological training in seminaries. Congregationalists founded Andover Theological Seminary (1808), Bangor Seminary in Maine (1816), Yale Divinity School (1822), the Theological Institute of Connecticut (1833), and Oberlin Theological Seminary (1835), while Presbyterians established Princeton Theological Seminary (1812), Auburn Theological Seminary in western New York (1818), Union Theological Seminary in Richmond (1824), Danville Theological Seminary (1827) in Kentucky, Columbia in South Carolina (1828), Lane Theological Seminary (1828) in Ohio, and Union Theological Seminary in New York (1836). Designed primarily to supply the ever-growing number of churches in the West, they would eventually channel religious energies into more clearly defined denominational identities.³⁰

The close relationship between Congregationalists and Presbyterians was formalized in the Plan of Union (1801), a joint effort to plant churches west of the Hudson River. The intention was to eliminate duplicated efforts and 'to promote union and harmony in those new settlements' in which Presbyterians and Congregationalists lived.³¹ Under this 'presbygational' arrangement, a congregation could call a pastor from either denomination; disagreements among mixed church members were to be adjudicated by the pastor's ordaining denomination. As it turned out, Presbyterians benefited more from this union because their organization was stronger than the looser, independent polity of the Congregationalists. Between 1800 and 1850, about 2,000 churches in New York, Ohio, Illinois, and Michigan that began as Congregational had switched to Presbyterian.³² As one Congregational minister lamented, the Presbyterians 'have milked our Congregational cows, but they have made nothing but Presbyterian butter and cheese'.³³

³⁰ Hart and Muether, *Seeking a Better Country*, p. 108; David B. Potts, 'American Colleges in the Nineteenth Century: From Localism to Denominationalism', *History of Education Quarterly*, 11 (1971), 363–80.

³¹ Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (Boston, 1960 edn.), p. 530.

³² Youngs, *Congregationalists*, p. 122.

³³ Quoted in Hart and Muether, *Seeking a Better Country*, p. 134.

FRAGMENTATION AND A RISING
DENOMINATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

By the 1830s, the Evangelical United Front, whose supporters aspired to transcend sectarian diversity, represented one of several Reformed trajectories. While the Second Great Awakening was taking hold in New England, an incipient theological liberalism in Massachusetts eventually divided the Congregational Church, resulting in the creation of the American Unitarian Association in 1825. The controversy centred on the appointment in 1805 of the liberal Henry Ware to the Hollis Professorship of Divinity at Harvard. Conservatives launched their own counterattack, creating Andover Theological Seminary and Park Street Church in Boston (1809) as bastions of Calvinist orthodoxy. The crowning blow to conservatives came with the Dedham Decision of 1820, when the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts ruled that the parish (that is, the congregation as a whole) and not the members (that is, those who gave credible testimony to their conversion) was the legal entity of the church and therefore had the right to appoint the pastor, even if against the wishes of the members. Since parish members, who tended to be theologically liberal, outnumbered full members, the court decision enabled them to take control of over one hundred churches, mostly in the Boston area.³⁴

A more contentious and longer-lasting theological dispute arose among Congregationalists and Presbyterians over the revival methods of Finney and the theology of Nathaniel Taylor. Finney never escaped the scrutiny of the more theologically conservative elements in Congregationalism and Presbyterianism. Nor did Taylor, professor of theology at Yale Divinity School and architect of the New Haven Theology, who insisted in his *Concio ad Clerum* sermon (1828) that sin was 'in the sinning', and in his other works that penitent sinners played a role in their own regeneration, and that God's grace was not coercive but worked in conjunction with the human will.³⁵ By the end of the 1820s, the theological lines were clearly drawn among the Edwardsians. To their conservative Reformed detractors, Finney's new measures and Taylor's new theology—however Finney and Taylor pleaded otherwise—betrayed the Edwardsian tradition. This heterodox duo placed their adherents, claimed Griffin, who throughout his career moved comfortably within 'orthodox' Congregational and Presbyterian circles, 'within the

³⁴ Peter S. Field, *The Crisis of the Standing Order: Clerical Intellectuals and Cultural Authority in Massachusetts, 1780–1833* (Amherst, MA, 1998).

³⁵ Douglas A. Sweeney, 'Taylorites and Tylerites', in Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney, ed., *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology* (New York, 2012), pp. 144–5.

pale of another denomination . . . between us and them as intervenes between Presbyterians and Methodists'.³⁶

As Griffin suggests, Presbyterians had long been included in this theological fray. Despite the reuniting of Old Side and New Side parties in 1758, disagreements remained that reasserted themselves more forcefully in the 1820s with the emergence of Old School and New School parties and culminated in schism in 1837. The more conservative Old School party, led by Princeton theologians Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge, upheld the church's traditional polity as an article of faith and opposed extra church organizations such as the Plan of Union and voluntary associations. Theologically, its supporters feared that new forms of revivalism and certain features of Edwardsian theology would compromise Westminster confessional standards of the church, weaken covenant baptism, and downplay the importance of religious education. To the Old School Princeton theologians, the disastrous Plan of Union, which did not require Congregationalists to subscribe to the Westminster Confession, opened the door to compromising orthodox Calvinism. On the other hand, the more innovative Presbyterian New School party welcomed New England Congregationalists as fellow evangelical labourers in promoting revivals, championing the Evangelical United Front, and voicing increasing opposition to slavery.

Although partisans of each school were never of one voice on theological and ecclesiological matters, the distinctions were sufficiently weighty to divide the Presbyterian Church. After New School advocates Beecher and Albert Barnes were subjected to highly publicized heresy trials (both were acquitted), matters came to a head. At the 1837 General Assembly, the Old School garnered enough votes to abrogate the Plan of Union, declared the synods formed by the plan illegal, and retroactively excinded them from the Presbyterian Church. In one fell swoop, close to one-half (28 presbyteries, 509 ministers, and 60,000 members) of the church had been jettisoned by the Old School. New School supporters then met in Auburn, New York, where at the 'Auburn Convention' they rejected the Assembly's decision as illegal and resolved to remain Presbyterian. A year later, after New School efforts to be recognized at the Assembly were rebuffed, New School leaders created a separate denomination yet retained the parent name, 'The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America'.³⁷

Ironically, the creation of the separate New School denomination resulted eventually in greater Presbyterian self-consciousness, less attachment to their

³⁶ Edward Dorr Griffin, *A Letter to a Friend on the Connexion between the New Doctrines and the New Measures* (Albany, NY, 1833).

³⁷ George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven, CT, 1970), pp. 62–6.

Congregational brethren, and the disintegration of the United Front.³⁸ The era of cooperative endeavour continued through the 1850s—over 170 Yale Divinity School graduates during Nathaniel Taylor's tenure (1822–58) served as Presbyterian or 'presbygational' clergy—but the pendulum was moving in the direction of distinct denominational interests.³⁹ New School Presbyterians would gradually cut their ties to Yale and Andover as ministerial feeders for their churches, form their own committee on home missions, and critique the Congregational-sponsored American Tract Society publications for revising the contents of Calvinist works to suit a broad evangelical constituency.⁴⁰ For their part, fewer Congregational ministers exchanged pulpits with Presbyterian colleagues or served pastorates in both denominations. The year 1852 proved pivotal. Old School Presbyterians expressed their own historical consciousness by forming the Presbyterian Historical Society, and Congregationalists held their first national conference in two centuries at Albany, New York, where they terminated the Plan of Union and made plans to raise funds for the construction of churches in the West (by century's end the denomination stretched from coast to coast). In another act of denominational assertiveness at the conference, they established the Congregational Library Association, and a year later formed the American Congregational Union to promote the denomination's growth.

Following the Civil War, Congregationalists convened again in 1865 at Old South Church in Boston and took the name National Congregational Council. The most revealing theological feature of the meeting was the adoption of the 'Burial Hill' declaration of faith, a supplement to the attending members' declared adherence to the historic Westminster Confession and Savoy Declaration. This new statement excluded mentioning that the Congregational Church was 'Calvinist' and encouraged fellowship with other Christians 'upon the basis of those great fundamental truths in which all Christians should agree'.⁴¹ Of course, according to Congregational polity the Burial Hill Declaration (as well as all other creedal statements) was binding only if the local church adopted it; many preferred to continue using previously accepted creeds. Nevertheless, the Burial Hill Declaration testified to an effort by Congregationalists to create a 'big tent' of faith where theological differences were tolerated.

Indeed, the Declaration confirmed an existing reality: Congregationalists allowed a wide spectrum of theological beliefs, ranging from the strict Calvinism of Bennet Tyler to the 'progressive orthodoxy' of Horace Bushnell.

³⁸ Foster, *Errand of Mercy*, pp. 249–74.

³⁹ Sweeney, *Nathaniel Taylor, New Haven Theology, and the Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, 2003), p. 149.

⁴⁰ Marsden, *Evangelical Mind*, pp. 116–27.

⁴¹ Quoted in Youngs, *Congregationalists*, p. 144.

Whereas Tyler and his ilk defended the integrity of New Divinity revivalism through an appeal to the self-evident truths of Scripture,⁴² in *God in Christ* (1849) Bushnell eschewed what he considered a shallow revivalist culture in favour of a more romantic account of Christian belief. In his earlier *Christian Nurture* (1847), Bushnell's best known work, he argued that children within the church ought to grow 'organically' by a process of steady spiritual development and maturity within the family and church so that one need not know a time when he or she was not a Christian. This and his general turn to religious experience or 'Christian consciousness' as a source of theology raised suspicions about his theological orthodoxy and eventually led Bushnell and his upper-middle-class Hartford congregation to withdraw from the local Congregational consociation in 1852.⁴³

SLAVERY AND SCHISM

Congregational and Presbyterian churchmen played major roles in the moral revolution that polarized North and South between 1830 and 1860. The regional concentration of Congregationalists in the North not only disposed the denomination to take an antislavery position; Congregationalists led the moral crusade against slavery. As it turned out, the greatest Protestant opposition to slavery came from northern Congregationalists—Henry Ward Beecher of Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, New York, called it 'the most alarming and most fertile of national sins', whereas the greatest defence of slavery came from southern Presbyterians—James Henley Thornwell told his Presbyterian church in Columbia, South Carolina that slavery was the 'good and merciful' way of organizing 'labor which Providence has given us'.⁴⁴ Among Congregationalists, the American Missionary Association (AMA, 1846) became a major branch of antislavery; Congregational colleges (Finney's Oberlin in particular) championed abolitionism; and Harriet Beecher Stowe, daughter of Lyman and wife of a Congregational professor of Old Testament, galvanized the abolition movement with her best-selling novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Following the War, Congregationalists under the auspices of the AMA (and a smaller number of northern Presbyterians

⁴² See Bennet Tyler, ed., *New England Revivals, As They Existed at the Close of the Eighteenth, and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Centuries* (Boston, MA, 1846).

⁴³ E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, CT, 2003), pp. 452–54.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), p. 2.

working through their freedman's committee) travelled to the South to assist freed blacks by establishing elementary schools and colleges.⁴⁵

Attitudes towards slavery among Presbyterians were considerably more complicated than the Congregationalists' opposition (though even they were divided over immediatism, gradualism, and colonization). Northern Presbyterians expressed a range of conflicting views. Free blacks, who had formed churches in Philadelphia, New York, Washington, D.C., and other cities, voiced their opposition. Henry Highland Garnet, a fugitive slave and pastor of an all-black Presbyterian church in Troy, New York, emerged as the most outspoken and radical critic of slavery. He called for the violent overthrow of southern slavery, urging slaves to murder their masters: 'If you must bleed, let it all come at once—*rather die as freemen, than live to be the slaves*.'⁴⁶ At the other end of the northern Presbyterian spectrum, Princeton's Charles Hodge defended the institution of slavery on biblical grounds and yet supported gradual emancipation.⁴⁷

Although the centre of Presbyterian gravity remained in the North (with the highest concentration of churches in western Pennsylvania), Southerners had about one-eighth of New School churches and more than one-third of Old School congregations. In 1818, the General Assembly, which included representatives from the South, declared slavery 'utterly inconsistent with the law of God'. By the 1830s, however, it was clear that, amid abolitionist calls for immediate emancipation, southern Presbyterian clergy would maintain 'the peace and prosperity' of their church by not opposing slavery. Increasingly, Old School Presbyterians such as Thornwell, the South's most respected minister, endorsed biblical warrants for its existence, while at the same time advocating that masters treat slaves with decency and respect, protect slave marriages, and keep families intact. Charles Colcock Jones, a Presbyterian clergyman, educator, and owner of three plantations, was the most prominent organizer of plantation missions dedicated to the instruction of slaves and humanizing their condition. Thornwell and southern Presbyterians not only defended the existence of slavery biblically but maintained distinct ecclesiological views that prohibited the church from pronouncing on political forms of society, including taking action on slavery. Their doctrine of the spirituality of the church claimed that the state had no authority in matters purely spiritual and that the church had no authority in matters purely secular or civil.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Andrew E. Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro—A History* (Philadelphia, PA, 1966), pp. 170–7.

⁴⁶ Henry Highland Garnett, 'An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America' (1843), in John H. Bracey, Jr, August Meier, and Elliot Rudwick, eds., *Black Nationalism in America* (Indianapolis, IN [1970]), p. 73.

⁴⁷ Paul C. Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (New York, 2011), pp. 168–75.

⁴⁸ On the theological arguments over slavery, see Noll, *Civil War*.

The first split among Presbyterians occurred within the New School in 1857, when under constant pressure from the northern New School party to declare slavery sinful, six southern synods and twenty-one presbyteries in the South formed the United Synod of the Presbyterian Church. With Lincoln's election in 1860 ('the greatest calamity that ever befell this Union', declared the Virginia Presbyterian minister Moses Hoge), and after moderator Gardiner Spring put forward the resolution for the 1861 General Assembly to support the Union, the die was cast.⁴⁹ Old School Southerners, supporting both political and ecclesiastical secession, created the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America. The fractures within Old and New School denominations over the issue of slavery and the Union resulted in the uniting of southern New School and Old School Presbyterians in 1864 under the denominational name Presbyterian Church in the United States; their northern counterparts reunited in 1869 as the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

The Civil War not only ruptured the organizational structure of the Presbyterian Church; it also prompted the exodus of nearly all of its 14,000 black members (out of a total membership of around 190,000) from the southern denomination. By the 1890s, the African-American Presbyterian presence had been reduced to twenty-four ministers and some 700 members. With southern white Presbyterians unwilling to give full equality to blacks, a move for independence culminated in the creation of a separate denomination, the Afro-American Presbyterian Synod, which most Presbyterian black churches joined. A failure to grow resulted in readmission to the Southern Presbyterian Church in 1917.⁵⁰ Ironically, the one bright spot for blacks was on the mission field. The black pastor William Henry Sheppard teamed up with the white minister Samuel Norvell Lapsley to establish the American Presbyterian Congo Mission in 1890. Sheppard, the self-appointed 'Black Livingstone', returned home after several years and recruited other blacks to join the Congo mission. Largely due to his efforts, Presbyterians became the largest Protestant denomination in the Congo by 1910.⁵¹

THE POST-WAR ERA: CHRONICLING THE PAST, ENGAGING THE PRESENT

The self-conscious denominational awareness that emerged in the antebellum period became even more pronounced among Congregationalists and Presbyterians in the last four decades of the nineteenth century. In the aftermath

⁴⁹ Quoted in Longfield, *Presbyterians and American Culture*, p. 105.

⁵⁰ Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, pp. 150–1.

⁵¹ Longfield, *Presbyterians and American Culture*, pp. 129–30.

of a devastating internecine war and amid rapid urban, industrial, and ethnic transformation, denominational energies were diverted to collecting, preserving, interpreting, and memorializing the past. In this 'golden age' of denominational historiography, Congregationalist and Presbyterian authors recognized that a bygone era required some accounting.⁵² In addition to the budding interest in local church histories, the sweep of Congregational history was recorded in the hefty works by Henry Martyn Dexter and Williston Walker.⁵³ On the Presbyterian side, historians Ezra Hall Gillett, Charles A. Briggs, and Robert Ellis Thompson offered up the same.⁵⁴ These histories offered a comprehensive view of the past as an exercise in denominational self-understanding and identity formation. Congregationalists and Presbyterians could situate themselves within the American story and view their accomplishments with gratification, knowing that without their culture-defining influence a very different story would be told. Yet not all within the Calvinist tradition warmed to the past. One could trace the steady repudiation of the TULIP formula in two generations of the remarkable Beecher family, beginning with Lyman's New School modifications and extending to his talented children, epitomized in his daughter Harriet's novel, *Oldtown Folks* (1869).⁵⁵

But past was now past and the present beckoned with hitherto unknown challenges. The historian Sydney Ahlstrom remarked that 'a strange formlessness marks the half-century which follows the Civil War'.⁵⁶ The era of evangelical hegemony had run its course; an industrial revolution promised better material conditions but at a cost of social dislocation, human exploitation and misery, and extremes of wealth and poverty; millions of immigrants—predominantly Catholics from eastern Europe—threatened the remains of a Reformed definition of America; and revolutionary forms of modern thought, particularly historical criticism of the Bible and Darwinian evolutionary theory, posed direct challenges to traditional theological views.

⁵² See Joseph A. Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, and American Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1995), p. 149.

⁵³ Henry Martyn Dexter, *The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years as Seen in Its Literature* (New York, 1880); Williston Walker, *A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States* (New York, 1894); idem, *Creeks and Platforms of Congregationalism* (New York, 1893).

⁵⁴ Gillett, *History of the Presbyterian Church*; Charles A. Briggs, *American Presbyterianism: Its Origin and Early History, Together with an Appendix of Letters and Documents* (New York, 1885); Robert Ellis Thompson, *A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States* (New York, 1895).

⁵⁵ TULIP stands for total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.

⁵⁶ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT, 1972), p. 733.

THE CHALLENGES OF MODERNITY: DARWINISM AND HIGHER CRITICISM

Congregationalists and Presbyterians responded to these challenges in a variety of ways. Southern Presbyterians were outliers. Unlike their northern counterparts who confronted exploding populations, industrialization, and new ideas, southern Presbyterians remained largely isolated from these major changes. The devastating defeat in war turned the white South in upon itself, aggrieved at northern aggression, haunted by the Lost Cause, nostalgic for the past, and consciously committed to conservatism. Although Presbyterians could not match southern Methodists and Baptists in sheer numbers (both denominations had well over 1,000,000 white members each by 1890, whereas Presbyterians numbered close to 170,000),⁵⁷ they exerted a disproportionate influence by virtue of their middle- and upper-middle-class social standing, internal cohesiveness, and insistence upon well-educated orthodox clergy and thus came to embody the South's white establishment. Their peculiar doctrine of the spirituality of the church shielded them from addressing or engaging in social, educational, or economic issues; by their silence and passivity they endorsed the status quo, including white supremacy and Jim Crow laws.⁵⁸ Their worship remained formal and austere, their Bible inspired and inerrant, and their theology Calvinist and defined strictly by the Westminster Standards.⁵⁹

In one major intellectual challenge of the day—the relationship of the Bible to new scientific theories, particularly the theory of evolution—southern Presbyterians were not of one mind. Robert L. Dabney, Professor of Theology at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, emerged as the strongest critic of Darwin's naturalistic premises and opposed the establishment of the Perkins Chair of Religion and Science at Columbia Seminary in 1859. The occupier of the chair, James Woodrow, considered the reasons given for evolution insufficient but, as he stated in 1883, 'The Bible teaches nothing as to God's method of creation, and therefore it is not teaching anything contradicting God's word to say that he may have formed the higher beings from the lower by successive differentiations; and as several series of facts, more or less independent of each other, seem to point this out as the method which he chose.'⁶⁰ Asked to clarify publicly his views, in 1884 Woodrow affirmed the possibility of theistic evolution in an address to the alumni association of the seminary, stating

⁵⁷ Weber, *Presbyterian Statistics*, p. 197.

⁵⁸ Samuel S. Hill, Jr, *Southern Churches in Crisis* (New York, 1967), pp. 9–13; Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, p. 726.

⁵⁹ Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3 vols (Richmond, VA, 1973), II: 442–53.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 461.

that God created organic forms (i.e., Adam's body but not his soul) mediately or over time, not instantaneously. A furore soon followed with Woodrow's defenders and detractors exchanging heated editorials in denominational publications. Columbia's Board of Directors asked Woodrow to resign and most southern synods resoundingly condemned his views. A drawn-out, acrimonious debate ensued, with academic politics and personality clashes entering the fray. Eventually Woodrow was expelled from Columbia and in 1891 he accepted the presidency of the University of South Carolina. 'The overwhelming defeat of the Woodrow forces', observed Ernest Trice Thompson, 'made it abundantly clear that one could not accept a theistic form of evolution and remain as a teacher in one of the Southern Presbyterian Church's theological seminaries.'⁶¹

In the North, the challenges over secularization, evolution, and higher criticism were more open-ended than in the South. In opposition to an exclusively spiritual view of the church, northern Presbyterians campaigned for Christian government, Christian public schools, and a general transformation of the culture.⁶² Although Darwin received mixed reviews among northern Presbyterians (just as he did in the scientific community), nothing on the scale of the Woodrow episode racked northern Presbyterians. Charles Hodge challenged Darwin's naturalistic presuppositions in *What is Darwinism?* (1871), and argued that it was utterly impossible to reconcile Darwin's theory of natural selection with the biblical understanding of providential design. A more accepting view came from James McCosh, Princeton's president, who, in promoting 'doxological science', argued that science and religion are reconcilable and indeed, that evolution could be seen as God's handiwork.⁶³ Among Congregationalists, George Wright, professor of the harmony of science and revelation at Oberlin, was the strongest advocate of the idea that Darwin's views constituted a 'Calvinistic interpretation of nature'.⁶⁴ And two celebrated Congregational pastors, Henry Ward Beecher and Lyman Abbot, popularized the harmony between religion and science. Until the early twentieth century, most Presbyterians and Congregationalists aware of Darwin generally supported some form of theistic evolution—which might of course diverge from what Darwin had actually said.

In matters specific to Presbyterian ecclesiology and theology, disputes arose over revising the Westminster Standards and the reliability of the Bible.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 489; for a detailed account of this episode, see pp. 453–90.

⁶² Gary Scott Smith, *The Seeds of Secularization: Calvinism, Culture, and Pluralism in America, 1870–1915* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1985), chs. 4–5.

⁶³ Bradley J. Gundlach, *Process and Providence: The Evolution Question at Princeton, 1845–1929* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2013).

⁶⁴ Quoted in Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880–1930* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1982), p. 5.

⁶⁵ On the debate over revising the Standards, see Smith, *Seeds of Secularization*, pp. 28–35.

Whereas A.A. Hodge and B.B. Warfield at Princeton Theological Seminary defended the verbal inspiration and the notion of original autographs of Scripture with highly scholastic appeals to Scottish commonsense certainty, Charles A. Briggs at Union Theological Seminary in New York dismissed both viewpoints, acknowledging the presence of errors and inconsistencies in the text. When Briggs, who had studied under Henry Boynton Smith at Union and then continued his studies in Germany, transferred to a new chair of biblical studies at Union, the 1891 General Assembly vetoed his appointment (which the directors of Union rejected) and shortly thereafter he was charged with heresy by the New York presbytery. Briggs reiterated his earlier critical views, and also denied Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the single authorship of Isaiah, and the precise predictive function of prophecy. His renowned trial worked through church courts until at the 1893 General Assembly he was found guilty and suspended from the ministry. By then, Union had already rescinded its official ties to the Presbyterian Church, while the church at its 1892 General Assembly explicitly indicated that it would not tolerate the likes of Briggs by formally endorsing the doctrine of biblical inerrancy.⁶⁶

Congregationalists experienced their own doctrinal controversies over similar issues and often took similar actions. They conducted heresy trials (e.g., of five professors at Andover Theological Seminary) and hotly debated specific theological issues, such as over future probation—the notion that those who did not know Christ in this life will have the opportunity after death—but the results were often very different from those of their Presbyterian counterparts.⁶⁷ By the century's end, Congregationalists had moved into the liberal camp, especially in the Northeast and in urban churches. Their attempt to align theology with modern concepts went by different names—Progressive Orthodoxy, New Theology, and modernism. Depending upon the theologian or group, the accents were different, but in the main Congregational liberals sought to 'improve' or revise traditional theology in light of the new findings in the sciences, historical criticism, and biblical hermeneutics. They eschewed the codification of received truths, uplifted an Arminian view of human freedom, emphasized ethical preaching and moral education, stressed the immanence of God in human culture, and recognized the ever-changing, historical nature of doctrine. Influenced by the new science, they viewed the

⁶⁶ Longfield, *Presbyterians and American Culture*, pp. 124–7; Max Gray Rogers, 'Charles Augustus Briggs', in George H. Shriver, ed., *Dictionary of Heresy Trials in American Christianity* (Westport, CT, 1997), pp. 46–57.

⁶⁷ Glenn T. Miller, 'Andover Theological Seminary', in *Dictionary of Heresy Trials*, 1–10; Sharon A. Taylor, 'The Great Debate: The American Board and the Doctrine of Future Probation', in Clifford Putney and Paul T. Burlin, eds., *The Role of the American Board in the World: Bicentennial Reflections on the Organization's Missionary Work, 1810–2010* (Eugene, OR, 2012), pp. 11–26.

Bible as a living book, containing the historical, evolutionary, and progressive unfolding of God's plan.⁶⁸

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

A number of modernists applied their insights to contemporary social problems created by the upheavals of the industrial age. As proponents of the Social Gospel, they insisted that society was as much, if not more, in need of redemption as the individual. While this thinking was not entirely new, the stress on social salvation was—in large part because the deepening systemic social problems triggered by industrialization and the massive movements of people from rural to urban areas and from Eastern Europe to America created challenges that outpaced the churches' and government's ability to respond effectively.

Congregationalists, led by Washington Gladden and Josiah Strong, were second only to Episcopalians in their participation in the early Social Gospel movement. From his pulpit in Columbus, Ohio, Gladden, a popular champion of the New Theology, became not only one of the earliest but also one of the most pre-eminent spokesmen for the church's need to address pressing social problems. Unencumbered by an ecclesiastical hierarchy to hinder his efforts and through his many publications, organizations, and lectures, Gladden attracted a constituency of committed clergy and laity to address social problems and examine them from new social scientific perspectives.⁶⁹ In Cincinnati, Strong, 'the most irrepressible spirit of the Social Gospel movement', expounded his views in *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (1885), one of the most important Social Gospel books of the nineteenth century, perhaps second only to Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps* (1896).⁷⁰ A Topeka Congregational minister-turned-author who wrote more than thirty Social Gospel novels, Sheldon's fame rested on a simple question designed to elicit a practical response, 'What would Jesus do?'

Northern Presbyterians, observed Henry May, were 'far less concerned in the early social movement than any other major church'.⁷¹ Throughout the 1890s, the General Assembly mentioned the problems of labour and capital but did little to formulate suggestions for improving society, taking the position that these matters were beyond the church's jurisdiction.

⁶⁸ Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, pp. 779–80; David W. Kling, 'Newman Smyth', in *Dictionary of Heresy Trials*, p. 371.

⁶⁹ Paul T. Phillips, *A Kingdom on Earth: Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880–1940* (University Park, PA, 1996), pp. 60–1.

⁷⁰ Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, p. 798.

⁷¹ Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York, 1967), p. 192.

Presbyterians were initially sceptical about the Social Gospel's roots in the New Theology, arguing that the 'new' undercut the biblical teaching about human depravity, redemption, and Christian hope. In their minds, Social Gospellers treated the symptoms—the social environment—and not the cause—individual sin.⁷² Not until the end of the nineteenth century did social Christianity, under the forceful leadership of Charles Stelzle, gain institutional traction among Presbyterians. By 1898, Northern Presbyterians maintained over one hundred mission day and industrial training schools and social settlements. Although often tarred with the brush of insensitivity due to their middle and upper-class standing, Presbyterians 'frequently denounced those who gained fortunes by fraud or exploitation'.⁷³

GROWTH

Despite tensions within and challenges without, the northern Presbyterian church experienced steady growth during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, and maintained a slightly better growth rate than the overall population. Congregationalists lagged behind Presbyterians in absolute numbers, although their growth rate tracked close to their Reformed kin. In 1870, there were 446,561 Presbyterians and 312,403 Congregationalists in a US population of 38.5 million; by 1900, each denomination had doubled in size, with Congregational membership at 630,000 and Presbyterians topping 1,000,000 in an overall population of 76 million.⁷⁴ Membership boosts (especially among Presbyterians) were assisted by the evangelistic campaigns of Dwight L. Moody, J. Wilbur Chapman, A.T. Pierson, and Billy Sunday (granted a Presbyterian license to preach in 1898). Chapman and Pierson remained within the Presbyterian camp during most of their careers. In 1895, Chapman was appointed Corresponding Secretary of the General Assembly's Committee on Evangelism where he oversaw the work of fifty-one evangelists in 470 cities and then in 1905 as a full-time evangelist after the wealthy Philadelphia philanthropist, John H. Converse, agreed to underwrite Chapman's expenses.

Pierson, probably the greatest evangelical champion of foreign missions in the late nineteenth century, was convinced that Christians, especially through the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM), should seize the providentially prepared opportunities awaiting them now that countries around the world

⁷² Smith, *Seeds of Secularization*, p. 145.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁷⁴ *The Congregational Quarterly* (Boston, MA, 1871), 178; *The Congregational Year-Book, 1900* (Boston, MA, 1900), pp. 472–3; Weber, *Presbyterian Statistics*, p. 22.

were open to Western influence. One notable student who heeded Pierson's challenge was Robert Speer. As a freshman at Princeton, Speer experienced the saving grace of God under Pierson's preaching at the Annual Day of Prayer. Following graduation he served as a college recruiter for the SVM and then, in 1891, became secretary for the Board of Foreign Missions, a position he filled for forty-six years. Pierson, like Chapman, had his benefactor—in his case, the department store magnate John Wanamaker, who convinced Pierson to become pastor of Bethany Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Although Pierson rejected the New Theology of Social Gospellers, he not only expressed concern for social justice but also transformed Bethany into an 'institutional church' that addressed the needs of the poor.

WOMEN

Thus far, the story of nineteenth-century Congregationalists and Presbyterians has been exclusively male. But not least if numbers matter, that is less than half of the story, for women constituted a majority of the membership of these (and other) denominations. The consequences of this so-called 'feminization' of the church have been discussed at length by historians. Some have argued that women's influence softened the 'hard sayings' of Calvinism and influenced the Romantic turn in theology. Others, noting that the church provided the only public outlet for women, have documented the empowerment of women by their participation in the Second Great Awakening and leadership in female charitable, praying, orphan, poor relief, and missionary societies. Middle-class Congregational and Presbyterian women were crucial to the three most important reform movements of the nineteenth century—antislavery, temperance, and missions. Still, other historians contend that following the Civil War a reaction against feminization of the church occurred with the professionalization of the ministry.⁷⁵

Throughout the nineteenth century a complex dynamic characterized the lives of Protestant women. They were silenced yet empowered, restricted in some areas yet given (or seized) greater opportunities in others. Although Congregational and Presbyterian women held no ordained leadership positions (with the exception of the 1853 landmark ordination of Antoinette Brown at the First Congregational Church of South Butler, New York, and a handful of female Congregational clergy that followed to the end of the century), they

⁷⁵ Karen E. Gedge, 'Ministry to Women in the Antebellum Seminaries', in D.G. Hart and R. Albert Mohler, Jr, eds., *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1996), p. 188.

taught, preached, and served as evangelists at home and abroad.⁷⁶ Among Presbyterians, the Cumberland Presbyterians went the farthest by approving women's ordination to eldership in 1892 and endorsed Louisa L. Woolsey as a lay evangelist in 1894. Women also gave voice to their religious views in print. Susan Warner was the Presbyterian counterpart to the Congregationalist Harriet Beecher Stowe, her sentimental novel, *The Wide, Wide World* (1851) rivalling the sales of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In another work by Susan and her sister Anna, *Say and Seal* (1859), a Sunday school teacher sings to a dying boy the poem that children in nearly all Protestant Sunday schools have since learned, 'Jesus Loves Me'.⁷⁷

Although subordinate to males and often relegated to the domestic sphere, women often worked alongside their minister or missionary husbands and found ways to express leadership and solidarity with involvement in religious and charitable societies. Mary Lyons founded Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1837 for the purpose of training self-denying and self-giving missionary wives for the ABCFM. Fifty years later Mount Holyoke alumnae comprised 20 per cent of the missionary women associated with the Board and had sent out 175 foreign missionaries to eighteen countries.⁷⁸

Although women could not sit on male governing boards, they established their own regional auxiliaries and national boards of home and foreign missions, creating enviable models of efficiency and financial stability. In the post-Civil War era, independent women's missionary societies came into their own and became so popular that they competed financially with male-led counterparts.⁷⁹ By 1877, the Board of Foreign Missions (PCUSA) reported fifty more women than men on the mission field. In that same year, the Boston-based women's society of the ABCFM raised nearly \$480,000, and by the early twentieth century women's societies supplied the majority of ABCFM missionaries in the field. And although preaching and evangelism were restricted to women on the home front, they fulfilled these roles and others such as education and medicine in the foreign field. In fact, the women's missionary movement (often called 'woman's work for woman') became 'the largest women's movement of the nineteenth century'.⁸⁰ The women's societies became so successful (and, to many men, so threatening)

⁷⁶ Barbara Zikmund Brown, 'Women's Ministries with the United Church of Christ', in Catherine Wessinger, ed., *Religious Institutions and Women's Leadership: New Roles Inside the Mainstream* (Columbia, SC, 1996), pp. 68–9.

⁷⁷ Smylie, *Brief History of the Presbyterians*, p. 84.

⁷⁸ Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA, 1996), pp. 93, 97.

⁷⁹ Margaret L. Bendroth, 'Women and Missions: Conflict and Changing Roles in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1870–1935', *American Presbyterians*, 65 (1987), 52.

⁸⁰ Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870–1920* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1985), p. 84.

that in the early decades of the twentieth century the male-led missionary organizations eventually absorbed them into the official board in the name of bureaucratic efficiency.

In less public but perhaps more profound ways, Congregational and Presbyterian women shaped the spirituality of generations to come by instructing children in Sabbath (or Sunday) schools. As early as 1816, the Presbyterian Joanna Graham Bethune, known as 'the mother of Sabbath Schools in America', established the Female Union Society for the Promotion of Sabbath Schools. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were more than 8,000 Presbyterian Sunday schools, staffed almost exclusively by women, providing Christian education to more than 1,000,000 children.⁸¹ On the Congregational side, Sunday school attendees numbered nearly 700,000 by 1899, with an overall average attendance of nearly 409,000.⁸²

A VIEW FROM THE PEW

In his study of British and northern American Reformed congregations from 1830 to 1915, Charles Cashdollar characterized changes in Congregational and Presbyterian life as 'from piety to fellowship'; that is, from an intense concern with spiritual life to a greater emphasis on participating in the many activities and practices that churches offered by the end of the century. Much of the change was incremental rather than drastic. For example, church membership practices came increasingly to mirror 'the general Victorian trend toward the private and individual, rather than public and communal, conventions'.⁸³ In the early decades of the century, prospective members were scrutinized by the whole congregation or a committee for 'credible' or 'satisfactory' evidence of personal piety and character and examined on their spiritual views and practices. By century's end, however, 'examination' often disappeared from church minutes. Candidates 'appeared before the elders' or 'conversed with' them and were subsequently admitted. Cashdollar attributes this shift not only to cultural values but also to the influence of revivalism. By emphasizing repentance and faith over behaviour and character, revivalism located the evidence of conversion in the humanly inaccessible reaches of the heart. No good Congregationalist or Presbyterian would admit to indisputable outward signs of salvation, but once the presence of saving grace took

⁸¹ Lois A. Boyd and R. Douglas Brackenridge, *Presbyterian Women in America: Two Centuries of a Quest for Status* (Westport, CT, 1983), p. 176.

⁸² *Congregational Year-Book, 1900*, pp. 472–3.

⁸³ Charles D. Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home: Life in British and American Reformed Congregations, 1830–1915* (University Park, PA, 2000), p. 104.

primary position and past and present behaviour became secondary (short of the demonstration of grievous sin), belief not behaviour became the primary criterion of church membership. Religion became an increasingly private, intensely personal affair.⁸⁴

Similarly, doctrinal affirmations ensconced in earlier confessions or articles of faith increasingly fell out of favour, especially among Congregationalists who revised, replaced, or simply ignored the old-fashioned confession. In an act of ecumenicity, Hartford's Second Church replaced its creed with the Apostles' Creed, and even then did not 'require of its members a literal acceptance of even this Confession'. Most Reformed communions simply reaffirmed their historic emphasis on freedom of conscience in matters of faith. General membership required belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and a willingness to submit oneself peaceably to the rule of the church. One need not accept all the doctrines taught in the standards of the church.⁸⁵ Communal accountability remained, but it was less stringent, more focused on belonging and involvement than on a strict set of beliefs and high standards of behaviour.

Sunday worship practices best exemplify the trend from piety to fellowship. Whereas in the early nineteenth century prayers lasted for up to twenty minutes and in some cases, sermons up to two hours, by century's end they were less than five minutes and a half-hour, respectively. Increasingly, lengthy, formal, doctrinal sermons gave way to conversational, personal, anecdotal, and more practical sermons. Indeed, in the second half of the nineteenth century, charm, personality, and the oratory of such preachers as Henry Ward Beecher in Brooklyn, George A. Gordon in Boston, T. Dewitt Talmadge in New York, and Newman Smith in New Haven attracted thousands of the middle class and affluent to well-appointed urban churches built in Classical, Romanesque, and Gothic styles. Whereas earlier in the century, unaccompanied psalm singing defined worship music, by century's end organs, choirs, gospel songs, and denominational hymnals were widespread, though in some cases not without controversy. For those with cultivated liturgical tastes, the dignity and beauty of the Episcopal Church had special appeal—so much so that throughout the nineteenth century its attraction led to a small exodus of Congregationalists and Presbyterians.⁸⁶ Efficiency and standardization, the axioms of the modern industrial age, were increasingly incorporated into church life. The church continued to fulfil its primary function as the centre of corporate worship and instruction, but also expanded its services to include a variety of activities, including suppers, literary institutions, women's guilds, men's clubs, youth societies, and Sunday school classes for all ages.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 104–5.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 110–11.

⁸⁶ Julius Melton, *Presbyterian Worship in America: Changing Patterns Since 1787* (Richmond, VA, 1967), pp. 63–70.

⁸⁷ Cashdollar, *Spiritual Home*, pp. 74–98, 127–31, 151–66, 241.

To conclude with this description of church life gives the appearance that by the turn of the century all was well with Congregationalists and Presbyterians. As predominantly middle-class denominations, these groups undoubtedly benefited from the rising economic fortunes of the country and embraced modern consumer culture. They provided their members with a divinely ordained sense of place and belonging. To Josiah Strong, the United States was 'the highest type of Anglo-Saxon civilization', thanks to the cultural influence of the largely Anglo-Protestant Congregationalists and Presbyterians.⁸⁸ And yet this sense of divine purpose (tinged with racism) was tempered by the volatility of the age, including the weakening numerical strength of white Protestants of British background, the persistent intellectual challenges to faith, and the shift of population to cities. Congregationalists and Presbyterians continued to exert influence on sectors of American life, but their days of cultural hegemony were long past.

CANADA

Late in the eighteenth century, Congregationalists enjoyed a brief period of influence in the Canadian Maritimes. When Nova Scotia opened for European settlement after the French and Indian (Seven Years') War of 1754–63, New Englanders with their Congregational churches made up the bulk of the new population. Yet that presence was short-lived since most Congregationalists soon moved into the Baptist and 'New Light' churches, which grew from the influential revivalism of Henry Alline, or were absorbed into the Presbyterian churches set up by immigrants from Scotland.⁸⁹ Thereafter Congregationalism remained in the shadows, emerging for public attention only in 1925 when 160 out of Canada's remaining 168 Congregational churches joined over 8,000 Methodist and Presbyterian congregations to create the United Church of Canada.⁹⁰

Presbyterians, by contrast, became increasingly more important until they stood at the centre of Canada's Protestant history. A Dissenting Scot, Thomas McCulloch, played the leading role in early developments.⁹¹ McCulloch was a

⁸⁸ Quoted in Paul F. Boller, Jr, *American Thought in Transition: The Impact of Evolutionary Naturalism, 1865–1900* (Chicago, IL, 1969), p. 213.

⁸⁹ Nancy Christie, '“In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion”: Popular Religion and the challenge to the Established Order, 1760–1825', in George A. Rawlyk, ed., *The Protestant Canadian Experience, 1760–1990* (Burlington, Ontario, 1990), pp. 20–1.

⁹⁰ C.T. McIntire, 'Unity Among Many: The Formation of the United Church of Canada, 1899–1930', in Don Schweitzer, ed., *The United Church of Canada: A History* (Waterloo, Ontario, 2012), pp. 8–9.

⁹¹ For full treatment, see Charles H.H. Scobie and G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *The Contribution of Presbyterianism to the Maritime Provinces of Canada* (Montreal and Kingston, 1997).

minister of the Presbyterian Secession, which had left the established Presbyterian Kirk in the early 1730s as a protest against interference with local congregations. From his base in Pictou County (northern Nova Scotia), McCulloch became the province's leading educator, its first genuine creative writer, and one of its most important ministers. The kind of Presbyterianism that he promoted combined intellectual rigour with warm evangelical piety, represented most visibly by the tradition of multi-day, open-air communion 'seasons'. Seceders like McCulloch were soon joined by Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, immigrants representing the established Kirk, and (after 1843) many new Canadians who supported the Disruption of the Scottish Kirk that took place in that year.

The Disruption, led by Thomas Chalmers, Scotland's foremost minister of the nineteenth century, resulted from protests against the imposition of governmental control over church appointments and activities. It created the Free Church of Scotland, which maintained the principle of church-state establishment even as it created an alternative structure alongside the continuing Kirk. Presbyterians in Canada were almost all descendants of the Scottish Kirk, its various secessions, or the closely related Presbyterian church of Northern Ireland, which meant they paid close attention to these developments.⁹² Strictly considered, the old-world events need not have affected new-world churches since the Maritimes and Upper Canada (later Ontario), where almost all Canadian Presbyterians lived, had moved quite close to the American pattern of church-state separation. Only continuing debates over how to distribute revenues from the 'Clergy Reserves' (land set aside for the use of the churches) and how church-sponsored higher education would fit into Upper Canada's new universities remained as echoes of European Christendom.

Yet because of the self-conscious Scottish inheritance, Canadian Presbyterians also divided, with the group that supported the new Scottish Free Church forming the Presbyterian Church of Canada. This denomination grew rapidly and soon outdistanced the Kirk synod in Canada that remained in fellowship with Scotland's established Church of Scotland. Together the Canadian Presbyterians numbered about 80,000 before their own disruption. By 1861, the (Free) Presbyterian Church of Canada had grown to about 150,000 (or roughly 10 per cent of the Upper Canada population) while the Kirk synod had fallen behind with only 110,000 members. In that year the Free Church body completed a merger with the United Presbyterian Church in Canada, a new-world offshoot of an earlier splinter from the Scottish Kirk. The (Free) Presbyterian Church of Canada maintained Scottish traditions of Sabbath observance, anti-popery agitation, and conservative worship and church architecture. Yet it also added some North American habits by vigorously

⁹² The authoritative account is Richard W. Vaudry, *The Free Church in Victorian Canada, 1844-1861* (Waterloo, Ontario, 1989).

promoting temperance reform and eagerly sponsoring missionary outreach, especially in the opening Canadian West. In the process, however, it also changed its stance on the church in society. Early on, this denomination had disciplined a minister for holding that religion should not seek help from the state. Within two decades, however, its vision had turned from Scotland to Canada by abandoning almost all aspirations to old-world church establishment. Over the same period, Canada's Kirk synod also came to terms with new-world voluntarism. The negotiations between the (Free) Presbyterian Church of Canada and the United Presbyterian Church had sparked a general impetus towards Presbyterian unification.

The other motive for that move came from outside the churches. During the very years when American Presbyterians were fragmenting over first theology, then slavery, and finally sectional conflict, political leaders in all regions of Canada entered negotiations aimed at establishing the Dominion of Canada, which were finalized in 1867. The new Dominion enjoyed the strong support of leading Canadian Presbyterians, who saw in political confederation a model for uniting the many Presbyterian churches that Scotland's fractious history had bequeathed to British North America. One of these leaders was George Monro Grant, who from his position as a parish minister in Halifax, Nova Scotia strategized how national union might assist ecclesiastical union.⁹³ His ministry, which featured straightforward biblical preaching along with social programmes for immigrants, assistance for the industrial poor, and mediation between the increasingly conflicted interests of capital and labour, kept together concerns that had mostly separated in the United States. Pushed on by key figures like Grant, the four largest Presbyterian denominations joined together in 1875 as the Presbyterian Church in Canada. More generally, Grant and others like him developed a commitment to mediation—as the best means for resolving conflict in the church as well as conflicts between the churches and secular society—at least in part to avoid the American pattern where Presbyterians of all sorts took their cues for conflict resolution from the life-and-death ferocity of the Civil War.⁹⁴

Over the last third of the century, Canadian Presbyterian experience continued to diverge from the American path. Although a celebrated heresy trial did take place in 1877, which resembled similar struggles in the US, the result in Canada differed: an ambiguous acquittal for Daniel James Macdonnell and a cautious general liberalization in applying the Westminster Standards. In that same year, Grant became principal and divinity professor at Queen's

⁹³ See D.B. Mack, 'George Monro Grant' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Queen's University, 1992); and Mack, 'Grant, George Monro', in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*: <http://www.biographi.ca/index-e.html>.

⁹⁴ For the impetus of the American Civil War on Canadian confederation and of confederation on church reunion, including its effect on Grant, see John S. Moir, *Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (2nd edn., Toronto, Ontario, 1987), pp. 134–5.

College (Kingston, Ontario) where he charted a course that is hard to square with any American trajectory. Thus, Grant was open to modern biblical criticism, but like moderate conservatives in the United States, he was cautious about changing the Westminster Confession. He resembled leaders of the Social Gospel movement in his activities on a broad range of social issues—defending the rights of women, aboriginals, immigrants, and Armenians, while advocating profit-sharing for relief of industrial strife. Yet he also supported popular revivals, encouraged fair treatment of Catholics, and maintained a lifelong enthusiasm for Martin Luther. Historian Barry Mack pointed to such leaders when he concluded that ‘to Grant... belongs at least some of the credit for the absence in Canadian Presbyterianism of the theological polarization that troubled Presbyterians in the United States in the 1890s’.⁹⁵

The unifying and mediating instincts of nineteenth-century Canadian Presbyterianism contributed to forces that in 1925 led two-thirds of Canadian Presbyterians (and almost 90 per cent of their ministers) into the United Church, Canada’s grand experiment in institutional ecumenism. The Presbyterians who continued as a separate denomination did maintain some confessional elements from the Scottish heritage, but now as a sectarian body bereft of the cultural influence exercised by Presbyterians of the Grant era. For its part, the United Church also continued some Presbyterian organizational elements but moved steadily away from the liberal evangelical theology that Grant had championed towards liberal modernism.⁹⁶ With a new-world history descending more directly from Scotland than from England, Canadian Presbyterians developed in North America in significant contrast to the unfolding of Dissenting traditions in the United States.

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⁹⁵ Mack, ‘Grant, George Monroe’, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*.

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Methodists and Holiness in North America

Jay R. Case

Theodore Roosevelt once said that he ‘would rather address a Methodist audience than any other audience in America’ because ‘the Methodists represent the great middle class and in consequence are the most representative church in America’.¹ At first glance, this middle-class status might seem to place Methodism squarely within the American establishment, as an institution against which others dissent. In actuality, though, Methodism embodied a paradox embedded in the culture of the United States. Representative of a nation founded in a self-conscious act of Dissent against an existing British system, Methodism has embraced the American cultural centre while simultaneously generating what Nathan Hatch calls ‘the pervasive quality of dissent in American Christianity’.²

From its creation, in fact, Methodism prospered amidst a structural tension with the official church establishment. Formed by John Wesley as a society within the Church of England, the original Methodist leaders held positions within the religious establishment as ordained ministers of the Church of England. At the same time, though, they belonged to a society that sought to invigorate the Church with greater spiritual zeal. This zeal, which has characterized evangelicalism, infused the movement with Dissenting impulses. As Andrew Walls has observed, ‘historic evangelicalism is a religion of protest against a Christian society that is not Christian enough.’³

¹ Quoted in Winthrop S. Hudson, *American Protestantism* (Chicago, IL, 1961), p. 128.

² Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT, 1989), p. 208.

³ Andrew Walls, ‘The Evangelical Revival, The Missionary Movement, and Africa’, in Mark A. Noll et al, eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700–1900* (New York, 1994), p. 311.

The American Revolution intensified these qualities within American Methodism, which cut its teeth in an atmosphere thick with cultural dissent. In the wake of the Revolution, mediating structures based on hierarchy, deference, patronage, and patriarchy came under assault by ordinary Americans. The social, political, economic, and cultural changes surging through the United States did not simply place American Methodists in a position of cultural dissent; Methodism actually played a key role in promoting those changes. Institutionally, issues regarding ordination provoked the official creation of Methodism as a separate denomination in America. Wesley's practice, in which only an ordained Anglican minister could administer the sacraments with Methodism, proved to be unworkable in the United States after the Revolution, where Anglican clergy held little cultural authority and could not keep pace with Methodist growth. And unlike in Great Britain, preaching privileges in the United States did not depend upon loyalty to the civil government. In 1779, Methodist ministers at the Fluvanna conference in Virginia voted to ordain one another. Five years later, at the annual conference in Baltimore, American Methodists officially broke with Wesley and the Church of England, forming the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC). Methodists in America could now continue Wesley's methods, message, and doctrines, but as a denomination that was not tied to older structures linked to the Anglo establishment.⁴

The real energy, vitality, and growth of American Methodism were yet to come, however. Disestablishment had opened up political and legal opportunities, but a cultural ferment amidst fragmentation, high mobility, and few stable institutions drove more significant changes. American elites found themselves without the means to dictate and direct American culture in this wide open field. Methodism exploded in this liberal, market-driven, competitive society, growing from fewer than 1,000 members in 1775 to more than 250,000 in 1820.⁵ The form of dissent that the MEC embodied at this time was not so much political as it was cultural. Patterns of deference were eroding throughout American society and Methodism played a key role in that process. Appealing to the aspirations and interests of common people, early Methodism grew primarily among ordinary people who found hope in spiritual, social, and cultural improvement, a process that challenged traditional social structures of hierarchy. Led by young leaders who, in Nathan Hatch's words, 'went about movement-building as self-conscious outsiders', Methodists promoted individual freedom, autonomy, responsibility, and achievement.⁶

⁴ John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York, 1998), pp. 23–5; Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, pp. 8–9.

⁵ Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, p. 3.

⁶ Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, p. 4.

The most forceful expression of this cultural dissent may have been its anti-elitism. The MEC created preachers on the basis of their ability to move crowds, not on traditional ideas of religious status or achievements in theological education. These young ministers operated with convictions that ordinary people had more finely tuned spiritual sensibilities than elites. 'St. Peter was a fisherman', one young minister proclaimed. 'Do you think he ever went to Yale College? No, no beloved brethren and sisters. When the Lord... wants to blow down the walls of spiritual Jericho... he don't take one of your smooth, polite, college larnt gentlemen, but a plain, natural ram's horn sort of man like me.'⁷ These democratized impulses produced new and sometimes startling results, as Methodists validated the spiritual experiences and gifts of ordinary people. Blacks took on roles as Methodist ministers, claiming a status that was rarely matched in any other American institution of the era. Women were not only encouraged to speak in public meetings, testifying to their own spiritual experiences or exhorting others to deeper spiritual commitments, but sometimes took on roles as itinerant preachers. In the South, Methodism challenged the patriarchal authority of the household as many white men were unable to prevent daughters, wives, and slaves from embracing the spiritual practices found in Methodist love feasts, class meetings, and revivals. Some Methodists embraced producerist ideas, opposing the exploitation of workers. Methodism helped embed Christianity in popular culture, making use of popular musical styles, common language, sarcastic humour, coarse styles, and enthusiastic religious expressions.⁸

METHODISM AND DISSENT IN CANADA

While democratized Methodism in the United States took a sharp turn away from the reputable path of British Methodism, early Methodism in Canada found itself pulled in both directions. In the Maritimes and Lower Canada, Methodist missionaries from Britain established churches that adopted the more hierarchical, respectable, and moderate practices common in Britain. Beginning in the 1790s, however, Upper Canada (later known as Ontario) experienced an influx of MEC ministers from upstate New York who brought popular revivals, enthusiastic religious styles, and a notable lack of deference

⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 112, 151; Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740–1845* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998); Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997); William R. Sutton, "'To Extract Poison from the Blessings of God's Providence': Producerist Respectability and Methodist Suspicions of Capitalist Change in the Early Republic', in Nathan O. Hatch and John H. Wigger, eds., *Methodism and the Shaping of American Culture* (Nashville, TN, 2001), pp. 223–56.

for established religious authorities. These bodies also tended to form tight communities that segregated themselves from non-Methodists. This not only put them at odds with non-Methodists but created tension with the Wesleyan Methodist leaders from Britain.⁹ The official status of MEC bodies in Upper Canada created additional problems. Because Methodism had formed as an Anglican society in Britain, the MEC was not granted official status as a Dissenting denomination in Canada. Without official ties to the Church of England and without the freedoms granted to official Dissenters, MEC ministers in Canada could not perform marriages, own property collectively, or draw from clergy-reserve funds, as Anglican ministers could. MEC members in Canada also faced tensions with ordinary people. Many questioned their loyalty to Canada, particularly after the War of 1812. Furthermore, some Canadians found their religious enthusiasm to be improper.

Canadian Methodists worked to ease these tensions, though, creating a merger between the British Wesleyans and the MEC in 1833. MEC churches also enjoyed more mass appeal than the British Methodists did. While the MEC had initially drawn largely from poorer outsiders in rural areas of Upper Canada, the second and third generation of these Methodist bodies proved to be upwardly mobile. Methodism in Canada had largely grown into a respectable, middle-class denomination by the 1850s, shaped by Victorian values. In 1884, the various strands of Methodism united into one body, forming the largest denomination in Canada. Nationalist sensibilities infused Canadian Methodism with a sense of duty to nurture the social order. Earlier impulses towards Dissent had eroded as these custodial desires for cultural dominion strengthened.¹⁰

RESPECTABILITY AND NEW FORMS OF DISSENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Methodists in the United States also moved towards more respectability. Ironically, characteristics that appealed to self-conscious outsiders, such as spiritual discipline and aspirations for improvement, would push Methodists into the mainstream. As early as the 1820s, MEC minister Nathan Bangs spearheaded the drive towards acceptance in the cultural establishment. From his base in New York City, Bangs built expensive church structures, added trained choirs, promoted theological education, and urged a moderation of Methodist enthusiasm. As a key agent in the Methodist Book Concern, editor

⁹ Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism*, (Montreal, Québec, 1996), pp. 32–26, 43–6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 77–86, 179–80, 334.

of the *Methodist Magazine*, and founder of the Methodist newspaper, *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Bangs effectively used the Methodist institutional machinery to promote his vision of a respectable denomination.¹¹

Many Methodists were eagerly heading in that direction anyway. Evangelistic success ensured that the MEC could not retain its outsider status in American society. By mid-century, Methodists constituted one-third of the total church membership in the United States. They not only entered the American middle class, they played a key role in shaping it. Between 1830 and 1860, Methodists founded thirty colleges. They helped shape the forms and language of American politics, for, as Richard Carwardine has noted, savvy politicians picked up techniques from the Methodists for mobilizing popular participation and building institutions that combined centralized organization with local initiative. Indeed, politicians of all stripes had been actively courting Methodists for several decades, even though in its earliest years Francis Asbury had urged Methodists to stay out of politics. Accordingly, leading Methodists adjusted their stance towards the American nation, as they began speaking the Reformed language of Christian republicanism.¹²

With the move to middle-class respectability, the MEC lost much of the cultural dissent that had shaped it in the immediate decades after the American Revolution. Female preaching declined as Methodists embraced middle-class conceptions of domesticity. Producerist critiques of capitalism faded from view. In the South, Methodism accommodated itself to existing forms of patriarchy.

The move to insider status did not create universal agreement on key issues, though. Dissent had embedded itself as such a pervasive characteristic in both American society and American Methodism that breakaway bodies appeared regularly. In fact, only eight years after the creation of the MEC in 1784, the first major Dissenting body broke away from the parent body. James O'Kelly petitioned the 1792 General Conference to amend its hierarchical and ecclesiastical system of appointing ministers. Most ministers voted against the change, despite their democratized convictions, believing that the Methodist system enabled popular success and growth by appointing circuit-riding itinerants to strategic areas of expansion. Dissatisfied with what he termed an 'ecclesiastical monarchy', O'Kelly led a small group of Virginia ministers out of the MEC to form the Republican Methodists, a group that grew moderately in Virginia before merging with Elias Smith's Christian movement in 1809.¹³

¹¹ Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, pp. 202–4.

¹² Richard J. Carwardine, 'Methodists, Politics, and the Coming of the American Civil War', in Hatch and Wigger, eds., *Methodism*, pp. 309–42.

¹³ Quoted in Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, p. 39. Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, p. 70.

The issue of institutional hierarchy emerged again at the 1820 General Conference with a petition that the ordination of ministers should come by election rather than appointment by bishops. The motion did not pass, but the debate continued through the decade. A group of ministers who argued for the reform promoted their views through several independent periodicals and associations. Some of these ministers were ordered to desist in their protests and then were expelled from the denomination when they did not. In 1830, the protestors organized a General Conference in Baltimore and declared themselves the Methodist Protestant Church, with a denominational structure that contained no bishops or presiding elders.¹⁴

Slavery and racial issues, however, provided the fodder for the most significant forms of dissent within Methodism. The most notable indication that the MEC no longer maintained its stance as an outsider body in American culture can be seen in official changes regarding slavery. The original 1784 *Discipline*, which functioned as the guiding law for the denomination, had declared that slaveholders who became members were to free their slaves. The 1808 General Conference (the quadrennial governing meeting of church representatives) shifted its position by giving authority to local conferences to decide their policies on slavery. By 1824, the General Conference declared that when it came to slavery, civil laws took precedence over church laws. Many historians see this change regarding slavery as a byproduct of the move to respectability and an accommodation to attract slaveholders to the church.¹⁵

Black Methodists, of course, were the first to respond to these shifts. Early Methodism, with its egalitarian qualities, had attracted blacks in remarkable numbers. They formed 20 per cent of the MEC membership in 1790. But democratized whites, in Nathan Hatch's words, attempted to 'take back with one hand, what had been granted with the other'. While the MEC backtracked on its earliest stances against slavery, congregations began to expect blacks to behave in a traditionally deferential manner to whites. In many places, this reassertion of racial hierarchy took the form of forbidding blacks from worshipping in the central sections of the sanctuary—a practice they had enjoyed for years—and requiring them to sit in the balconies or rear of the church.¹⁶

These developments led to a form of racialized Dissent from mainstream Methodism with consequences that are still felt today: the formation of independent black Methodist denominations. When white elders of the newly renovated St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia in 1794 informed black members that they would have to sit in a segregated section,

¹⁴ Emory Stevens Bucke, ed., *The History of American Methodism*, 3 vols (New York, 1964), I: pp. 636–65.

¹⁵ Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), pp. 127–8.

¹⁶ Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, p. 107.

Richard Allen led an exodus to form the Bethel Methodist Church. 'Our only design is to secure to ourselves our rights and privileges', Allen explained, 'to regulate our affairs, temporal and spiritual, the same as if we were white people.' Bethel Church became one of the largest churches in the MEC, but the local conference refused to ordain Allen. So in 1816, Bethel merged with several other black Methodist congregations to form the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination. Similar sorts of conflicts led to the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal, Zion (AMEZ) denomination in 1822.¹⁷ By the 1830s, some whites entered the fray, protesting that the MEC had been compromised by accommodations to slavery. Methodist ministers Orange Scott and La Roy Sunderland campaigned against slavery, material ostentation, and episcopal structures. After publishing their arguments in several Methodist newspapers, they ran into opposition from MEC leadership. In 1842, they led a number of followers out of the denomination to form the Wesleyan Methodist church.¹⁸

As they gained their place in the American mainstream, many Methodists followed the establishment wherever it led. American society itself became increasingly divided on the issue of slavery after 1830, and most Methodists tended to follow the dominant standards of their region. Southern Methodists increasingly justified slavery while northern Methodists took moderate anti-slavery positions that made some accommodation to the more radical immediate abolitionists in their midst. It was this accommodation that provoked a split in the MEC. The 1844 General Conference had passed a motion asking Bishop Andrew of Georgia to step down from his position as long as he owned slaves. This motion led southern Methodists to break away and form the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) in 1845. Although one could interpret this move as a form of Dissent, most historians describe the action as a denominational split. The middle-class status of Methodists in both the North and South and the embrace of sectional attitudes towards slavery indicate that the action should probably be seen as a battle over whether a northern or southern religious establishment would provide the ethical, political, economic, and social vision for the nation.¹⁹

Even then, dissent over slavery still arose among northern Methodists. Throughout the 1850s, some Methodists in upstate New York lodged criticisms at the 'Regency', an informal band of urban Methodist leaders who dominated institutional positions. The critiques accused the urban ministers of compromising on the issue of slavery, though they also railed against emblems of gentility among middle-class Methodists: pew rents, expensive church architecture, theological erudition, and professional choirs. The dissenters further

¹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 107. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, pp. 129–34.

¹⁸ Bucke, ed., *The History of American Methodism*, II: pp. 39–47.

¹⁹ Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, pp. 129–32.

accused MEC leaders of abusing institutional power, corrupting the faith through membership in the Masons, and neglecting the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification. Battles between the urban 'Regency' and the rural 'Nazarites' broke out at each annual conference, until one of the leaders of the Dissenting rural faction, B.T. Roberts, was expelled in 1860. Roberts then founded the Free Methodist denomination, leading several thousand laity and a number of Methodist ministers out of the MEC.²⁰

BLACK METHODISTS AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

Slavery had functioned, among other ways, as a racialized religious establishment. This racialized religious authority extended far beyond white ministers preaching messages that slaves must obey their masters. It also quashed black religious dissent. In the early years of the century, 4,000 blacks in Charleston, South Carolina had formed a Methodist society where they practised their own disciplinary and financial matters, an arrangement that followed Wesley's model of creating a society within the larger denomination. White leaders of the MEC, however, abolished that conference in 1815. The blacks responded by forming the African Church of Charlestown affiliated with the AME. This church was also forced to disband, not by denominational powers, but by politicians who feared slave rebellions in the wake of Denmark Vesey's plot in 1822. Vesey had been a lay leader in the church. The closure mirrored actions taken by whites throughout the south. By 1860, only a handful of AME congregations could be found in the south, and those in just three slave states: Kentucky, Louisiana, and Missouri.²¹

After 1830, with the rise of immediate abolitionism, growing political sectionalism, and the intensification of fears of slave rebellion, the screws were tightened on African-American Christianity in the south. Laws restricting black Christianity varied from state to state, but many struck at the heart of evangelical and Methodist life. In many places, it became illegal to teach blacks to read, which undermined the evangelical desire to get the Bible into the hands of laity. Many states passed laws making it illegal to ordain blacks, a restriction that limited evangelism and democratized leadership. Some slaves could not get baptized without their master's permission. In areas where black

²⁰ Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, p. 207. Kathryn T. Long, 'Consecrated Respectability: Phoebe Palmer and the Refinement of American Methodism', in Hatch and Wigger, eds., *Methodism*, p. 298; Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1957), pp. 129–32.

²¹ Reginald F. Hildebrand, *The Times Were Strange and Stirring: Methodist Preachers and the Crisis of Emancipation* (Durham, NC, 1995), pp. 31, 34; Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, p. 110.

preachers were allowed to preach, they usually were required to do so under white supervision. Some white evangelicals objected to these restrictions and even ignored the laws. But blacks resisted more fully. A secret 'invisible institution' formed in many areas, as slaves 'stole away' to remote locations to worship without the supervision of white authorities.²²

The Civil War, of course, changed this entire religious arrangement. Emancipation struck down the *de facto* racial religious establishment in the South. While most whites worked during Reconstruction to reassert their power over blacks in politics, economics, social relations, and education, American society gave them no means to effectively assert authority in the religious sphere. The result was a remarkable explosion of black evangelicalism in what might be called the African-American Great Awakening. Patterns of democratized black Christianity that had emerged during the era of the early republic but had been tightly constricted in the antebellum era burst open with renewed vigour.

As in the Second Great Awakening, Methodists and Baptists reaped the greatest rewards of this new growth of Christianity among blacks. Unlike in the earlier era, however, most of this growth occurred in independent black denominations, rather than mixed-raced organizations. The growth was remarkable. The highest estimates for the size of Christianity among blacks in 1860 put adherence around 17 per cent. By 1900, that figure had risen to 40 per cent. Black Methodists grew from 190,000 in 1860 to 1,000,000 in 1906. Even while African Americans struggled with the collapse of Reconstruction, disenfranchisement, share-cropping, lynching, and the reconfiguration of a racial hierarchy based on Jim Crow, the church emerged as the one institution in the South, besides the family, where blacks could operate free from the custodial hand of whites.²³

The process was not uncomplicated. Even before the Civil War had ended, several Methodist denominations began competing with one another for black allegiance. Each of these denominations, the MEC, the MECS, the AME, the AMEZ, and the Colored Methodist Episcopal church (CME), promoted the same Methodist evangelical theology, conducted themselves with the same Methodist-style evangelism, and structured their institutions upon a similar Methodist episcopal system. The key differences lay in their position within the southern class system and the concomitant vision of society they offered the former slaves.

The white leadership of the MECS assumed, as it did before the war, that God had granted them the paternalistic role as guardians of black religious life.

²² Jay R. Case, 'The African American Great Awakening and Modernity, 1866–1880', in Kurt W. Peterson et al, eds., *American Evangelicalism: George Marsden and the Shape of American Religious History* (Notre Dame, IN, 2014), pp. 115–16.

²³ Case, 'The African American Great Awakening'.

An 1866 item in the *Southern Christian Advocate* explained that white Methodists should 'make what was the happiest and best class of slaves in the world to be the happiest and best class of peasants'. But MECS officials quickly discovered that most black Methodists had a different view of God's intentions. Between 1860 and 1866, 130,000 of the 200,000 MECS blacks left the denomination. Here was a very compelling form of dissent: blacks made their religious point by voting with their feet. Realizing that African Americans wanted independent black congregations, and incapable of staunching the bleeding, the white leadership of the MECS began to accommodate to new realities. The 1866 General Conference created a separate black denomination, which became known as the Colored Methodist Episcopal church (CME). White officials of the MECS ordained black CME ministers, organized black congregations, transferred church property, and set up the administrative systems of the new denomination. While conceding black Methodist independence, MECS leaders hoped they still might be able to maintain some sort of ongoing influence in the CME.²⁴

The more fiercely independent blacks in the AME and AMEZ churches often accused CME blacks of grovelling to their former masters. Several factors seem to have been in play here, though, leading CME blacks to attempt to form workable relationships with whites in the MECS. Accounts from CME leaders suggest that they still held some affection for white Methodists and did not want to break those relationships. They worked to keep contentious political issues out of their churches in an effort to keep the peace. And they spoke warmly of their Christian conversions when they had worshipped in the MECS. Still, the CME insisted on independence and did not submit to whites in ways that many MECS officials had hoped for when they created the denomination. Taking advantage of the general vitality of black evangelicalism in the African-American Great Awakening, the CME grew from 68,000 members in 1873 to 120,000 in 1880. Even with this growth, though, the CME garnered only a minority of black Methodists. In the decades after the Civil War, the AMEZ church attracted twice as many and the AME church more than three times as many blacks as the CME church. Both of those independent denominations had started with virtually nothing in the South.²⁵

The Civil War also allowed the northern-based MEC to compete in the southern religious scene. The MEC missionary system offered freed people something the other Methodist denominations lacked: resources. The MEC entered the South with comparatively large financial resources, educational opportunities, and political connections. These resources also came attached to white authority, though. While it is true that the MEC contained white abolitionists who were more likely to support black aspirations, it also

²⁴ Quoted in Hildebrand, *The Times Were Strange and Stirring*, p. 9. See also pp. 11–22.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 15–23, 48.

contained a sizeable population that doubted black capabilities. In 1864 the MEC had formed its black churches into separate mission conferences, an arrangement that granted independence to black churches and ministers on the congregational level, but not equality or authority on the denominational level. As a result, the MEC embodied a rather complicated ambivalence towards black aspirations. While it entered the South on the ground as an outsider group that challenged the old southern racial order, it operated from an insider northern position that put limits on black advancement. This brand of Methodism made more inroads among blacks than the CME church, attracting about twice as many blacks to its fold, but it did not carry the day among blacks.²⁶

That distinction, for black Methodists, belonged to the AME and AMEZ denominations. Even without the resources of the MEC, these independent black denominations attracted three times as many blacks as the MEC. The AME church grew from 20,000 in 1856 to 400,000 in 1876 and the AMEZ church grew from 4,600 in 1860 to 250,000 in 1880. The growth of these two denominations points to a type of cultural dissent that exposed the racial hypocrisies and injustices of American society. While most white Americans were ambivalent or downright aghast at the thought of blacks holding positions of power and authority, African-American pastors and bishops administered the AME and AMEZ denominations. From the outset, the existence of this black leadership thrilled ordinary blacks. The AME and AMEZ churches also urged blacks to get involved in politics, encouraging them to claim the promises that American democracy continued to deny them. It was apparent that the particular vision that these denominations promoted—one that combined Methodist revivalism with legal protection, political participation, education, black achievement, and a challenge to white supremacy—resonated most widely among blacks.²⁷

These denominations were not simply providing a religious basis for political dissent, though. The AME and AMEZ churches evoked a popular form of evangelical spirituality that drew upon religious enthusiasm, traces of African culture, and the solidarity of local communities. The most oft-noted expression of this popular spirituality comes from an account provided by AME bishop, Daniel Alexander Payne. Promoting a vision of black Christianity built upon emancipation, education, respectability, and civilized deportment, Payne worked to stamp out enthusiastic and 'heathenish' forms of religious expression such as a dance known as the 'ring-shout'. At one church he visited in 1878, Payne ordered the congregation to 'sit down and sing in a rational manner'. The young AME minister of the congregation later defended the ring as a means of evangelism, telling Payne that 'at camp meeting there

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 75–8, 95, 117.

²⁷ Case, 'The African American Great Awakening'.

must be a ring here, a ring there, and a ring over yonder, or sinners will not get converted'. Even within the AME, then, divisions emerged between those who wanted the denomination to function as a black representative in the American establishment and those who wanted a black faith that followed a separate route. Payne enjoyed high status within the AME, but most of the denomination did not follow his recipe for respectable black Methodism. Popular spirituality—a feature of democratized Methodism that had persisted for the previous century—still carried the day as a form of cultural dissent among the ordinary members of the African-American denominations.²⁸

The popular spirituality of Methodism also became crucial in the formation of black racial identity, which itself played a key Dissenting role for a people pushed to the margins of society. Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood argue that the 'conversion of African Americans to Protestant Christianity was a, perhaps *the*, defining moment in African American history'.²⁹ In other words, in the long process of identity transformation that had begun when slaves were first taken from their African communities, the evangelical church in America became the institution that defined and solidified what it meant to be a black American. After the Civil War, while local communities weakened in most parts of American society, the black church emerged as the central institution for local black communities. It not only marked out the terms of black identity in America, but provided a safe haven for blacks to negotiate the travails of racism. Black movements for political Dissent and civil rights found African-American churches to be the most fruitful ground for basing their movement, a natural legacy for an institution that had first been forged in religious Dissent. In this way, the black church, along with the black family and school, provided the foundation from which twentieth-century civil rights movements would emerge.³⁰

The vibrant growth of black Methodist and black Baptist churches after the Civil War shows how outsider groups could thrive in the American religious setting. That growth combined quintessentially American religious characteristics—religious disestablishment, competitive denominationalism, democratized leadership, and institutional autonomy—with characteristics that did not dominate the American mainstream: religious expressiveness, African cultural elements, black racial identity, and a strengthening rather than weakening of local communities.³¹

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), p. xi.

³⁰ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York, 1988), p. 612.

³¹ Case, 'The African American Great Awakening'.

THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT AND DISSENT

American Methodism spawned yet another major set of denominational dissenters: the Holiness movement that emerged in the last half of the century. The Holiness movement emerged in the 1840s as a renewal and revivalist effort, with a particular emphasis on perfectionist spirituality based on John Wesley's theology. Half a century later it had evolved into a widespread movement of religious dissent that created more than one hundred new denominations and laid the foundation for Pentecostalism.

Phoebe Palmer, a middle-class Methodist from New York City, did much to institutionalize the sanctification experience. Gaining widespread popularity in the 1840s for leading 'Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness', Palmer built upon earlier Methodist theology that emphasized a path towards spiritual perfection through an immediate second experience of sanctification that followed conversion. For three decades, her Tuesday meetings attracted between fifty and 150 laypeople and ministers each week. Palmer wrote extensively of holiness, played a key role in popularizing the 1857–8 revival, and toured the northeast, the Midwest, and Ontario, promoting the experience.³²

Because the Holiness movement could adapt to a number of different social and cultural situations, it fit well with the middle-class segment of American Methodism that was comfortable with the American cultural establishment. Palmer herself promoted a holiness sensibility that combined spiritual zeal with respectability, decorum, and gentility. A number of MEC bishops and leaders counted themselves as Holiness advocates. But the very popularity of holiness also ensured that it would be embraced by those who were dissatisfied with the cultural establishment. Holiness could, in fact, serve as a badge of countercultural identity. B.T. Roberts, who broke with the MEC in 1860 to form the Free Methodists, shared Palmer's holiness theology but not her cultural vision. As Roberts saw it, riches and sanctification were incompatible. Though Roberts and his followers dissented on a number of issues that were not directly related to holiness theology, his linkage of Holiness to a critique of middle-class gentility would prefigure holiness Dissent in the decades that followed. The independent, autonomous, and Dissenting nature of American religious arrangements provided fertile soil for Holiness to grow as a movement of those unhappy with the cultural establishment.³³

In the decade after the Civil War, the Holiness movement still had wide (though not total) support from the leaders of the MEC, MECS, and AME

³² Long, 'Consecrated Respectability', pp. 281–5; Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1997), pp. 17–19.

³³ Long, 'Consecrated Respectability'.

denominations. Four of the eight MEC bishops elected in 1872, for instance, were Holiness supporters. But two characteristics within the Holiness movement increasingly intensified the dissenting impulses of the movement.³⁴ First, Holiness dissent followed a similar structural path to American Methodism under John Wesley. Just as Methodism started out as a society committed to spiritual zeal within the Church of England, so the Holiness movement started out as a network of advocates committed to spiritual zeal within the MEC. And just as the rapid growth of American Methodism led ordinary leaders to establish an independent denomination, the rapid growth of the Holiness movement led its advocates to establish independent institutions. Drawing upon the Methodist heritage of the camp meeting as a way to promote their cause, Holiness leaders formed the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness in 1867. This organization, which was neither created nor sanctioned by the official governing bodies of any existing Methodist denomination, held fifty-two Holiness camp meetings between 1867 and 1883. Soon, regional Holiness bodies formed that operated separate from the official 'connectional' system of institutionalized Methodism. By 1887, 206 full-time holiness evangelists were scouring the country, preaching and holding revivals in Methodist churches without having been officially appointed to the office by the denomination. The Southwest Holiness association went so far as to allow local Holiness groups to buy their own meeting houses and call pastors. Holiness advocates established numerous periodicals dedicated to Holiness teachings without official sanction by denominational officials. And in their zeal to spread holiness, these advocates worked quite readily with non-Methodist churches and leaders.³⁵

Second, while Holiness devotees intended to purify Methodism, injecting it with greater zeal, they eventually realized that many Methodists would not follow their lead into the doctrines and practices of sanctification. As a result, Holiness advocates began to lament that the MEC had fallen prey to complacency, ostentation, a lack of zeal, and worldliness. This kind of jeremiad had a long and rich history in American Protestantism. Dating back to the second generation of Puritan ministers in the 1660s, the American jeremiad was usually employed by religious leaders to warn ordinary laypeople that they had lost the spiritual faithfulness of their ancestors. Holiness advocates, however, democratized it, so that ordinary laypeople and preachers critiqued the spiritual complacency of denominational leaders. The Wesleyans and Free Methodists had argued these points as justification for forming separate denominations in the antebellum era. In the 1860s, old-school 'croakers' within the MEC, like the famous circuit rider Peter Cartwright, lamented the

³⁴ Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, pp. 27–8.

³⁵ Charles Edwin Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion: The Holiness Movement and American Methodism, 1867–1936* (Metuchen, NJ, 1974), pp. 19–21.

loss of simplicity and zeal that they remembered from the Methodism of their youth. In the minds of these old-timers, too many Methodist churches loved wealth and pleasure too much, particularly those filled with well-educated, socially influential, and economically prosperous congregants.³⁶

The combination of autonomous holiness activity within the denomination and a growing critique of mainstream Methodism inevitably led to forms of dissent that produced independent denominations. 'Come-outerism', the idea of leaving the MEC or MECS to form an independent Holiness denomination, began gaining ground in the 1880s. The issue arose several times in the national holiness camp meetings, but the Holiness leaders there averted further discussion. The Holiness tide, however, was rising. Holiness dissent provoked deeper conflicts in the South than in other regions of the nation. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, some segments of the white South had built a tradition of republican dissent against the prevailing cultural establishment dominated by slave-owners. Democratized Methodism, meanwhile, had grown through a critique of the reigning cultural order. The Holiness movement, which had not made very deep inroads in the South before 1880, drew from these traditions within southern society. Unlike many denominational leaders in the MECS, Holiness leaders, who numbered more greatly in upcountry areas that had shown Unionist support during the Civil War, were not comfortable with the reigning Lost Cause conception of the South. Like northern Holiness advocates, they were critical of Methodists who showed a penchant for luxury, materialism, and worldliness. Many southern Holiness advocates were poor, and even if they weren't, they identified with the poor.³⁷

By the 1880s, then, older forms of southern cultural Dissent had reasserted themselves in religious form. Holiness advocates tended to allow women to take leading roles and sometimes accepted them as evangelists and preachers, a characteristic that challenged southern patriarchy. Many white southern Holiness advocates were open to interracial cooperation and sometimes integrated worship. Holiness promoted a democratized conviction that the effectiveness of an evangelist, under the power of the Holy Spirit, carried more religious authority than denominational rulings, laws, or policies. These characteristics led non-holiness MECS leaders to perceive the movement as a threat to both denominational leadership and the social order.³⁸

Holiness never gained as much support from prominent Methodists in the American South as it did in the North. As a result, conflicts fell along clearer demarcations between insiders and outsiders. In 1885, the prominent MECS

³⁶ Wigger, *Taking Heaven By Storm*, pp. 180–2.

³⁷ Randall J. Stephens, *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South* (Cambridge, MA, 2008), pp. 55–8, 62–7, 80–2, 93.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 62, 64–7, 80, 82, 93.

minister and soon-to-be bishop Atticus G. Haywood preached quite clearly against the Second Blessing, launching a decade-long campaign against Holiness. Holiness advocates 'preach a different doctrine', wrote a contributor to the *Georgia Wesleyan Advocate* that same year, 'they sing different songs; they patronize and circulate a different literature; they have adopted radically different words of worship'.³⁹ Southern seminaries began to teach against it and major MECS periodicals like the *Quarterly Review of the M.E. Church, South* and the Nashville-based *Christian Advocate* ran articles criticizing the movement as a 'church-within-a-church'. This stance practically became official at the 1894 General Conference when MECS bishops issued a statement rebuking the movement.⁴⁰

The conflict extended beyond rhetoric and debates. In 1885, the North Georgia Conference assigned most of its Holiness ministers to one district in an attempt to segregate and contain the movement. In 1892 the South Georgia Conference, in an attempt to undercut autonomous Holiness itinerants, passed a resolution refusing to recognize the office of evangelist. Many southern conferences assigned Holiness ministers to poor, low-paying, or isolated churches. The Northwest Texas Conference urged members to report any Holiness meetings to denominational officials.⁴¹ This state of affairs inevitably produced ruptures within the MECS in the 1890s. Many Holiness advocates left the southern denomination to join MEC, Free Methodist, or Wesleyan churches that now found receptive audiences in previously unpromising soil. Others formed independent Holiness denominations, such as the National Church of Christ or the Pentecostal Alliance.⁴²

These 'come-outer' movements intensified in other regions of the United States as well, even though the MEC tended to be more accommodating to Holiness than the MECS. Much depended upon local dynamics, which played out at the conference level. Many Midwestern conferences of the MEC managed to negotiate workable arrangements with Holiness advocates. Other areas, such as southern California, were more antagonistic. When Methodist minister Phineas Bresee gained fame as a notable Holiness evangelist in California and displayed independent tendencies, MEC officials appointed him to struggling churches. Bresee left the MEC and established what would become the largest Holiness denomination in the United States, the Church of the Nazarene. In other areas, Holiness advocates simply left because they were dissatisfied with the lack of zeal in the MEC. Many argued that converts from Holiness meetings would backslide once they settled into Methodist churches

³⁹ Quoted in Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Stephens, *The Fire Spreads*, pp. 140–1; Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, pp. 37, 40.

⁴¹ Stephens, *The Fire Spreads*, pp. 143, 154; Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, p. 39.

⁴² Stephens, *The Fire Spreads*, pp. 158–9.

that were not led by Holiness ministers. The only solution, as they saw it, was to form independent Holiness denominations. As a result, they created scores of new Holiness denominations between 1890 and 1910, with names like the Holiness Christian Association, the People's Evangelical Church, and the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America.⁴³

Not all Holiness bodies emerged as Dissenters from Methodist bodies. Though they all drew from Wesleyan theology and spirituality, some Holiness groups emerged from non-Methodist denominational sources. The Church of God (Anderson) broke from the Winebrenner Church of God in the Midwest, while Holiness advocates emerged in Quaker, Mennonite, and United Brethren bodies. The Christian Missionary Alliance and Keswick Holiness movement drew their followers largely from non-Methodist denominations. The Salvation Army landed in New York City in 1880, transplanting the movement from Great Britain. But while these Holiness movements were not directly dissenting from established Methodist denominations, they expressed the old evangelical Wesleyan conviction that they were to instill deeper spiritual commitments in a culture that was not Christian enough. The well-known Salvation Army practices of taking religion to the city streets, in the form of bands, parades, and social services, provided a visible example of the Holiness desire to reclaim sacred space in a culture that increasingly privatized religion.⁴⁴

The new Holiness bodies drew upon democratized impulses that had driven American Methodism at the beginning of the century. Ordinary Holiness activists promoted their movement without the sanction of elites or guidance of denominational policies. Female evangelists began to appear again, with a few, like Amanda Berry Smith and Maria Woodworth-Etter, gaining widespread success and fame within Holiness circles. Smith, a black woman who preached more often to white audiences than black audiences, demonstrated that Holiness enthusiasm sometimes transcended the racial constraints of the Jim Crow era. Religious enthusiasm also infused the movement with religious expressiveness common to early American Methodism. The emphasis on the unpredictable work of the Holy Spirit led to increased claims of supernatural activity, including divine healing, visions, and miracles.⁴⁵

Many of these new Holiness denominations continued on as small, independent bodies. Some eventually merged with one another to form larger Holiness bodies. And many followed the more radical spiritual impulses of

⁴³ Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion*, pp. 90–9.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 59–60; Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, pp. 35, 48, 144; Diane Winston, *Red-Hot and Righteous: The Urban Religion of the Salvation Army* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

⁴⁵ Jay Riley Case, *An Unpredictable Gospel: American Evangelicals and World Christianity, 1812–1920* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 218–27; Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, pp. 190–1.

holiness into Pentecostalism, providing the foundation for the Pentecostal movement in the United States and around the world.

THE NORTH AMERICAN HOLINESS CONNECTION TO WORLD CHRISTIANITY

The American Holiness movement would have a global impact as well. The Dissenting impulses within the American holiness movement would not only be transplanted to new holiness bodies overseas, they would also provide important material from which new forms of Pentecostalism around the world would draw. The groundwork began with the activities of William Taylor, a holiness preacher who became the most famous Methodist missionary of the late nineteenth century. Embodying all the standard dissenting characteristics of democratized Methodism and Holiness zeal, Taylor's ministry was characterized by individual autonomy, resistance to bureaucratic centralization, and critiques of ministries infused with material comforts. Taylor left the Methodist connectional system to become an itinerant evangelist in the 1850s and 60s, increasing his field of labours from the United States to Methodist churches in Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and South Africa. A successful revival among blacks and whites in South Africa in 1866 convinced Taylor he could be a roving worldwide itinerant missionary, much in the style of earlier circuit riders, though with a notably larger field of operation.

The key difference, though, was that Taylor did not get appointed by the Methodist Missionary Society and he refused to take directions from them. Making what he called 'Spirit-led' ministry decisions, Taylor roamed the sub-continent of India in the 1870s, holding revivals and setting up fellowship bands. He later notified MEC officials that he had formed new churches for them to incorporate into their system.⁴⁶ Naturally, this independent style put Taylor into conflict with the Missionary Society. Taking a more systematized approach to missionary efforts, the MEC made decisions with careful planning, economic planning, inter-denominational cooperation, and episcopal oversight in mind. That oversight also meant they granted 'less civilized' overseas conferences, like those in India, a subordinate, 'missionary' status. Taylor believed his churches in India could develop their own episcopacy and enter as equal conferences with MEC conferences in the US. Taylor gained widespread fame and support in the 1870s and 80s, fuelling the conviction among Holiness enthusiasts that the MEC had lost its spiritual zeal. Taylor

⁴⁶ Case, *An Unpredictable Gospel*, pp. 110–33.

developed a 'Pauline' plan of self-support for missionaries, so they would not have to depend upon, or follow the dictates of, the Missionary Society, a model that was picked up by Holiness entrepreneurs who started their own domestic missions. Taylor travelled to the West Indies and South America to set up new stations before being elected missionary bishop to oversee MEC missions in Africa.⁴⁷

Taylor did not spark widespread movements of Christianity as he had hoped he would. But he did recruit scores of Holiness missionaries from America who carried out their work with zeal, a strong sense of autonomy, and a knack for validating the spiritual claims of ordinary Christians. These Holiness missionaries formed the backbone of a worldwide Holiness network, connected through media reports of revivals around the world, surprising works of the Holy Spirit, and a sense that God was at work among ordinary people from all nations. In addition to fuelling a sense that the MEC and MECS had lost their ability to effectively spread the Gospel, that network provided the basic tools and resources that laid the foundation for the birth of worldwide Pentecostalism.

Religious dynamics in Chile provide the most obvious example of how Taylor's Holiness system stoked a worldwide Pentecostal dissent grounded in democratized Christianity, dissatisfaction with the status quo, and claims to remarkable movements of the Holy Spirit. Willis and May Hoover were Holiness Methodist missionaries who had been recruited by Taylor. Inspired by news of Holiness and Pentecostal activity in India, the Hoovers helped foment revival among their churches in Chile. When Methodist missionary authorities attempted to rein in the ecstatic movement, working-class Chileans left the church and the Hoovers followed them out. They formed the Iglesia Metodista Pentecostal, which eventually became the largest Pentecostal body in Chile. Pentecostal missionaries around the world followed similar patterns. In this manner, the dynamics of religious Dissent, which began in early American Methodism, continued its path through the Holiness movement to Pentecostalism, where it became a pervasive feature of world Christianity.⁴⁸

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⁴⁷ Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion*, pp. 54, 64; Case, *An Unpredictable Gospel*, pp. 133–44.

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Baptists in North America

Bill J. Leonard

Describing the state of religion along the Cumberland River in 1813, Kentucky circuit rider Peter Cartwright commented that while his beloved Methodists ‘preached in new settlements, and the Lord poured out his Spirit’, they ‘were constantly followed by a certain set of proselyting Baptist preachers’ who apparently waited until ‘a revival was gotten up’ by the Methodists, and then tried ‘to take our converts off into the water’. Cartwright concluded that the Baptists ‘made so much ado about baptism by immersion, that the uninformed would suppose that heaven was an island, and there was no way to get there but by diving or swimming’.¹

In ways that Peter Cartwright probably never anticipated, his critique of the ‘proselyting’ Baptists captured something of their broad ethos in nineteenth-century North America. They were generally evangelistic, calling sinners to repentance; committed to the idea of a believers’ church represented in believers’ baptism as the biblical norm for church membership; willing to challenge the theology and practice of other Christian communions, particularly ‘paedo-baptists’ (infant baptizers); and, with some significant exceptions, fervent advocates of revivalism. These characteristics contributed to a legacy of Dissent in American culture but also within the Baptist movement itself, which was, as the chapter will demonstrate, dominated throughout the century by political, racial, and ecclesiological disagreements.

BAPTISTS IN THE US AND CANADA: SIMILAR AND DISTINCT

North American Baptists came of age in the nineteenth century, often to the chagrin of traditional religious establishments and Baptists’ sectarian competitors.

¹ Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, the Backwoods Preacher* (New York, 1856), pp. 133–4.

In the colonial period, their insistence that the individual could be trusted in matters of biblical interpretation and religious experience contributed to a fierce demand for religious liberty, a stance that made them, as John Lee Eighmy suggested, 'natural enemies of the established churches' and fostered 'considerable persecution'.² In the United States, the Bill of Rights and the Great Awakenings transformed their public status considerably. In 1792 Baptists in the United States claimed 65,345 members. By 1812, after two Great Awakenings, they had doubled their membership, and by the 1830s Baptists and Methodists were the largest denominations in the United States.³ As their numbers increased so did their internal dissent over multiple issues including predestination and free will, revivalism, missionary activity, denominationalism, and the role of the church in society. As they moved from sect to denomination, Baptists' approaches to church/state issues modified variously.

In a study of Christianity in Canada and the United States, Mark Noll wrote that nineteenth-century 'Christian developments' in both countries 'bear striking similarities'. Like their American counterparts, 'Canadian believers mobilized to preach the gospel in new settlements spread over a vast frontier' and 'linked the progress of Christianity with the advance of civilization'. They also made a concerted effort to contribute 'a Christian tone to the institutions, habits and morals of public life'. At the same time, differences between the two countries were evident in Canadian links to the British Commonwealth and French culture, as well as a strong and enduring Catholic influence.⁴ Canada did not become a nation until 1867, when three provinces formed the Federal Dominion of Canada, yet a Baptist presence was evident from the mid-eighteenth century, when Ebenezer Moulton, a Dissenting Massachusetts Baptist, immigrated to Nova Scotia in 1760 after challenging a state-mandated taxation that benefited the established (Congregational) church. Such persecution from the New England 'Standing Order' led numerous Dissenters, including Baptists, into exile in the Maritimes. Many of these individuals brought their revivalist sentiments with them.⁵ One of the most influential New Light (pro-revival) preachers was Henry Alline, whose revivalist travels bridged the colonies. Although not a Baptist, Alline's itinerant methods and conversionist message had an impact on numerous Canadian evangelical groups including New Light and Free Christian Baptists, as well as the schismatic Primitive and Reformed Baptists.⁶ Baptism by immersion seems

² John Lee Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville, TN, 1972), p. 8.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

⁴ Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1992), p. 246. See also Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History* (Valley Forge, PA, 2003), p. 227.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

⁶ D.G. Bell, ed., *Newlight Baptist Journals of James Manning and James Innis* (Hantsport, Nova Scotia, 1984), p. xiii.

to have been an important impetus for moving New Light enthusiasts into the ranks of the Baptists. In 1800, one Canadian churchman noted that while New Lights initially accepted infant baptism, 'by a recent illumination, they have adopted the Anabaptist scheme, by which their number has been much increased and their zeal inflamed'.⁷

Baptists' critics soon numbered them among the resident Dissenters. Walter Bates, High Sheriff of Kings County, New Brunswick, compiled a narrative of Dissenting activities in his region, 1838–9. He enumerated the 'different denominations', 'espetially [sic] those under the name of Anabaptists and New Lights who have crept in from the United States with such aversion [sic] to Kings and Bishops as might harm more than Episcopacy [sic] might remedy in an age'.⁸ Bates acknowledged that a preacher who came 'despising all lawfull ordination or licence' [sic] and 'deprecating all wise and good Churchmen, will never find himself long without an Audience'.⁹ These Canadian Baptist preachers refused to hold their peace regarding the dangers of establishmentarian religion. Like their American counterparts, Canadian Baptists divided over Calvinism/Arminianism, open/closed communion, missionary agencies, and denominational cooperation.

'FREEDOM FROM ALL HUMAN CONTROL': BAPTIST PRINCIPLES

Because Baptists have origins in multiple locales and movements—Anabaptism, Arminianism, Calvinism, Puritan Separatism, Nonconformity—they have searched diligently for common threads of theology and praxis that provide continuity. That sense of history has been and remains important. The Baptist movement began around 1609, grounded in the centrality of a believers' church, and the inevitability of ecclesiastical and political Dissent. As second-generation Protestants, theirs was a commitment to a visible church composed only of those who could testify to an experience of grace through faith in Jesus Christ, a religious experience publicly professed in believers' baptism.¹⁰ One of their earliest confessions, written in 1611 by the British Baptist founders exiled in Amsterdam, had defined the church as 'a company of faithful people separated from the world by the word & Spirit of GOD being

⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

⁸ Walter Bates, 'Walter Bates on the Rise of Religious Dissent, c1839', Appendix XI in D.G. Bell, ed., *The New Light Baptist Journals of James Manning and James Innis* (Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1964), p. 358.

⁹ Ibid., p. 359.

¹⁰ The earliest Baptists practised believers' baptism by affusion (pouring), but by the 1640s immersion became the normative mode.

knit unto the LORD, & one unto another, by Baptism. Upon their own confession of the faith and sins'. The statement concluded with a declaration that 'Churches constituted after any other manner, or of any other persons are not according to CHRIST'S testament'.¹¹

Baptists' penchant for Dissent was predicated on the idea that a believers' church necessitated a faith uncoerced by the state or its culture-privileged religious establishment. For the earliest Baptists, God alone was judge of conscience and each individual was responsible to God, not government, for the faith he or she did or did not have. The Philadelphia Confession of 1742, a major source of doctrinal identity for many North American Baptists, affirmed that: 'God alone is the Lord of Conscience, and hath left it free from the Doctrines and Commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his Word, or not contained in it.'¹² Since governments and religious establishments were ever inclined to manipulate faith and churchly institutions, religious Dissent was essential for those groups that resisted such salvific uniformity. Baptists made their case in colonial America through seventeenth-century advocates such as Roger Williams and Dr John Clarke in Rhode Island, and eighteenth-century Baptist leaders like Massachusetts's Isaac Backus and Virginia's John Leland. As with Williams and Clarke, Leland's radical religious libertarianism extended even to non-believers. He wrote: 'Whether, therefore, the Christian religion be true or false, it is not an article of legislation. . . . Bible Christians, and Deists, have an equal plea against self-named Christians . . . who tyrannize over the consciences of others, under the specious garb of religion and good order.'¹³

As nineteenth-century British historian Edward Underhill noted, 'a distinguishing . . . trait' of the early Baptists was their claim 'for the church and for the conscience, of freedom from all human control'. Thus Baptist insistence that 'faith is the gift of God' 'brought them into collision with every form of human invention in the worship of God'. 'For this', Underhill suggested, 'the Baptists bore cheerfully, *cruel mocking, and scourging; yea, moreover bonds and imprisonments*, and death.'¹⁴ The Baptist commitment to religious freedom was born of an insistence on a church composed only of believers—those who professed faith as the basis for baptism. State or culture-based religious

¹¹ William L. Lumpkin and Bill J. Leonard, eds., *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge, PA, 2012), p. 111. Emphasis in original.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 275. The Philadelphia Confession was taken from the Second London Confession of Particular Baptists, written in London in 1689, using much of the Westminster Confession of Faith. See also *ibid.*, pp. 362–5.

¹³ John Leland, *The Writings of John Leland*, ed. L.F. Greene (1845; Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 294.

¹⁴ Edward Bean Underhill, introduction, *The Records of a Church of Christ, meeting in Broadmead, Bristol, 1640–1687* (London, 1847), p. xlv. Emphasis in original.

efforts to coerce faith or manipulate conscience must be opposed at all costs, hence the necessity of Dissent.

This concept of the church led Baptists towards a pervasive congregationalism, the belief that Christ's authority was mediated not through bishop or king, presbytery or synod, but through the congregation of Christian believers. Each faith-affirming church bore Christ's authority for administering the sacraments, preaching, ordaining, and determining the specific nature of its ministry. The New Hampshire Confession of 1833, a guide for many nineteenth-century Baptists, notes that 'a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptised believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by his laws; and exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by his word'.¹⁵ This intense emphasis on congregational polity fostered a continuing tension between individual church autonomy and corporate connectionalism, evident early on in 'associations' of regionally and doctrinally related Baptist churches. Baptist historian W.T. Whitley wrote that, 'Baptists from the beginning sought to maintain sisterly intercourse between local churches; they never thought that one church was independent of others.'¹⁶ Baptist congregationalism covered a spectrum from intense localism to varying degrees of associational and denominational cooperation. An uneasy tension often developed between local churches and corporate associations, particularly when congregational autonomy appeared threatened by denominational bureaucracies. While this system of ecclesiastical order created a dramatic sense of freedom for individuals and churches to determine their own spiritual, theological, and ministry-related approaches, such populism often ensured internal dissent, disagreement, and the potential for schism. Nineteenth-century Baptists reflected these divisions in controversies related to revivalism, mission, slavery, and denominational connections.

In her study of American frontier religion, Christine Leigh Heyrman described the tendency of nineteenth-century Baptist churches to split over a variety of issues, noting that: 'the absence of any authoritative higher body left the Baptists with no means of settling disputes among the clergy, generational or otherwise'. Although Baptist denominations could and did set their own membership regulations, they eschewed any effort to interfere in specific disputes or policies set by local congregations. Heyrman concluded that 'given their abiding devotion to congregational independence, a veritable icon of lay adoration, the Baptists could not have handled matters differently and still remained Baptists'.¹⁷ Congregational polity and its appropriation by Baptists

¹⁵ Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, p. 382.

¹⁶ W.T. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* (Revised edn., London, 1932), p. 86.

¹⁷ Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York, 1997), p. 97.

often meant that debates and divisions were not only possible, but probable. The suggestion that Baptists 'multiply by dividing' is the inevitable result of their polity.

BAPTIST DISSENT: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCHES

Nineteenth-century Baptists agreed on many issues. First, they were successful in their efforts to secure religious liberty and the abolition of state-privileged churches in Puritan New England and the Anglican South. The First Amendment to the US Constitution provided for freedom of religion, setting in motion a religious pluralism congruent with that long anticipated by Baptists. While Baptists readily affirmed such liberty and celebrated their own contribution to achieving it, as they moved from sectarian minority to denominational multitude they were not always prepared to extend it to certain religious communions; that is, to the Catholics, Mormons, or non-believers who in their eyes challenged Christian and American culture. In the United States, chattel slavery created Baptists' most significant theological, ethical, and organizational division, pressing their biblicism and conversionism to the limit. Second, amid their differences, Baptists shared commitments to biblical authority and liberty of conscience; personal faith as essential for church membership; believers' baptism (by immersion) and the Lord's Supper as gospel sacraments/ordinances; local church autonomy and associational cooperation; the priesthood of all believers and the calling of ministers; and the importance of religious freedom within the context of respectful citizenship.

Third, while they maintained certain commonalities of doctrine and practice, nineteenth-century Baptist individuals, congregations, and denominations in both the United States and Canada were sharply divided over the specific interpretations of their most basic beliefs. They implemented those ideals across a wide spectrum of theological, practical, and regional interpretations. While affirming the authority of Scripture, they divided over biblical interpretations regarding Calvinism or Arminianism, slavery, war, and political engagement. They affirmed the centrality of a believers' church but disagreed as to the morphology or process of religious experience itself. They required immersion baptism of all who professed faith but differed on the proper candidate and administrator of that ordinance. They used associations of churches for fellowship, spiritual affirmation, and common ministry, but differed over denominational purpose and participation. They insisted that gospel preaching was central to the church's mission, but divided over the role of human beings in implementing that mission. They affirmed the need to convert sinners to faith in Christ, but wrangled over revivals as a means to that end.

CONVERSION, REVIVALS, AND REVIVALISM

From the beginning of their movement, Baptists insisted that personal regeneration was necessary for all who would claim to be ‘in Christ’. The Orthodox Creed (1678) declared that ‘Those that are united unto Christ by effectual faith, are regenerated, and have a new heart and spirit created in them through the virtue of Christ, his death, resurrection, and intercession.’¹⁸ While an experience of God’s regenerating grace was required of every member, in many congregations such a conversion required congregational verification. Many nineteenth-century Baptist churches required potential members to detail their conversion to the congregation or its elders who determined if it was a valid spiritual experience. If the experience seemed questionable, the sinner might be required to try again or ‘wait on the Lord’ for a clearer vision of redemption, before baptism and church membership were permitted. If the spiritual transformation was approved, baptism was then administered as a public declaration of the regenerated individual’s Christian commitment. Nineteenth-century congregations took seriously their disciplinary responsibilities, and church records are filled with accounts of corrective action meted out against recalcitrant members.¹⁹

While conversion was normative, Baptist groups differed over Calvinist and Arminian morphologies for regeneration. General (Arminian) Baptists insisted that all persons were potentially elected to salvation by virtue of the general atonement of Christ, his death for the sins of the entire world. Sinners actualized that election as their free will (enabling grace) cooperated with God’s saving grace to bring about salvation. For Arminian Baptists, regeneration followed repentance and faith, as the terms for receiving divine grace. Those who had the free will to choose salvation could exercise that freedom in turning from faith; ‘falling from grace’ was a distinct possibility.

Particular (Calvinist) Baptists, by contrast, emphasized a Reformed morphology whereby salvation was the activity of God alone, bestowed only on those elected to salvation before the foundation of the world. God’s grace was infused into the hearts of the elect, thereby enabling them to repent of their sins and profess faith in Christ. In this case, regeneration preceded repentance and faith. Whom grace called, it kept, enabling the elect to persevere to the end.²⁰ By the nineteenth century, these varied, often contradictory, salvific processes positioned Baptists across a wide theological spectrum from

¹⁸ Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, p. 316.

¹⁹ William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists* (Chicago, IL, 1931), pp. 272–416.

²⁰ Bill J. Leonard, *A Sense of the Heart: Christian Religious Experience in the United States* (Nashville, TN, 2014), pp. 32–5.

Calvinist-oriented Primitive, Old Regular and Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Baptists, to Arminian-oriented Separate, General, and Free Will Baptists. Other regional and ethnic Baptist groups in the US and Canada modified their Calvinism to permit missionary evangelization or their Arminianism to allow for perseverance in the faith.²¹

Divisions also developed over revivals as a public means for awakening sinners to repentance. As the First Great Awakening took shape in eighteenth-century North America, Baptists initially seemed hesitant to engage with it, perhaps because it began within the Standing Order of New England Puritanism, a privileged religious establishment that often dealt severely with Dissenters. As the Awakening intensified, Baptists, like other colonial communities, were divided, less over the need of conversion than the use of external 'means' for conversion, particularly involving emotional outbursts labelled 'religious affections'. Divisions occurred between Regular Baptists, who encouraged the conversion of the elect but looked askance at emotion-laden religious experiences, and Separate Baptists, who saw outbursts as an external sign of inward grace. Although using the language of Calvinism, the Separate Baptists preached with an intensity that suggested all were capable of redemption by faith. Baptist historian Leon McBeth noted that Regulars favoured strict Calvinism, confessional theology, 'orderly worship', 'formal hymns', 'educated pastors', and the silence of women in the church. Separate Baptists often looked askance at confessions of faith, while encouraging dramatic conversions, emotive worship, and spontaneous, Spirit-inspired preaching, frequently giving women 'considerable leadership in the church'.²² Regulars and Separates reunited on the edge of the nineteenth century (1787), agreeing that confessions of faith should not be used for 'usurping a tyrannical power over the conscience of any' and that 'every Christian' should believe 'the doctrine of salvation by Christ, and free and unmerited grace alone'.²³

Revival controversies deepened on the American frontier as many Baptists enthusiastically promoted the camp meetings and revivals of a Second Great Awakening. David Benedict reported that Baptists benefited from innumerable conversions as a result of such 'enthusiastical' religion, estimating that 'about ten thousand were baptized and added to the Baptist churches in the course of two or three years' (1799–1803).²⁴ Benedict described revivalist scenarios of an 'affecting nature' that included 'groans and praise', as well as

²¹ Bill J. Leonard, *The Challenge of Being Baptist: Owning a Scandalous Past and an Uncertain Future* (Waco, TX, 2010), pp. 75–94.

²² H. Leon McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN, 1990), p. 165.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 166, citing David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* (Boston, MA, 1813), pp. 60–2.

²⁴ David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* (New York, 1848), p. 687.

'jerking' and 'dancing' under the Spirit's power. He insisted that these religious exercises 'prevailed' among the Methodists and Presbyterians, 'but were not introduced at all among the Baptists in these parts'.²⁵

Throughout the nineteenth century, revival meetings became a normative method for enlivening Christians and awakening 'lost sinners' to their need of salvation. Baptists were particularly committed to the protracted meeting, a scheduled time, often in spring after planting and fall after harvest, when nightly meetings were held for an extended period. Revivals shaped a particular hymnody (the gospel song), preaching that urged repentance and warned of damnation, and rituals linking salvation to actions such as coming forward to the 'mourner's bench' or 'walking the aisle' during the 'altar call'. Converts often described their redemption with phrases such as 'when I came forward' or 'when I walked the aisle'. Revivals also sought the renewal of practising Christians who were urged to avoid the 'worldliness' of alcohol, dancing, sexual immorality, gambling, tobacco, Sabbath breaking, and other sinful practices.²⁶

Not all Baptists agreed on the appropriateness of revival-oriented conversionism, however. Many Calvinistic Baptists resisted the use of revivals as an entry point for faith. For the Primitive Baptists and other Reformed Baptist communions, revivalist calls to immediate conversion were fruitless attempts at works-righteousness, a false notion that redemption could be initiated by the human will rather than the regenerating power of God alone. Rather, the elect were admonished to wait on the Spirit of God to infuse regenerative grace within. The elect would not leave this world without it. The Black Rock Address, approved by Particular Baptists of the Old School in 1832, acknowledged that while congregations could join together for 'the opportunity of preaching the gospel...from time to time', only God could bring about 'regeneration...at his own sovereign pleasure'. 'Protracted meetings', however, were inappropriate since they were 'got up either for the purpose of inducing the Holy Spirit to regenerate multitudes who would otherwise not be converted, or to convert them themselves by the machinery of these meetings'.²⁷ Salvation rested with God alone; human efforts were faulty attempts that gave sinners false hope.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Bill J. Leonard, 'Dull Habit or Acute Fever? William James and the Protestant Conversion Crisis', in *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, 43 (2015), 48–58.

²⁷ B.L. Beebe, *The Feast of Fat Things* (Middletown, NY, n.d.), pp. 21–2.

²⁸ Bill J. Leonard, *Baptists in America* (New York, 2005), pp. 104–8; and James L. Peacock and Ruel W. Tyson, Jr, *Pilgrims of Paradox: Calvinism and Experience among the Primitive Baptists of the Blue Ridge* (Washington, DC, 1989), pp. 88–103.

MISSION AND ANTI-MISSION: DENOMINATIONAL DISSENT

Revival enthusiasm and conversions led to a growing concern for Christians' 'obligation' to take the gospel to the 'heathen'. British Baptists seized the momentum with an impetus from leaders such as William Carey and Andrew Fuller, both of whom helped form the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in 1792. Asserting that it was the duty of Christians to accentuate a global gospel, Carey went to India under the auspices of the BMS. Fuller restyled the prevailing Calvinism to suggest that since God had ordained preaching to awaken the elect, Christians were obligated to fulfil that mandate. As Paul Fiddes suggests, Fuller insisted that while Christ's atoning death was 'effective' only for the elect chosen by God to enter the 'covenant of grace', his death was itself 'sufficient' for the sins of the world.²⁹

North American Baptists, enlivened by revivals, responded accordingly, forming a variety of local and regional mission societies such as the Female Baptist Missionary Society and the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society, both established in 1802. In the United States, Baptists' first national missionary organization, the General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions, was founded in 1814. The society, known as the Triennial Convention because it met every three years, was formed in part as a result of a request from Adoniram and Ann Hasseltine Judson and their colleague Luther Rice to fund a missionary endeavour in Burma. The Judsons and Rice were sent to India in 1814 by the Congregational American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Ann Hasseltine Judson articulated their calling: 'Yes, I think I would rather go to India, among the heathen, notwithstanding the almost insurmountable difficulties in the way, than to stay at home and enjoy the comforts and luxuries of life.'³⁰ On the long ocean voyage, the three missionaries determined to become Baptists, receiving immersion from British Baptist missionaries in India. Realizing that they could no longer receive Congregational funds, they sent Rice back to the US with a request for support for a new mission in Burma, and the Baptist Triennial Convention was born.

In Canada, Maritime Baptists raised their first funds for missions in 1814, with particular concern for home mission work in planting churches in new settlements. They also partnered with the American Baptist Home and Foreign Mission Societies in the US. In Upper Canada, Strict (Calvinist) Baptists were less evangelistic than their Evangelical Baptist counterparts.

²⁹ Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Waynesboro, GA, 2003), p. 256.

³⁰ James D. Knowles, *Memoir of Mrs Ann H. Judson, Missionary to Burmah* (Boston, MA, 1832), p. 48.

Hesitant to support denominational mission boards, they addressed missionary activity primarily through local congregations. Baptists in Montreal, concerned to convert French Catholics and deliver Canadians from the 'yoke' of the papacy, formed the Grande Ligne Mission. Calling themselves 'Baptiste Liberaux', or Free Baptists, their early connection to the Canadian Baptist Missionary Society ended in 1839 in a debate over immersion baptism. Reunited in 1845, they soon joined the Baptist Union of Canada.

While mission societies had been present in Baptist life for some time, the founding of the Triennial Convention set in motion a cooperative effort between a large number of Baptists, north and south. It represented the first real denominational organization of Baptists in the United States, with home and foreign mission societies. It also precipitated a significant schism as Old School, Calvinistic Baptists resisted efforts at global evangelization as an arrogant sign of human efforts to usurp the salvific power and process of the Divine. Mission boards and other denominational agencies were dismissed as unscriptural threats to the autonomy of local congregations.

One dissenter from the missionary cause was Daniel Parker, who proposed a doctrine of 'the two seeds', a belief that each person was born into the world with one of two spiritual seeds delineating salvation or damnation. The damned were not created in God's image but received the seed of the serpent, and were thus incapable of redemption. He wrote: 'It is evident that there are two seeds, one of the Serpent, the other of the woman; and they appear plain in Cain and Abel, and in their offerings.'³¹ The Calvinist Baptists who approved the Black Rock Address also condemned mission societies, theological schools, Sunday schools, and Bible societies as 'arrogant pretensions' that salvation could result from mere 'religious sentiments instilled into it' by external human efforts rather than by the exclusive work of the Holy Spirit.³²

Among more moderate nineteenth-century Baptist leaders were some who developed serious concerns that denominational missionary organizations were potential threats to congregational autonomy. Francis Wayland, an American Baptist pastor and president of Brown University, was an early supporter of denominational connectionalism. In the 1820s he proposed that 'the model of our system of general and state government will at once suggest itself to every American. The Associations in one state could easily send delegates to a state convention. This would embody all the information, and concentrate energies of a state. These state conventions might be brought to concentrated and united action'. Wayland was clear that these affiliations would not include 'any creeds or articles to be imposed on ourselves, or our brethren. The Bible is our only standard, and it is a sufficient standard of faith

³¹ Daniel Parker, *Views on the Two Seeds Taken from Genesis Third Chapter, and Part of the Fifteenth Verse* (Vandalia, IL, 1826), p. 8.

³² Beebe, *Fat Things*, p. 9.

and practice'.³³ He later repudiated those views, concerned that denominational mechanisms threatened the authority of the congregation. He renewed his concern for establishing mission societies that were themselves autonomous and not controlled by denominational bureaucracies. Wayland wrote: 'A missionary society is not a representative body, nor can any number of them speak the language of a whole denomination.' The members of each society joined together 'not as representatives of churches, for the churches have never sent them nor commissioned them; they come together on their own motion, merely as members of the Union, or of the Home Mission, or Bible, or any other society'.³⁴ Dissent over denominational authority continued among nineteenth-century Baptists.

BAPTISTS AND SLAVERY: DISSENT AND SCHISM

Perhaps the most significant division in nineteenth-century North American Baptist life occurred as a result of dissent over slavery and abolition. By the 1830s, Triennial Convention leaders encouraged a focus on common missionary endeavours rather than engaging in debates that would 'array brother against brother, church against church, and association against association, in a contest about slavery'.³⁵ It soon became clearer that the slavery question could not be avoided, particularly as abolitionist sentiments spread among Northern Baptist groups.

Baptists in the South were among the first to develop Biblical defences of slavery, linking cultural practice with scriptural authority. Richard Furman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Charleston, South Carolina, and one-time president of the Triennial Convention, addressed the state legislature in 1822, asserting: 'Had the holding of slaves been a moral evil, it cannot be supposed, that the inspired Apostles, who feared not the faces of men, and were ready to lay down their lives in the case of their God, would have tolerated it, for a moment, in the Christian Church.' Furman concluded: 'In proving this subject justifiable by Scriptural authority, its morality is also proved; for the Divine Law never sanctions immoral actions.'³⁶ Many southerners linked the veracity of Scripture with the continuation of chattel slavery.

³³ H. Leon McBeth, *Sourcebook*, p. 216.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

³⁵ Arthur T. Voss and Edward Mathews, eds., *Facts for Baptist Churches: Collected, Arranged, and Reviewed* (Utica, NY, 1850), p. 23.

³⁶ 'Rev. Dr. Richard Furman's Exposition of the Views of the Baptists Relative to the Coloured Population of the United States' [1822], in Bill J. Leonard, ed., *Early American Christianity* (Nashville, TN, 1983), pp. 382–3.

Baptist abolitionism gained ground in New England in the 1830s, creating dissenting movements that challenged denominational attempts at maintaining neutrality on slavery to preserve unity and missionary cooperation. The American Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention was founded in New York in 1840 with Elon Galusha, highly respected vice president of the foreign missions board, as president. The group sent a statement to Baptists in the South, signed by Galusha, declaring that should they 'remain deaf to the voice of warning' the abolitionists dared 'not recognize you as consistent brethren in Christ'. It asserted that abolitionist members could not, 'at the Lord's table, cordially take that as a brother's hand, which plies the scourge on woman's naked flesh'.³⁷ They were supported in these stances by British Baptists, who as early as 1833 had begun to correspond with the Americans, urging the abolition of slavery. In December 1833, the British Baptist Union wrote to the American Baptist Triennial Convention attacking 'the slave system... as a sin to be abandoned, and not an evil to be mitigated'.³⁸ In 1834, the Baptist Union sent Francis A. Cox and James Hoby 'to promote the sacred cause of negro emancipation'. They raised those concerns with Baptists in the travels around the United States and Canada, though on returning home they encountered criticism from the Baptist Union that they had not pressed their case more intently.³⁹

These pronouncements led the southerners to press the foreign mission board to abandon neutrality on slavery and rule for them or the abolitionists. Georgia Baptist B.M. Sanders wrote to the board: 'Between us and the abolitionists we know no neutrals. Those who are not for us are against us.'⁴⁰ When the Triennial Convention met in 1841, a statement was issued asserting that the board would require 'no new tests unauthorized by the Scriptures' that might 'interfere with the harmonious operations of our benevolent associations, as originally constituted'.⁴¹ Since slave owning was not a test when the Convention was founded, it would not be added to the membership regulations. At its triennial meeting in April 1844, the Convention again refused to sanction 'slavery or anti-slavery', while acknowledging that members were free to express their own opinions on the matter, 'in a Christian manner and spirit'.⁴² In November 1844, Alabama Baptists asked the General Convention's Acting Board to declare that slaveholders and non-slaveholders alike could be appointed to mission service. The Board replied that if a known slaveholder applied for missionary appointment, 'and should insist on retaining [slaves] as his property, we could not appoint him. One thing is certain, we can never be a

³⁷ H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But... Racism in Southern Religion, 1780-1910* (Durham, NC, 1972), p. 119.

³⁸ H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville, TN, 1987), p. 301.

³⁹ *Ibid.* ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 120. ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁴² C.C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War* (Macon, GA, 1985), p. 95.

party to any arrangement which would imply approbation of slavery.⁴³ In response, Baptists in the South gathered at First Baptist Church, Augusta, Georgia, in May 1845 and formed a new denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention. Its charter made no reference to slavery, but referenced the need for a new denomination to enable southerners to fulfil their divine mandate for world evangelization.

In Canada, the abolition of slavery and the slave trade occurred in various stages. As early as 1793, Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe was able to secure legislation that secured freedom for indentured servants and the gradual manumissions of African slaves in Canada when they reached twenty-five years of age. Complete abolition of slavery in Canada came in 1834 when it was abolished throughout the British Commonwealth. Black Baptists were particularly evident in Halifax and the Maritimes, under the early leadership of a fugitive slave named David George. George preached throughout the region, urging conversion and denouncing slavery. In 1854, an escaped slave named Richard Preston helped form the African Baptist Association of Nova Scotia, a strongly abolitionist union of some twelve black congregations.⁴⁴

With the start of the Civil War, Baptists, like other Americans, chose sides quickly. In 1861, Virginia Baptists declared their 'sweet assurance that our [Confederate] cause is a righteous one, and we can appeal to the God of Battles for help in this hour of darkness and peril'.⁴⁵ Freewill Baptists, generally supportive of the Union cause, understood the bloody war as God's 'severe and merited punishment' on the entire nation. In 1862, they asserted 'that the common people, and especially the dissenting Protestant Christians of other countries', were 'in full sympathy with the stupendous efforts of liberty and vital Christianity to enthrone their principles throughout our common country'. They concluded: 'Who can doubt that upon the result of this contest depends the fate of Christian civilization in America?'⁴⁶

AFRICAN-AMERICAN BAPTISTS: FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

By the nineteenth century, Baptists north and south, like other Protestant denominations, had developed strategies for evangelizing slaves. Churches

⁴³ 'Reply of the Acting Board, December 17th, 1844', *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 25 (1845), 222.

⁴⁴ H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, p. 337; and D.G. Bell, ed., *Newlight Baptist Journals of James Manning and James Innis*, pp. 19, 73, 139.

⁴⁵ Virginia Baptist General Association, *Minutes*, 1861, p. 16.

⁴⁶ 'Minutes of the Freewill Baptist General Conference', 1862, in William Brackney, ed., *Baptist Life and Thought, 1600–1980: A Sourcebook* (Valley Forge, PA, 1983), pp. 241–2.

and home mission societies were vehicles for Christianizing the captive people. Slaves were admitted to white churches, segregated by seating, usually in the gallery (balcony) away from direct contact with whites. The evangelizers developed various arguments supporting slave conversion, always assuring slave owners that Christianity would deepen slave obedience as required by certain biblical texts; that conversion changed only the slaves' heavenly status, not their earthly condition. Yet many Christianized slaves heard the gospel message differently, offering hope of liberation in this world and the next. Sometimes their dissent was expressed in 'hush arbors', clandestine gatherings for prayer and praise beyond the master's watchful eye. At other times slaves made small but direct moral challenges to the South's Peculiar Institution.

Conversion was the great link between blacks and whites in Baptist revivals and faith communities. Mechal Sobel has noted that although Methodists and Baptists were committed to evangelizing slaves, 'black Christianity has a more particular relationship to Baptist faith'.⁴⁷ This was not only due to the large Baptist presence in the South and the relative ease of forming Baptist congregations, but also their Baptists' visionary conversionism, community rituals—particularly immersion baptism—and, as Sobel insists, 'their Sacred Cosmos', known in 'the penetrating power of the holy'.⁴⁸ Baptists' concern for regeneration through dramatic religious experience, Sobel believed, enabled black converts to discover an 'extraordinarily significant synthesis of the African and Baptist cosmos'.⁴⁹ Yet black Baptists went beyond their white counterparts in their sense of the freedom inherent in the visionary 'born again' experience. Sobel concludes that 'Christian rebirth set blacks free forever. They might remain slaves in body for the rest of their lives, but they were free, in ways their white [Baptist] masters might or might not be'.⁵⁰

Sometimes that freedom expressed itself in public dissent, even when it produced disciplinary action from the church. In 1807, a Kentucky slave named Winney was disciplined by the Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church 'for saying she once thought it her duty to serve her Master & Mistress but since the Lord converted her, she had never believed that any Christian kept Negroes or Slaves—2nd. For saying she believed there was Thousands of white people Wallowing in Hell for their treatment to Negroes—and she did not care if there was as many more'.⁵¹ The slave woman was 'excluded' from the church for a period of time in punishment for her dissent against slavery and Christian slave owners. Nathaniel Paul, a Northern, free black Baptist pastor and abolitionist who foretold the end of slavery since deliverance for

⁴⁷ Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin' On: the Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Princeton, NJ, 1979), p. 79.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁵¹ William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists* (Chicago, IL, 1931), p. 329.

oppressed peoples was central to God's plan, declared in *An Address, Delivered on the Celebration of the Abolition of Slavery, in New York State* (1827) that 'The progress of emancipation, though slow, is nevertheless certain: It is certain because God who has made of one blood all nations...and who is said to be no respecter of persons, has so decreed.'⁵² Likewise, numerous Baptist associations, formed by African-American Baptist churches in the North, gave great attention to abolition as part of their collective mission.

Some northern Canadian provinces abolished slavery as early as 1793, and the entire system was forbidden across the British Empire by 1838. Many Baptists in the United States gladly participated in the Underground Railroad, that system of churches and homes that offered sanctuary to slaves escaping bondage for the 'promised land' of Canada. Some even united in abolitionist pursuits. In 1841, the Amherstburg Association was formed in Amherstburg, Canada West by a group of churches originally known as the Baptist Association for Colored People. It included Baptist churches spread from Southern Ontario to Windsor, including certain free black enclaves, as well as five Michigan-based Baptist congregations. The Association formed a mission society and commissioned a Tennessee fugitive slave named Israel Campbell as its first missionary. Strongly abolitionist, the Amherstburg Association later became a Canadian auxiliary of the powerful American Baptist Free Mission Society, the strongest of the Baptist antislavery groups. A dissenting minority resisted 'auxiliary' status and formed the Canadian Anti-Slavery Baptist Association (1850). The two groups merged in 1857, a joint North American Baptist effort to abolish slavery.⁵³

The years immediately following the Civil War and Emancipation produced a mass exodus of blacks from white Baptist churches in the South and the founding of new congregations and regional associations. White Baptists generally encouraged this departure or made little attempt to stop it. In 1866 the General Association of Baptists in Virginia voted for a resolution encouraging former slaves to establish their own congregations and associational connections. In 1866, South Carolina Baptists formally encouraged their black members 'on their own accord [to] seek separation and a distinct organization'. Blacks were allowed to remain in white churches, 'provided they studiously avoid occasions of irritation and offence'.⁵⁴

This diaspora set the stage for the formation of new denominational organizations among African-American Baptists. Numerous missionary conventions were formed both before and after the Civil War. In 1895, the

⁵² Nathaniel H. Paul, *An Address, Delivered on the Celebration of the Abolition of Slavery, in the State of New York, July 5, 1827* (Albany, NY, 1827), p. 13.

⁵³ James Melvin Washington, *Frustrated Fellowship: The Black Baptist Quest for Social Power* (Macon, GA, 1986), pp. 36–8.

⁵⁴ *Minutes of the... State Convention of the Baptist Denomination in South Carolina, 1865 and 1866* (Greenville, SC, 1866), p. 234.

National Baptist Convention was founded in Atlanta by representatives of the American National Baptist Convention, the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, and the American National Baptist Educational Convention. It became the first of several African-American Baptist denominations that would take the name National Baptist in some form.⁵⁵ Amid various internal disputes over governance, many of the early denominational leaders were strong advocates of civil rights and the formation of African-American educational institutions.

OLD LANDMARKISM: A DISSENTING ECCLESIOLOGY

If antislavery debates and the formation of black churches indicate that Baptists often divided along the issue of race, ecclesiology too remained a cause of fissure. Old Landmarkism was a way that certain Baptists sought to trace their origins to the earliest Christian communions, establishing the 'true church' as precisely Baptist. In the United States, it became a symbol of ecclesiastical dissent inside and outside the Baptist fold. Internally, Landmarkism defined the church as represented only in local congregations, and demanding closed communion and baptismal orthodoxy as normative for all Baptist congregations. Externally, Landmarkists repudiated the ecclesiology of all Christian communions except those Baptist churches that bore the marks of the New Testament church. Landmarkism appeared at a time when many American Protestant denominations were competing for members by claiming to be the true expression of the first-century church, or at least the truest of the true.⁵⁶ The Restorationist or Christian Church movement had burst onto the scene claiming to have re-established primitive Christianity, long lost in the chaos of denominations. Landmarkists responded that they needed to restore nothing since Baptists alone had maintained the characteristics of the New Testament church from Jesus's own baptism in the river Jordan by John the Baptist.

Led by J.R. Graves of Tennessee and J.M. Pendleton of Kentucky, Landmarkists insisted that *ecclesia*, the New Testament word for church, referred only to local congregations of believers. Using a text from Proverbs 22:28, 'Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set', they charted the orthodoxy of Baptist faith and practice through a succession of Dissenting churches that ran across history from nineteenth-century Baptists through such groups as Anabaptists, Waldensians, Cathari, Donatists, and

⁵⁵ Leonard, *Baptist Ways*, pp. 270–7.

⁵⁶ See Douglas Foster, 'Restorationists and New Movements in North America', Chapter 11 of this volume.

Montanists—all the way to Jesus's baptism by John. These Dissenters they labelled 'Baptist in everything but name', faith communions that retained New Testament beliefs and practices, lost by all other Christian groups since the church's fourth-century 'fall' under the Emperor Constantine. These other denominations were of human origin, lacking the marks of the true church. Thus they could best be described as 'societies', lacking true New Testament ecclesiology.

The movement began as early as 1854, when Pendleton published *An Old Landmark Reset* at the request of his friend Graves. The primary purpose of the original work was to address the issue, 'Ought Baptists to recognize Pedobaptist [infant-baptizing] preachers as gospel ministers?' Pendleton concluded that they were not valid ministers since their own infant baptism and any infant baptism they might administer was invalid and had no biblical basis. Since their baptism was negated, their ordinations and claims to be authorized ministers of Christ were called into question. In *Distinctive Principles of Baptists* (1882), Pendleton insisted that, 'A scriptural church is a local congregation of baptized believers independent, under Christ, of the state and of every other church, having itself authority to do whatever a church can of right do.'⁵⁷ Since only local congregations bore the marks of the church, Pendleton and other Landmarkists repudiated denominational alliances, mission boards, synods, episcopacies, and other ecclesiastical units. As Pendleton understood the New Testament, each doctrinally appropriate Baptist congregation 'is as complete as if it were the only church in the world'.⁵⁸

Only the local Baptist congregation had the authority to baptize and celebrate the Lord's Supper. Persons baptized as infants or immersed outside the Baptist context who sought membership in Landmark churches were required to receive the proper immersion at the hands of a duly ordained Baptist minister. Since only local congregations had the authority to celebrate Holy Communion, only members of that specific congregation could receive communion (closed communion).

At the same time, Pendleton and Graves were deeply committed to democratic idealism and understood the radical democracy of Baptist church polity as a model for the American Republic. Pendleton wrote that 'churches are executive democracies organized to carry out the sovereign will of their Lord and King'. Christ was head of the church, but the church on earth 'in its organized state of small communities, each managing its own affairs in its own vicinage, is a pure democracy'.⁵⁹ Thus, particularly in America, church and state were to promote democracy by resisting hierarchies, 'monarchy and aristocracy'.⁶⁰ J.R. Graves was even more specific and optimistic, declaring in *The Watchman's Reply* (1853) that 'The religion of Christ constitutes the

⁵⁷ J.M. Pendleton, *Distinctive Principles of Baptists* (Philadelphia, PA, 1882), p. 169.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

people, the foundation of all power, and establishes and protects their *supreme sovereignty*. The Gospel gives them a charter, written by God to protect them against the tyranny of the political usurper, and the still more dreadful despotism of the spiritual ruler and the lordling in the church.⁶¹ Religious liberty was inseparable from civil liberty; Graves insisted that if it was correct to suggest 'like priest, like people', it was also necessary to add, 'like religion, like government'. Without religious and civil liberty, a government fostered a citizenry of serfs.⁶²

Landmarkism had a great impact on Baptist churches in the United States, particularly in the South. It is also found in certain churches worldwide, particularly those planted by Landmark-oriented missionaries. These missionaries were commissioned and funded directly by individual congregations, not from mission boards. They were highly evangelistic, with conservative, even fundamentalist approaches to theology and doctrine, inculcating those ideals into the individuals and congregations they established on the mission field. Other segments of the Baptist family were not impacted by Landmark views and retained open communion and denominational affiliations. Nonetheless, for all their doctrinal uniformity, early Landmarkists reflected a particularly strong concern for democratic idealism and the links between religious and civil liberty. While Landmark ideas were present in various Baptist groups in Canada, Great Britain, and other international settings, its ecclesiology was perhaps strongest in the States. Indeed, Landmark influence in Canada may be traced to efforts of the Southern Baptist Convention to establish direct connections with Canadian Baptist churches, particularly in the northwest.

BAPTISTS AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY SOCIETY: THE PARADOX OF DISSENT AND CONFORMITY

In one sense, Baptists seem among the great Dissenting movements of American religious history, particularly in the colonial period. They confronted religious establishments in Canada as well as in New England and the South, experiencing varying degrees of persecution, exile, imprisonment, fines, and church closings. They did not hesitate to challenge the status quo when they believed it a threat to individual conscience, biblical teaching, and Christian ethics. Paradoxically, however, they often used the language of Dissent in defending cultural norms—chattel slavery in the South and the worker-exploiting Gospel of Wealth in the North—for which they later issued apologies and professed repentance.

⁶¹ J.R. Graves, *The Watchman's Reply* (Nashville, TN, 1853), pp. 16–17.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

That was particularly true as Baptists moved from a minority group to enjoy central status in American Protestantism.

These attitudes were particularly evident in relation to immigration, which became a great challenge in the post-Civil War era, by bringing large numbers of non-Protestants to American shores. In 1890, the *Proceedings* of the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting sounded an alarm, noting that 'Rationalists and Socialists and Anarchists, and other heathens, who pollute by mere contact of association, are pouring into our Southland from materialistic Europe by thousands every year; Asiatic Buddhism [sic] already numbers its swarms of blinded votaries in the United States and its hundreds in the South, to whom, in future, will be added many more in spite of prohibitory laws.'⁶³ By 1895, Southern Baptists remained concerned, reporting that some two million immigrants were descending on the United States each year, and commenting that 'Every great city in our country is dominated by foreigners, and rum and Romanism dominate the foreigners. But the great misfortune of all of this is that these foreigners bring along with their anarchy, their Romanism, and their want of Morals. We must evangelize them, or they will overwhelm us. We would, therefore, urge that the gospel shall be preached to foreigners, and that mission schools and churches be founded among them.'⁶⁴ These Baptists accepted or at least acquiesced to the presence of 'Romanist' immigrants but saw their conversion to Protestantism as the only way to preserve American culture from them.

Many Baptists in the North nursed similar sentiments. In a 1901 address on 'The Stranger in our Midst', Social Gospel activist Samuel Zane Batten described the dangers to American society from the immigrant hordes, and urged their evangelization to Protestant Christianity. He boldly asserted that, 'America must be democratic in government and Protestant in religion. This is our destiny as I read it; and we must give diligence to make our calling and election sure.' Non-Protestants were doubly dangerous since they were also voters who could change the course of American religious and political history. Batten concluded that 'The foreigner is here. . . . There is only one thing for us to do as Christians, and that is to win these peoples unto Jesus.'⁶⁵

Baptists might agree that all religious groups in the US were entitled to religious freedom, but they were not so sure that these burgeoning non-Protestant communities were beneficial until converted into 'American citizens, and loyal subjects of the King of Kings'.⁶⁶ They generally affirmed the

⁶³ *Proceedings*, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), 1890; <http://digitalcollections.baylor.edu/cdm/ref/collection/mlsbcann/id/10402>.

⁶⁴ *Proceedings*, SBC, 1895; <http://digitalcollections.baylor.edu/cdm/ref/collection/mlsbcann/id/3240>.

⁶⁵ Norman H. Maring, *Baptists in New Jersey: A Study in Transition* (Valley Forge, PA, 1964), p. 265.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 265–6.

First Amendment rights of Catholics in practising their faith freely, but they also opposed what they believed to be Catholic attempts to secure 'public tax funds for their church agencies'. By the early twentieth century, Baptist participation in organizations such as the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, as well as the movement known as Protestants and other Americans United for Church and State, was shaped by fears that Catholics were making claims on 'the public treasury'.⁶⁷

A rising Catholic presence revived the Baptist concern for religious liberty which had been so strong in the colonial period, while also defining it negatively as something to be protected against confessional aggression. First, Baptists looked at Catholic-oriented countries in Europe and South America as danger signs for Catholic efforts to gain dominance and church support in the United States. Second, they feared that growing Catholic populations throughout the country would lead to political voting blocs that would impact democratic ideals and religious freedom. Third, Baptists cited the rhetoric and doctrinal mandates of Catholicism in opposing freedom of the press, education, religion, and government as evidence that the growing Catholic presence was a threat to 'the American way of life'. At the same time, Baptists were forced to acknowledge that Catholics had every right to express themselves and assert their presence in the American public square. What they often failed to acknowledge was their own Protestant privilege as an implicit 'establishment' in American religious life; that the public schools, with their daily Bible readings and Protestant-oriented prayers, seemed to many Catholics little more than Protestant academies. Opposition to Catholics cut two ways when it came to the religious liberty which Baptists claimed to hold so dear, and for which they believed they were offering dissent.

The temperance cause was another in which nineteenth-century Baptists pitched themselves against society. Many of them waged war against alcohol and the 'liquor trade', joining other Protestant groups in moving from an emphasis on moderation to demanding total abstinence from all who claimed Christian commitment. In 1883, Freewill Baptists reflected the views of many Baptist groups in urging members to abandon all liquor consumption while resisting any effort to provide 'legal protection of the disgraceful and soul-destroying traffic'.⁶⁸ Revivalist Baptists insisted that abstention from alcohol was a sign of genuine conversion, and its use a pollution of the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Progressive Baptists promoted the Temperance cause as a tool for social reform. At both Methodist and Baptist revivals, converts were often asked to 'take the pledge' to abstain from liquor as soon as they 'accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior'. Walter Rauschenbusch wrote that 'alcoholism is both a cause and an effect of poverty. The poor will

⁶⁷ J.M. Dawson, *Baptists and the American Republic* (Nashville, TN, 1956), p. 159.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

take a drink because they are tired, discouraged, and flabby of will, and without more wholesome recreation.’⁶⁹ He and other temperance-minded Social Gospellers did not hesitate to criticize corporations and factories for contributing to the sense of futility that led to alcoholism due to the low wages and poor housing they provided.⁷⁰

Temperance debates raised questions regarding the use of wine in Communion. Some Baptists maintained that the ‘wine’ used by Jesus was unfermented, while to others the use of ‘real’ wine was mandated by Scripture. The total abstinence movement served to unite Baptists who were often unable to agree on other theological and social issues. Conservatives and progressives alike viewed the use of alcohol, even in moderation, as unbecoming to Christian devotion and detrimental to Christian family, economic, and spiritual life. The Temperance Movement was also something of an early ecumenical movement, bringing together representatives of various denominations in the Anti-Saloon League and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Movement (WCTU). Organized in 1874 by women from numerous Christian communions, the WCTU welcomed women of all creeds, races, ethnic groups, and denominations. Members were asked to pledge: ‘I hereby solemnly promise, God helping me, to abstain from all distilled, fermented, and malt liquors, including wine, beer, and hard cider, and to employ all proper means to discourage the use of, and traffic in the same.’⁷¹ These organizations fought the liquor trade through lobbying for legislation, educational information, and spiritual renewal efforts.

The WCTU had branches in Canada as well, and the Canadian-organized Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of Alcohol Traffic was founded in 1875. Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalist individuals and churches were among the strong supporters of these two groups, again illustrating that hostility to the liquor trade and manufacture was an ecumenical force. The Dominion Alliance associated alcohol use with crime and family abuse, urged prohibitionist legislation, and insisted that Christians work for that prohibition. The divisions in Canada tended to be between French (Catholic) populations who opposed such legislation and English (Protestant) regions that supported it.

The political ambitions of Baptists were not, though, confined to policing individual behaviour. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a number of them were swept up in a movement known as the Social Gospel, an attempt to extend the corporate implications of Jesus’s teaching on the kingdom of God

⁶⁹ Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, ed. Robert D. Cross (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 242.

⁷⁰ Bill J. Leonard, ‘“They Have no Wine”: Wet/Dry Baptists and the Alcohol Issues’, in *Criswell Theological Review*, 5 (2008), 13.

⁷¹ Sarah F. Ward, ‘Woman’s Christian Temperance Union’, in *Criswell Theological Review*, 5 (2008), 53.

in response to economic realities shaped by the Industrial Revolution. While not limited to Baptists, the Social Gospel was formed by individual leaders, including Walter Rauschenbusch, sometimes known as the father of the movement. Born into a German Baptist home in 1886, Rauschenbusch was educated in Germany and at Rochester Theological Seminary. Entering the ministry, he served eleven years as pastor of a German Baptist church in Hell's Kitchen, New York, an area plagued by serious social problems. He then became professor of church history at Rochester Seminary. In 1893 he helped create the Brotherhood of the Kingdom, a group concerned to apply Jesus's teaching in both church and society. In affirming the immediacy of God's kingdom, Rauschenbusch offered his own critique of American political and economic exploitation of workers and the impoverished. In *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907) he wrote: 'Our cities are poor, unclean, always laying heavy burdens of taxation on the producing classes.' It was a 'deep-rooted injustice'.⁷² He lamented that workers were paid 'fixed wages', noting that, 'The upward movement of this wage is limited by the productiveness of his work; the downward movement of it is limited only by the willingness of the workman to work at so low a return.'⁷³ Committed to the conversion of individuals to Christian faith, Rauschenbusch was equally concerned for the transformation of society through the rule and reign of God in the world.

Other Baptists were less comfortable with this approach to social Christianity. Baptist premillennialists believed that the return of Christ was imminent and that worldly society was long past redemption. Just after the close of this period, the Social Gospel would be criticized for neglecting the church's primary calling, which was the evangelization of sinners. In the 1930s, for example, some Southern Baptist leaders dissented against efforts in the Southern Baptist Convention to promote the Social Service Commission, insisting it was a distraction from personal evangelism. Social historian John Lee Eighmy noted that fundamentalists declared that Christ's mission was not to promote 'social customs' or 'meddle' in politics, but to redeem persons from sin. Some 'argued that the apostles did not preach a "Soap and Soup Salvation" or advocate "cleaning up the slums of Jerusalem"'.⁷⁴ Fundamentalist leader J. Frank Norris, the so-called 'Texas tornado', would link his premillennial belief that the return of Christ was imminent with the need for evangelism, not social Christianity. If Christ's premillennial return was at hand, then that was 'the only missionary motive . . . not to clean out the stables, but to redeem the individual man and woman'.⁷⁵

⁷² Rauschenbusch, *Christianity*, 228.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁷⁴ John Lee Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville, TN, 1972), p. 136.

⁷⁵ C. Allyn Russell, *Voices of American Fundamentalism: Seven Biographical Studies* (Philadelphia, PA, 1976), p. 27.

In Canada, the Baptist pastor and editor Ebenezer Dadson was an articulate advocate of the Social Gospel. Strongly Calvinist and theologically conservative, Dadson became editor of the *Canadian Baptist* in 1882, and from that position gave strong encouragement to 'practical Christianity', with emphasis on 'justice in personal relations, political equality, and freedom of conscience'. He urged churches and legislatures to support anti-poverty programmes, union efforts, laws protecting women, children, and ethnic minorities, anti-liquor legislation, and an end to 'blood sports'. Dadson contended that Jesus's Sermon on the Mount applied to individual and corporate relationships in both church and society.⁷⁶

BAPTISTS AND DISSENT: GOSPEL FREEDOM—DIVERSE VISIONS

The Baptist movement began in Dissent, challenging religious establishments in Europe and North America. Their commitment to the idea of a church composed only of believers meant that they opposed efforts to coerce faith by state or established church. Uncoerced faith meant that all persons were free to exercise their conscience, of which God alone was judge, a position which necessarily brought them into collision with early modern governments. Yet as Baptists in North America, more so in the United States than in Canada, became players in religiously plural societies, they often had to confront the dilemma of their own cultural privileges. When the pluralism they promoted on the margins challenged their own ecclesiastical status, they found their identity challenged. Likewise, this sense of gospel freedom has meant that the Baptist movement was never free from internal dissent and divisions over the nature and practice of the gospel itself. Thus the adage: 'Baptists multiply by dividing'.

Explaining 'Why I am a Baptist', Walter Rauschenbusch wrote optimistically: 'Our [Baptist] churches are Christian democracies. The people are sovereign in them. All power wielded by the church's ministers and officers is conferred by the church. It makes ample room for those who have God-given powers for leadership, but it holds them down to the service of the people by making them responsible to the church for their actions. That democracy of the Baptist church is something to be proud of.'⁷⁷ This idyllic description of Baptist identity captures both the strengths and weaknesses of

⁷⁶ John S. Moir, 'Dadson, Ebenezer William', in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dadson_ebenezer_william_12E.html.

⁷⁷ Walter Rauschenbusch, 'Why I am a Baptist', in J.M. Dawson, *Baptists and the American Republic* (Nashville, TN, 1956), p. 173.

the movement. Commitments to a believers' church, uncoerced faith, liberty of conscience, personal conversion, and congregational autonomy often led to dissent in the public square. Yet such freedom intensified the possibility of internal division, even schism, in the churches. Such 'Christian democracy' was in the nineteenth century and remains now both salvifically liberating and ecclesiastically messy.

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Unitarians, Shakers, and Quakers in North America

Stephen P. Shoemaker

Religious dissent flourished in the United States during the nineteenth century. While evangelical Protestantism held a hegemonic position in American culture, plenty of religious groups deliberately swam against that cultural tide. This bounty of dissenters presents a constellation of complications for the scholar attempting to discern the existence of potential patterns. This chapter considers an unlikely trio of groups who opposed the Protestant mainstream in nineteenth-century America: the Unitarians, the Quakers, and the Shakers. Each of these denominations had to navigate two different forms of dissent: the external and the internal. When deciding how best to revise or contradict the hegemonic forms of Protestantism, these groups had certain goals and methods for interacting with those outside their fellowship. Then, over the course of time, they each also had to face a more pernicious adversary: the second generation of dissenters that grew from within their own ranks.

While, on the surface, these disparate traditions may appear to have little in common, each body faced many of the same questions as they undertook to assert their distinct form of external cultural and religious correction. Dissent in nineteenth-century America was not an end in itself, but reflected an underlying perception of religious truth. When a person or group had a theological vision that went against the mainstream, they had to determine how to best serve that particular vision in a culture that did not share their theological views. On the one hand, there were some who decided to follow the model of the separatist Plymouth pilgrims. To protect their ideology from potential contaminating theological influences, they pursued isolation. Such groups withdrew from contact with outsiders and used their enclaves as a way to practise and preserve their distinctive vision of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. On the other hand, there were groups that followed the Massachusetts Bay non-separatist model of the 'City on the Hill'. These dissenters sought to

model correct religion for others, and thereby hoped to transform other religious groups by intentionally disseminating their theological vision beyond the confines of any type of self-imposed seclusion. For them, the ghettoization of the Plymouth-style Dissenters completely missed the point. A theological vision was meant to bring widespread transformation, rather than merely inform the practices of a small local group of isolated adherents.

Despite these divergent directional impulses regarding external relations, a point of contact often emerged between dissenters of both inclinations. This connection concerns the ongoing interpretation of their original vision. Both kinds of dissenting groups were established to serve a theological insight that marked them as distinct from those whom they sought to oppose or correct. Their unique insight was articulated by a founder or group of founders who sought to outline orthodoxy and orthopraxy for future members. However, as the decades passed, many groups were surprised by the inevitable challenges to that founding orthodoxy from within their own membership. This dissent among dissenters was, of course, an outgrowth of the very impulse that stood behind the earlier establishment of the group. Subsequent generations of membership often failed to realize that belonging to a group of dissenters did not entitle them to practise wholesale dissent. They had not been authorized to engage in theological libertarianism. Rather, membership in a dissenting group often required adherence to a specific and detailed alternative theological vision. This tension between founding theology and ongoing interpretation would leave a dissenting group hierarchy in the awkward position of having to restrict future innovation. The irony of this was not lost on subsequent generations of members who often had to fight to assert their own evolving theological vision. The leadership of dissenting groups would frequently be compelled to decide what alterations to the founding vision were considered tolerable, and what was beyond the bounds of their origin and purpose.

In some ways, this dynamic reflects the sect to denomination transition described long ago by thinkers such as Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and Reinhold Niebuhr. As Bryan Wilson later articulated, a sect will tend to emphasize exclusivity, may impose onerous rules, articulates a self-perception as the elect in possession of a unique theological message, and likely fosters a sense of opposition to the outside world. In contrast, the denomination is more open or tolerant, has diminished distinctive rules, embodies just one of many viable doctrinal options, and aligns more closely with the standards of the prevailing culture.¹ In some respects, this typology illuminates what is happening in these three dissenting groups, particularly if one recognizes that there is often a counter-current flowing among those who are pushing for a

¹ Bryan Wilson, 'An Analysis of Sect Development', *American Sociological Review*, 24 (1959), 3–15.

return to sect-like qualities when they notice a trend towards denomination-ism within their own group. However, there are other variables at play that merit consideration. Charles and Zona Loomis discuss the role of the organizational hierarchy as key to understanding the dynamics of religious change, for leadership provides the framework that structures internal dissent with any tradition.² Finally, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark point to the role of the theological content of a group's message, and for these three groups, the internal debate over theology was not only central to their understanding of the importance of a *contra mundum* attitude, but also informed their discussions on how best to retain a distinctive religious message.³

This chapter seeks to understand Unitarians, Shakers, and Quakers in nineteenth-century America in light of the various ways they addressed these two key aspects of dissent: external and internal. In what ways did each group perceive their relationship to American culture and other more mainstream religious groups? How did each group encounter and negotiate the emergence of dissent from within the ranks of their own membership? At first blush, the answers to these questions may appear relatively obvious, and yet in each group there was an evolution over the course of the nineteenth century that adds yet another layer of complication to any interpretation of these Protestant dissenting traditions as they were embodied in the United States.

The Unitarians, a regionally significant group in New England, asserted from the start their optimism regarding the likelihood of converting American Protestantism to their point of view. Theological debate and rational persuasion were their tools of choice. However, when it eventually became clear that there would be no widespread adoption of Unitarian theology in mainstream Protestantism, they were forced to retreat to the creation of their own denomination and to the defence of their institutional enclave, Harvard Divinity School. After a relatively short time, dissent began to emerge from within, and the group tried in vain to assert a form of orthodoxy upon their membership, only to abandon that quest for fixity later in the century. The Shakers faced their own set of challenges. The content of their teachings regarding both orthodoxy and orthopraxy located them more beyond the cultural pale than the Unitarians. Content to perpetuate their theological and social system in well-ordered agrarian ghettos, they sought to augment their celibate membership through both conversion and the communal adoption of local orphans. They relied upon religious experience and economic circumstance as motivators for potential adherents, rather than the reason so carefully cultivated by the Unitarians. Led by a carefully structured hierarchy that ruled with an iron

² Charles Loomis and Zona Loomis, eds., *Modern Social Theories* (New York, 1961).

³ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776–1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1992).

grip, the Shakers adroitly handled religious innovation and gender role issues throughout the course of the century, as their numbers continued to dwindle for reasons that scholars continue to debate. The Quakers represent yet another strain of dissent in relation to our two central questions. Unlike the Unitarians, they did not assume that American Protestantism was likely to embrace their theological vision. Nor did they withdraw into a secluded community that forbade even familial relations, as did the Shakers. Instead, the Quakers steered a type of middle course when it came to their relations with broader American culture. While aspects of their theology relegated them to outsider status from the perspective of mainstream Protestants, they sought ways to influence the moral shape of the country through their deliberate social dissent. Sadly, though, the story of nineteenth-century Quakerism is less about this visionary impact upon public policy and national ethics than it is about their incessant cycles of division regarding the debated boundaries of Quaker theology. For Quakers of this era, the inherent tension between the 'Inward Light' of the individual Friend and the external control of the Society was a source of endless ongoing internal dissent. The collective navigation of external and internal dissent by these groups thus provides an informative basis for productive comparison, despite their apparent diversity.

UNITARIANISM

Strangely enough, the Unitarians were a group that did not desire to exist. From the outset, these self-styled 'liberal Christians' sought to model a modern vision of faith that would subsequently sweep the land. They did not wish to be a separate dissenting group, but optimistically attempted to popularize a theology that they anticipated others would gleefully adopt. Eventually, they reluctantly realized that only a limited number were going to embrace their highly rational faith, and thus they were compelled to circle the wagons through the formation of a denomination. This defensive protective manoeuvre had limited utility, however, as a strong voice of dissent from within the group soon emerged, much to the consternation of denominational leadership.

There were several decades of developments before the Unitarians (initially a term of disapprobation applied by their opponents) were officially organized as a denomination in 1825. The origins of this movement, and their eventual formal organization, were largely focused around Boston and specifically in Harvard University. Professors of theology at Harvard had been questioning the presuppositions of traditional Calvinist theology since the 1730s, and they held a monopoly on graduating students who served in local parish ministry. Father and son Wigglesworth, Hollis Professors of Divinity at Harvard (the nation's first named Chair), both pushed against the conversion-centric

Calvinism that stressed human depravity and substitutionary atonement. It was during this era that the revivalist George Whitefield visited the College in 1744, only to have Harvard subsequently issue a public statement declaring their hesitations about his conversion-orientated form of Christianity. In opposition to Whitefield's 'enthusiasm', Harvard espoused a form of religion that was 'agreeable to our Reason' that was characterized by 'Study and Meditation'.⁴ Whitefield had accused Harvard of neglecting its old emphasis on conversion, and President Holyoke responded by carefully evading that accusation, which he knew was certain to attract negative publicity. Instead, he explained that Harvard was still religious, but in an orderly and controlled fashion.

This encounter set the dominant theological tone for the remainder of that century at Harvard, and thus for many of the pulpits in the surrounding region. Conrad Wright identifies the key theological modifications suggested by these early Unitarians as including a de-emphasis on human depravity and the concomitant need for conversion, an increasingly prominent role for reason in religion, and belief in a benevolent God who sought human moral improvement.⁵ Two central figures can serve as representatives for Unitarianism at the opening of the nineteenth century: William Ellery Channing, Harvard class of 1798 and minister in the Boston Federal Street Church, and Andrews Norton, Harvard class of 1804 and later the Dexter Professor of Sacred Literature, who together embody the dynamics of early Unitarianism as a form of Protestant dissent.

Channing articulated the hope of his colleagues that there was room in the Churches for both the liberals and the orthodox. In a move that portrayed the theological details of orthodox Trinitarianism as analogous to the theological accretions of Roman Catholicism that both groups detested, Channing declared that the church 'can never suffer by admitting to Christian fellowship men of irreproachable lives... while it has suffered most severely by substituting for this standard, conformity to human creeds and formularies'.⁶ He opposed the orthodox Trinitarians who were attempting to oust liberals from the Congregational Churches. Channing, more optimistic than many of his colleagues, hoped for peaceful coexistence. But this was at least in some respect a disingenuous request, for the liberals wished to remain so that their theological vision would have an opportunity to eventually emerge as triumphant within the existing churches. His ultimate motives aside, Channing did argue clearly in the early years for the liberals to stay within the Congregational

⁴ Edward Holyoke, *The Testimony of the President, Professors, Tutors and Hebrew Instructor of Harvard College in Cambridge, Against the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield and His Conduct* (Boston, MA, 1744), pp. 3, 4, 10.

⁵ Conrad Wright, *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America* (Boston, MA, 1966 edn.), pp. 115–95.

⁶ William Ellery Channing, *The Works of William Ellery Channing, D.D.*, 5 vols (Boston, MA, 1841–3), V: p. 376.

setting despite the Trinitarian pushback. He confidently declared: 'Error of opinion is an evil too trifling to be named in comparison with this practical departure from the Gospel, with this proud, censorious, overbearing temper, which says to a large body of Christians, "stand off, we are holier than you."' ⁷

How did these liberal Christians perceive their role as dissenters? They sought to offer a rational religion that all could embrace, once having been exposed to its logic. Yet, even from the start, these liberals understood they were embodying dissent. William Ellery Channing once wrote to an orthodox acquaintance in 1806 that, 'You will see from this that our standard of divinity does not entirely correspond with yours. It is clear that we cannot all be right.' ⁸ Yet, to Channing, this type of admission did not mean the end of mutual acceptance, for like Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, these early liberal Christians sought to reform the existing church rather than begin a new, separate body.

This strategy for the pursuit of unity had already begun to unravel by 1805. The delicate balance of coexistence was upset by a controversy regarding how to fill Harvard's vacant Hollis Professorship of Divinity. David Tappan, who held this Chair after the Wigglesworths father and son, was a man of moderate disposition who stirred no theological controversy. However, with his death, there appeared to be a binary decision at hand, and each theological camp struggled to place a sympathetic figure in this key position. To complicate matters, the similarly inclined College President died before the Hollis Chair was filled. With these two most prominent positions both vacant, the back-room machinations grew to a fever pitch. Ultimately, the liberals carried the day on both vacancies, and the concomitant handwringing on the conservative side ultimately garnered much public attention.

At the forefront of the ensuing Trinitarian protest was Harvard Overseer Jedidiah Morse, who was unwilling to see the College lost to the liberal or Unitarian cause because it was the source of local ministers. Morse published his hostile *True Reasons on Which the Election of a Hollis Professor of Divinity in Harvard College was Opposed at the Board of Overseers* in 1805. Here he spelled out the essential theological differences between the two increasingly combative sides. He founded a periodical to disseminate the conservative case, and was instrumental in the establishment of Andover Seminary in 1808. This was the country's first seminary, and it was created specifically to counter the liberal students training in Harvard's unofficial ministry programme. Harvard's liberals, realizing they were being flanked by Morse and his colleagues, responded with the creation of their own official Divinity School

⁷ William Ellery Channing, *A Letter in the Panoplist on the Ministers of Boston and the Vicinity to the Rev. Samuel C. Thacher* (Boston, MA, 1815), p. 14.

⁸ William H. Channing, *Memoir of William Ellery Channing, With Extracts from his Correspondence and MSS*, 3 vols (Boston, MA, 1848), I: p. 345.

under the leadership of President John Kirkland. In raising money for this new Harvard theological division, the President (and William Ellery Channing) made an earnest argument for a liberal answer to Andover. While Harvard Divinity never established an official link to Unitarianism, the intimate bond was difficult to obscure. In 1815, Harvard sought donations to fund their new theological school, arguing that 'religion should not be left to feeble and ignorant advocates, to men of narrow and unfurnished minds'. Suggesting that 'an enlightened ministry is the only barrier against fanaticism', Harvard proposed to propagate a theology 'adapted in its mode of exhibition to the state of society'.⁹ Indeed, the only solution to the conflict at hand was entrenchment, and this shifting perception of the theological battleground was institutionally borne out by both sides. The Unitarians' optimistic dissent in pursuit of the Massachusetts Bay model was now shifting somewhat towards the defensive stance of Plymouth-style ghettoization.

The tone of theological debate in the ensuing years grew to reflect this fortress mentality on each front. In Channing's significant 1819 address in Baltimore, it seemed that even he had given up hope for a united body of orthodox and liberal Christians. In this famous ordination sermon, he spelled out the Unitarian theological case, leaving no space for orthodox Trinitarian views to be considered reasonable. The wide distribution of the published address, simply titled *Unitarian Christianity*, only served to fan the flames of controversy. Leonard Woods of Andover Seminary soon penned his *Letters to Unitarians* in 1820, opening a four-year back-and-forth barrage of publications with the liberal Professor Henry Ware of Harvard that eventually filled five volumes. Still hesitant to fully engage in conflict, Channing allowed others to answer the inevitable conservative response to his opening salvo.

Since his friend Andrews Norton did not share Channing's distaste for conflict, he was glad to enter the fight when Channing effectively withdrew. Indeed, responding to orthodox attacks upon Channing's 1819 treatise, Norton chose to deliberately attack the orthodox view in print rather than follow Channing's more irenic approach of offering an explanation of his perception of theological truth.¹⁰ This mode of engagement set the stage for Norton's role within Unitarianism for years to come. His zest for conflict led him to battle not only Trinitarians who resisted theological innovation in the name of orthodoxy, but also those on the opposite extreme whom he perceived as pushing modern views beyond the limits of acceptable liberal Christian theology. These early Unitarians embraced the historical truth of the biblical text and the importance of biblical miracles, and Norton devoted

⁹ John T. Kirkland, *Observations on the Proposition for Increasing the Means of Theological Education at the University in Cambridge* (Cambridge, MA, 1815), pp. 6–7.

¹⁰ Andrews Norton, *A Statement of Reasons for Not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians Concerning the Nature of God, and the Person of Christ* (Boston, MA, 1819).

himself to the defence of these theological fundamentals against the attacks of German scholarship, culminating in his landmark, if quickly obsolete, *Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels* (1838). In this text, Norton took on the role of conservative, attempting to respond to the model of biblical criticism offered in Johann Gottfried Eichhorn's *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*. The higher criticism that the Germans were proposing was anathema to Norton, who insisted that the reliability of the biblical text was linked to its historical truth.

This double-sided dissent, simultaneously opposing Trinitarian orthodoxy on the one side and radical innovation on the other, marked Unitarianism's pattern for the subsequent decades. However, the threat of innovation was soon not limited only to bold German scholars; a new home-grown opponent emerged out of the very bosom of Unitarianism. The development of these Transcendentalist thinkers caused an exaggerated angst because they were birthed in Unitarian circles. In 1838, Ralph Waldo Emerson delivered his infamous Divinity School Address. With true temerity, Emerson strode into Harvard Divinity School, the unofficial headquarters of Unitarian theology—Harvard having never adopted a statement of faith, but for almost a century exclusively appointing Unitarians to theological professorships—and assaulted its rational theology by declaring it 'corpse-cold'. As a disgruntled erstwhile Unitarian minister, Emerson insisted that 'Christianity has fallen into the error that corrupts all attempts to communicate religion', by which he meant that even the Unitarian form of belief inhibited true religiosity. As he explained in his own confusing fashion, 'there is no doctrine of the Reason which will bear to be taught by the Understanding'. This was his specific attack on Unitarian theology in particular, as it attempted to teach everything by the Understanding, which for Emerson was a dead-end path. He told Harvard's students that it was better to follow intuition and religious sentiment than to trust Unitarian arguments and formulations. They should follow the example of Christ in asserting their own infinitude rather than relying upon the theological systems constructed by scholars. Emerson urged them to 'go alone', for 'all attempts to project and establish a Cultus with new rites and forms, seem to me vain'.¹¹

The Unitarian leadership was incensed. They were still battling Trinitarian opponents, while the German theological menace grew greater each decade, and now they suddenly had a new home-grown enemy. It fell to Andrews Norton, indefatigable theological combatant, to publicly deal with Emerson and his colleagues. Standing at the same chapel pulpit where Emerson had spewed his heresy, Norton delivered his scathing response entitled 'A Discourse on the Latest form of Infidelity'. He firmly held the old party line.

¹¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York, 1965), pp. 246–56.

He asserted that Christianity was based on 'revelation', and in its highest form (Unitarianism) they had been able to weed out the elements of 'human speculations' that had accumulated over the centuries and had contaminated Christian doctrine. Norton correctly understood the connection between the German and Transcendentalist threats. They were both founded on the same premise, although they represented somewhat opposite extremes. One emphasized reason to a level that Norton felt excluded revelation and the other emphasized intuition to a level that banned reason. In contrast, Norton espoused a delicate balance of both factors in religion. 'We shall perceive, that all which has been taught us by God's revelation, corresponds with all that our reason, in its highest exercise, had before been striving to establish.'¹²

Of course, the Transcendentalist threat was not to be so easily controlled. Emerson was banned from Harvard's campus for almost three decades, which was a preventative measure of limited utility. But at least the Unitarians would not again be humiliated by handing their own pulpit over to the enemy. Emerson remained a prolific opponent outside of Cambridge, and was joined by others who shared his iconoclastic tendencies. One prominent ally was Theodore Parker, whose theological musings provoked a similarly strong response from Unitarian leaders. Parker swam in the current of German scholarship and offered an analysis of religion that caused even the still moderate Channing to 'recoil in horror'.¹³ In his 1841 discourse on 'The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity', Parker had designated as 'transient' almost all the fundamentals that Unitarian theologians considered to be 'permanent'. Revelation, miracles, and pivotal doctrines were all considered by Parker as non-essentials, even distractions from what he considered 'Absolute Religion'. As far as the Unitarian hierarchy was concerned, it was just more of the same threat posed by Emerson, and their response to his 1843 'Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion' was a failed attempt to push him out of the Boston Association of (Unitarian) Ministers. The faculty of Harvard Divinity was less subtle; following Parker's untimely death, they allegedly agreed that no one would attend his memorial service.

The irony of their treatment at the hands of the Unitarian hierarchy was not lost on Emerson and Parker. They were shunned because of their role as theological innovators. This mirrors the very treatment that the Unitarians had received at the hands of the orthodox Trinitarians, which in itself is not necessarily a binding criticism, as the Unitarians had separated to perpetuate a distinct theological vision. But the potential paradox becomes more obvious

¹² Andrews Norton, 'A Discourse on the Latest Form of Infidelity', in *An American Reformation: A Documentary History of Unitarian Christianity*, ed. Sydney Ahlstrom and Jonathan Sinclair Carey (San Francisco, CA, 1998), p. 459.

¹³ Perry Miller, *The American Transcendentalists: Their Prose and Poetry* (Garden City, NY, 1957), p. 4.

when one considers the very words of Channing in defence of the early Unitarians' right to co-exist in the Congregational churches. He had argued that 'error of opinion' was a trifling matter in comparison to the biblical mandate for Christian charity. Now, when faced with precisely the same threat to their own form of orthodoxy, the Unitarians adopted the same position as their earlier Trinitarian opponents. Parker and Emerson had threatened the very fundamental elements of Unitarian orthodoxy, and the Unitarian hierarchy was unwilling to accept this radical dissent as acceptable within their own ranks.

Over the decades that followed, a gradual acceptance of the ideas proposed by Emerson, Parker, and company emerged. These shifting views were reflected by the honorary degree offered to Emerson by Harvard in 1866, and even more significantly, the invitation for him to deliver lectures in 1869. With the appointment of Charles Carroll Everett as Dean of Divinity in 1878, Harvard had officially turned a corner, as he was well known for his Transcendentalist sympathies. But to the careful observer, these manoeuvres were a day late and a dollar short. In the heat of the moment, when the Unitarians had the opportunity to honour what they often termed 'the principle of free inquiry', they had failed. This is the burden of those who dissent. They must perpetually decide how to best serve the vision behind the dissent, rather than advocating dissent as an independent virtue.

SHAKERS

The nineteenth century follows the full parabolic arc of Shaker expansion and contraction in North America. As a radical Dissenter in Manchester, England during the early 1770s, Ann Lee, one of the key founders of the Shaker movement, was jailed several times. By 1774 she and a cohort that included her husband had arrived in New York, where they sought to establish a colony of like-minded believers, and by 1780 they owned land near Albany. Lee was illiterate, and thus her message was one focused upon immediate revelation and religious experience, and she left no written record of her nuanced theology after her death in 1784. She also failed to provide a plan for a succession of leadership, with her vacancy filled by another of her imported English brethren for three years following her death. With his death in 1787, direction was transferred to the first indigenous leader, Joseph Meacham.

Brother Meacham was a capable figurehead whose organizational gifts made him a quintessential embodiment of the phenomenon famously described by Max Weber as the 'routinisation of charisma'. It was Meacham who focused the Shaker impulse into a coherent system that would exist for the remainder of the century. Working with his selected female counterpart

Lucy Wright, he established a communal system of living with its attendant rules of orthopraxy, the formal structure of Church leadership, and began to formulate an understanding of Shaker orthodoxy. By the time of his death in 1796, Lucy Wright assumed control of an ordered society that steered virtually the same course for the subsequent twenty-five years under her guiding hand.

What did these early American Shakers believe? They inherited from the first generation of 'witnesses' a distinctive interpretation of Christianity that was not favourably received by those belonging to more traditional denominations. During her early proselytization efforts in New York, Ann Lee was physically beaten on more than one occasion because of her alternative views. Like the Unitarians, the Shakers rejected common formulations of Christology. Specifically, they did not espouse the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement, and offered an alternate view of Christ, not dissimilar to that of the Unitarians. As articulated by Brother Evans in the ongoing Shaker periodical *The Manifesto*, they did not 'believe any benefit accrued to mankind from their causing him to be murdered or sacrificed under [the] Romans['] Laws'. Instead, Jesus was the 'advent of a Christ Spirit', wherein the divine message for humanity was first realized, and he thereby 'begins to resurrect souls from the process of reproduction'. In his celibate life, Jesus modelled God's plan for human salvation from original sin. As Evans elaborated, 'Jesus, instead of being one of three Gods, was simply the first generative man who became a Shaker.'¹⁴

Freedom from sexual sin, defined as any kind of sexual activity, was at the core of the Shaker vision. As Sisters White and Taylor later elucidated, the message of early Shakers revealed 'the secret of man's sin, the hidden cause of man's fall from uprightness, his loss of purity, lay in the premature and self-indulgent use of sexual union'. But for those who might hope to find a valid window for sexual expression, disappointment loomed, for 'Ann Lee saw in a vision the act of the first pair performed, not as a natural function . . . but as an act of self-indulgence and therefore of sin'.¹⁵ The same was seen to be true for any subsequent human sexual acts.

It was this anomalous view of sexuality and family life that generated the anti-Shaker hostility among outsiders that perpetually plagued the group. This doctrine was intimately linked to their theological system. Like the Unitarians, they dismissed the orthodox view of a triune God. But what the Shakers substituted for the old model was a new vision of 'the duality of the Deity, God both Father and Mother; one in essence—one God, not two; but God

¹⁴ Frederick Evans, *Shaker Manifesto*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 16.

¹⁵ Anna White and Leila Taylor, *Shakerism, Its Meaning and Message: Embracing an Historical Account, Statement of Belief and Spiritual Experience of the Church from Its Rise to the Present Day* (Columbus, OH, 1904), p. 19.

who possesses the two natures...each distinct in function yet one in being, Co-equals in Deity'.¹⁶ From the outside, one might anticipate that sexual union was the expression of uniting these two reflections of the Divine as evident within humanity. Shakers, however, sought to achieve the reflection of Divine duality through the organization of their communal life where both genders co-habited, but scrupulously avoided any kind of sexual contact. For the Shakers, this was not a recipe for perennial sexual frustration, but rather served as their expression of God's 'co-equal' nature.

Indeed, the 'duality of Deity' not only shaped the daily life of the Shaker community, it even figured largely in their formulations of soteriology. If salvation was not derived from a propitiatory sacrifice, then how did the Shaker obtain this ultimate religious goal? It was to be accomplished through their carefully constructed system of confession (offered to an approved member of the Society) and sanctification. While they were to avoid an extensive compiled list of identified sins, at the top of the chart was any form of sexual activity. Avoiding sex became the key to eternal life, and it made their message unique. As Brother Evans clarified, other versions of Christianity had failed to comprehend this fundamental component of God's plan for salvation. 'Paul, Moody, and Sankey are apologists for the flesh; and the genuine life of Christ is not found in the gospel they teach.' According to the Shakers, these other teachers 'preach *part of Christ*, and adulterate the true gospel'.¹⁷ While the Unitarians made their 'moral argument against Calvinism' by arguing that the Trinitarians used the substitutionary atonement as an excuse for moral laxity, the Shakers defined moral laxity as the Protestant indulgence in sexuality and the concomitant life of the nuclear family. By doing this, they attacked the very virtue held as the pinnacle of morality among their Protestant contemporaries. It was a bold move.

Their source for this teaching was to be found in yet another divergent theological formulation, the Shaker notion of ongoing revelation, or 'gifts'. Revelation was not closed with the establishment of the biblical canon. Indeed, the presence of the Christ Spirit was something potentially open to anyone, but in the present age was first and foremost evident in the teaching of Ann Lee. For the sceptic, the problem here is that Lee left behind no written teachings, so the message is only accessible through the layers of later nineteenth-century interpreters within the tradition. The argument made by Shakers emphasized the way in which subsequent followers should not be restricted to Lee's message, but rather should follow her lead to seek their own access to the Christ Spirit. There are remarkable similarities to Emerson's Transcendentalist sensibilities. He had rejected the restriction of revelation to a closed book and the veneration of any historical figure, in favour of the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *Manifesto*, p. 16.

individual's quest for religious experience. As Brothers Bishop and Wells explained the Shaker view, 'by visions, revelations, and other gifts from God, through Mother, they wait with patience for God's appointed time', a coming day when 'I see great numbers of people come and believe the gospel; I see great men come and bow down their heads and confess their sins'.¹⁸

The tension here, of course, is evident in virtually any religious tradition. How does the community balance the need for authority and fixity with the simultaneous expression of duality and fluidity? For some traditions, the response to the latter is to emphasize the former. This is precisely what the Unitarians did when faced with 'the latest form of infidelity' in Transcendentalism. By contrast, the Shakers could not similarly indulge the inclination to place hierarchy fully in place of 'gifts', as their very formation and theology advocated the ongoing nature of individual revelation. This delicate balance of Shaker authority and individuality was put to the test during the years of what they termed the 'Era of Manifestations'. In 1837, the year before Emerson's infamous visit to Harvard Divinity School, there began a sudden surge of revelations or 'gifts' across the various Shaker communities scattered around the northeast quadrant of the United States. This onslaught of new Divine messages provided a ripe opportunity for internal dissent among the Shakers on two levels. First, the established hierarchy (the Elders of each community were accountable to the overseeing Ministry) had to decide how to respond to messages that would potentially threaten their authority over existing Shaker orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Second, individual Shakers had to decide if they felt these new manifestations were authentic Divine communications, or human projection.

Almost from the start of this roughly decade-long trend of revelation, the Ministry had decided to take control of how these messages should be received. Any 'gift' deemed genuine would have to correspond with existing Shaker doctrine and practice. It might properly extend or expand existing policy, but it could not contradict the teaching of the Society if it was an authentic manifestation of what they called 'Mother's Work'. The hierarchy made this point clear for those who might blindly follow the whim of any immediate revelation. 'Yea', they asserted, 'and Mother has given to the Ministry and Elders here, spiritual spectacles that they may see clearly and not be deceived by false spirits.'¹⁹ But within this agreed framework, 'gifts' were encouraged and continued to blossom at remarkable rates. Indeed, leadership even established new traditions and rituals surrounding the late 1830s blossoming of 'Mother's Work'. Thinking that the outdoors might encourage some freedom from the routine of their daily environs, in the

¹⁸ Rufus Bishop and Seth Wells, *Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Our Ever Blessed Mother Ann Lee and the Elders with Her* (Albany, NY, 1888), p. 10.

¹⁹ *Central Ministry Journal*, 1839–50, 26 May 1839.

early 1840s the Ministry had each Shaker community construct a sacred site for outdoor 'feasts'. These 'mountain feasts' were the setting for a great variety of enthusiastic revival behaviours, which continued to be evaluated and controlled by the presence of each community's Elders.

Still, there were those within the Society who doubted the authenticity of many revelations. To publicly question the authority and opinions of the Elders was anathema, but there were more private expressions of doubt. As one member expressed, 'I don't want to be deceived & imposed upon, & believe this & that to be a gift, a vision &c &c which is only made. It would disgust me very much to have anyone old or young take advantage & mix in their own stuff & pretend to some gift or to alter and fix the matter at all to suit themselves.'²⁰ One troubling conversation overheard in 1842 was reported as follows: 'I dare say the Elders have a hand in putting them (the instruments) up to it, in some way or other;... And as for these songs that they say are given by the Spirits, what silly things they are! I could make better songs myself, if I should try, and... tell them that they came from the Spirits, and I dare say they will all believe me.'²¹ As this comment reveals, to question the validity of the 'gifts' was to simultaneously doubt the hierarchy that authorized and espoused them, and that was not acceptable within the Shaker community.

The hierarchy, as voiced by the Ministry, and locally enforced by the Elders, insisted on control of the 'gifts' as they continued to unfold for a number of years. By 1841, the Ministry announced that they had been given the responsibility to adjudicate the veracity of all 'gifts'.²² Instructions were given to branch Elders to have messages transcribed for their evaluation before they were made public to the assembly of members. These manoeuvres indicate the ongoing internal tension regarding revelation. In essence, there was no real freedom of visions, or a concomitant ability for the individual member to decide independently their own opinion of putative visions. The hierarchy controlled both the speaker and the audience, which was only possible given the restrictions of a residential community. In effect, if the Unitarians had tried something similar, they would have dismissed the majority of Emerson's insights as 'inauthentic' and then required the Unitarian membership to accept the remaining portions as valid on the authority of the religious leadership. The result feels artificial or contrived, and imposed an avoidance of dissent upon membership. Both Shaker visionaries and critics were stifled.

The authoritarian impulses of the Ministry were also evident in their ongoing issue of increasingly detailed collections of rules for the membership

²⁰ As cited in Glendyne Wergland, *One Shaker Life: Isaac Newton Youngs, 1739–1865* (Amherst, MA, 2006), p. 120.

²¹ As quoted in Jean M. Humez, *Mother's First-born Daughters: Early Shaker Writings on Women and Religion* (Bloomington, IN, 1993), p. 214.

²² Sally Promey, *Spiritual Spectacles: Vision and Image in Mid-Nineteenth Century Shakerism* (Bloomington, IN, 1993), p. 60.

to follow. First proclaimed in 1821, at the very end of Lucy Wright's leadership, the 'Millennial Laws' were intended to establish a uniformity of practice across the various communities that eventually numbered above twenty. The revised version offered in 1845 reflected the recent 'spirit of revival' and in extraordinary detail 'sharpened the boundaries between the society and the world, raised the standards of purity among the Believers, and enlarged the areas of supervision by the leaders'.²³

By 1860, the Society scaled back on some of the more onerous aspects of regulated life, but it was now too late to have the desired impact. In fact, Shaker membership had peaked back in the 1840s, and had been in steady decline following the era of manifestations. There is no single explanation for declension on such a consistent pattern, but many factors seem relevant. Some point to the increasing percentage of women in both membership and leadership positions, which prompted some of the remaining males to meekly protest what they termed 'petticoat rule'. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the national shift towards urbanization and industrialization made the Shakers seem out of touch, as did their antiquated dress code—a reflection of the styles current at the time when their movement had begun. These factors colluded in an indecipherable fashion to produce an inevitable result, the significant shift from constant expansion to the ongoing closure of Shaker communities one after another in the second half of the century. From a peak of over 5,000 members in the 1840s, the group had shrunk to 885 members by 1900, with a third of those above sixty years of age.²⁴ The contours of the rise and decline of Shakerism were largely contained within the nineteenth century.

QUAKERS

The Quakers hold a prominent position in nineteenth-century American religious history, given both their size and their sphere of influence upon the fledgling country. The group's colonial era history was one of significant growth, but eventually they focused less upon proselytization and more upon influencing the broader moral sensibilities and ethical policies of the country. Ultimately, however, they became so embroiled in repeating rounds of internal dissent during the nineteenth century that they were distracted from their declared agenda regarding social reform.

²³ Stephen Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven, CT, 1992), p. 198.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

Tracing its roots to 1650s rural England, the Quakers had been Dissenters of extraordinary conviction. Their founder George Fox modelled a religion that eschewed fixed authority in favour of the individual encounter with 'Spirit'. Later in that decade, Quaker messengers came to share their vision in the colonies of the British Empire, but soon encountered persecution that surpassed even that they had suffered in England. Fox had been jailed in his home country many times, as had his ardent followers. In the colonial context of New England, where Puritans had sought to establish a pseudo-theocracy, there was even less tolerance for Quaker claims of inward revelation. The unpredictable religious experience of the Quakers, named for their physical quivering in response to an encounter with the Spirit of God, was well beyond the pale of a Puritan system which favoured a bibliocentric theology. The Puritan model emphasized the supreme authority of the Bible while allowing the individual to interpret that text, but could not permit individual claims to immediate revelation. For this major theological violation (and the threat it represented to their system) the Puritans had exiled their own Anne Hutchinson in 1637, and had even executed recalcitrant Quakers who returned to Massachusetts after repeated warnings to stay away.

The unusual style of Quaker worship articulated their theology in a public way. Without an appointed minister to lead the service or provide a sermon, congregants were seated facing each other and together 'waited upon God' to provide a message for an individual recipient to deliver to the assembled group. In these 'testimonies', Spirit could speak without the distracting clutter of sacrament, clergy, hymns, or the overbearing authority of the biblical text. By whittling away all these extraneous religious elements, they perceived themselves as the fullest expression of the Protestant Reformation. Other Protestants would ask if the remaining components were sufficient to sustain a Christian identity. To further these doubts, Quaker theology demanded that believers pursue perfection, and linked their own actions to salvation. Yes, the blood of Christ was essential, but its ultimate goal was to empower the faithful to achieve entire sanctification. To other Protestants, this held the connotation of salvation by works.

Overcoming their early violent reception, the Quakers came to figure prominently in several American colonies, controlling Pennsylvania and half of New Jersey. They demonstrated that radical Dissent did not necessarily mean worldly withdrawal as it had for the Shakers, although they did establish increasingly detailed rules for members. Indeed, their expression of the primitivistic impulse was shrouded in a kind of optimism similar to that of the early Unitarians who expected to point the way for others to eagerly follow. But, continuing in the same pattern, their hope soon gave way to a less encouraging reality.

Some scholars might argue that the rigorous strictures of Quaker life served to strengthen the group by raising 'overall levels of commitment', which

thereby functioned to 'screen out people whose participation would otherwise be low'.²⁵ One could alternately suggest that the increasing routinization of charisma had decreased the appeal of the movement to those who might be inclined to appreciate its freedom from the bounds of traditional dogma and ritual. The Quakers felt the need to construct carefully woven texts or 'Disciplines' filled with extensive rules for believers to follow. Although these were labelled 'Christian and Brotherly Advices', they were not suggestions, for those who failed to comply with Quaker standards were 'disowned' or excommunicated by the Church. Similar to the Shakers, the Quaker rules covered virtually all aspects of life. Endogamy was required, dress codes were enforced, 'plain speech' was the standard, military service was not permitted, alcohol use was monitored, and members were not to own slaves (they were the first religious group to take this stand). Each Meeting organized a 'visiting committee' to enter every household to ensure conformity to Quaker rules even in the privacy of the domestic realm. According to Quaker theology, an authentic experience of the 'Inward Light of Christ' by necessity meant a concomitant expression of obedience to Quaker rules. If the latter did not exist, then the former was not valid, and 'disownment' was the solution if rebuke did not elicit immediate repentance and a modification in behaviour.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, tensions began to brew that would result in an outbreak of hostility in a group dedicated to peace and harmony. Just as with the Unitarians, they had two rounds of nineteenth-century division, and the theological issues at play in both groups were surprisingly similar. The Second Great Awakening that swept America in the early nineteenth century emphasized conversion, biblical authority, and fixed orthodox doctrines. Simultaneously, an alternate religious breeze was blowing through the land that looked to reason and new historical and critical approaches to the Bible, and had a fluid understanding of doctrine. These divergent strains collided within Quakerism, and the result was the creation of groups that fit Wilson's description of 'schismatic sects'.²⁶

The first major division came in the 1820s as one group came to espouse the teachings of Elias Hicks, who emphasized the traditional Quaker teaching of reliance on Spirit, but in a way that suggested an opposition to the doctrinal fixity of the Great Awakening evangelicals. Hicks suggested 'that not the Scriptures but the Spirit of truth which Jesus commended to his disciples to wait for as their only rule that would teach them all things and guide them into all truth is the primary and only rule of faith and practice and is the only means by which our salvation is effected'. The key doctrines of the evangelicals were also suspect to him. When he insisted that 'we ought to bring all

²⁵ Laurence Iannaccone, 'Why Strict Churches are Strong', *American Journal of Sociology*, 99 (1994), 1183.

²⁶ Wilson, 'Analysis of Sect', p. 7.

doctrines whether written or verbal to the test of the Spirit of truth in our own minds as the only sure director relative to the things of God', he was articulating the fundamental insight of Quakerism, but in a way that conservatives found threatening. When he finally admitted that 'if any of my friends have received any known benefit from any outward sacrifice I do not envy them their privilege', he had gone too far for the taste of many Quakers by undermining the substitutionary atonement.²⁷ But to others, now called Hicksites, he was saving Quaker tradition from the infiltration of evangelicalism.

The conservative response to the Hicksites was sharp. At the 1827 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, when the Orthodox Quakers voted for a theological testing committee to verify the sound (read evangelical) doctrine of all affiliated Meetings, separation was the inevitable result. Significantly, the London Yearly Meeting, which represented ultimate Quaker authority, failed to recognize the Hicksite partisans as authentic Quakers. The analogy to the Unitarian split with Trinitarian Congregationalism is relevant on several levels. The same split occurred at the Ohio Yearly Meeting in 1828. The Orthodox had voted to allow members to be disowned for doctrinal variance, specifically their 'laying waste a belief in the divinity, mediation, and atonement of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, or the authenticity and divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures'.²⁸

The orthodox were confident that they had preserved Quakerism from abandoning the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, but the Hicksites accused them of abandoning the distinctive elements of Quaker practice and belief in the process. The Hicksites were suspicious of anyone who would impose structure above the leading of Spirit. The orthodox were suspicious of anyone who did not subscribe to their full doctrinal list, and they were soon to have an opportunity to suspect yet more Friends. In 1845, a hostile battle erupted among the orthodox at the New England Yearly Meeting, with other Meetings dividing in subsequent years. Again, two groups emerged with differing definitions of true Quaker theology and practice.

The followers of Joseph Gurney insisted that Quaker emphasis on 'Inner Light' or 'Spirit' could mislead the faithful to think 'that the light of the spirit of God in the heart of man, is itself actually Christ. The obvious tendency of this mistake, is to...reduce him to the rank of a principle'.²⁹ Following the evangelical model, Gurneyites focused upon conversion, Bible study, and missionary work. Their opponents, the Wilburites, were concerned that the distinctive qualities of Quakerism were being diluted. John Wilbur suggested

²⁷ Elias Hicks, *The Misrepresentations of Anna Braithwait, in Relation to the Doctrines Preached by Elias Hicks, Together with the Refutation of the Same, in a Letter From Elias Hicks to Dr. Atlee of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, PA, 1824), pp. 19, 20, 23.

²⁸ *Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Rules of Discipline* (Philadelphia, PA, 1834), p. 25.

²⁹ Joseph Gurney, *Brief Remarks on Impartiality in the Interpretation of Scripture* (New York, 1893), p. 8.

that orthodox pursuit of doctrine 'must unavoidably undermine Quakerism' in its tendency to 'outward views' rather than looking to 'the inner heart of man'. The inherent flaw was the corresponding emphasis on the 'propitiatory sacrifice...as the whole covenant of salvation...trusting in this alone for justification, without its essential concomitant, the true obedience of faith'.³⁰ Doctrinal fixity and individual religious experience were portrayed as contradictory, if not mutually exclusive, theological affirmations.

These divisions remained in place for decades, culminating in the 'Richmond Declaration of 1887', which reinforced the Gurneyite stance. It asserted that 'the Scriptures are the only divinely authorised record of the doctrines which we are bound, as Christians, to accept...any doctrine which is not contained in them; and whatsoever anyone says or does, contrary to the Scriptures, though under profession of the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, must be reckoned and accounted as a mere delusion'.³¹ But the evangelical contingency had pushed too hard and too long. As Thomas Kennedy notes in Chapter 3 of this volume, London Yearly Meeting decided not to adopt this declaration, while the door was opened for eventual reunification of Quaker Yearly Meetings in New York, Philadelphia, and elsewhere.³² Increasing attention was given to the unique elements of Quakerism and its early history, as the evangelical wing began to shrink considerably by the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

CONCLUSION

With the benefit of comparison, it becomes evident that these diverse groups of dissenters, the Unitarians, Shakers, and Quakers, all navigated familiar terrain. Each had to establish a pattern for relating to the broader American culture that reflected their distinctive aims and aspirations. To what extent did they hope to serve as a 'City on a Hill', optimistically providing a public example, with the assumption that large numbers would follow their lead? Or were they an embodiment of *contra mundum*, seeking to preserve their theological vision in a protected enclave? Either way, all three groups had to decide how to respond to the secondary wave of dissent that emerged from within their own membership. What theological essentials were considered sacrosanct? How did the structure of hierarchy in each group inform their reaction to internal dissent? In the final analysis, each of these groups represented

³⁰ John Wilbur, *Journal of the Life of John Wilbur: A Minister of the Gospel in the Society of Friends With Selections from his Correspondence* (Providence, RI, 1859), p. 274.

³¹ *The Declaration of Faith of The Society of Friends in America* (New York, 1912), pp. 21–2.

³² Thomas Kennedy, 'Quakers', Chapter 3 of this volume.

a rather different response to the evolution of Protestant Dissenting traditions in an American setting, and yet they all sought some balance of individuality and authority, hoping to honour religious experience while simultaneously defending their definition of orthodoxy.

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Restorationists and New Movements in North America

Douglas A. Foster

Canada and the United States shared a heritage as British colonies shaped by the experience of the 'New World', including significant interaction with French, Spanish, and Native American cultures. With the exception of cities like Toronto, Montreal, New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, much of both Canada and the United States in the early nineteenth century was still an undeveloped frontier. In the United States, however, in both rural and urban settings, the American Revolution had seared ideas of liberty, self-sufficiency, and God's special favour towards the new nation deep into the people's consciousness. The somewhat chaotic notions of democracy that permeated the general population were manifested in every segment of culture, including government, business, education, and the churches. These attitudes fuelled the rise of new popular religious movements and significant adaptations in the older churches. Somewhat ironically, one of the most powerful impulses behind many of these new bodies was a deep longing to restore what they believed was a lost primitive and pure form of the church, uncorrupted by the accretions of the centuries.¹

Canada, on the other hand, remained very much part of the British Empire. Overt rejection of the American Revolution by large parts of the Canadian population, including Loyalists who emigrated from the new United States during and following the Revolutionary War, was strengthened and virtually universalized by the War of 1812. The Constitutional Act of 1791 established and endowed Anglicanism in Canada as at least the favoured religion, the very year the First Amendment to the US Constitution prohibited making laws

¹ For examples see Richard T. Hughes, ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Urbana, IL, 1988) and Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT, 1989).

concerning the establishment of religion.² Canada's Constitutional Act was mitigated by the reiteration of the protection of Catholicism spelled out earlier in the Quebec Act of 1774 and by pressure from Presbyterians and other Protestants that they share in the revenues of the 'clergy reserve' lands. Nevertheless the religious situation of Canada was more conservative. Thus, while many in both the United States and Canada shared notions of democracy and freedom from tyranny, it was Christianity in the United States that engendered and sustained several new religious movements.

Democratized attitudes held by a growing number in the United States included a modification of European Enlightenment understandings of a God-endowed 'natural aristocracy'. The argument went that such natural aristocrats—as contrasted with the hereditary aristocracy—had the ability to discern the laws of nature, conformity to which was essential to maintaining a properly ordered and flourishing society and avoiding degeneration into chaos.³ Therefore, ordinary people should defer to such gifted people in every area of society. In the United States, however, the notion of insight into natural law began to expand to include and even to privilege the 'common people'. The rhetoric of human equality was reflected in the assertion of the Declaration of Independence of 1776 that 'all men are created equal', though the writers clearly understood 'all men' to mean propertied white males. Nevertheless, radical ideas of democratization and a massive optimism permeated many segments of the nation.⁴

The rise of such convictions had begun before the American Revolution, but became virtually universal afterward. These assumptions functioned as myths that drove the formation of all American social structures. After the American Revolution, people increasingly rejected what they viewed as coercive and corrupt hierarchical structures—including in the churches. Even where the older churches had been relatively secure, opposition developed towards the assumption that ordinary people were obliged to defer to and support learned ministers, priests, and theologians. Resentment arose towards confessions of faith that were often incomprehensible to common Christians who alleged that such 'creeds' were sources of false teaching and division in the church. Many embraced with enthusiasm the idea that the old structures requiring deference to elites were rapidly passing away.⁵

While precise figures are difficult to obtain, estimates of actual church membership in the United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century

² Mark A. Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World: The History of North American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2002), pp. 227–34.

³ Darren Staloff, *Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson: The Politics of American Enlightenment and the American Founding* (New York, 2005), pp. 153, 187ff; L. Joseph Hebert, Jr, *More Than Kings and Less Than Men: Tocqueville on the Promise and Perils of Democratic Individualism* (New York, 2010), pp. 77–90.

⁴ Hatch, *Democratization*, pp. 9–15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 17–46.

indicate that up to 75 per cent of the population may have been, in contemporary terms, 'unchurched'. This figure may reflect Reformed understandings of church membership that assumed only the 'elect' were eligible for full membership, in contrast to the voluntary model that would later become the norm. Nevertheless, significant antagonism towards older forms of Christianity existed, sometimes because they bolstered the status quo of elite rule (Anglicanism) or because of their adherence to 'un-American' notions such as Calvinism. Regardless of precise numbers, claims of early America as a Christian nation may actually reflect a projection of New England Puritan religion onto the entire nation.⁶

Also, regardless of exact numbers at the beginning of the century, there is abundant evidence of a significant increase in church membership in the nineteenth. The convergence of the idealization of the common person, the view of the United States as a uniquely God-favoured nation, and a rejection of any obligation to defer to elites contributed to and shaped a powerful burst of religious fervour and creativity. Reflecting the Puritan rhetoric of America as the new promised land, many Christian bodies embraced millennial notions such as that the events surrounding the formation of the United States heralded the culmination of all things. America, many believed, was to provide now in the fullness of time an uncorrupted setting for the recovery of the primitive gospel, its universal dissemination, and the unity of all Christians. In the mind of Alexander Campbell, one of the leaders of what would become the largest of the new Restorationist groups, those events would lead to the conversion of the world and the ushering in of the millennium.⁷

Restoration, restitution, and Christian primitivism are terms used for the impulse to return the church to the perceived lost purity of its origins. Historically the Restoration impulse has focused on recovering beliefs and practices believed lost or obscured. This yearning was by no means new or confined to the American context. In a sense, every reform movement in Christian history contains something of a Restorationist element. In his 1960 study *The Restoration Principle*, Alfred T. DeGroot documented the presence of the concept in patristic and medieval theology, as well as in the modern and American church. Among those DeGroot highlighted were Tertullian and the Montanists, the Waldenses, Thomas à Kempis, John Calvin, and John Wesley. He pointed out that regardless what the individuals or groups believed had to be restored, when reformers viewed their crusade as universally applicable and

⁶ Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 37–66; Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776–2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (2nd edn., New Brunswick, NJ, 2006), pp. 25–49.

⁷ Anthony L. Dunnavant, 'Basic Themes of the Campbell-Stone Movement', *Discipliana*, 46 (June 1986), 17, 30–1; Anthony L. Dunnavant, *Restructure: Four Historical Ideals in the Campbell-Stone Movement and the Development of the Polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (New York, 1993).

vilified those who disagreed with them, Restorationism has tended to be divisive and exclusive.⁸

In two conferences organized by Richard T. Hughes in 1985 and 1991, scholars of American Christianity examined the ubiquity of Restorationist impulses in the churches of the United States. The essays hinted at the question of whether 'Restoration' ultimately has any real meaning. If everyone is a Restorationist, the term may have no definite content. Hughes argued against such a conclusion, however, insisting that Restoration is a 'substantive theme in the American experience' that was manifested in diverse ways in different traditions, times, and contexts.⁹ It would therefore be a mistake to assume that the groups treated in this chapter are the only 'Restorationist' groups in nineteenth-century North American Christianity. The Restoration motif is strong and overt in Baptists, Mormons, and Plymouth Brethren, and played a significant role as well for Methodists and Presbyterians, among others.¹⁰ These groups, however, are not the subject of this chapter and are treated elsewhere.

The North American Christian groups generally classified as 'Restorationist' are bodies that emerged from what is today labelled the Stone-Campbell movement, which began to take shape in the early 1800s. Itself the confluence of parts of at least four new American movements, these churches identified themselves as 'Christian Churches', 'Churches of Christ', or 'Disciples of Christ' in an attempt to use generic names that would not separate them from other Christians.¹¹ The label 'Restoration Movement' was seldom used until relatively late in the nineteenth century.¹²

THE CHRISTIAN MOVEMENTS: JAMES O'KELLY, ABNER JONES AND ELIAS SMITH, BARTON W. STONE

A number of populist religious reform movements began after the American Revolution, each of which reflected Restorationist ideas some of which would

⁸ Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Restoration Principle* (St. Louis, MO, 1960). See especially pp. 151–64 for an example of the divisive potential of Restorationism.

⁹ Hughes, *American Quest*, p. 7.

¹⁰ Richard T. Hughes, ed., *The Primitive Church in the Modern World* (Urbana, IL, 1995); Hughes, *American Quest*; Ivan Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration: A History of the LDS Church to 1846* (Provo, UT, 1973); C. Douglas Weaver, *In Search of the New Testament Church: The Baptist Story* (Macon, GA, 2008).

¹¹ The Association of Religion Data Archives, Religion Family Trees, 'Restoration Movement', http://www.thearda.com/denoms/families/trees/familytree_Restorationmovement.asp, accessed 11 November 2014; Frank S. Mead, Samuel S. Hill, and Craig D. Atwood, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (Nashville, TN, 2010 edn.).

¹² Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement* (Joplin, MO, 1994 edn.), pp. 6–12.

feed into the Stone-Campbell Restoration movement. As Case suggests in Chapter 8 of this volume, structural tensions in Methodism made them particularly prone to secessions.¹³ Among Methodists in Virginia and North Carolina, a group of ministers led by James O'Kelly reacted against what they regarded as the episcopal tyranny embodied in the leadership of Francis Asbury. O'Kelly had moved from the Church to Methodism around 1775 and was present at the Christmas Conference in Baltimore, Maryland in 1784 that constituted the Methodist Episcopal Church as a separate body from British Methodism. Though already a leader in American Methodism, O'Kelly's republican principles brought him into sharp conflict with Asbury, especially over the absolute authority of bishops to appoint ministers to churches or circuits. At the Conference meeting in Baltimore in November 1792, O'Kelly and a group of ministers broke with Asbury and withdrew from the Conference. Still, O'Kelly and his supporters saw themselves as Methodists and tried to petition Asbury and other Methodist leaders for change in what they regarded as an oppressive system of episcopacy. When the Conference denied O'Kelly the right to appeal, and after repeated rejections of petitions for change, the dissidents formed what they named the 'Republican Methodist Church' at Manakin Town, Virginia on Christmas Day, 1793.

The new body was, as its name indicates, committed to republican governance as opposed to episcopacy. There was to be no hierarchy—all ministers were to be on equal footing, and there was to be no creed but the Bible. In response to an appeal made by Rice Haggard, one of the founders of the new denomination, the body changed its name to the 'Christian Church' in 1794.¹⁴ Decisions made at conferences were to be merely advisory, and each congregation was to have the freedom to call its own pastor without the approval of any outside authority.¹⁵

Though apparently articulated in the following manner first in 1866, the 'Five Cardinal Principles of the Christian Church' reflected commitments held by the group from its beginning:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only head of the Church.
2. The Name Christian to the exclusion of all party or sectarian names.
3. The Holy Bible, or the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, our only creed or confession of faith.

¹³ Jay R. Case, 'Methodists and Holiness in North America', Chapter 8 of this volume.

¹⁴ Rice Haggard, *An Address to the Different Religious Societies on the Sacred Import of the Christian Name* (Lexington, KY, 1804).

¹⁵ W.E. MacClenny, *The Life of Rev. James O'Kelly and the Early History of the Christian Church in the South* (Raleigh, NC, 1910), p. 118.

4. Christian character, or vital piety, the only test of fellowship and church membership.
5. The right of private judgment and the liberty of conscience the privilege and duty of all.¹⁶

By 1809, this Christian Church included over 20,000 members, mostly in Virginia and North Carolina.¹⁷

O'Kelly's writings reflect a strong commitment to representative government in both church and state. His anti-Catholic and anti-British sentiments, coupled with his embrace of Enlightenment ideas of the natural rights of humans, appear throughout his books and pamphlets. The tyranny of prelates who rule without the consent of the people was not only in opposition to Scripture, he insisted, but to the genius of the new American Republic, which had just fought and won a war to throw it off. Christ alone was the ruler of the church, with each congregation led by ministers chosen and confirmed by the Christians in that local body.¹⁸ Unlike separatist Restorationist groups like the Scottish Glasites and Sandemanians, O'Kelly's attempts at Restoration were designed to effect Christian unity. The adoption of the generic name Christian was key to O'Kelly's understanding of how all followers of Christ could be united. In an 1808 article entitled 'A Plan of Union Proposed', published in the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, O'Kelly urged all denominations to abandon their unscriptural names and for the sake of peace call themselves simply Christians—a name he assumed all could agree was appropriate. This would allow all followers of Christ to take communion together without the old sectarian identities. Furthermore, without the names that provoked sectarian loyalties, O'Kelly optimistically asserted, when anyone preached against an error, instead of being offended because of feeling resentment over the assault on one's denominational creed, 'the divine reproofs and corrections would give conviction, without offence'.¹⁹

Abner Jones and Elias Smith were the chief leaders of the Christian movement in New England. Jones was born into a Separate Baptist family and was baptized at age twenty-one. While teaching school at Heartland, Connecticut, he heard a Baptist preacher argue that only those things for which there is a clear 'thus saith the Lord' should be part of the church's beliefs and practices.

¹⁶ Milo True Morrill, *A History of the Christian Denomination in America, 1794–1911* (Dayton, OH, 1912), p. 385; see expansion of each principle on pp. 178–82.

¹⁷ Charles Franklin Kilgore, *The James O'Kelly Schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church* (unpublished PhD thesis, Emory University, 1961), p. 51.

¹⁸ See for example James O'Kelly, *Author's Apology for Protesting Against the Methodist Episcopal Government* (Hillsborough, 1829), pp. 38, 74–5; James O'Kelly, *Letters from Heaven Consulted* (Hillsborough, 1822), pp. 12, 17, 51; and MacClenny, *Life of Rev. James O'Kelly*, pp. 54, 84, 207, 232–47.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

He concluded that the name Baptist itself was unscriptural, and rejected much of Baptist polity and procedures, including church covenants.²⁰ After moving to Lyndon, Vermont in 1800 to practise medicine, he witnessed a revival in a nearby town and was inspired to begin preaching his convictions. In September 1801, he established an independent Christian Church in Lyndon.²¹ Elias Smith was born in Lyme, Connecticut to a Baptist father and Congregationalist mother. At age twenty-one he was baptized by immersion after a crisis of faith that included a dream in which an angel told him that God had special work for him to accomplish. He taught school for several years while struggling to feel a call to preach. He eventually began itinerant preaching among Separate Baptist churches and accepted pastorates in Salisbury, New Hampshire and Woburn, Massachusetts, accepting ordination in 1791.²²

Growing discomfort with trends he saw among the Baptists, however, including increasing organization that could become coercive, clerical pretensions, developments in Calvinist theology, and discussions concerning Universalism, led him to reject both Calvinism and Universalism for an Arminian position.²³ In the summer of 1802, he and others with similar concerns convened a 'Christian Conference' in Sanbornton, New Hampshire that determined to 'leave behind everything in name, doctrine or practice not found in the New Testament'.²⁴ The following year, Smith formed an independent Church of Christ in Portsmouth that reflected the sentiments of the conference, including no organization or authoritative leadership beyond the local church.²⁵ Smith's theology was deeply influenced by his radical Jeffersonian Republicanism, which equated primitive Christianity with republican virtue. God's word was clear to anyone who studied it carefully. Because the doctrines of predestination, the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and original sin were not clearly spelled out in Scripture, they were human inventions and must be rejected out of hand.²⁶

That year, 1803, Jones and Smith began collaborating in the establishment of independent Christian Churches throughout New England. They especially appealed to Baptists, and by 1807 a number of Separate Baptist Churches had affiliated with the Christian movement of Jones and Smith.²⁷ In September 1808, Smith began publishing a religious newspaper he titled the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*. This journal became an important tool for networking the

²⁰ Abner Jones, *Memoirs of the Life and Experiences, Travels and Preaching of Abner Jones* (Exeter, NH, 1807), pp. 45, 57–67.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 67–78.

²² Elias Smith, *The Life, Conversion, Preaching, Travels, and Suffering of Elias Smith* (Portsmouth, NH, 1816), pp. 200–28.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 291–4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 300–1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 312–21.

²⁶ Michael G. Kenny, *The Perfect Law of Liberty: Elias Smith and the Providential History of America* (Washington DC, 1994), pp. 4–5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 370–83.

Christian Church movements of James O'Kelly and Barton W. Stone (see below) with the New England Christians. In 1817 Smith embraced Universalism, resulting in a general disavowal of him and his views by the leadership of the Christian Church (also called the Christian Connection or Connexion).²⁸ Though he tried at least three times to return to the Christian Connection, he was never a major player in the movement again. Other leaders took over the publication of the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, and a new publication, the *Christian Palladium*, largely eclipsed it.²⁹

The Christian movement in the west—Kentucky and Tennessee—is identified most closely with Barton Warren Stone. A Presbyterian minister and leader in the Great Western Revival (1797–1805), Stone and four fellow ministers withdrew from the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1803. The separation had been precipitated by a series of frontier meetings that culminated in the Cane Ridge revival of August 1801. When conducted by Presbyterians, the context for these revivals was sacramental gatherings modelled on Scottish 'Holy Fairs'.³⁰ Non-stop preaching, singing, and exhorting over several days, ostensibly to prepare communicants for taking the Lord's Supper, moved many participants to a variety of intense 'religious exercises'. In his autobiography, Stone described these as the falling, dancing, barking, running, and singing exercises as well as jerks; that is, dramatic shaking of parts or all of the body. Stone admitted that there were excesses in the meetings and was frank that he believed the exercises had been caused by the 'circumstances of the times'—which included fervent millennial expectations of the end of the world. Nevertheless, he believed God was working in the events to bring people to Christ.³¹

Stone and his colleagues were part of a stream of American Presbyterianism known as the New Side or New Lights. Differences over the legitimacy of revivals (then most often called awakenings) and the necessity of ministerial subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, sparked in part by the Great Awakening (1730s and 1740s), resulted in a schism between Old Side and New Side Presbyterians in America between 1741 and 1758. The New Lights had weakened the essentiality of strict ministerial subscription to the Confession because it was a human document, and highlighted God's potential use of awakenings to provide the elect a conversion experience. Even after the structural reunion of the sides, the two attitudes remained.³²

²⁸ Morrill, *A History of the Christian Denomination*, pp. 121–3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 150–3.

³⁰ Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scotland and the Making of American Revivalism* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2001 edn.).

³¹ Barton W. Stone, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone, Written by Himself; With Additions and Reflections by Elder John Rogers* (Cincinnati, OH, 1847), pp. 39–42.

³² Randall Balmer and John R. Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians* (Westport, CT, 1993), pp. 30–4, 62ff.

While a number of ministers in the Transylvania Presbytery where Stone worked were New Lights, the Synod of Kentucky as a whole was dominated by Old Light sentiments that opposed revivals and insisted on subscription to the Westminster Confession.³³ The Cane Ridge meeting exacerbated the uneasiness of staunch Calvinists towards Stone and his colleagues. The elders of the Cabin Creek Presbyterian Church brought charges against their minister Richard McNemar, one of the revival leaders. Among the chief dangers that Presbyterian leaders detected in the revivalists was the teaching that all—not just the elect—could come to Christ, which they labelled Arminianism, and the practice of communing with Methodists and Baptists.

Increasing tension between the revival's supporters and antagonists led to the September 1803 censure by the Synod of Kentucky of the Washington Presbytery where McNemar and another revival minister, John Thompson, served. In response, McNemar, Thompson, Barton Stone, Robert Marshall, and John Dunlavy—the Presbyterian ministers at the Cane Ridge meeting—drew up a protest against the Synod's actions and withdrew from its jurisdiction. They constituted themselves into the Springfield Presbytery (named after a town near Cincinnati, today Springdale) because of support for the revival cause in that area.³⁴

The Synod was unsuccessful in reclaiming the five ministers, who published in January 1804 *An Apology for Renouncing the Jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky* which included a lengthy explanation of the group's rejection of much of Calvinist orthodoxy as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith. The leaders of the new Springfield Presbytery made it clear in the document, however, that they regarded themselves as still in communion with the Synod. They included in the *Apology* the letter to the moderator of the Synod from their 1803 protest, which ended with the reaffirmation:

Our affection for you, as brethren in the Lord, is, and we hope shall be ever the same: nor do we desire to separate from your communion, or to exclude you from ours. We ever wish to bear, and forbear, in matters of human order, or opinion, and unite our joint supplications with yours, for the increasing effusions of that divine Spirit, which is the bond of peace. With this disposition of mind, we bid you adieu, until, through the providence of God, it seem good to your reverend body to adopt a more liberal plan, respecting human Creeds and Confessions.³⁵

The *Apology* rejected 'human creeds and confessions' as having any legitimate authority over the consciences of Christians. But it was Stone's exploration of theological issues that most clearly set a different trajectory from Reformed

³³ In 1799 Transylvania was divided into three Presbyteries: Washington, West Lexington, and Transylvania. These Presbyteries constituted the Synod of Kentucky in 1802.

³⁴ D. Newell Williams, *Barton Stone: A Spiritual Biography* (St. Louis, MO, 2000), pp. 65–94.

³⁵ Quoted in Stone, *Biography of Barton Warren Stone*, p. 171.

belief. In his *A Compendious View of the Gospel*, Stone admitted that humans were depraved and that regeneration through the gospel was necessary for salvation. However, he insisted repeatedly that regeneration was available to everyone without exception through believing the gospel. '[God] calls all the ends of the earth to look unto him, and be saved; saved, not in part, but in whole, from beginning to end.'³⁶ Faith was simple belief in the testimony of God, for which he believed everyone had the capacity.

The Springfield Presbytery grew by additions of other Presbyterian congregations after the publication of the *Apology*. By the summer of 1804, however, the leaders of the group became increasingly disturbed at some of the results of their actions. The *Apology* stated that their aim had been to preach and serve as ministers of the gospel free from the church structures and creedal standards that separated them from fellowship with all who were followers of Christ. While they were clear, perhaps naïvely, about their intention to remain in communion with their former colleagues in the Synod of Kentucky, the feeling was not reciprocated. And though they seemed more compatible now with Methodist theology, they would not align themselves with yet another structure and creedal system that did not include all Christians.

They realized, however, that those around them viewed the Springfield Presbytery as one more church among the many that already existed. In June 1804, meeting at the Cane Ridge church, six ministers adopted and signed a short document they titled 'The Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery'. Reflecting sentiments seen in other anti-creedal, anti-hierarchical Restorationist groups like the Jones-Smith and O'Kelly bodies, the document first willed that the Springfield Presbytery 'die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the body of Christ at large'. It called for an end to giving power to delegated bodies to legislate for the church, so that 'the people may have free course to the Bible'. It insisted that local congregations choose and support their own ministers. And in a call to end religious strife, the document willed that 'preachers and people, cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance; pray more and dispute less'.³⁷ The document also echoed widespread millennial expectations of an impending great work of God in America. It proclaimed that the writers were willing to unite with all other Christians regardless of name in thankfulness for the exciting events of the past few years in America which they believed would end 'in the universal spread of the gospel and the unity of the church'.³⁸ At the urging of Rice Haggard, the former colleague of James O'Kelly who had recently come west, the group agreed to call itself

³⁶ Barton W. Stone, *A Compendious View of the Gospel*, in Hoke S. Dickenson, ed., *The Cane Ridge Reader* (Paris, KY, 1972), p. 200.

³⁷ Stone, *Biography of Barton Warren Stone*, pp. 51–2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

simply Christians. Its churches were designated as Christian Churches or Churches of Christ.³⁹

Like the Jones-Smith Christian Churches in New England, and the O'Kelly Christians in Virginia and North Carolina, the new Christian Church in the West insisted on a return to the Bible alone as the source of authority for everything they would believe and practise. The movement's revivalist roots, however, mitigated any tendency towards 'cold, dead, rationalism', a charge many in these Christian movements would level at the Restorationist effort begun by a father-son team from Ireland, Thomas and Alexander Campbell.

THE CAMPBELL MOVEMENT

Thomas Campbell was a native of Ireland. He was ordained in the Anti-Burgher (Seceder Presbyterian) Synod of Ulster in 1798, the year of the disastrous uprising led by the United Irishmen that pitted Irish Presbyterians, Anglicans, and ultimately many Catholics against their British overlords. Campbell had embraced Presbyterianism early in life despite the disapproval of his father Archibald, a churchman who had converted from Catholicism. These conversions reflected the political and religious complexities of contemporary Ireland, which pitted Irish against British, Catholic against Protestant, and Protestant against Protestant. The Battle of the Diamond in September 1795 that had resulted in the formation of the stridently anti-Catholic Orange Order occurred about ten miles from Campbell's house, as did some of the fighting in the 1798 uprising. The long-standing antagonism between Burghers and Anti-Burghers in the Church of Scotland over issues largely irrelevant in Ireland caused the sensitive Campbell even more turmoil. In October 1798, immediately after the United Irishmen's uprising, Thomas Campbell was an organizer and founding officer of the Evangelical Society of Ulster (ESU), a Protestant inter-denominational group that fostered evangelistic cooperation between Presbyterian factions as well as Church people and independents. The next year, however, Campbell's Anti-Burgher synod ruled that the ESU was too latitudinarian and posed a threat to the gospel, forcing Campbell to leave his leadership position and by summer 1800 to sever his ties to the Society completely.⁴⁰

His attempts at reconciliation continued in efforts to unite the Burgher and Anti-Burgher synods in Ireland. The division was over the requirement of an

³⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁰ Hiram J. Lester, 'The Form and Function of the Declaration and Address', in Thomas H. Olbricht and Hans Rollmann, eds., *The Quest for Christian Unity, Peace and Purity in Thomas Campbell's 'Declaration and Address': Texts and Studies* (Lanham, MD, 2000), pp. 184–5.

anti-Catholic oath for magistrates—burgesses—in the Scottish cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Perth, where there had been significant support for the return of the Catholic Stuarts to the British throne in the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion. The part that proved problematic was the requirement that burgesses swear to uphold ‘the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof’. It was not clear to some whether this included the Seceders or only the main Church of Scotland. Those Seceders who opposed the oath became known as the Anti-Burghers.⁴¹ In October 1804 Campbell participated in a consultation meeting at Rich Hill that drew up a formal proposal for the union of the Burghers and Anti-Burghers in Ireland. The proposal was presented to the Synod of Ulster at its meeting in Belfast later that year and was ‘favourably received’. However, the General Associate Synod—the Scottish body over all the Anti-Burgher churches—quashed any formal proposal being brought to its assembly. Still, the Synod of Ulster sent Thomas Campbell to the Scottish Synod meeting in Glasgow in 1806 with a formal application to allow the Irish churches to make their own decision about this matter. The Synod, however, refused to allow the proposition to come to a vote.⁴²

Campbell’s deep disappointment coupled with his rigorous work schedule of operating a school and serving as pastor for the Anti-Burgher congregation in Ahorey resulted in serious illness. His physician advised him to leave behind the sources of the stress, causing him to do what tens of thousands of people from Ulster had done over the past decades—sail to America. He departed in April 1807, profoundly shaped by his experiences in Ireland and his Irish Presbyterian church.

The Seceders had sufficient numbers in America to organize the Associate Synod of North America in 1801. When Thomas Campbell arrived in Philadelphia in May 1807, he found the Synod in session. He was received as a minister and assigned to the Chartiers Presbytery in western Pennsylvania, settling in the town of Washington. His more open views got him into trouble with the Presbytery when he served communion to non-Seceders while on a preaching trip. A series of trials led to his separation from the Associate Synod in 1809. Friends around Washington continued to support him, forming a society similar to the Evangelical Society of Ulster, which they named simply the Christian Association of Washington, PA.⁴³

⁴¹ Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland Since 1707* (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 23; Thomas Sommers, *Observations on the Meaning and Extent of the Oath Taken at the Admission of Every Burgess in the City of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1794), pp. 7–8.

⁴² Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Embracing a View of the Origins, Progress and Principles of the Religious Reformation which he Advocated*, 2 vols (Philadelphia, PA, 1868), I: pp. 57–8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 222–32.

In October 1809, the leadership of the Christian Association asked Campbell to draw up a statement of the nature and purpose of the organization, which he titled the *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association*. Not unlike the constituting document of the ESU, it proposed to promote 'simple evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men'. It would raise funds to support ministers who would teach what they deemed to be the original Christianity spelled out in the pages of Scripture, and who would avoid promoting anything as a matter of 'Christian faith or duty, for which there cannot be expressly produced a thus saith the Lord, either in express terms, or by approved precedent'. The Association also proposed to supply copies of the Bible to the poor.⁴⁴

A primitivist agenda is strong throughout the document. In the twelfth of thirteen propositions defining the Association's way forward, Campbell again insisted that the basis for the body's work was 'the example of the primitive church, exhibited in the New Testament; without any additions whatsoever of human opinions or inventions of men'.⁴⁵ One inevitable result of a Restoration of the ancient church, Campbell sincerely believed, would be Christian unity. To achieve that unity, only beliefs or practices that were clearly and unmistakably enjoined in Scripture as terms of communion could be required to recognize and affiliate with others as Christians. He assumed that all honest people could and would come to agree on that set of doctrines and observances.⁴⁶

Thomas Campbell sent for the rest of his family to join him in America in 1808. His oldest son, twenty-year-old Alexander, arranged passage from Londonderry, departing 1 October. The ship ran aground in a storm two days out, however, and the family was unable to resume their journey until the following August. They lived in Glasgow while awaiting passage, allowing Alexander to attend lectures at the University of Glasgow where his father had studied earlier. He learned from advocates of the Scottish Common Sense philosophy, and had an opportunity to interact with Independents in the city who were affiliated with John Glas, Robert Sandeman, and James and Robert Haldane. In conversations with Independent leaders, Alexander was exposed to calls for congregational autonomy, opposition to creeds, weekly communion, rejection of a special clergy class, and immersion of adult believers.⁴⁷

After Alexander and the family finally arrived in New York on 29 September 1809, they went first to Philadelphia, then west towards Washington, Pennsylvania. Thomas met them along the way and soon shared the proof copies of the *Declaration and Address* with Alexander. The young man embraced

⁴⁴ Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington* (Reprint edn., Washington, PA, 1908), p. 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴⁷ Richardson, *Memoirs*, I: pp. 129–205; Lynn McMillon, *Restoration Roots: The Scottish Origins of the American Restoration Movement* (Dallas, TX, 1983).

his father's vision of restoring the primitive church in doctrine, practice, and unity and quickly rose to leadership in the reform he and his father were promoting.⁴⁸ The Christian Association had essentially become a local church named after nearby Brush Run, a stream that ran near its place of meeting. Alexander began preaching and was ordained to the ministry by the church on 1 January 1812, with his father officiating. He had married Margaret Brown, the daughter of a Presbyterian supporter of Thomas, the previous March. With the impending birth of their first child, the question of infant baptism became personal and acute.

Alexander had heard the arguments between Independents in Scotland, some of whom had accepted believers' immersion as New Testament baptism. Through intense study he concluded that infant baptism was not warranted by Scripture, and sought out a Baptist minister, Matthias Luce (or Luse), to immerse him. Luce resisted at first, because Campbell insisted that the baptism be performed upon a simple confession of belief in Jesus as the Christ. Baptist practice, consistent with Calvinist understandings, required a statement of one's conversion experience. Luce eventually agreed to perform the baptism, however, which included seven members of the Brush Run Church, including Alexander's wife, sister, mother, and father, on 12 June 1812. Thirteen others from the Brush Run Church received immersion the following week.⁴⁹

This move brought the Campbells and the Brush Run Church in line with Baptist practice. As early as the following year, the Brush Run Church became part of the Redstone Baptist Association, and the Campbells conducted their reform primarily among Baptist churches for over fifteen years. Campbell supporters became known as Reformed (or Reforming) Baptists. In 1823 Alexander Campbell began publishing a religious paper titled the *Christian Baptist* in which he took aim at what he considered corruptions in the Baptist churches and in Christianity in general. In a pivotal thirty-two-article-long series titled 'A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things', Campbell laid out ideas that would shape the reform on matters such as the nature of Scripture, human creeds and confessions, legitimate worship, church discipline, bishops and deacons, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.⁵⁰

Campbell defended believers' immersion in several debates with Presbyterians, including John Walker in 1820 and W.L. McCalla in 1823. It became increasingly clear to Baptist leaders, however, that Campbell's understandings of baptism differed considerably from Baptist doctrine. Over time, he increasingly connected immersion with remission of sins and entry into the kingdom

⁴⁸ Richardson, *Memoirs*, I: pp. 218–21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 366–405.

⁵⁰ See a transcription of all the articles at <http://www.outrageouscampbellite.com/pdfs/Restoration-Ancient-order-of-Things.pdf>.

of God.⁵¹ In addition, the Campbell movement was anti-creedal and refused to assent to the Baptist's Philadelphia Confession of Faith. Furthermore, it resisted extra-congregational structure, including the Baptist Associations themselves. By the early 1830s, several Baptist Associations moved to exclude the Campbell reformers through the issuing of 'anathemas', beginning in 1829 with the Beaver Association Anathema. Meanwhile, the Mahoning Baptist Association, dominated by Campbell reformers, voted to dissolve itself as an unscriptural organization in 1830.⁵²

UNION OF CHRISTIANS AND CAMPBELL REFORMERS

As the Campbell churches became differentiated from Baptist Associations in the 1830s, many began to have closer relationships with the Christian Churches that were part of the Barton W. Stone movement. Stone and Campbell congregations often found themselves in the same communities or in close proximity in places like western Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Ohio. Alexander Campbell and Stone had met in Stone's home in Georgetown, Kentucky in 1824 and formed a lasting friendship. Though there were considerable differences in belief and practice between the two movements, both were committed to Scripture alone as the authority in religion, a return to what they saw as simple apostolic Christianity depicted in Scripture, the eradication of human creeds and confessions as terms of communion, and the unity of all Christians.⁵³

In the early 1830s, some leaders in the Stone and Campbell movements began a move to unite the congregations of the two movements. Alexander Campbell was less enthusiastic about such a move because of his uneasiness about doctrinal positions held by the Christian Churches in general—including the Jones-Smith and O'Kelly bodies in the East with which the Stone churches were affiliated. These included among other things a Unitarian rather than Trinitarian view of God and a view of baptism that allowed for 'open membership' and 'open communion' with persons who had not been immersed. Campbell preferred the label 'disciples of Christ' to Christian Church, partly to avoid being confused with those groups.⁵⁴

⁵¹ John Mark Hicks, 'The Recovery of the Ancient Gospel: Alexander Campbell and the Design of Baptism', in David W Fletcher, ed., *Baptism and the Remission of Sins* (Joplin, MO, 1990), pp. 111–70.

⁵² Richardson, *Memoirs*, II: pp. 80–90, 327–30.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 184–204.

⁵⁴ Barton W. Stone, 'Union', *Christian Messenger*, 5 (1831), 180–5.

Nevertheless, beginning in 1831, local Stone and Campbell congregations began to unite in several Kentucky towns, including Georgetown and Lexington. Because of the radically congregational nature of the movements, such unions necessarily had to occur at the congregational level. As mentioned, the O'Kelly and Jones-Smith Christian Churches had formed by 1810 a loose coalition with Barton Stone's Christian Churches in the west, often referred to as the Christian Connection (or Connexion). Many in the Christian Connection strongly resisted the growing union of Stone churches with the Campbell movement. In addition to the differences already mentioned between the 'Stoneite' Christians and the followers of Campbell, the eastern Christians believed that Campbell's theology denied the active work of God's Spirit in conversion and the Christian life, except through the words of Scripture.

Soon many of Stone's Eastern Christian collaborators accused him of having left the original platform of the Christian Churches and having become a follower of Campbell. The attacks came primarily from the *Christian Palladium* published in New York and edited by Joseph Badger. Stone sparred with Badger and his successor Joseph Marsh between 1835 and 1841 in the pages of the *Palladium* and Stone's journal the *Christian Messenger*. Stone vehemently denied the charge made by the eastern Christians that Campbell's, and now Stone's, religion consisted of 'heartless dogmas—soul-chilling and spiritless doctrine'. Stone insisted that he had given up nothing in uniting with Campbell and that he stood exactly where he had always stood. Though Stone did not give a blanket endorsement of all of Campbell's positions, he was adamant that Badger and the others who were attacking Campbell violated the very platform of the Christian Churches to be open and inclusive of diverse views.⁵⁵ Stone's colleagues in the eastern Christian Churches accepted in principle his commitment to radical Christian inclusivity, but when it came to extending fellowship to churches whose doctrines they believed undermined that very commitment, they drew the line. It was an acute example of the perennial dilemma faced in Protestant Dissenting traditions of how to define boundaries.⁵⁶

By the end of the decade, many of the Stone churches had united with Campbell churches, boosting the numbers of members in the united movement to around 22,000. By the time of the US Civil War (1861–5), the Stone-Campbell movement had an estimated 192,000 members. It would rise

⁵⁵ Barton W. Stone, 'Brother Badger', *Christian Messenger*, 9 (1835), 106–11; 'Western Christians', *Christian Messenger*, 11 (1841), 417–20. See also Elizabeth C. Nordbeck and Lowell H. Zuck, *The Living Theological Heritage of the United Church of Christ*, vol. IV, *Consolidation and Expansion* (Cleveland, OH, 1999), pp. 120–5.

⁵⁶ See for example Douglas A. Foster, 'From Unifiers to Come Outers: The Journey of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement', 17th Believers Church Conference, Acadia Divinity College, 23 June 2016.

to over a million members in the United States by 1900, making it one of the country's largest denominational bodies.⁵⁷

CONCLUSION

The western Christian Churches that did not unite with the Campbell movement remained in the Christian Connection. This body attempted a more formal union beginning in 1841, but the effort was halted when the New England Convention issued a strong antislavery resolution. The northern and southern conventions agreed to a 'Plan of Union' in 1890 that provided for cooperation in publications, evangelism, and missions, though it did not create a single church government.⁵⁸ Often known simply as the Christian Church, the body merged in 1931 with the National Council of Congregational Churches to form the General Association of Congregational Christian Churches. This body in turn merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1957 to form the United Church of Christ. At the end of 2012, this body had slightly fewer than one million members in the United States.⁵⁹

The Stone-Campbell tradition suffered a major division in the United States following the Civil War that was rooted in sectional and socioeconomic factors as well as diverging views of the nature and function of Scripture. The body listed in the 1906 *US Census of Religious Bodies* as 'Churches of Christ' generally took the restrictive view that doctrines and practices not explicitly spelled out in Scripture were prohibited. Most of these churches at the end of the nineteenth century were located in the states of the former southern Confederacy and were generally in rural communities, whether north or south. They rejected 'innovations' such as instrumental music in worship and extra-congregational organizations like missionary societies as additions to, and therefore contrary to, Scripture. These issues became divisive after the US Civil War when northern churches built new buildings that included costly organs at a time when many in the south were barely surviving. The American Christian Missionary Society, established in 1849 and headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio, had passed anti-south resolutions in 1861 and 1863, polluting itself with a political agenda in the minds of southern members of the movement.

⁵⁷ Winfred E. Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis, MO, 1948), pp. 324–9; Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies: 1906, Part 1, Summary and General Tables* (Washington DC, 1910), p. 148.

⁵⁸ Nordbeck and Zuck, eds., *Living Theological Heritage*, pp. 185–6.

⁵⁹ *The United Church of Christ: A Statistical Profile* (Cleveland, OH, 2013), p. 1.

The other churches of the movement, known as Disciples of Christ or Christian Churches, were found primarily in the mid-west and enjoyed the relative prosperity of the post-war era. The optimism accompanying the winning of the American Civil War, and the nationalistic fervour that viewed the United States as a Christian nation that would 'Christianize and civilize' the rest of the world, was strong among Disciples. This part of the Stone-Campbell movement would suffer its own division in the twentieth century, resulting in three North American streams: the Churches of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, with a combined North American membership in the early twenty-first century of just under three million.⁶⁰ The widespread impulse in the nineteenth century towards 'New Testament' Christianity, though understood in different ways and evolving over time, thus resonated and continues to resonate with many Americans.

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⁶⁰ *Churches of Christ in the United States* (Nashville, TN, 2015), 'Churches of Christ in the United States Statistical Summary', at https://www.21stcc.com/pdfs/ccusa_stats_sheet.pdf (1,188,333 members); *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) 2014 Yearbook and Directory* (St. Louis, MO, 2014), p. 534 (497,423 members); *Directory of the Ministry: A Yearbook of Christian Churches and Churches of Christ* (Springfield, IL, 2014), pp. F-36 (1,269,084 members).

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Colonial Contexts and Global Dissent

Joanna Cruickshank

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, each of the major Dissenting denominations held worldwide meetings. The Reformed denominations met in Edinburgh (1877), Philadelphia (1880), Belfast (1884), and London (1888); the Congregationalists in London (1891) and Boston (1899); the Methodists in London (1881, 1901) and Washington (1891); and the Baptists in London (1905). The locations of the meetings demonstrated that the majority of leaders and members of each movement were still located in the older Dissenting churches in Britain and their vigorous offshoots in North America. Attendees at the meetings, however, came from regions well beyond these centres of Dissent, including Australasia and the Pacific Islands, Asia, and Africa.¹ The vast majority of these delegates were white colonists or missionaries rather than indigenous Christians, but their attendance was evidence of the global presence of Dissent at the end of the nineteenth century and a harbinger of the indigenization of Dissenting denominations that would occur in many of these regions within the subsequent century.

Mark Juergensmeyer explains the phenomenon of religious globalization with reference to three factors: the role of diasporas in globalizing religion; the transnational character of globalizing religious movements; and the emergence of religious movements within societies and cultures that are themselves transnational or pluralist.² Each of these factors is relevant to the expansion of nineteenth-century Dissent, which included the flow of colonists to the British settler colonies; the growth of fledgling indigenous churches in response to the transnational Christian message; and, largely beyond the scope of this chapter, the emergence of new forms of religious practice and belief out of the transnational cultures that developed in this period. Each of these trends

¹ Hilary Carey, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c.1801–1908* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 4–5.

² Mark Juergensmeyer, 'Thinking Globally About Religion', in Juergensmeyer, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Global Religions* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 5–6.

was connected in significant ways to the British Empire as it also expanded and changed during this century.

COLONIAL CONTEXTS: AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, AND THE CAPE COLONY

Though the expansion of Protestantism in the nineteenth century is often interpreted primarily in terms of missionary activity, it was equally a result of the flood of emigrants who poured out of Britain after the end of the French wars. Around a million people left Britain between 1815 and 1840, while in the second half of the century this figure rose to seven million.³ Many of these migrants were Dissenters, who translated their faith into the new social contexts of the colonies. By the 1870s, there were significant numbers of Dissenting colonists in the self-governing settler colonies of New Zealand, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria, Queensland, and Cape of Good Hope (in addition to the North American colonies discussed elsewhere in this volume) and smaller populations in Southern Rhodesia, Kenya, South America, and India. In these rapidly emerging settler communities, the Dissenting churches took on new patterns of adherence and social roles, reflecting both the particular contexts of the colonies and changes occurring in the status of Dissent within the metropole. Yet while historians have paid increasing attention to the role of religion in the British Empire, the resulting body of scholarship has until recently included very little work on the establishment and historical significance of settler churches.⁴

AUSTRALIA

The arrival in 1788 of the First Fleet in the penal colony of New South Wales was marked by a Church of England service, attended by all convicts and soldiers. While this event signalled the continuing dominance of the Church of England in the new colony, the patterns of religious affiliation and the roles of particular denominations would develop differently in the Australian colonies from the metropole. Almost immediately, the difficulty in securing chaplains to penal settlements opened opportunities for some Dissenting clergy to take on this role. In Van Diemen's Land, Methodists, a Congregationalist, and a

³ Carey, *God's Empire*, p. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Baptist were appointed as chaplains to convicts.⁵ In New South Wales, the first Anglican chaplains to the colony were evangelicals, whose loyalty to the Church was accompanied by a degree of willingness to endorse the efforts of evangelicals from other denominations, where those efforts were seen as complementary rather than competitive. Nonetheless, in both New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land (later Tasmania), the Dissenting churches remained relatively small, with around 20 per cent of the population identifying as Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist, or Baptist in the 1871 census.⁶

Other Australian colonies were established with a stronger Dissenting presence. The British economic recession of the 1830s prompted a wave of middle-class migrants to Victoria (colonized from 1834) and South Australia (colonized from 1838), both more attractive to many devout Dissenters than the penal settlements in Sydney and Van Diemen's Land.⁷ In Victoria, nearly 30 per cent of the population identified with Dissenting denominations in the 1871 census, almost equalling the 35 per cent adhering to the Church of England.⁸

South Australia has been labelled a 'Paradise of Dissent'.⁹ George Fife Angas, a successful Baptist shipowner, played a leading role in the establishment of the colony. He promoted its interests energetically in Britain and used his wealth to fund devout settlers to the colony, ensuring that the gender balance was much more even than elsewhere in Australia. The first Anglican Bishop of South Australia, Augustus Short, complained that the people of the colony were 'republican and Dissenting in their "tone of thought"' and that Dissent was 'powerful and hostile'.¹⁰ By 1901 more than half the South Australian population identified with Dissenting denominations, by comparison with 29 per cent with the Church of England.

The patterns of growth for individual denominations differed somewhat from those seen in the earlier transmission of Dissent to the North American colonies. Presbyterian clergy arrived in Australia from 1822, in response to the requests of Scottish colonists. The 1843 Disruption divided Australian

⁵ See entries for William Schofield, William Butters, and Thomas Atkins in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*: <http://adb.anu.edu.au>.

⁶ Carey, *God's Empire*, p. 36. All subsequent census figures are taken from Carey, *God's Empire or Census of the British Empire 1901: Report with Summary* (London, 1906).

⁷ Stuart Piggins and Allan Davidson, 'Christianity in Australasia and the Pacific', in Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley, eds., *Cambridge History of Christianity, VIII: World Christianities, c.1815–1914* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 544.

⁸ Carey, *God's Empire*, p. 36.

⁹ Douglas D. Pike, *Paradise of Dissent: South Australia, 1829–1857* (Melbourne, 1967).

¹⁰ Augustus Short to Burdett-Coutts, 3 June 1851; 20 June 1858, Burdett-Coutts Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, London. Quoted in David Hilliard, 'Unorthodox Christianity in South Australia: Was South Australia Really a Paradise of Dissent?' *History Australia*, 2 (2005), 1–2.

Presbyterians, as did the inflammatory conduct of the first Presbyterian minister in New South Wales, John Dunmore Lang. Lang's energetic recruiting of Presbyterian clergy and colonists from Scotland helped establish the denomination, but his constant, indiscriminate feuding with clergy and other members of the colonial elite was a source of distraction within the Presbyterian churches for much of the century. Both before and after the Disruption, he made short-lived attempts to found his own Synod of New South Wales. Lang was a strong proponent of missions to Aboriginal people and it was partly as a result of his efforts that Presbyterianism, alone of the Dissenting churches, sustained missionary effort among Aboriginal people throughout the nineteenth century. These efforts were, however, always reliant on state funding to survive and, until the end of the nineteenth century, on Moravian missionaries for personnel. Broadly following patterns of Scottish migration to the Australian colonies, by the end of the century Presbyterians were strongest in Victoria, where they made up 16 per cent of the population, and Queensland, with 12 per cent.

Across the Australian colonies, Methodism initially struggled to gain members. Although class meetings had begun in New South Wales in 1812, twenty years later the total membership was still only 126. As in North America, the use of itinerant preachers meant that Methodism was effective at reaching a scattered colonial population and the movement experienced a series of revivals from the 1840s. The establishment of an Australasian Conference for the Wesleyan Methodist churches in 1855 signalled the independence of the colonial churches from the metropolitan Conference. In Australia, as elsewhere, Wesleyan Methodists were joined by smaller Methodist denominations including the Bible Christians, Free Church Methodist Connexion, and Primitive Methodists. In 1871, Serena Thorne (later Lake), a prominent woman preacher and granddaughter of the founder of the Bible Christians, married a South Australian colonist. She subsequently preached on Bible Christian circuits throughout the country. As a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and supporter of woman suffrage, she epitomized the powerful part that women from the Dissenting churches played in both movements.¹¹ In the second half of the nineteenth century, Methodism grew rapidly. By 1901, Methodists made up more than 10 per cent of the population in each of the states, with particular strength in South Australia, where more than 25 per cent of the population identified as Methodist. 'Methodism', Piggin and Davidson conclude, 'was the great success story of nineteenth-century Australian Christianity.'¹²

¹¹ Helen Jones, 'Lake, Serena (1842–1902)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lake-serena-13037/text23573>, published first in hardcopy 2005, accessed online 26 February 2015.

¹² Piggin and Davidson, 'Christianity in Australasia and the Pacific', p. 543.

By contrast, after a similarly fitful start, Congregationalism failed to grow significantly. This was in spite of the confidence of many Congregational leaders that the theology and practices of the denomination were particularly suited to colonial culture. At the Jubilee of Congregationalism in South Australia, the Reverend Dr Llewellyn Bevan described the Australian colonies as both democratic and free, continuing:

The appeal in these colonies is to the people, almost to the people en masse. It is so with Congregationalism—the essential, necessary, and absolute democracy of the Christian Church. Therefore, if we are true to our principles and to our opportunities in these colonies, the future of our Churches will be a very great and noble future.¹³

The establishment of Congregationalism in the colonies was strengthened by the presence of LMS missionaries retiring from service in the Pacific, as well as clergy supported by the Colonial Missionary Society.¹⁴ Yet in a context of sectarian competition, those denominations that strongly insisted on denominational identity appear to have had the advantage over Congregationalism, which in the colonies had deliberately eschewed emphasizing theological distinctives in favour of non-sectarian evangelicalism. Fifty years after the formation of the first Congregational fellowship, only 5 per cent of colonists across the colonies identified as Congregationalist. After a brief period of growth in the 1880s, decline was precipitous. Between 1891 and 1933, the number of Congregationalists in Victoria, where adherents had been most numerous, fell by 44 per cent.¹⁵ Nonetheless, in the nineteenth century, in the Australian colonies as elsewhere, Congregationalism was often disproportionately influential through its attractiveness to urban elites.

Baptist congregations were formed in the 1830s and gained a small foothold in South Australia and Victoria, primarily in the cities, where they reproduced the metropolitan divisions between Particular and General Baptists. In Victoria, Baptists were especially deeply divided, not only between Particular and General congregations, but also by ethnicity, with Scottish Baptists meeting separately.¹⁶ In South Australia, Baptist colonists began meeting from 1838 and George Fife Angas recruited preachers for the fledgling group.¹⁷ In 1901, Baptists made up 6 per cent of the population in South Australia and 2.8 per cent of the population in Victoria, totalling 2.4 per cent of the colonial population as a whole.

¹³ Jubilee of Congregationalism in South Australia. Report of Intercolonial Conference held in Adelaide, September 1887. Adelaide, 1887, p. 36. Quoted in H.R. Jackson, 'Aspects of Congregationalism in South-Eastern Australia, circa 1880 to 1930' (unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1978), p. 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁶ Ian Breward, *A History of the Churches in Australasia* (Oxford, 2001), p. 100.

¹⁷ Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*, p. 261.

Unitarianism came to Australia in 1794 with the Rev. Thomas Fyshe Palmer, who had been sentenced to seven years' transportation for seditious practices after he arranged for the printing of a pamphlet calling for parliamentary reform.¹⁸ No other Unitarian minister would arrive until 1851, when the changing attitude to Unitarianism was demonstrated by the establishment of a church-building fund in New South Wales, supported by two parliamentarians, the chief justice, and assistance from the Colonial Secretary. The total number of Unitarians in the colonies was always very small, but they attracted a number of socially prominent members, including the suffragette and preacher Catherine Helen Spence. In 1873, Martha Turner was elected minister of the Melbourne Unitarian congregation, the first woman to be ordained to the ministry in Australia.¹⁹

The Australian colonies demonstrate a variety of ways in which the relationship between Dissenting churches and the state could be transformed in colonial contexts. Though the Church of England was initially able to maintain its privileged place with regard to state aid and education, by the 1830s, the strength of Dissenting churches in the colonies as well as the repeal of the Test and Corporations Act in Britain led to pressure on the colonial authorities to enact a more equitable situation. Sir Richard Bourke, a liberal Irish Anglican who was Governor of New South Wales from 1831, supported such measures, though this brought him into bitter conflict with the Anglican Archdeacon of New South Wales (subsequently Bishop of Australia) William Grant Broughton. In 1836, Bourke oversaw the passing of the New South Wales Church Act that provided potential state aid to all the major denominations, both Protestant and Catholic. Van Diemen's Land and Western Australia followed suit with similar Acts, funding the building of churches and payment of ministers.²⁰

The Church Acts signalled the new realities of the second British Empire, where there would be no established church in the settler colonies, even as all denominations were often supported by the state as valuable for social order. Contrary to Bourke's intention, the provision of state funding ensured that sectarian rivalry was 'effectively bankrolled' for much of the nineteenth century.²¹ It did, however, provide a sound financial basis for the establishment of the larger Dissenting denominations—Presbyterianism and Methodism—in the colonies where state aid was available. The vast majority of Baptist and Congregationalist congregations in these colonies refused state aid, as

¹⁸ John Earnshaw, 'Palmer, Thomas Fyshe (1747–1802)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/palmer-thomas-fyshe-2535/text3441>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 2 March 2015.

¹⁹ Susan Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women: A Biography of Catherine Helen Spence* (Adelaide, South Australia, 2010), pp. 72–3.

²⁰ Breward, *A History of the Churches in Australasia*, p. 73.

²¹ Piggins and Davidson, 'Christianity in Australasia and the Pacific', p. 547.

incompatible with the principles of 'old Dissent'. One of the first acts of the South Australian legislative council formed in 1851 was to remove all state aid to the churches, ensuring that South Australia was the first part of the empire to separate church and state. In the 1860s, Baptists in Victoria were involved in a vigorous campaign to end all state aid and this was accomplished in 1870 with the State Aid Abolition Act. While preserving the principles of Dissent, the struggles that Baptists, Congregationalists, Unitarians, and Quakers had to establish any significant presence in the Australian colonies may partly be explained by their relative disadvantage in relation to state funding.

The strength of the Dissenting influence also helped shape the Australian education system, as Dissenters resisted an Anglican monopoly on state funding for education. From 1880, all the Australian colonies introduced 'free, secular and universal' education. Such education was not intended to remove children from Christian influence, but rather to restrict sectarianism. The state systems ensured that denominations received equal opportunity to provide limited religious instruction within a state-funded education system, with the intention of promoting 'civic-mindedness in the rising generation'.²²

NEW ZEALAND

By contrast with Australia, Christianity came to New Zealand prior to formal colonization, through missionaries rather than colonists. Church Missionary Society missionaries arrived in 1814, followed by Wesleyan Methodist missionaries in 1823. Both societies had established missions throughout the islands by the time New Zealand was formally annexed by the British Crown at the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. As a result, missionaries played a far greater role in shaping these denominations than in Australia. As the population of colonists grew, some missionaries and clergy attempted to minister to both Maori and *pakeha* (white) communities. However, the land wars that erupted sporadically between 1845 and 1872 as a result of aggressive colonial expansion demonstrated the difficulty of maintaining unity between the two communities in the context of colonization.

Scottish colonists brought Presbyterianism to New Zealand, with the first clergyman arriving in Wellington in 1840. The Presbyterian settlers who followed were primarily associated with the Free Church. In 1848, the Scottish Free Church Lay Association founded the settlement of Otago (or New Edinburgh) in an attempt to produce 'a Geneva of the Southern Seas'.²³ The Free Church colonists instituted strict Presbyterian patterns of life, including

²² Ibid., p. 547.

²³ Ibid., p. 558.

discipline by the kirk session, fast days, and communion seasons, which would have an enduring presence in the settlement.²⁴ Only two-thirds of the original settlers were Presbyterians, however, and in 1849, while the Free Church colonists marked the first anniversary of their arrival with a service of humiliation and prayer, English colonists celebrated the day with a ball and races.²⁵ The colony as a whole quickly attracted a more diverse population with little interest in the demanding practices of Free Church piety, especially after the discovery of gold in the 1860s. Nonetheless, the province was deeply shaped by the Presbyterian presence, notably through the widespread commitment to education. By 1871, there were a hundred public schools in the province and a university had been established in Dunedin, becoming the first university in the British Empire to grant degrees to women.²⁶

Presbyterianism was numerically the strongest of the Dissenting denominations in nineteenth-century New Zealand, making up over 20 per cent of the population in the late nineteenth century. This reflected the proportion of Scottish and Irish Presbyterian settlers, which was relatively high compared to Australia. Missionary efforts among Maori were limited and unsuccessful until the end of the century. A general assembly of the Presbyterian churches met in 1862, without the presbyteries of Otago and Southland, which were protective of their endowments and identity. In 1866, southern Presbyterians established the separate Synod of Otago and Southland. Reunion was not achieved until 1901.²⁷

The first Wesleyan Methodist mission to the Maori was established in 1822 and within twenty years Methodist missions had been founded throughout the colony. From the 1850s, however, work among colonists became increasingly important, especially after the Maori wars had an adverse impact on the missions. Primitive Methodist societies were formed in 1844, followed by the United Methodist Free Church in 1860 and the Bible Christians in 1887. In 1896, the latter two connexions reunited with the Wesleyan Methodists. As a proportion of the New Zealand population, the Methodists grew slowly but steadily through the second half of the century, reaching 11 per cent in the 1901 census. Baptists, who registered 2 per cent of the population in the 1901 census, and Congregationalists, who registered under 1 per cent, as well as even smaller percentages of Quakers and Unitarians, had a much less substantial presence in the colony, but were over-represented among the urban elites.

²⁴ Alison Clarke, ‘“Days of Heaven on Earth”: Presbyterian Communion Seasons in Nineteenth-Century Otago’, *Journal of Religious History*, 26 (2002), 274–97.

²⁵ Breward, *A History of the Churches*, p. 98.

²⁶ Carey, *God’s Empire*, p. 350.

²⁷ Piggan and Davidson, ‘Christianity in Australasia’, p. 588.

Given that New Zealand was annexed after the constitutional changes of 1828–32 in Britain and the Church Acts of 1836 onwards in the Australian colonies, it was obvious from the first that the Church of England would not be able to claim its historically dominant role. Bishop Selwyn, the first Anglican Bishop of New Zealand, accepted this and envisioned a self-supporting church. Nonetheless, Dissenting missionaries, clergy, and laypeople in New Zealand remained mistrustful of the ambitions of the Church of England in general and Selwyn in particular, as the majority of settlers and officials within the colony belonged to the Church. For the Methodists, ill-feeling was heightened by Selwyn's refusal to accept Methodist ordinations as valid.²⁸

This mistrust exacerbated divisions that developed in relation to the Maori land wars. Most missionaries of both the CMS and the WMMS had actively encouraged the Maori to agree to the Treaty of Waitangi. In 1846, however, when the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Earl Grey, proposed a model for colonial self-government which would largely exclude the Maori, the missions and colonial society began to display divisions along denominational lines. The CMS missionaries, supported by Selwyn, were sympathetic to the complaints of the Maori, whose rights under the Treaty they believed were being violated. While the WMMS missionaries were initially in agreement with their CMS counterparts, as tensions between the Maori chiefs and colonists continued to develop, Methodist missionaries increasingly sided with Methodist colonists, who generally supported the acquisition of land from Maori. Dissenting leaders among the colonists pointed to Selwyn's use of his influence in London on behalf of the Maori as evidence that he represented the oppressive power of the old Establishment against humble Dissenters.²⁹ Unsurprisingly, the colonial state ultimately overrode the objections of the 'Church Party' in attempting to violently suppress Maori resistance—though for colonial rather than theological reasons.

CAPE COLONY

Though there are records of lay Christian work by Dissenting soldiers stationed at the Cape at the end of the eighteenth century, Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches were formally established in the Cape after the British re-occupied the region in 1806 and founded a settler society through the migration of the 1820 Settlers. From 1806 onwards, large

²⁸ John Stenhouse, 'Church and State in New Zealand, 1835–1870: Religion, Politics, and Race', in Hilary M. Carey and John Gascoigne, eds., *Church and State in Old and New Worlds* (Leiden, 2011), p. 252.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 254–5.

numbers of missionaries from the Dissenting mission societies, particularly the London Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Missionary Society, and (later) missions of the Church of Scotland and Free Church, also began to arrive. As in New Zealand, the significance of these missions to denominational identity as well as the high profile of some individual missionaries meant that missionaries often had great influence in the colonial churches, even if they did not regularly minister to white congregations. As the settler community grew, some missionaries distanced themselves from African communities among whom they had been working.³⁰ Although the majority of Dissenting clergy ministering in the Cape Colony were trained in Britain, during the nineteenth century the settler churches began to develop their own identities and move towards a measure of independence from the metropolitan denominations.

Until 1828, the status of Dissenters reflected their legal disadvantages under British law, though these were unevenly applied. The fledgling Methodist community was prohibited from holding meetings. In 1816, however, after Barnabas Shaw, the first WMMS missionary, defied this ban and began work in the north-western Cape, Governor Somerset supported his establishment of a Methodist mission at 'Namaqualand' (later Lilyfontein).³¹ In numbers of adherents, Methodism proved itself the most successful of all the denominations, including the Church of England, among all ethnicities in the colony. As elsewhere, Methodist missionaries and clergy formed closer and more cordial relations with the colonial regime than their colleagues from the older Dissenting traditions, which contributed to the success of the denomination among colonists.³² In addition to the Wesleyan Methodists, Primitive Methodists, Bible Christians, the New Methodist Connexion and Free Methodist Church also founded small congregations. In 1866, the arrival of William Taylor, the American Methodist revivalist, caused revivals to occur throughout the Methodist connection, influencing both settlers and Africans. Several years later, however, observers noted that the impact on white congregations had been superficial, by comparison with ongoing revivalism spearheaded by African leaders whom Taylor had influenced.³³ In 1904, the census identified around 35,000 white Methodists and over 200,000 'native' Methodists.

³⁰ See Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853* (Montreal and Kingston, 2002), p. 294.

³¹ Rodney Davenport, 'Settlement, Conquest and Theological Controversy: The Churches of Nineteenth-century European Immigrants', in Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport, eds., *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), p. 51.

³² Greg Cuthbertson, 'Pricking the "Nonconformist Conscience": Religion against the South African War', in Donal Lowry, ed., *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester, 2000), p. 182.

³³ Wallace G. Mills, 'The Taylor Revival of 1866 and the Roots of African Nationalism in the Cape Colony', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 8 (1976), 108.

Congregationalism in the Cape was strongly associated with the missions of the London Missionary Society, which began among the Xhosa in 1799. John Philip, superintendent of the LMS missions in southern Africa, combined oversight of the growing number of missions with ministry among colonist congregations, becoming minister of the Union Church in Cape Town. By the middle of the nineteenth century, there were settler Congregational churches in Cape Town, George, Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown, and Queenstown and colonists also attended Coloured Congregational churches and churches at the LMS missions. From mid-century, Congregational churches in the Cape increasingly took responsibility for local missions, seeking self-sufficiency 'in accordance with the principles of Independency'.³⁴ This created unsustainable demands on congregations and in part accounted for the decline in white Congregational membership and churches towards the end of the century. The 1904 census found around 5,000 European adherents to Congregationalism, but more than 70,000 African adherents.

The Baptist churches, by contrast, had 9,940 European adherents in the 1904 census, but just over 3,300 African adherents. English Baptists had arrived with the 1,820 settlers and formed the first Baptist church in Grahamstown.³⁵ They were followed by German Baptists, who constituted a separate denomination or *Bund*. In 1872, the scattered churches formed a Baptist Union. In spite of some resistance from German-speaking Baptists, the German Bund joined the Union, partly through the efforts of the leading German Baptist missionary Hugo Gutsche.³⁶ Unitarians were scarce among the colonists, with a Free Protestant Church established in 1867 to minister to Unitarians. Unlike the other Dissenting denominations, the Unitarians did not engage in missionary activity.³⁷

Devout soldiers from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Regiment, stationed at Cape Town from 1806 until 1814, established a Calvinist Society that formed the basis of the first Presbyterian congregation, established in 1812. The first Presbyterian church, St Andrew's, was not built until 1829. A series of prominent ministers oversaw an ethnically and linguistically diverse congregation with a strong social welfare programme. Presbyterian churches and missions proliferated during the second half of the nineteenth century, founded by both Church of Scotland and Free Church clergy and missionaries. The Presbyterian Church of South Africa, established in 1897, united many of these diverse groups. In the 1898 census, around 9,000 white and 13,500 African adherents to Presbyterianism were counted.³⁸

³⁴ Davenport, 'Settlement, Conquest and Theological Controversy', p. 54.

³⁵ Sydney Hudson-Reed, *By Taking Heed: The History of Baptists in South Africa, 1820–1977* (Roodepoort, South Africa, 1983), p. 162.

³⁶ Hudson-Reed, *Taking Heed*, p. 41.

³⁷ Davenport, 'Settlement, Conquest and Theological Controversy', p. 54.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

In the Cape Colony, as in the other settler colonies considered here, the issue of state support for clergy salaries divided the denominations and represented the most obvious indicator of the changing relationship between church and state. From 1854, a Congregationalist parliamentarian, Saul Solomon, and the Presbyterian attorney-general of the Cape, William Porter, headed a movement that ultimately severed the financial relationship between the state and the churches.³⁹

At the end of the century, conflict in southern Africa revealed differences between some of the Dissenting denominations and their metropolitan counterparts. In the 1890s, British annexation of the region that would become Rhodesia created new opportunities for mission work by Baptists in the Cape Colony, under the protection of the British South Africa Company. This sparked criticism from metropolitan Baptists, who questioned the morality of the annexation. The editor of the *South African Baptist* responded to these criticisms: 'This kind of logic means that the Matabele, who are supposed to be sinned against, are to be without the gospel because Englishmen have sinned in obtaining their land.'⁴⁰

More dramatically, the Anglo-Boer War provoked different responses from the colonial and metropolitan churches. Almost without exception, the Dissenting settler churches in the Cape enthusiastically supported British military action. Rare exceptions were the Rev. Ramsden Balmforth, the Unitarian minister in Cape Town; the Rev. Drewdney Drew, a Congregationalist who was forced to resign over his views in 1901; and a Presbyterian clergyman from Port Elizabeth, John T. Lloyd.⁴¹ In the case of the Wesleyan Methodists, who as a denomination had tended to align more closely with both the imperial cause and the colonial state, the WMMS committee and Methodist church leaders in Britain echoed their loyalty to the British cause. 'Wesleyan Methodism is an Imperial Body', wrote the British editor of the *Methodist Times*. 'Methodism is in a pre-eminent degree, the religion of the English-speaking world.'⁴² For the missionaries and settler churches of the 'old' Dissenting churches—Baptists and Congregationalists—with their historic commitment to independence from the state, the situation was more complex. Baptist missionaries in southern Africa published pro-British views in the denominational periodical, the *Southern African Baptist*, with the editor of the periodical praising 'the splendid marches of the British army' and its 'great moral justification'. In Britain, however, Baptist views on the war were divided.⁴³ General support for the war in the

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Frederick Hale, 'The Baptist Union of South Africa and Apartheid', *Journal of Church and State*, 48 (2006), 755.

⁴¹ Cuthbertson, 'Pricking the "Nonconformist Conscience"', p. 182.

⁴² *Methodist Times*, 12 October 1899. Quoted in Michael Watts, *The Dissenters*, III: *The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity* (Oxford, 2015), p. 343.

⁴³ Hale, 'The Baptist Union of South Africa', p. 756.

Baptist periodicals was tempered by criticism from some leading Baptists, most notably John Clifford, whose pamphlet 'Brotherhood and the War in South Africa' condemned the 'faithless, cowardly' settler churches that were approving the unjust actions of 'John Bull'.⁴⁴

The global Congregational fellowship was even more divided, with LMS missionaries like John Philips becoming passionate defenders of the British military action. Their influence on Congregationalism in the Cape ensured widespread settler support for the war, even though Philips and other Congregationalists had been longstanding critics of the colonial regime (and of their Methodist colleagues for supporting it). In London, LMS and Congregational church leaders denounced the war. The LMS missionaries, along with some of the leading African Congregationalists like Walter B. Rubusana, argued that the war was necessary to defend Africans from Boer oppression. They were ultimately successful in shifting the weight of opinion within metropolitan Congregationalism towards support of the British.⁴⁵

COLONIAL MISSIONARIES

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Dissenting denominations in Britain founded mission societies with the express purpose of evangelizing and providing spiritual support to colonists within the British Empire. By the end of the century, these colonists were themselves founding mission societies. Australian Baptists went to East Bengal, Australian Methodists to the Pacific Islands, and Australian Presbyterians to the Pacific Islands and Korea. In each of these denominations, women's auxiliary societies provided crucial financial support for the missions and eventually many of the missionaries themselves. For Methodists, as for many other evangelical Dissenters, 'this was the ideal towards which the home society had aspired: the colonial church... was itself responsible for colonial missions'.⁴⁶

In other ways, Dissenting churches in the late nineteenth-century colonies bore a less straightforward resemblance to the metropolitan churches from which they had emerged a century earlier. From the start, the new conditions of settler societies, combined with the changing status of Dissent in Britain, made disestablishment in the colonies almost inevitable. Yet the relative weakness of the Church of England created competition among the Dissenting

⁴⁴ Cuthbertson, 'Pricking the "Nonconformist Conscience"', p. 173.

⁴⁵ See Greg Cuthbertson, 'Missionary Imperialism and Colonial Warfare: London Missionary Society Attitudes to the South African War, 1899–1902', *South African Historical Journal*, 19 (1987), 93–114.

⁴⁶ Carey, *God's Empire*, p. 193.

denominations that was heightened, rather than resolved, where colonial governments provided state aid to all the denominations. Acceptance of state aid proved a divisive issue for all those denominations with historic links to Dissent: Presbyterians and Methodists were more likely to accept state aid, while Congregationalists and Baptists generally refused it. Yet this closer relationship between church and state was short-lived. Dissenting clergy and politicians were prominent among those who successfully campaigned for the abolition of state aid in Australia, New Zealand, and the Cape Colony by the end of the nineteenth century.

In 1903, Revd John Muirhead, a New Zealand Baptist, wrote: 'in England Non-episcopalians are Free Churchmen and Nonconformists; in New Zealand they are Free Churchmen but not Nonconformists. . . . The fact is there are no Nonconformists in New Zealand.'⁴⁷ This was true of the other settler colonies as well, although, as has been noted, at times many non-Episcopalian churches in the colonies could hardly be said to be Free Churches either, given their willingness to accept state aid. On the whole, as Martin Sutherland has noted of New Zealand, in the absence of an established church, it was less important for Dissenting churches to maintain the distance between state and religion. One consequence of this was the enthusiasm of many Dissenting churches in the settler colonies for imposing the moral values of evangelical Dissent—particularly attitudes to drink and gambling—on society as a whole.⁴⁸ In Australia, this tendency gave rise to the deprecation of the Dissenter as the 'wowser' or killjoy, a stereotype that has taken deep root in Australian culture.⁴⁹

GLOBALIZING DISSENT: EXAMPLES FROM THE PACIFIC AND AFRICA

From the late eighteenth century onwards, as Andrew R. Holmes shows in Chapter 16 of this volume, most of the Dissenting churches in Britain adopted an increasingly global focus. The transnational character of Christian belief, with its focus on the universal rule of Christ, was given new impetus by evangelical zeal and made imaginable by European exploration and imperial

⁴⁷ J. Muirhead, 'Nonconformist or Free Churchman', Letter to the Editor, *New Zealand Baptist*, December 1903, p. 181. Quoted in Martin Sutherland, 'Free Church Ecclesiology and Public Policy in New Zealand, 1890–1914', *The Pacific Journal of Baptist Research*, 1 (2005), 51.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See Stuart Piggin, *Spirit of a Nation: The Story of Australia's Christian Heritage* (Sydney, New South Wales, 2004), pp. 51–2.

expansion. By the end of the nineteenth century, this had resulted in Dissenting churches taking root in southern and western Africa and the Pacific Islands, expanding in the Caribbean, Dutch East Indies, and South Asia, and making initial inroads into China and East Africa. While the majority of these churches remained formally under missionary supervision or control, the evangelistic activity of indigenous Christians and, in some cases, the ordination of indigenous ministers served as a foundation for indigenous churches that would become fully independent in the twentieth century. At the same time, indigenous people were being drawn into the increasingly global networks of Dissent, as well as the overlapping but distinct imperial networks that linked much of Africa, Asia, and the Pacific with each other and Europe by the end of the nineteenth century. Two examples of global Dissent are considered here: the expansion of Dissenting churches in Polynesia and the emergence of Ethiopianism in western and southern Africa.

By the 1830s, missionary activity in the Pacific Islands had resulted in the establishment of churches in many Polynesian communities. Dissenting and Anglican missionary societies generally accepted the comity principle, dividing the islands into spheres of action. The London Missionary Society began work in Tahiti in 1797. After a discouraging beginning, in 1812 the Tahitian king, Pomare II, precipitated acceptance of Christianity by many Tahitians. From 1816, the missionaries stopped recording the names of converts, 'the profession of Christianity having become national'.⁵⁰ Two years later, islanders in Raiatea, south of Tahiti, began forming auxiliary mission societies, donating coconut oil, arrowroot, pigs, and cotton to finance island teachers.⁵¹ Tahitian converts spread their faith to Tonga; Tongans associated with the LMS and others from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society took the gospel to Samoa and Fiji; and hundreds of Samoan missionaries associated with the LMS were crucial in the Scottish Presbyterian mission that finally made inroads into Melanesia.⁵²

Congregational and Presbyterian missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions arrived in Hawaii (then known as the Sandwich Islands) in 1820. In spite of the outbreak of war between Britain and the United States in 1812, transatlantic evangelical solidarity had remained strong, with the ABCFM keeping the LMS informed of its plans to form a mission. Three Hawaiian men who had trained at the Foreign Mission School in Connecticut accompanied the missionaries.⁵³ The ABCFM arrived to a culture already in a state of flux: European and American explorers and

⁵⁰ John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Geneva, 1982), p. 23.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵² 'London Missionary Society', in Brij V. Lal and Kate Fortune, eds., *The Pacific Islands: An Encyclopaedia* (Honolulu, 2000), p. 178.

⁵³ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, p. 35.

traders had brought new ideas, technology, and diseases to Hawaii over several centuries and there was a widespread conviction among the islanders that great changes were coming. The old religion had been suspended and some of the powerful chiefs, including Queen Kaahumanu, welcomed the missionaries.⁵⁴ In 1822, assisted by the arrival of a party of LMS converts and missionaries from Tahiti and Raiatea, widespread conversions of the chiefs and people began. Christianity began to take deeper root in Hawaii after a wave of revivals in 1837–40 and Hawaiian missionaries, in conjunction with a minority of ABCFM missionaries, took the faith to the outer islands of Micronesia, in turn spurring further missionary work to the inner islands.

Almost immediately, then, the church in Polynesia took on its own character and impetus, shaped by the Dissenting and evangelical convictions of the Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist missionaries but beyond their control. The mass conversions in Tahiti and Hawaii confronted the mainly Congregational missionaries of the LMS and ABCFM with theological dilemmas regarding the relationship between church and state authorities and the importance of individual conversion. Missionaries were almost universally committed to establishing a church hierarchy that was independent from both chiefly and foreign control. However, evangelical emphasis on the necessity of individual conviction and reformation of life, as well as underlying racial prejudices, made Dissenting missionaries slow to license and ordain indigenous preachers, and when they did so these preachers were not given equivalent status to their British, American, or Australian equivalents. Missionaries generally acknowledged the central role that indigenous Christians played in missionary work, and successful local preachers were lauded in the missionary publications, but details of their lives and service are sparse in mission archives.⁵⁵

The LMS held to its mission policy of allowing island churches to decide on their own form of government: in practice, most identified as congregational but their assemblies were structured on Presbyterian lines, with missionaries acting as bishops in all but name.⁵⁶ Chiefs were often integrated into the church hierarchies as deacons and pastors. The LMS began training Pacific Islander pastors in 1829 and established training institutes in the Cook Islands in 1839 and in Samoa in 1844.⁵⁷ The ABCFM had licensed only nine Hawaiians to preach before 1849 when James Kekela became the first Hawaiian to be fully ordained to the pastorate.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 36.

⁵⁵ Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley, 'Pacific Islander Pastors and Missionaries: Some Historiographical and Analytical Issues' *Pacific Studies*, 23 (2000), 12–13.

⁵⁶ 'London Missionary Society', p. 178.

⁵⁷ 'Pastors' in *The Pacific Islands: An Encyclopaedia*, p. 186.

⁵⁸ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, p. 47.

In the second half of the century, the settler churches in the Australian and New Zealand colonies began to play a larger role in supporting missions to the Pacific Islands, particularly the Methodist and Presbyterian missions. Broadly speaking, this slowed the movement of the Pacific Islander churches towards independence, as colonial racism and imperial fervour impeded missionary commitment to self-governing churches.⁵⁹ By the end of the nineteenth century, the only denomination free of missionary oversight was the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, which broke away from the Australasian Methodist conference in 1885, under the leadership of Shirley Baker, prime minister of Tonga and an ex-missionary.⁶⁰ Taufa'ahau (George), king of Tonga, keen to maintain the sovereignty of his kingdom against the colonial ambitions of European powers, ordered all Tongans to join the church and used force to punish those who refused.⁶¹ The phenomenon of a 'Free' church, forcibly installed by a monarch as the national church, demonstrates some of the complexities and contradictions of Dissent in the colonial context. For indigenous Christians in the Pacific and elsewhere, the principles of Dissent were often expressed more strongly in resistance against missionary and colonial control than in hostility to association with the state.

The arrival of Dissenting missionaries was one small, if significant, element in the expansion of African Christianity. Historically, African Christianity far pre-dated European Christianity, with the Coptic, Nubian, and Ethiopian churches forming in the early centuries of Christianity, though only Ethiopia survived the first millennium as a Christian state. In the nineteenth century, when Dissenters followed other European missionaries into Africa, they encountered communities in a state of considerable and often traumatic change as a result of both internal and external forces, which gave rise to refugee movements and dislocated communities in both southern and western Africa. Dissenting missionary activity was in many cases vigorous and persistent, but the emergence of deeply rooted Dissenting churches was almost entirely dependent on African initiative and receptivity.⁶²

By the 1870s, there were significant populations of Africans adhering to Dissenting denominations in southern and western Africa. In West Africa, freed slaves from England and Nova Scotia arrived in Sierra Leone from 1787, forming self-supporting communities of 'Black settlers' and establishing

⁵⁹ Helen Gardner, *Gathering for God: George Brown in Oceania* (Dunedin, NZ, 2006).

⁶⁰ Piggin and Davidson, 'Christianity in Australasia', p. 555.

⁶¹ See Sione Latukefu, *Church and State in Tonga: The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries and Political Development, 1822–1875* (St Lucia, Queensland, 2014 edn.); Noel Rutherford, 'Baker, Shirley Waldemar (1836–1903)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/baker-shirley-waldemar-2921/text4219>, published first in hardcopy 1969, accessed online 7 March 2015.

⁶² Christopher Steed and Bengt Sundkler, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 83.

Baptist and Methodist churches. When Methodist missionaries arrived in the 1790s, the settlers saw their presence as largely unnecessary. From about 1810, new groups of liberated slaves or recaptives began arriving in the colony, rescued by British naval ships from slave trading vessels leaving West African ports. By 1834, around 60,000 recaptives were flooding into Sierra Leone. This dislocated community of Africans, primarily from Nigeria, were highly receptive to the Christian message preached by the black churches as well as a new wave of missionaries. Some of these liberated recaptives, particularly groups of Igbo people from Nigeria, returned to their homelands and established Dissenting churches there.

The black settler churches in Sierra Leone provided a model of African Christianity, led by African preachers and willing to reject European control, as a segment of the Methodist church did in 1822, when it seceded from the British Methodist connection.⁶³ Leaders of these churches were sometimes unwilling to allow the recaptives to participate fully in leadership of congregations. Joseph Jewett, the Methodist preacher in charge of Rawson Methodist Church, allowed his fellow settlers to preach from the main pulpit, but recaptives were only permitted to preach from the reading desk. As a result of such discrimination, almost 2,000 recaptives with forty-three preachers left the church to form the West African Wesleyan Society. Similar splits occurred among Calvinist Methodists in the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection in Freetown, as well as the Baptist congregations.⁶⁴

In southern Africa, the establishment of Dissenting churches among Africans was in part a consequence of the *mfecane*, the drastic upheaval within the Nguni tribes in the northern part of the region. While the causes of this upheaval are contested, it created waves of forced migration in every direction, resulting in displaced and struggling communities of migrants, often receptive to engaging with the new worldviews brought by missionaries.⁶⁵ By the 1870s, as already noted, there were substantial populations of Africans in the south who adhered to Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches, as well as smaller numbers of Baptists. These churches expanded among minorities that had been fragmented by conflict, either between European colonizers or African tribes.⁶⁶ Yet as in the Pacific, the expansion of churches in the second half of the nineteenth century was followed by the slowing of progress towards African independence from missionary control. The European scramble for territories and the partition of the continent in 1885 increased imperial and white settler anxiety about African leadership and independence.

⁶³ Jehu Hanciles, *Euthanasia of a Mission: African Church Autonomy in a Colonial Context* (Westport, CT, 2002), p. 151.

⁶⁴ Skeed and Sundkler, *A History of the Church*, p. 185. ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁶⁶ John Lonsdale, 'The European Scramble and Conquest in African History', in Roland Oliver and G.N. Sanderson, eds., *The Cambridge History of Africa vol 6, c.1870–c.1905* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 686.

Of particular concern to colonial authorities in southern Africa and elsewhere was the rise of 'Ethiopianism' among the churches. The term describes a drive towards 'Africa for the Africans' that characterized a range of Christian intellectuals and networks, primarily in southern and West Africa. These movements drew on shared convictions about the divine purpose for Africa, which African-American Christians had developed on the basis of biblical references to Africa, most powerfully Psalm 68, 5:31: 'Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth its hands unto God.' Ideologically, Ethiopian movements rejected white racism and incorporated 'an evocative appeal to the heritage of the early African Church, a vigorous endorsement of African spirituality, an emphatic espousal of the African culture, and a vibrant (if visionary) pan-Africanism'.⁶⁷ In West Africa, these ideas were championed by the leading Anglicans James Africanus Horton and James Johnson, in Sierra Leone and given impetus by the Liberian nationalist Edward W. Blyden, a sometime Presbyterian.⁶⁸ In Nigeria, a Southern Baptist leader, David Brown Vincent, seceded from the Southern Baptists to form the Native Baptist Church. In the Gold Coast, Attie Ahuma withdrew to form an independent Gold Coast African Methodist Church and affiliated it to the American Methodist Episcopal Zion, an African-American denomination, in 1896.⁶⁹ Many others remained within the Dissenting denominations but voiced their frustrations and aspirations in print and at denominational gatherings.

In the South African colonies, Ethiopianism emerged independently from West African influences, but responded to the same experience of white racism in the churches and colonial society. The 1880s saw a trickle of African leaders leaving the Dissenting denominations in frustration with ongoing missionary control. In 1892, a Wesleyan Methodist minister, Mangena M. Mokone, withdrew from the racially segregated denomination and established an Ethiopian Church in Pretoria. Shortly afterwards, he affiliated his church with the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) in the United States.⁷⁰ In 1898, Bishop Henry Turner of the AMEC visited South Africa, further energizing the Ethiopian cause.

While church and colonial authorities were generally wary of the Ethiopian movement and its leaders, in some cases there was outright suppression and persecution of the leadership. This was particularly the case in Natal, where settler rule became entrenched with the granting of Responsible Government to the colony in 1893. The new regime saw Christian Africans as a particular threat because of their education and elite status in the colony, and sought to remove their privileges. By 1900, preachers suspected of having Ethiopian

⁶⁷ Hanciles, *Euthanasia of a Mission*, p. 148.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 160–8.

⁶⁹ Ogbu U. Kalu, 'Ethiopianism and the Roots of Modern African Christianity', in Stanley and Gilley, eds., *Cambridge History of Christianity*, VIII, p. 586.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 589.

convictions were under surveillance and in the following few years, African Christian leaders in the colony were arrested, imprisoned, exiled, and humiliated by colonial officials.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Dissenting churches that had begun forming in Africa one hundred years earlier began to explore in new ways what it meant to be African churches and how this might align or be in tension with the denominational distinctives that had emerged in European history. Ethiopianism was one response, which emerged primarily among elite African Christians, many of them leaders in the Dissenting denominations. The experience of the Ethiopian leadership showed that 'Christianity made African leaders less, not more acceptable to white colonists and their governors. Their religion had been shown to be inseparable from the many other disadvantages imposed upon them, and would continue to be integral to the struggle of the next century'.⁷¹

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⁷¹ Norman Etherington, 'Religion and Resistance in Natal, 1900–1910', in Arianna Lissoni et al, eds., *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Theologies Today* (Johannesburg, SA, 2012), p. 76.

Part III

Reflection

The Bible and Scriptural Interpretation

Mark A. Noll

After 1662, when the ejection of nonconforming ministers from the established Church of England created Protestant 'Dissent', it became progressively difficult to find Dissenters agreeing among themselves on questions of Christian doctrine, church organization, or Christian practice. Yet exceptions to the rule of constantly expanding diversification carried great significance. One exception, naturally, was common opposition to established state-churches. The other most important points of agreement concerned the Bible. Until late in the nineteenth century, the otherwise fractious universe of Dissent united to affirm Scripture as the supreme religious authority and also to exalt the individual conscience as the final interpreter of the Bible's message. Not precisely *what* the Bible taught or exactly *how* its character should be defined as authoritative, but rather the conviction that Scripture constituted a unique revelation from God and that all believers enjoyed the privilege of encountering it for themselves characterized the diverse worlds of Protestant Dissent throughout most of the nineteenth century, as it had defined Dissent from the beginning. Because of this scriptural fixation, Dissenters in turn contributed disproportionately to the manifestly biblical character of nineteenth-century Anglo-American civilization. If, by the end of the century, a few Dissenters began to question the uniqueness of Scripture as the supreme source of God-given revelation, they anticipated the vicissitudes of the future rather than the course of Dissent to that time.

A forthright statement of Dissenting scripturalism came in 1834 from John Angell James, pastor of the Independent congregation at Carrs Lane in Birmingham, England. To James, the 'the whole fabric of Dissent' could be summarized in only two propositions. First, 'The Holy Scriptures are the sole authority and sufficient rule in matters of religion, whether relating to doctrine, duty, or church government.' To underscore this crux, James modified slightly a famous declaration from 1638 when William Chillingworth had affirmed that 'the Bible... the Bible only' is the 'religion of Protestants'.

In James's variation, 'The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Dissenters.' To James, a second proposition followed as an axiom: 'it is every man's indefeasible right, and incumbent duty, to form and follow his own opinion of the meaning of the word of God.'¹

A dozen years later, when the first meeting of the international Evangelical Alliance convened in London, Dr James's defining propositions featured prominently as the first and seventh of the 'Evangelical views' affirmed by that body: 'The divine Inspiration, Authority, and Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. . . . The right and duty of Private Judgement in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.'² The Alliance included state-church Protestants from England, Scotland, and the Continent, but its doctrinal basis reflected most clearly the scriptural and voluntaristic traditions of Protestant Dissent.

The nineteenth century witnessed the continuing proclivity of Dissent to spawn fresh Dissenters. With only a few exceptions (like the Mormons in their adherence to the original revelations granted to Joseph Smith), these new expressions regularly re-asserted a firm commitment to the principles of *sola scriptura* and private judgement. Thus, in 1809 Thomas Campbell, two years after coming to the United States as a minister of the Scottish Presbyterian Seceder Church, spelled out his reasons for breaking with that body and all other existing churches as he sought to recover the unity of the New Testament. The 'Declaration and Address' that Campbell composed for a small band of similarly disaffected former Presbyterians anticipated James's later definition: 'we are persuaded that it is high time for us not only to think, but also to act for ourselves; to see with our own eyes, and to take all our measures directly and immediately from the Divine Standard. . . . As the divine word is equally binding upon all, so all lie under an equal obligation to be bound by it, and it alone.'³ Campbell's statement announced what would become the organizing principles for America's Restorationist tradition as found in the Christian Church, the Churches of Christ, and Disciples of Christ.⁴

In England, the Bible Christian Society came out of Wesleyan Methodism in 1815 because its leaders felt that the Wesleyans had compromised their commitment to Scripture. In the words of a standard Methodist history, 'Bible Christians' chose that name to underscore a contrast between 'those who in church use Bible and Prayer Book and these [themselves] who on village green, in farm shed, and everywhere used only or chiefly one book and

¹ 'J. A. James on the Principles of Dissent', in James R. Moore, ed., *Religion in Victorian Britain: Vol. III, Sources* (Manchester, 1988), pp. 132–3.

² 'The Basis of the Evangelical Alliance, 1846', in *ibid.*, p. 232.

³ Thomas Campbell, *Address of the Christian Association of Washington* (Washington, PA, 1809), p. 1.

⁴ On which see Douglas Foster, 'Restorationists and New Movements in North America', Chapter 11 of this volume.

appealed to it for everything'.⁵ Edmund Gosse's famous account of growing up among the Plymouth Brethren likewise highlighted the same commitments at work in another new Dissenting movement: the 'little flock' he described from around 1860 deliberately gathered by themselves, 'connected with no other recognised body of Christians, and depending directly on the independent study of the Bible'.⁶

Variations of the same profession spread wherever English-speaking Protestants migrated. So it was for Presbyterians in New Zealand who in 1862 drew up a Basis of Union for their organization in this new British colony. Second came a profession to follow the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, but not before these transplanted Scots first affirmed, 'That the Word of God, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and the only certain standard by which all matters of doctrine, worship, government, and discipline in the Church of Christ are to be tried and decided.'⁷ The fact that this Basis for New Zealand Presbyterianism also attempted to clarify the relationship between church and state testified to both strong Dissenting traditions and the ambiguity surrounding 'Dissent' outside of Britain. The New Zealanders, as mostly transplanted Scots who had experienced wrenching divisions over establishment in their native land, admitted differences of opinion over how to read the Westminster Confession's statements about cooperation between state and church, but nonetheless affirmed their unanimous support for 'liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment'.⁸

As the Introduction to this volume notes, 'Dissent' as a category for self-identification lost precision the farther Protestants moved away from the establishmentarianism of England and Scotland. Yet for attitudes and practices relating to Scripture, such ambiguity mattered little. In Scotland, the Free Church after the Disruption of 1843 considered itself the Establishment-in-Waiting; in the north of Ireland, Presbyterians combined cultural dominance with their official status as only a tolerated denomination; in Canada, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand, Presbyterians and Anglicans often aspired to the privileges of establishment they had enjoyed in the homelands; and even in the United States, where the Constitution prohibited a national state-church, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians often acted

⁵ W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, and G. Eayrs, *A New History of Methodism*, 2 vols (London, 1909), I: p. 511, as quoted in Deborah M. Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England* (Princeton, NJ, 1985), p. 144.

⁶ 'A Congregation of Brethren, c. 1860', in David M. Thompson, ed., *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1972), p. 167.

⁷ 'Basis of Union of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand', in Allan K. Davidson and Peter J. Lineham, eds., *Transplanted Christianity: Documents Illustrating Aspects of New Zealand Church History* (2nd edn., Palmerston North, 1989), p. 112.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

proprietary as if they filled the role of established churches. Notwithstanding the presence of these ersatz, quasi-, or informal church–state unions, the Dissenting exaltation of Scripture as supreme authority and biblical interpretation as personally determined prevailed strongly throughout the broad expanse of English-language Protestantism.

Beyond that basic stance, however, it is difficult to differentiate a specifically Dissenting history of the Bible from a very great deal shared with Anglicans in England, Presbyterians in Scotland, and indeed Anglo-American culture in general. Region, in fact, often played a more prominent role in directing the use of Scripture than denominational tradition or specific doctrinal professions. In the north of Ireland, for example, the Presbyterian spokesman Robert Watts responded to John Tyndall's inflammatory promotion of evolution at the 1874 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which had convened in Belfast, by denouncing Tyndall for aiming at the 'extirpation of the Jehovah of the Bible'. But Watts lived in an environment where religious combat featuring Scripture shaped his daily life. When Irish Catholics also complained about Tyndall's aggressive evolutionary naturalism, Watts would not recognize an ally, but insisted on denouncing Romanism as characterized by 'antagonism to the Word'.⁹ Watts's particularly contentious deployment of Scripture came not from his status as a Dissenter but because he was a Dissenter habituated to the Bible battles that regularly roiled Belfast. Canada makes for a nice contrast, since Protestants of all sorts there fairly easily adjusted their traditional reliance on Scripture to newer evolutionary views. A settled pattern of biblical-scientific accommodation, along with concerns for how fragmented denominations might overcome inherited internal divisions and how the churches might unite in service to the Dominion, left little room for battles over natural selection.¹⁰

General cultural influences, rather than anything specific to traditional Dissent, likewise came to bear on how Dissenters put the Bible to use. One example was the force exerted by the century's strong emphasis on human subjectivity, whether from secular romantic impulses or the piety of evangelical revival. When that influence combined with the high status accorded to scientific truth understood in empirical terms on a model idealizing Francis Bacon, these broad cultural trends could bring historically antagonistic traditions closer to each other. So it was when the leading Canadian Methodist of his era, Nathanael Burwash, instructed theology classes in the 1890s on the sources of Christian certainty: 'We study not words nor formal definitions, not

⁹ Both quotations from David N. Livingstone, *Dealing with Darwin: Place, Politics, and Rhetoric in Religious Engagements with Evolution* (Baltimore, MD, 2014), pp. 68, 75.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89–116; and Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal and Kingston, 1991), ch. 2, 'Authority and History: Evangelicalism and the Problem of the Past'.

second-hand observations... but wherever possible, the things themselves... Where shall we find our facts...? In the Bible and in the heart of humanity.¹¹ That formula diverged only slightly from what the Presbyterian Charles Hodge, one of the era's leading Calvinists, had published in his much-used *Systematic Theology* from 1872: 'The true method in theology requires that the facts of religious experience should be accepted as facts, and when duly authenticated by Scripture, be allowed to interpret the doctrinal statements of the Word of God.'¹² Along with Dissenting traditions, the spirit of the age also shaped attitudes towards Scripture.

Those traditions, however, did predispose all varieties of Dissent to conspicuous reliance on Scripture and determined insistence on the right of private judgement to apprehend what the Bible taught. As those traditions remained so strong, Dissenters contributed more than their share to making Scripture unusually salient in nineteenth-century Anglo-American societies. Personal, domestic, and congregational dedication to the Bible was the era's most significant historical reality, but that dedication also spilled over naturally into a powerful public presence.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY BIBLE CIVILIZATIONS

Throughout the nineteenth century in England, the scripturalism of Dissenting traditions exerted a cultural influence that exceeded the considerable numerical strength of nonconformity; in the rest of the English-speaking world, Dissenting traditions did even more to make the Bible a central presence. Modern scholarship, perhaps reflecting the instincts of a more secular age, was late in recognizing how important the Bible remained for so long, but it has been rapidly catching up. David Bebbington's history of British evangelicalism demonstrates that the revivals of the eighteenth century, then the expansion of various evangelical varieties in the succeeding century, heightened attention to Scripture throughout all of Britain.¹³ More recently, Timothy Larsen documented that the biblical fixation of evangelical Dissent extended to Dissenters who never became evangelical, as well as to Anglican, Roman Catholic, and even free-thinking Victorians.¹⁴ In the United States, major new studies of the Civil War era have described the widespread extent of Bible distribution and Bible reference in all segments of national life.

¹¹ Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839–1918* (Kingston and Montreal, 1989), p. 98.

¹² Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols (Grand Rapids, MI, 1979 edn.), I: p. 16.

¹³ David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), pp. 12–14, 89–91.

¹⁴ Timothy Larsen, *A People of One Book: The Bible and the Victorians* (Oxford, 2011), p. 6.

George Rable's comprehensive account expertly portrayed the ubiquity of Christian Scripture as a physical object as well as a source for public rhetoric and private devotions.¹⁵ A different sort of testimony came from David Goldfield's study of the forces leading to that war. He has argued that religious hyperventilation, expressed in biblical terms and promoted especially by the dominant evangelical denominations, so strongly affected the nation that both north and south willingly accepted a violent war, which a political system free from this religious infection might have avoided.¹⁶

A byproduct of such studies has been the awareness of how often scriptural phrases, allusions, paraphrases, quotations, and references sprang to the pen and lip of many of the era's most visible actors. The terrorist-liberator John Brown, the African-American orator Frederick Douglass, President Abraham Lincoln, Union Secretary of State William Seward, the novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens came from different locations on the spectrum of Protestant Dissenting traditions (and with different levels of personal religious commitment). Yet they all turned instinctively to the Bible to express their varied points of view. In so doing, they illustrated the scriptural fixation of what Lewis Saum once called the 'prodigious appetite for religion' displayed by ordinary citizens in the antebellum United States.¹⁷

Another host of deeply researched studies has explored the pervasive scriptural presence beneath the level of American citizenship—that is, among the United States' black populations.¹⁸ African-American Christianity emerged in the eighteenth century only after evangelical revivalism separated the Bible's salvific message from the use of Scripture to support slavery within British Christendom.¹⁹ By the mid-nineteenth century, the Bible for African Americans had become a more flexible and emblematic book than for well-placed public figures or well-respected theological professionals in the white community. Yet for the social sphere created by the slave experience, newer scholarship has shown that both before and after African Americans enjoyed significant literacy, the Bible functioned as a foundational resource—as private encouragement; an inexhaustible treasure of stories to be sung, preached, and

¹⁵ George C. Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2010).

¹⁶ David Goldfield, *America Aflame: How the Civil War Created a Nation* (New York, 2011).

¹⁷ Lewis O. Saum, *The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America* (Westport, CT, 1980), p. 33.

¹⁸ See, as examples only, Vincent L. Wimbush, ed., *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures* (New York, 2000); Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven, CT, 2006); Katherine Clay Bassard, *Transforming Scriptures: African American Women Writers and the Bible* (Athens, GA, 2010); and Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past: African-American Race Histories* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

¹⁹ Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998).

sung again; an inspiring assemblage of heroes bestowing hope; and, for some, a weapon to wield against slavery itself.

Another set of scholars has explored the boom in Bible publication and Bible marketing that the United States and Britain both experienced in this era. Bible societies produced the most Bibles most cheaply.²⁰ But commercial presses in England—and then US imitators like Harper Brothers and A.J. Holman—flooded the market with the most elaborate and expensive Scriptures imaginable. These specially bound, clasped, and ornamented Bibles served as Protestant icons, still functioning as God's word, but manufactured for conspicuous display as well.²¹

Still other scholars have documented the same biblical salience throughout the rest of the English-speaking world. In Canada, Michael Gauvreau has suggested that since British North America did not experience the sceptical and revolutionary phases of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment feeding into the American Revolution, English-speaking Canada witnessed an even more central place for the Bible as educators joined others in deploying Scripture as the nation's 'foundation for doctrine and the fountainhead of devotion'.²²

This relatively recent scholarship rarely pauses to single out Dissent for special attention. As James Turner has written, after commenting on the prominence of biblical symbols among British novelists, but also as a general matter: 'Bible reading saturated Anglophone Protestant culture.'²³ In sum, private, personal, domestic, congregational, and society-wide engagement with Scripture constituted a supremely important feature of the era. Only because of that widespread presence did disputes over the nature of scriptural authority—and then developments in biblical criticism—become important, even though these matters have until recently received more intensive scholarly scrutiny than the sheer ubiquity of Scripture. In Larsen's words, 'the Bible's place in marking the rhythm of life (most notably through morning and evening private and household devotions) and how it was the lens through which people saw their own experience' explains why 'many, many Victorians experienced the Bible first and foremost as a richly abundant and life-giving source of spiritual comfort and divine promises'.²⁴

²⁰ Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge, 1991); Peter J. Wosh, *Spreading the Word: The Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY, 1994).

²¹ Paul Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880* (Stanford, CA, 1999); Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, CT, 1995), ch. 3, 'The Bible in the Victorian Home'.

²² Gauvreau, *Evangelical Century*, p. 19.

²³ James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton, NJ, 2014), p. 160.

²⁴ Larsen, *People of One Book*, pp. 6, 297–8.

IN PRIVATE

The steady perusal of Scripture for personal edification—day-in, day-out, year-in, year-out—undergirded Dissenting engagement with Scripture. From the Bible, Dissenters sometimes took conflicting guidance concerning doctrine and practice, but did so only from a common starting point of deep personal investment. Elias Boudinot, an honoured colleague of George Washington in the early years of American independence, a dedicated Presbyterian layman, and the first president of the American Bible Society, spelled out in 1811 the reasons for that investment in an entirely typical statement. In explaining to the New Jersey Bible Society why the distribution of Scripture was so important, Boudinot did stress that Protestant devotion to the Bible could fend off Roman Catholic advances and also firm up a society being led astray by the political followers of Thomas Jefferson. But his main argument remained firmly devotional: ‘We firmly believe that the Bible contains the clear and only *written* revelation of the will of God to man.’ Moreover, Boudinot asserted, through knowledge of the Scriptures ‘we may become “Workers together with Christ”, to fulfil those glorious promises, that “in the latter days all shall know the Lord, from the least unto the greatest; and that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas”’.²⁵ In 1859, a noted English Quaker, J.S. Rowntree, expressed this same belief in a different way when he explained why some earlier Friends had been led astray. It happened ‘when the Bible was not read in meetings for worship, not regularly in the domestic circle—the consequences, by allowing a wide-spread ignorance of scriptural truth, were most hurtful to the growth of vital religion’.²⁶

Testimonies abounded in this era concerning the positive godliness associated with dependence on Scripture. In 1832, a Belfast religious magazine reported on the last days of Agnes Cuming of Ballymena; Cuming had been renowned for the breadth of her pious reading but was especially honoured because as death approached she read only the Scriptures.²⁷ Catherine Booth began her ministry in the London slums with great trepidation, but also with a determination to be sustained by Scripture. Her first encounter in the ministry that would become the Salvation Army involved a woman poverty-stricken because of her husband’s drinking. Booth immediately read the Bible with him, whereupon he sobered up and became a founding member of a small group that met weekly under Booth’s direction ‘for reading the Scriptures’ and

²⁵ Elias Boudinot, *An Address Delivered before the New-Jersey Bible Society* (Burlington, NJ, 1811), 2 (quoting from 2 Corinthians 6:1; Jeremiah 31:34; and Isaiah 11:9).

²⁶ ‘The Causes of Quaker Decline, 1859’, in Thompson, ed., *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 164.

²⁷ Andrew R. Holmes, *The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice, 1770–1840* (Oxford, 2006), p. 245.

for ensuring the continuity sobriety of such reformed alcoholics.²⁸ Looking back from the 1890s, an elderly Primitive Methodist itinerant recalled how the Bible had upheld him as he entered the rural village of Hockering in Norfolk thirty years earlier. From that later distance he spoke directly about ‘one of the most awful conflicts with the enemy of souls that I ever experienced’ and then metaphorically about falling into ‘a dry ditch covered over with briars and thorns’. Resolution for Key came from recourse to the Scriptures: ‘the conflict was so horrible, that I was afraid at one time I should lose my reason. I opened my pocket-Bible on Psalm cxxi. and read it; and while reading the last verse [“The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore”], the snare was instantly broken, the power of darkness were scattered, and hell’s legions routed; my soul was, in a moment, filled with light and love.’²⁹

Private devotions fed naturally into the much-honoured practice of family Bible reading. In Ireland, after the Presbyterians split between orthodox evangelicals and Arian Remonstrants in 1829, both sides continued to publish devotional materials for family worship, though the evangelicals insisted more strongly on the absolute necessity of reading a complete chapter in the family each day. When in the wake of that same conflict, one adherent to the orthodox camp cautioned against family devotions as cutting into time for personal Bible reading, a chorus of objectors leapt to defend the familial practice.³⁰ In that same year the London Yearly Meeting of Friends defined daily Bible reading, privately and ‘in our families’ as the norm for Quakers.³¹ On the other side of the world, an Australian Presbyterian in 1871 indicated the esteem with which family worship was held when he complained about the practice of some itinerating ministers: ‘any Minister who would go into a house, remain all night and rise on the Sabbath morning without taking a Bible in his hand or engaging in family worship was not fit for a Christian minister.’³² As an indication of how far beyond evangelical circles the habit of family Bible reading extended, the distinguished American Episcopalian Phillips Brooks, author of ‘O little town of Bethlehem’, led his family in Bible-centred worship twice daily.³³

²⁸ Timothy Larsen, ‘The Bible and Varieties of Nineteenth-Century Dissent: Elizabeth Fry, Mary Carpenter, and Catherine Booth’, in Scott Mandelbrote and Michael Ledger-Lomas, eds., *Dissent and the Bible in Britain, c. 1650–1950* (Oxford, 2013), p. 170.

²⁹ ‘R. Key on Primitive Methodism in Eastern England during the 1830s’, in Moore, ed., *Religion in Victorian Britain*, p. 248.

³⁰ Holmes, *Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief*, p. 288.

³¹ Larsen, ‘The Bible’, p. 154.

³² Mark Hutchinson, *Iron in Our Blood: A History of the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales, 1788–2001* (Sydney, New South Wales, 2001), p. 117.

³³ McDannell, *Material Christianity*, p. 78.

The era's expansion of commerce led to a noteworthy material expression of this domestic fixture. Susan Warner's best-selling American novel from 1850, *Wide, Wide World*, illustrated this conjuncture. It featured a protagonist, Ellen Montgomery, who in one memorable scene went shopping with her mother for Ellen's first Bible. The expedition partook of pathos, since with her mother, who was dying, Ellen had already read passages describing heaven and the afterlife. It also featured nineteenth-century trade since Warner shows her heroine enthusing over the great variety of Bibles available for purchase in every size, colour, binding, and price. The scene, as summarized by Colleen McDannell, demonstrated 'how at mid-century the Bible brought together faith, family, and fashion'.³⁴

The large folio Bibles that both British and American publishers produced in this era came to function as all-purpose mini-libraries with their maps, gazetteers, chronologies, pronouncing guides, theological treatises, capsule oriental histories, illustrations (with those by Gustave Doré especially popular), genealogical charts, concordances, and more. Yet although they weighed far too much to be read from easily, they were all known as 'family Bibles'. Widely distributed paintings and then photographs reinforced the ideal by portraying the family unit (kin plus servants) gathered attentively around the paterfamilias as he read from the sacred volume.³⁵ Such Protestant icons affirmed the centrality of Scripture in the domestic round for all English-language societies in this period. They also illustrated the way that contemporary values, in this case commercial and aesthetic, shaped that devotion to Scripture.

HYMNS

Hymnody provided one of the most effective (and affecting) means by which scriptural themes spread throughout nineteenth-century culture in Britain, North America, and the British Empire. In the eighteenth century, Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, and a host of others had led the break from Scripture-paraphrase that had earlier dominated English public worship. Where that break came later, as in Scotland and with some Presbyterians overseas, singing in church and the use of hymnbooks for private devotion sustained versified psalmody as a powerful anchor of Protestant scripturalism. An illustration of how that kind of traditionalism could merge with expanding evangelistic zeal came from Ireland early in the century. The Hibernian Bible Society—as a way of keeping psalm-only Presbyterians on board with its effort to provide the

³⁴ Ibid., p. 99.

³⁵ For examples of such depictions, see *ibid.*, pp. 72–84.

Bible to Ireland's Catholics—added a complete metrical Psalter to all of its copies of the King James Version.³⁶ Other compromises also expanded the outreach of hymnody, as when in 1867 the Presbyterians of New South Wales authorized a collection of hymns, even as they reaffirmed the importance of metrical psalms for public worship.³⁷

More generally, the full deployment of hymnody energized public and private worship at all social levels. Fresh Dissenting movements seemed always to be accompanied by fresh outbreaks of song. In England, representatives of what Deborah Valenze has called 'Sectarian Methodism', who left behind the older Methodist movements as tarnished by the same kind of conservative formalism those movements had originally arisen to oppose, thrived on a vigorous hymnody in which biblical themes predominated. The Independent Methodists (1796), Methodist New Connection (1797), Primitive Methodists (1812), and Bible Christians (1815), thus, sang their new songs—such as 'I am a Christian pilgrim, a sinner saved by grace, / I travel to Mount Zion, my final resting place'³⁸—with the same vigour that the original Methodists had taken to the hymns of Charles Wesley. Similarly, *A Selection of Hymns: For the Use of the Female Revivalists*, which appeared in at least three editions in the 1820s, turned to Scripture for songs written with a definite polemical intent, like 'Happy Magdalen, to whom / Christ the Lord vouchsaf'd t'appear? / Newly rise from the tomb, / Would he first be seen by her?'³⁹

Throughout the nineteenth century, hymnbooks continued to be printed most often in text-only editions, which underlined their usefulness for personal as well as corporate devotion. Even with hymnody coming from many directions, editors often keyed their selections to specific biblical passages. As an example, in 1858 three well-known New Englanders published *The Sabbath Hymn Book* for use primarily in church, but also 'to aid in the more private social devotions, in the conference room, the family, and the closet'.⁴⁰ Its editors were the American Congregational ministers Austin Phelps and Edwards Amasa Park, both long associated with Andover Seminary, and the noted composer and hymn-arranger Lowell Mason, who was employed at different times by Congregational and Presbyterian churches. Their book's 1372 hymn texts mingled a minority of hymns paraphrased from Scripture with a majority that ranged more widely. Instead of titles, however, verses from Scripture headed most of the hymns, as for the very first three, which were versified renditions of the Lord's Prayer appearing under the heading,

³⁶ David Hempton and Myrtle Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society, 1740–1890* (London, 1992), p. 54.

³⁷ Hutchinson, *Iron in Our Blood*, p. 120.

³⁸ Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, p. 29.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁴⁰ Edwards Amasa Park, Austin Phelps, and Lowell Mason, eds., *The Sabbath Hymn Book for the Service of Song in the House of the Lord* (New York, 1858), p. ix.

'After this manner, therefore, pray ye. Matt. 6, Luke 11'.⁴¹ The editors included many hymns written for use in established state-churches, but even more from Dissenting authors, beginning with Isaac Watts and continuing through their contemporaries like the Scottish Free Church Presbyterian Horatius P. Bonar and the American Congregationalist Ray Palmer.

Although hymns easily crossed the divide between state-supported and free churches, it is still noteworthy that many of the era's most popular hymns came from Dissenters who expatiated on biblical stories, images, or themes. As only a few of numerous examples, take: Palmer's 'My faith looks up to thee, / Thou Lamb of Calvary' (1830); Bonar's 'I heard the voice of Jesus say' (1846); 'I love thy Kingdom, Lord, / The house of thine abode', by the American Congregationalist Timothy Dwight (1800); 'Tis midnight and on Olive's brow... 'Tis midnight in the garden now / The suffering Savior prays alone', by the American Congregationalist William Tappan (1822); 'In the cross of Christ I glory, / Towering o'er the wreck of time', by the English Unitarian John Bowring (1825); 'My hope is built on nothing less... On Christ the solid rock I stand, / All other ground is sinking sand', by the English Baptist Edward Mote (1834); 'Shall we gather at the river', by the American Baptist Robert Lowry (1864); and "'Almost persuaded" now to believe; "Almost persuaded" Christ to receive,' by the American Methodist and Congregationalist P.P. Bliss (1871).

A few hymns with Scripture as the explicit theme also became popular. In 1803 the English Baptist layman, John Burton, published 'Holy Bible, book divine, / Precious treasure, thou art mine; / Mine to tell me whence I came; / Mine to teach me what I am.' By the second half of the century it was appearing in more than a quarter of English-language hymnals.⁴² A different kind of popularity came to a song published in 1841 by George P. Morris, editor of the *New York Mirror*. Found as 'This book is all that's left me now' in a few denominational hymnbooks (Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal, Seventh-day Adventist), it received greater circulation when sold as sheet music or appeared in hymnals produced by parachurch organizations.⁴³ The song's more common designation as 'My mother's Bible' spoke for its sentimental appeal in portraying a domestic ideal: 'How calm was my poor mother's look, / Who learned God's word to hear! / Her angel face—I see it yet! / What thronging memories come! / Again that little group is met / Within the halls of home.'⁴⁴ Popular hymns did as much to circulate biblical phrases, themes, and narratives as any medium of the era. Unlike other Dissenting uses

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 1–2.

⁴² http://www.hymnary.org/text/holy_bible_book_divine (accessed 24 October 2014).

⁴³ http://www.hymnary.org/text/this_book_is_all_thats_left_me_now (accessed 24 October 2014).

⁴⁴ McDannell, *Material Christianity*, pp. 84–7.

of Scripture, their combination of didactic content and musical affect also acted as a strong uniting factor for the various Dissenting traditions.

IN PUBLIC

The Bible as the essential foundation for sermons—usually heard, but still in this era also regularly published—remained the most audible means by which Scripture intersected with public life. Yet if preaching was primary, the Bible's presence in public life extended far, far beyond the churches.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the scriptural anchor for preaching became increasingly flexible in several traditions of Dissent, but the pattern rooted in the Restoration period retained considerable staying power. Adam Clarke, an Irish-born Methodist renowned for his comprehensive biblical commentary, explained in 1805 why detailed attention to Scripture was so essential: preachers, he said, must make it 'a point of conscience' to provide congregations with the meaning of biblical words: 'the meaning of the *thing* is found in the *word*; and if the *word* which comprises the original *idea* be not properly understood, the meaning of the thing can never be defined; and on this ground the edification of the people is impossible.'⁴⁵ A sermon on the Apostle Paul before Felix (Acts 24) that was published at Belfast in 1800 exemplified the pattern that remained prominent nearly everywhere: 'Let us proceed then to take up the subject under the following arrangement and method. First, by offering some previous observations on the text, preparatory to a farther elucidation thereof. Secondly, to give a general explanation of the words Righteousness, Temperance, and judgment to come. Thirdly, in a free paraphrase, to attempt to fix the Apostle's reasoning on them. And, lastly, to conclude the while with a particular and occasional application.'⁴⁶ Reading a text, expanding briefly on its scriptural context, moving (sometimes at great length) to its doctrinal meaning, and then applying this expanded meaning to various segments of the congregation (also sometimes at great length)—this ancient pattern remained a powerful norm.

Throughout the English-speaking world, 'princes of the pulpit' occupied the celebrated status that in the twentieth century would come to stars of pitch, field, and screen. Travel diaries, an important genre throughout the era, regularly reported on visits to churches whose ministers enjoyed such fame. From 1871, the Yale Divinity School sponsored an annual series on preaching, the Lyman Beecher Lectures, that has remained as a notable forum about and

⁴⁵ J.N. Ian Dickson, *Beyond Religious Discourse: Sermons, Preaching and Evangelical Protestants in Nineteenth-Century Irish Society* (Milton Keynes, 2007), p. 61.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

exemplifying pulpit eloquence.⁴⁷ For the first two years the lecturer was Lyman's son, Henry Ward Beecher, pastor of the Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn and America's best-known minister. Funds from one of Beecher's Brooklyn members, Henry W. Sage, also a benefactor of Cornell University, supplied the endowment.⁴⁸ Yet whether well funded or not, Dissent provided most of the homiletical stars of the era.

Representatives from Dissenting traditions provided much of the stimulus for the century's extraordinary production and distribution of the Scriptures. With the British and Foreign Bible Society in the lead, such societies often became the chief vehicle for intra-Dissenting cooperation as well. As one of countless examples, a campaign in Ireland during the early nineteenth century recruited Protestants from across the board into the Hibernian Bible Society, with the expectation that the provision of Scripture might wean the Irish population from the Catholic Church.⁴⁹ In this society's effort, as for many other activities in many other places, women volunteers played an especially prominent part.⁵⁰

Bible translation at home and abroad extended the same passion for distributing Scripture. Peter Williams's eighteenth-century translation of the Scriptures into Welsh, with thirty-five editions during the nineteenth century, played a major role in stimulating the extraordinary expansion of nonconformity in Wales.⁵¹ The Baptist William Carey extended the impulse overseas with his translation of the Bible into Bengali and other Indian languages, translations that became the major legacy of his pioneering missionary career. In New Zealand, William Williams of the Church Missionary Society, an evangelical Anglican agency that functioned outside of Britain in Dissenting fashion, began publishing sections of the New Testament in Maori in 1827. This translation served as Scripture for New Zealand's indigenous community until it was revised by a committee including Maoris after World War II.⁵² In Australia, a Lutheran Carl Strehlow, also functioning in this colonial setting as a Dissenter, completed the first New Testament translation into an aboriginal language in 1899.⁵³

⁴⁷ For full analysis, see Robert H. Ellison, 'Preaching and Sermons', Chapter 15 of this volume.

⁴⁸ Larry Witham, *A City Upon a Hill: How Sermons Changed the Course of American History* (New York, 2007), p. 161.

⁴⁹ Hempton and Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism*, p. 52.

⁵⁰ David Hempton, *The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion, c. 1750–1900* (London, 1996), p. 189.

⁵¹ Eryn White, 'Welsh Dissent and the Bible, c. 1750–1850', in Ledger-Lomas and Mandelbrote, eds., *Dissent*, p. 124.

⁵² Allan Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand* (2nd edn., Wellington, 1997), pp. 11, 136.

⁵³ Ian Breward, *A History of the Australian Churches* (St. Leonards, New South Wales, 1993), p. 103.

One of the audiences to whom reformers on both sides of the Atlantic made special efforts at providing Scripture was the incarcerated. In October 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont visited the Eastern State Prison in Philadelphia, where they were impressed by how many of the prisoners they interviewed spoke well of the Bible. Bibles had been provided to prisoners by the prison's chaplain through a scheme supported by local Presbyterian, Congregational, and Baptist churches.⁵⁴ Better publicized was the English Quaker Elizabeth Fry, whose public declamation of Scripture to prisoners in Newgate attracted immense public interest, with well-dressed tourists sometimes coming along inside to hear her read. Fry's method of connecting with prisoners was no fluke, since she also won renown for herculean labours on behalf of the British and Foreign Bible Society and for her daily devotional, the widely distributed *Texts for Every Day in the Year*.⁵⁵

If the Bible often served as a much-heard tocsin in this period, it could also be wielded as a weapon. Some of the major public disputes of the era, especially concerning education, witnessed particularly contentious scriptural sword-play. Anti-Catholic instincts often fuelled these disputes, as once in Belfast early in the century when Protestant and Catholic spokesmen tangled vociferously over the alleged burning of a Bible by a priest in an outlying town.⁵⁶ In the United States, conventional political wisdom emphasized the need in a republic for a virtuous citizenry that could act altruistically for the common good. With church and state separated by a Constitution inherited from a generation that regarded religious establishments as a deadly threat to public virtue, adherents of republican principles turned to publicly funded education for the virtue without which republics would fail. Daily reading from the King James Version, a 'non-sectarian' Bible accepted by almost all English-language Protestants, seemed the ideal vehicle to preserve both republican virtue and the free exercise of religion. When Catholics protested against the use of taxes to mandate reading from the King James Version, Protestants reacted angrily. In 1844 that anger turned ugly with a deadly 'Bible riot' in Philadelphia, which left fatalities and much destruction of property in its wake, and the threat of rioting in New York City, which was only contained when Bishop 'Iron John' Hughes armed parishioners to guard the city's Catholic churches.⁵⁷

When the number of Jews became significant, some of their leaders joined Catholics to protest against mandated readings of the King James Version in

⁵⁴ Olivier Zunz, ed., *Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont in America: Their Friendship and their Travels*, transl. Arthur Goldhammer (Charlottesville, VA, 2010), pp. 483–4, 486–7.

⁵⁵ Larsen, 'The Bible and Varieties of Nineteenth-Century Dissent', pp. 154–9.

⁵⁶ Hempton and Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism*, p. 127.

⁵⁷ Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800–1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York, 1938).

public schools. The famous 'Bible wars' of Cincinnati that played out in the late 1860s began a process of secularization that cut back on the widespread use of Scripture and that would lead, much later in the twentieth century, to a constitutional prohibition against any devotional Bible reading in tax-supported schools.⁵⁸

In Britain and its empire, a different narrative unfolded for schooling. Early in the century, Dissenters expressed greatest concern about the imposition of Anglican forms, standards, and expectations. But eventually many Dissenters joined with friends of the establishment to protect the use of Scripture in tax-funded schools. So it was that when the New Zealand parliament set up a comprehensive but secular national educational system in 1877, Dissenters and Anglicans protested immediately—first lobbying for the inclusion of Bible reading in the schools, but then for released time arrangements that allowed for a greater diversity of biblical instruction.⁵⁹ In New South Wales, Australia, Protestants of all sorts rejoiced that biblical instruction existed from the start of publicly financed education, as in the Dingo Creek School, where the earliest curriculum stipulated 'the Bible' as the main text for the 'First Class' and the 'Second Class'.⁶⁰ In Queensland, by contrast, it took a campaign that started in the 1880s until the same provisions were granted in 1910.⁶¹

In England, many Nonconformists eventually relaxed their historical wariness against Anglican domination when they grew even more worried about the threats of secularism. Through much of the century, the first worry prevailed. But then in 1894 during heated debate over proposed educational reform, Dissenters began cooperating with evangelical Anglicans to ensure the continued presence of Scripture in the schools. Together they formed the Bible Education Council to support the maintenance of a Christian curriculum. In David Bebbington's succinct summary, 'The exclusion of the Bible from the schools became almost as unthinkable as the inclusion of Anglican teaching.'⁶² By the end of the century, however, noticeable cracks appeared in what had once been a united Dissenting phalanx behind such measures, since by that time some Unitarians no longer supported such advocacy.

Earlier in the century, England's Dissenters had drawn freely on Scripture to stiffen their complaints against the Anglican establishment. Thus, the Anti-State Church Association, founded in 1844, relied for its basis on time-honoured Dissenting principles combined with liberal political ideals: 'in matters of

⁵⁸ Steven K. Green, *The Bible, the School, and the Constitution: The Clash that Shaped Modern Church-State Doctrine* (New York, 2012), ch. 3.

⁵⁹ Ian Breward, *Godless Schools? A Study of Protestant Reactions to the Education Act of 1877* (Christchurch, 1967), pp. 26–33.

⁶⁰ Hutchinson, *Iron in Their Blood*, p. 61.

⁶¹ Breward, *A History of the Australian Churches*, p. 102.

⁶² David Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870–1914* (London, 1982), p. 137.

religion man is responsible to God alone;...all legislation by secular governments in affairs of religion is an encroachment upon the rights of man, and an invasion of the prerogatives of God; and...the application by law of the resources of the state to the maintenance of any form or forms of religious worship and instruction is contrary to reason, hostile to human liberty, and directly opposed to the word of God.⁶³ Edward Miall, who began public life as an Independent minister, left active ministry to lead Dissenting opposition to the Anglican establishment. As the founding editor of the *Nonconformist* (1841) and the moving spirit in the Anti-State Church Association, Miall sometimes seemed too radical even for other Dissenters.⁶⁴ From wherever they came on the political spectrum, however, contributors to his magazine, the *Nonconformist*, regularly deployed Scripture as a cudgel against the Anglicans. In 1851 one author opined that the Church of England could not be 'a scriptural Church' because it was organized geographically and made 'no distinction between the converted and the unconverted'.⁶⁵ Another in 1864 used biblical metaphors to recruit divine support for their protests: 'God is working with them [Dissenters];...while they, in obedience to His will, compass Jericho seven times, and blow their rams' horns, the walls of the city will fall because He has determined it.'⁶⁶ Similar complaints came from British Quakers, including one author writing in the 'Ninth Month' (September) number of the *Friend* for 1847: for this critic, it was imperative to 'distinguish between a Church according to the Acts of the Apostles, and a Church according to the Acts of Parliament, the one holding Christ as its only Head, the other holding that the head of the State is head of the Church also'.⁶⁷

Dissenting attention to Scripture began in private and in church, but did not end there. Even as contentions increased among Dissenters over what exactly fidelity to the Bible entailed, the forces of Dissent also contributed powerfully to the public presence of Scripture—in different ways, but in all parts of the English-speaking world.

TRUTH CLAIMS AND CRITICISM

Those contentions, however, made up an especially important Dissenting contribution to the Bible civilizations of the Victorian era. The phenomenon that Nathan Hatch has described for the new United States operated only

⁶³ 'Constitution of the Anti-State Church Association, 1844', in Thompson, ed., *Nonconformity*, pp. 124–5.

⁶⁴ Timothy Larsen, *Friends of Religious Equality: Nonconformist Politics in Mid-Victorian England* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 31–2, 81–2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

slightly less aggressively elsewhere: 'Any number of denominations, sects, movements, and individuals between 1780 and 1830 claimed to be restoring a pristine biblical Christianity free from all human devices.'⁶⁸ Contradictory claims made on the basis of that fidelity certainly testified to axiomatic trust in Scripture. It probably also did more than celebrated disputes over biblical criticism to hasten the process by which Scripture began losing its hold in Britain, North America, and the British Empire. However such judgements are made, it is indisputable that a full range of biblically grounded contentions enjoyed a vigorous life long before most Dissenters felt the inroads of higher biblical criticism.

The new United States, with its freedom-enraptured public philosophy, witnessed a rapid multiplication of self-confident claims that strict adherence to Scripture would sweep away the moral detritus of the centuries. The clamour among competing biblical interpretations created the context for Joseph Smith to receive an authoritative supplementary scripture in the form of golden plates from the angel Moroni. Many others were also troubled by competing biblical assertions, though most remained content with the Bible as received. The radical Methodist Lorenzo Dow began his spiritual pilgrimage, for instance, by claiming that 'the bible was' to him 'like a sealed book' because when he 'applied to this person and that book', he received 'no satisfactory instruction'.⁶⁹ The message that Dow proclaimed—as recovered from Scripture by himself—illustrated a common process, even if it yielded divergent results. The American Universalist A.B. Grosh made a profession heard from many others when he claimed that 'in religious faith we have but one Father and one Master... and the Bible, *the Bible*, is our only acknowledged creed-book'.⁷⁰

If with less libertarian flair, it was much the same elsewhere. In 1826, William Bruce defended his Arian views against the orthodox party of Ulster Presbyterians with an explicit appeal to Dissenting tradition: the conclusions of anti-Trinitarianism, he said, arose from 'our freedom from human authority', a freedom shared by 'all free dissenters, all dissenters free from subscription or tests, [who] rely solely on Scripture, renounce the dictates of councils, convocations, and synods, and receive the decisions of fathers and doctors only as the opinions of fallible men'.⁷¹ After the 1829 break in Ireland between orthodox and Arian Presbyterians, the former began publishing *The Orthodox Presbyterian* while the innovative latter brought out *The Bible Christian*. Both proclaimed their faithfulness to Scripture, but the Arians appealed more

⁶⁸ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT, 1989), p. 179.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17. ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁷¹ Ledger-Lomas and Mandelbrote, 'Introduction', in Mandelbrote and Ledger-Lomas, eds., *Dissent*, p. 23.

directly to historical Dissenting principles by specifying that they stood for 'the right of private judgment' as it attempted 'to separate the doctrines of the bible from the "traditions and commandments of men"',⁷²

Such claims remained a constant. In 1848, a contributor to the *Methodist New Connexion Magazine* denied the Independents' long-standing claim that the New Testament demanded a congregational form of church government. In his view, 'It does not appear to us that any particular mode [of church government] is either prescribed or exhibited in the New Testament.'⁷³ When Mary Carpenter, the daughter of noted English Unitarian Lant Carpenter, informed her father that an evangelical doctrine of the substitutionary atonement made increasing sense to her, he responded with the standard Dissenter elixir: 'I would have you beware of founding any doctrinal opinion on strength of emotion, or on deep conviction of your own unworthiness. The Scriptures are our only guide. . . . Keep close to the Scriptures, my child.'⁷⁴

One of the few matters about which almost all nineteenth-century Dissenters continued to agree was their ancient conviction that Roman Catholicism disqualified itself as a genuine expression of Christianity because of its disregard of Scripture. British Wesleyans in 1845 repeated that aspersion after Parliament approved a grant to the Catholic Seminary in Maynooth, Ireland: 'the conference, in common with other Protestant bodies, is penetrated with the conviction that the Romish system . . . is, in its distinctive peculiarities, essentially antagonist to the vital truths of the Gospel, and to the free use of the holy Scriptures by the people.'⁷⁵ One of the era's most devastating critiques of evangelical religion played on the Dissenting obsession with Roman errors. Mary Ann Evans, writing under the pen name George Eliot, in 1855 lampooned the pulpit expositions of John Cumming, long-term pastor of London's National Scottish Church in London, for this particular obsession: 'Parenthetic lashes . . . against Popery are very frequent . . . and occur even in his most devout passages. . . . Indeed, Roman-catholics fare worse with him even than infidels. Infidels are the small vermin—the mice to be bagged *en passant*. The main object of his chace [sic]—the rats which are to be nailed up as trophies—are the Roman-catholics. Romanism is the master-piece of Satan.'⁷⁶ Eventually, such excesses recoiled to undercut the faith of some who had been raised under such evangelical pulpiteering, including Mary Ann Evans.⁷⁷

⁷² R. Finlay Holmes, *Henry Cooke* (Belfast, 1981), p. 82.

⁷³ Larsen, *Friends*, p. 87.

⁷⁴ Larsen, *People of One Book*, p. 150.

⁷⁵ 'Resolutions of the Wesleyan Conference on the Maynooth Grant, 1845', in Thompson, ed., *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 132–3.

⁷⁶ 'G. Eliot on Dr Cumming's Teaching, 1855', in Moore, *Religion in Victorian Britain*, p. 222.

⁷⁷ See David Hempton, *Evangelical Disenchantment: Nine Portraits of Faith and Doubt* (New Haven, CT, 2008), ch. 2, 'George Eliot—Dr. Cumming's Fundamentalism: Evangelicalism and Morality'.

Apart from the persistence of anti-Catholicism, however, Dissenting attention to Scripture continued to fragment. A memorable dispute over whether the British and Foreign Bible Society should distribute Scripture with the Apocrypha in Roman Catholic areas of Europe pitted the Scottish free churchmen Alexander and Robert Haldane (opposed) against the Independents Josiah Conder and John Pye Smith (allowed). The upshot followed time-honoured Dissenting practice with the creation of a new voluntary society to carry out Bible distribution for the nay-sayers.⁷⁸

New prophetic views also divided Dissenters over how best to interpret the Scriptures. European tumults, including the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, stimulated a renewed conviction in some Dissenting circles that the apocalyptic accounts in the Book of Revelation were unfolding in the present age. In 1836, an Ulster journal, *The Christian Freeman*, spoke for what was becoming a more common conclusion: 'The amazing fulfilment of prophecy in the events of the French Revolution—the overthrow of the antiquated despotisms of Continental Europe—the obvious pouring out of divine judgment on the ancient seats of Papal superstition—the decline of the Turkish empire, with a variety of other occurrences—have powerfully called the minds of the multitudes, in the latter days, to the study of the book of Revelation.'⁷⁹ The United States' leading biblical scholar, the Congregationalist Moses Stuart of Andover Seminary, begged to differ. Instead, the Apostle John had been a 'highly imaginative oriental man' whose 'glowing pictures' of seals, horsemen, vials, and trumpets arose from 'the genius of oriental poetry'. They decidedly were not accounts of 'battles fought centuries after John was dead', but rather a poetical statement of Christ's presence with his people at all times and places.⁸⁰

A similar divide existed over the use of other authorities to guide biblical interpretation. At one extreme stood the Free Church of Scotland, which had broken from the Kirk over questions about how a state-church establishment should function; it had no intention of abandoning the Westminster Confession as its time-tested standard for understanding Scripture. In almost total contrast operated the United States' Protestant populists, who expressed profound distrust of all inherited guides. Elias Smith of New England, who refused to call himself by any other name except 'Christian', recounted a life-story with a familiar plot: after intense reading in the polemic pamphlets of Calvinists and Universalists, 'I felt myself in a situation from which it was not

⁷⁸ Michael Ledger-Lomas, 'Conder and Sons: Dissent and the Oriental Bible in Nineteenth-century Britain,' in Mandelbrote and Ledger-Lomas, eds., *Dissent*, pp. 213–14.

⁷⁹ Andrew R. Holmes, 'Millennialism and the Interpretation of Prophecy in Ulster Presbyterianism, 1790–1850', in Crawford Gribben and Timothy C.F. Stunt, eds., *Prisoners of Hope? Aspects of Evangelical Millennialism in Britain and Ireland, 1800–1880* (Milton Keynes, 2004), p. 164.

⁸⁰ Ledger-Lomas, 'Conder and Sons', p. 220.

in my power to extricate myself'. At that parlous moment, Smith prayed, 'what shall I do?' In response came 'a gentle whisper to my understanding in these words: Drop them both and search the scriptures. . . . Having lost all my system, my mind was prepared to search the scriptures'.⁸¹ Smith's contemporary in West Virginia, Alexander Campbell, extended the Restorationist dictate of his father Thomas to assert, 'I have endeavored to read the scriptures as though no one had read them before me, and I am as much on my guard against reading them to-day, through the medium of my own views yesterday, or a week ago, as I am against being influenced by any foreign name, authority, or system whatever.'⁸²

The United States also witnessed an especially tragic difference of interpretive opinion over what the Scriptures taught concerning slavery. A Presbyterian, Jonathan Blanchard, spoke for northerners who opposed the institution: 'Abolitionists take their stand upon the New Testament doctrine of the natural equity of man. The one-bloodism of human kind [from Acts 17:26]; and upon those great principles of human rights, drawn from the New Testament, and announced in the American Declaration of Independence.'⁸³ A Baptist, Richard Fuller, responded with convictions shared by almost the entire white south and many in the white north as well. Yes, he conceded, evils did attend the southern institution of slavery, but considered in the light of Scripture those evils must be considered incidental: 'The matter stands thus: the Bible did authorize some sort of slavery; if now the abuses admitted and deplored by me be essentials of all slavery, then the Bible did allow those abuses; if it be impossible that revelation should permit such evils, then you must either reject the Scriptures, as some abolitionists are doing, or concede that these sins are only accidents of slavery, which may, and perhaps in cases of many Christians, do exist without them.'⁸⁴

Such conflicting views about what the Bible said extended in this era to questions about the character of Scripture itself. Earlier confidence in the inspiration, authority, and inerrancy of the Bible had remained mostly undifferentiated. Beginning early in the nineteenth century, however, growing familiarity with historical scholarship concerning the ancient world, awareness of Continental scholars who challenged the drift of German philosophical theology dominated by Friedrich Schleiermacher and G.W.F. Hegel, and internal British debates over specific doctrinal questions led to efforts at defining the doctrine of Scripture more precisely. The Haldanes, an Ulster Baptist polemicist, Alexander Carson, and leaders of the Scottish Free Church

⁸¹ Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, p. 42.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 179. On Campbell see also Foster, 'Restorationists and New Movements in North America', Chapter 11 of this volume.

⁸³ Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), p. 41.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

like James Bannerman insisted that the 'God-breathed' words of Scripture entailed their complete and absolute inerrancy.⁸⁵ A number of American Presbyterians, especially theologians at Princeton Seminary led by Benjamin Warfield, also adopted this view, though they did so with more flexibility than both earlier and later inerrantists. Joined by a few Scots like Robert Howie of the Free Church, the Princeton inerrantists believed Genesis could be interpreted to allow for an ancient origin of the earth, held that all but atheistic conceptions of evolution might be supported by solid empirical science, and agreed that some biblical books may have been the product of later literary compilation.⁸⁶ Yet they did not want to say that Scripture could contain error of any sort.

Dissenters who disagreed often maintained that inerrancy was the answer to a badly posed question. They usually continued to insist on biblical inspiration, but combined that traditional Dissenting belief with broader views of what it meant for an ancient text to be inspired. English Independents like Josiah Conder and John Pye Smith used phrases like 'dictation' and 'plenary and authoritative' to describe the divine authorship of at least the New Testament. But they also thought that scriptural 'history' drew on documents containing legendary or poetic elements and that much of the Old Testament recorded human sentiments rather than divine precepts. A few, like Josiah Conder, who wondered about the Old Testament books of Esther, Chronicles, and the Song of Solomon, also stood ready to reconsider questions of canonicity.⁸⁷

The growing felt need to specify a precise doctrine of biblical inspiration clearly reflected the challenge posed to all English-speaking Christianity by heightened awareness of German scholarship. The systematic study of ancient classical cultures, *Altertumswissenschaft*, had been expanding on the Continent since the seventeenth century, with Germans soon in the lead.⁸⁸ The tendency to modify, or even to eliminate, the perennial Christian belief in the supernatural character of Scripture followed in the wake of self-conscious historical scholarship more generally. But even in its most conservative forms, higher criticism from the Continent faced great resistance in Britain and America where, as James Turner has noted, 'Actually emending sacred scripture like a classical text seemed too much like nit-picking the words of God.'⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 88–91; Andrew R. Holmes, 'The Common Sense Bible: Irish Presbyterians, Samuel Davidson, and Biblical Criticism, c. 1800–1865', in Mandelbrote and Ledger-Lomas, eds., *Dissent and the Bible*, pp. 186–7.

⁸⁶ Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (3rd edn., Vancouver, BC, 2004), pp. 15–25; on Howie, see Colin Kidd and Valerie Wallace, 'Biblical Criticism and Scots Presbyterian Dissent in the Age of Robertson Smith', in Mandelbrote and Ledger-Lomas, eds., *Dissent and the Bible*, p. 250.

⁸⁷ Ledger-Lomas, 'Conder and Sons', pp. 211–12.

⁸⁸ See especially Turner, *Philology*.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

In the eighteenth century, the colonial Congregationalists Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards may have been the most knowledgeable Dissenters anywhere in sampling, but then rejecting, critical views.⁹⁰ In England during the same period, cautious explorations in higher criticism remained an almost exclusively Anglican monopoly.

Over the course of the next century, engagement with criticism advanced, but never among all Dissenters and only slowly. As a modern stereotype might predict, Unitarians were in the lead, but with many of their number also maintaining mostly traditional opinions about the Bible's divine character. Unitarians had, after all, long insisted that *they* were the believers who read the Bible for itself and not as dictated by man-made creeds. So it was that the verse, John 5:39, had so often headlined Unitarian polemics: 'Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.'⁹¹ Nonetheless, Unitarians advanced more rapidly than all other Dissenters as higher critics. By the late eighteenth century, the scientist-minister Joseph Priestley, who became notorious on both sides of the Atlantic, gave up on the virgin birth of Christ; a few decades later, the maverick Boston Unitarian and friend of the Transcendentalists, Theodore Parker, moved far ahead of other Americans in advocating critical views.⁹² Yet Priestley and later English Unitarians like Thomas Belsham spent more time trying to re-interpret Scripture in support of their views than they did in swarming after the Germans.⁹³ In America, the Unitarian Andrews Norton at Harvard could call some parts of Scripture 'spurious', but he also defended most New Testament miracles, vehemently attacked Theodore Parker and the Transcendentalists for promoting a merely vaporous religion, and complained, as James Turner has summarized his views, 'about how often philosophy drove German philology to its conclusions'. Norton's three-volume *Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels* (1837–44) won considerable praise, even from Britain, for defending the basic historicity of the gospel accounts of Christ's life.⁹⁴

Dissenting authorities like Josiah Conder in England and the Congregationalist Moses Stuart in America represented typical attitudes among the small minority of Dissenters who engaged the newer critical ideas. Conder,

⁹⁰ Reiner Smolinski and Jan Stievernann, eds., *Cotton Mather and Biblia Americana, America's First Bible Commentary: Essays in Reappraisal* (Grand Rapids, MI and Tübingen, 2010); Robert E. Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible* (Bloomington, IN, 2002); and for both Mather and Edwards, Michael J. Lee, *The Erosion of Biblical Certainty: Battles over Authority and Interpretation in America* (New York, 2013), pp. 25–85.

⁹¹ Simon Mills, 'Scripture and Heresy in the Biblical Studies of Nathaniel Lardner, Joseph Priestley, and Thomas Belsham,' in *Dissent and the Bible*, p. 86.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 99 (Priestley); and on Parker, Jerry Wayne Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800–1870: The New England Scholars* (Middletown, CT, 1969).

⁹³ Simon, 'Scripture and Heresy', pp. 100–12.

⁹⁴ Turner, *Philology*, pp. 222–4.

who also served Independents as a notable hymn compiler and spokesman for political reforms, adopted mildly critical views as a result of serious lay reading in accounts of the ancient world. For him, liberal-mindedness concerning questions of Old Testament historicity accompanied the dedication to worldwide Christian missions that also made up part of his liberal Dissenting mindset. Conder, as a consequence, strongly resisted efforts to change the Bible Society's practice of printing the Apocrypha and strongly defended foreign missions when the popular apocalyptic preacher Edward Irving deprecated such exertions. In both cases, Conder's moderate views of biblical criticism accompanied increased missionary zeal.⁹⁵

In the United States, Andover Seminary's Stuart, who taught himself German to become adept at Hebrew scholarship, was properly regarded as the nation's leading biblical scholar. Steadily throughout the first half of the century, Stuart translated, promoted, and incorporated a great deal of German historical scholarship, while turning that scholarship to explicate rather than replace traditional views of Scripture as divinely given. Stuart engaged in several sharp polemics with other American Calvinists, but these conflicts centred on how best to interpret the Bible rather than on whether Scriptures enjoyed a uniquely inspired status.⁹⁶

Apart from offence taken at a few radical Unitarians, Dissent mostly avoided harsh internal controversies over higher criticism until after mid-century. A notable early instance involved Samuel Davidson who, after becoming one of the inaugural two professors charged with full-time biblical instruction for Presbyterians in Belfast, had moved to take up a similar position for English Congregationalists at the Lancashire Independent College. In 1856 he contributed his revision of a popular textbook that followed contemporary German scholarship in denying the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, specifying numerous errors in the text of the Old Testament, and limiting scriptural inspiration to religion (not history, science, or ethics narrowly considered). The next year he was forced to leave.⁹⁷ Yet even at this early stage Davidson did not lack for supporters, including Thomas Nicholas of the Presbyterian College at Carmarthen, Wales, who marshalled classic Dissenting themes to support his colleague: 'He is the servant of a cause that is to live—the cause of progress, of an intelligent faith, and of a free and secure Bible. . . . How much of Rome is everywhere!—exactng, coercing, infallible Rome! How puny is forbearance—how eagle-eyed and world-hearted is the heresy-hunter.'⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Ledger-Lomas, 'Conder and Sons', pp. 207–18.

⁹⁶ Turner, *Philology*, pp. 212–22.

⁹⁷ Holmes, 'Common-Sense Bible,' pp. 195–8; Ledger-Lomas, 'Conder and Sons', pp. 224–5.

⁹⁸ 'T. Nicholas on Dr Davidson's Removal, 1860', in Moore, ed., *Religion in Victorian Britain*, pp. 148, 150.

Dissenting awareness of, engagement with, and disputes over biblical higher criticism increased rapidly in the wake of well-publicized Anglican controversies during the 1850s and 1860s. John William Colenso's work with Africans in his position as Anglican bishop of Natal convinced him that biblical criticism was an imperative. When prospective African converts queried him about the huge life-spans and other large numbers found in some Old Testament passages or asked why the Church of England prohibited the polygamy that God's people of old had practised, Colenso found their questions more compelling than the answers he had been taught.⁹⁹ As significant as the Colenso case became, with appeals rising to the Privy Council, it paled beside the attention accorded *Essays and Reviews* (1860), a collection of essays that promoted acceptance of some advanced German opinions. Colenso spoke from the margins of the Empire; the dons and clergymen who contributed to this colloquium represented the centre of Anglican culture. Dissenters joined others in worrying about the consequences if the procedure advocated by Benjamin Jowett, Oxford's Regius Professor of Greek, gained wide currency. That procedure sought to apply 'the general principle: "interpret Scripture from itself" as in other respects, like any other book written in an age and country of which little or no other literature survives, and about which we know almost nothing except what is derived from its pages'.¹⁰⁰ These intra-Anglican disputes paved the way for a few Dissenters to venture into criticism themselves.

In 1879 Crawford Toy resigned from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville after promulgating an account of the Pentateuch as evolving through a long period of literary composition.¹⁰¹ Shortly before in 1876, a brief flurry had greeted the cautious opening to critical views that Charles Briggs announced when he was inaugurated as a professor at the Presbyterians' Union Seminary in New York City. Less than twenty years later, Briggs advanced bolder opinions, which led to an extensive series of ecclesiastical trials that resulted in both Briggs and Union ending their affiliation with the Presbyterians.¹⁰²

The *cause célèbre* of the era was the trials of William Robertson Smith before the Free Church of Scotland, which took place from 1878 to 1881. The precociously learned Smith supported his critical opinions with expertise in

⁹⁹ Gerald Parsons, 'Rethinking the Missionary Position: Bishop Colenso of Natal', with documents, in *Religion in Victorian England*, vol. V: *Culture and Empire*, ed. John Wolffe (Manchester, 1997), pp. 135–76, 313–26; and for a survey of broader effects, Timothy Larsen, 'Bishop Colenso on the Pentateuch', in Larsen, *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Contexts of Victorian Theology* (Waco, TX, 2004), pp. 59–78.

¹⁰⁰ 'B. Jowett on the Interpretation of Scripture, 1860', in Moore, ed., *Religion in Victorian Britain*, p. 31.

¹⁰¹ Turner, *Philology*, p. 217.

¹⁰² Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, pp. 28–9, 36–7.

Arabic, ancient history, middle-eastern cultures, and several scientific fields. After publishing a general article on 'the Bible' in the 1875 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which favoured the documentary hypothesis of Julius Wellhausen over the traditional view crediting Moses as the author of the Pentateuch, aggrieved Free Church Presbyterians charged the young professor with violating the Westminster Confession's statement on the Scriptures. The trials took place, however, when leaders of the Free Church were concentrating more on questions about revising the Confession and about the place of their church in Scottish society than about biblical criticism as such. The decision to remove Smith from his teaching position but not to censure him personally reflected an ambiguity that allowed other Free Church scholars to continue teaching moderately critical views while maintaining their positions in the church.¹⁰³

Reverberations followed in many places and in many forms. As Ian Randall shows in Chapter 2 of this volume, the Baptist Union in England found itself in 1887–8 embroiled in the 'Down-Grade' controversy, which was triggered by Charles Haddon Spurgeon's worries about slippage on the doctrines of atonement and justification by faith, but also about increasing toleration for higher criticism. Rancorous debate and Spurgeon's resignation from the Union followed.¹⁰⁴ In the United States, agitation over criticism simmered for several years until it boiled over as the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1910s and 1920s.¹⁰⁵

It says something important about Dissent throughout the English-speaking world that controversy over criticism flared more dramatically in Britain and the United States than in the outposts of the British Empire. Dissenters in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia naturally took great interest in such matters, but they found themselves in situations requiring more energy to unify denominational splinters, create new institutions, and negotiate for a place in public life. In Australia, the Presbyterians of New South Wales took notice of Charles Darwin's *Origins of Species* (1859) as well as *Essays and Reviews* from the next year, but without the controversies attending these two books elsewhere.¹⁰⁶ Until the 1890s, the Presbyterians employed only part-time theological professors, a situation that retarded full consideration of disputes that they realized had already convulsed the Free Church of

¹⁰³ Turner, *Philology*, pp. 364–8; Kidd and Wallace, 'Biblical Criticism', pp. 233–55; and Richard Allan Riesen, *Criticism and Faith in Late Victorian Scotland: A. B. Davidson, William Robertson Smith, and George Adam Smith* (Lanham, MD, 1985).

¹⁰⁴ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 145–6. See Ian Randall, 'Baptists', Chapter 2 of this volume.

¹⁰⁵ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-century Evangelicalism* (2nd edn., New York, 2006); Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, pp. 38–47.

¹⁰⁶ Hutchinson, *Iron in Our Blood*, p. 89.

Scotland. When discussion did commence, heated words were exchanged, but only for a season. The result, in Mark Hutchinson's account, was 'a gradual adoption of modernist principles rather than the guerrilla warfare that typified Presbyterians in the USA or Baptists in Britain'.¹⁰⁷ It was similar in New Zealand, where Presbyterians showed more interest in shoring up their confessional traditions than battling over biblical higher criticism. Some concern over the views of professors and pastors did arise from the 1880s, but disputes over such matters did not become serious until the 1910s.¹⁰⁸

In Canada, Protestants generally subordinated concerns over higher criticism to more pressing issues of confessional identity and national service. Among Presbyterians, for example, a celebrated heresy trial in 1877 led to an ambiguous acquittal for Daniel James Macdonnell, who had questioned the statement about eternal punishment in the Westminster Confession.¹⁰⁹ In the same year, George Monro Grant began his influential tenure as principal and divinity professor at Queen's College (Kingston, Ontario). On biblical questions, Grant stood with the likes of Charles Briggs in defending modern criticism. As he put it in an essay published shortly before his death in 1902, 'Literary and historical criticism is... the indispensable condition of a living Protestantism, as well as the surest sign of faith.' He was also certain that some confessional readjustment was necessary so that 'the great churches of the Reformation' could discern 'the extent of common ground on which Christians now stand'.¹¹⁰ Yet Grant steadily maintained the character of Scripture as divine revelation, he defended a Reformation doctrine of justification by faith, and he insisted on the reality of a physical resurrection with Christ as 'in a unique sense, one with God the Father'.¹¹¹ This blend of what in other places divided conservatives from liberals fit well in the Canadian environment. In the judgement of historian Barry Mack, 'to Grant... belongs at least some of the credit for the absence in Canadian Presbyterianism of the theological polarization that troubled Presbyterians in the United States in the 1890s'.¹¹²

CONCLUSION

By the end of the century, the traditional Dissenting reliance on Scripture remained a prominent feature of English-speaking Protestantism, as well as a

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 190–1. ¹⁰⁸ Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa*, p. 92.

¹⁰⁹ John S. Moir, *Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (2nd edn., n.p., 1987), pp. 172–4.

¹¹⁰ Georg Monro Grant, 'The Outlook of the Twentieth Century in Theology', *The American Journal of Theology*, 6 (1902), 10, 15.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 14.

¹¹² Barry Mack, 'Grant', *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (online).

continuing force in public life. Yet signs of a coming era when the Bible would recede in both private and public had already appeared. Uncertainty besetting Anglicanism in England and Presbyterianism in Scotland, as witnessed by their reduced hold on the universities, made it less relevant for British Dissenters to affirm Dissent. Throughout the English-speaking world, academic respect continued to rise for scholars known by their university achievements and to decline for ministers increasingly excluded from the best universities. Competition from outside the churches also increased—for time, money, energy, and public attention.

Most of all, the expanding terrain of intra-Protestant conflict made it increasingly difficult to discern a unified Dissenting voice. Traditionally conservative positions on Scripture survived in almost all traditions of Dissent, as did many Bible-centred practices, but so also increased a new willingness to augment, supplant, or simply disregard the Scriptures. A New England Congregationalist could say in 1884, for example, what few Dissenters had ever been willing to countenance before: that ‘Christian consciousness’ or ‘the best Christian sentiment of the time’ should be relied upon as a supplement to the Scriptures.¹¹³ For a growing number of Dissenters around 1900 it was not as clear as it once had been to John Angell James seventy years earlier that ‘the Holy Scriptures are the sole authority and sufficient rule in matters of religion’. By that time as well, ‘the indefeasible right’ of every man to ‘follow his own opinion’, while continuing to stimulate much Dissenting attachment to Scripture, was also leading some Dissenters or their children away from the Bible. The time when Dissenting scripturalism contributed extraordinary moral seriousness, deep ethical engagement, and energetic Protestant advocacy throughout the English-speaking world had not yet come to an end. But it was passing away.

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¹¹³ Molly Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin: The Fight Against Slavery and the Rise of Liberal Protestantism* (New York, 2012), p. 141.

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Theology

David Bebbington

Evangelicalism was the chief factor moulding the theology of the Protestant Dissenting traditions of the nineteenth century. The Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century had gradually leavened the existing Dissenting bodies and had given rise to Methodism and other new groups. Apart from Unitarians and a few smaller bodies, all of them professed a version of the evangelical faith. Although evangelicalism shared the full range of Christian doctrines with other orthodox believers, its special characteristics were fourfold. Its adherents were eager to see conversions, initial acts of trust in Jesus Christ. John Rippon, a leading English Baptist minister at the opening of the century, defined conversion as consisting ‘both of God’s act upon men in turning them, and of acts done by men under the influence of converting grace: they turn, being turned’.¹ Equally evangelicals emphasized the doctrine of the cross. Thus Daniel Fraser, principal down to 1876 of the Airedale Independent College, used to tell his students, ‘Gentlemen, your chief business is to preach “Christ and Him crucified”’.² The other evangelical priorities were insistence on the Bible as the supreme source of teaching and a premium on activism, primarily designed to spread the gospel but also aiming to relieve the needy. Both these topics appear elsewhere in this volume.³ Theological opinions on Scripture and mission formed part of the staple of theological discussion during the century, but are not considered here. Views of conversion and the cross, however, loom large in this chapter. They were near the heart of nineteenth-century doctrinal debate because of the widely shared evangelical assumptions of the day.

¹ John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register for 1801 and 1802* (London, 1801), p. 664.

² Lucy A. Fraser, *Memoirs of Daniel Fraser, M.A., LL.D., Half a Century of Educational Work* (London, 1905), p. 112.

³ See the chapters in this volume by Mark A. Noll, Andrew R. Holmes, Eugenio Biagini, and Luke Harlow (Chapters 13, 16, 17, and 18, respectively).

THE ENLIGHTENMENT LEGACY

Another framework of thought for most of those in the Dissenting traditions—often called Nonconformists in England and Wales—consisted of the legacy of the Enlightenment. This eighteenth-century intellectual movement had contended that the advance of knowledge was shedding new light on the human condition. As the shackles of the past were increasingly cast off and the empirical methods of the day applied to new fields, human happiness would advance and a brighter future would dawn. Far from resisting enlightened thought, theologians of the eighteenth century generally absorbed it, so that by the following century their successors regarded its principles as axiomatic. The key technique of the Enlightenment, the use of reason, became central in doctrinal debate. Thus when, in 1829, Thomas Chalmers, the Scottish Presbyterian theologian who later led the Free Church, urged the deployment of exclusively spiritual weapons against Roman Catholics, he named them as ‘Reason, and Scripture, and prayer’, in that order.⁴ The principle of rational enquiry, if given free play, would make fresh discoveries. Charles Finney, the leading American revivalist, recommended in his *Lectures on Systematic Theology* of 1851 a ‘spirit of inquiry’ into the truths of religion.⁵ Accordingly the dogmatic formulae of the past could be modified. One development of the later Enlightenment in Scotland proved especially influential. The school of philosophers who followed Thomas Reid argued that the human mind was so constituted that certain beliefs cannot be doubted. Among these convictions held by mankind in common was the existence of God. This ‘common-sense’ approach, popularized by Dugald Stewart, became widespread in the English-speaking world.⁶ Stewart’s *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* was a text-book at the English Congregationalists’ Spring Hill College; Finney announced the foundational postulate of common sense, that we can take certain a priori truths for granted, on the opening page of his *Systematic Theology*; and a South African sceptic was recovered for the faith through reading the metaphysics of Sir William Hamilton, the leading proponent of the school of thought in the middle years of the century.⁷ Common sense seemed to supply a firm foundation for the theological enterprise.

The teachings of the Enlightenment often led in novel directions. The idea that traditional beliefs could be challenged meant that inherited confessions of

⁴ William Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D.*, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1849–52), III: p. 238.

⁵ Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology, Revised, Enlarged and Partially Rewritten by the Author*, ed. George Redford (London, 1851), p. viii.

⁶ Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 2002), ch. 6.

⁷ Alan P.F. Sell, *Philosophy, Dissent and Nonconformity* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 127; Finney, *Lectures*, p. 1; William Taylor, *Christian Adventures in South Africa* (London, 1867), p. 141.

faith no longer constrained the thought of those in the Reformed tradition. By the opening of the nineteenth century, the great majority of English Presbyterians had long abandoned the requirement, maintained in Scotland, to subscribe to the Calvinist doctrines of the Westminster Confession of the seventeenth century. The outstanding thinker among them, Joseph Priestley, had reached Socinian conclusions, denying that Christ had any heavenly existence before his birth on earth. Since Christ was only a man, the Trinity stood revealed as a fiction. Priestley acted as the trailblazer of a radical species of Unitarianism, still wedded to the Bible but believing that instead of giving weight to individual texts we should respect 'the whole tenor of scripture, and the dictates of reason'.⁸ In the last resort he allowed reason to take precedence over revelation, expecting that further research would lay bare the harmony of the two. His rationalist approach was taken up in Britain by other Unitarians, who created new denominational structures to advance the cause. Thus David Lloyd, Unitarian minister and college principal at Carmarthen in Wales, taught Priestleyan religion down to his death in 1863.⁹ In America the more liberal thinkers among the Congregationalists of New England, Calvinist in background, turned more towards Arianism than towards Socinianism, still holding that Christ was in some sense divine but believing him to be subordinate to God the Father. Their champion was William Ellery Channing, whose sermon on *Unitarian Christianity* (1819) announced that the Bible ought to be interpreted according to 'the known truths of observation and experience'.¹⁰ Unitarianism in the United States, though generally less dogmatic than its transatlantic cousin, similarly desired to understand Scripture within the paradigm provided by the Enlightenment.

The same source left its mark on other groups. The Sandemanians, a tiny sect whose origins went back to John Glas and his son-in-law Robert Sandeman in early eighteenth-century Scotland, held a distinctive view of faith. Saving faith, they supposed, consisted of no more than bare assent to the message of the gospel. It entailed no emotion, which might be an effect of faith but must not be confused with it. Once more the sway of reason showed itself, affecting, for example, the way in which their leading light Michael Faraday conducted his scientific experiments.¹¹ The Sandemanian estimate of faith was adopted by the Scotch Baptists, another small Scottish body that maintained a separate existence from other Baptists long into the nineteenth century. The Scotch Baptist theologian Archibald Mclean accused his critics of

⁸ Joseph Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 2 vols (Birmingham, 1782), I: p. 278.

⁹ *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940* (Oxford, 1959), p. 578.

¹⁰ Quoted by E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, CT, 2003), p. 200.

¹¹ Geoffrey Cantor, *Michael Faraday: Sandemanian and Scientist: A Study of Science and Religion in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 1991).

making simple belief the outcome of a previous holy disposition and so a type of work that undermined justification by faith.¹² The Restoration Movement in America, seeking to go back to the undiluted practice of the New Testament and far more successful than the bodies emerging from Scotland, also bears the stamp of the Enlightenment. Its most enterprising leader, Alexander Campbell, treated the New Testament as a form of law-code, to be followed in all its details once they were empirically established. Once again the Campbellites adopted the view that faith consists solely in mental assent.¹³ And the Universalists, stemming from Elhanan Winchester of Philadelphia in the late eighteenth century, adopted a rational exegesis of scripture which contended that since the Bible contains such promises as the one that 'every' knee would bow, all would ultimately be saved.¹⁴ The power of reason to interpret the text gave ordinary people great confidence in their capacity to understand the Bible in new ways. Their self-assurance formed a bequest of the Enlightenment to popular nineteenth-century theology.

CALVINISM AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The trends of the times also deeply affected the Calvinist theology of the mainstream churches which, unlike the Unitarians, retained a firm grasp on orthodoxy. Although the Puritan fathers of the seventeenth century such as John Owen enjoyed continuing respect, the prevailing form of theology among evangelical Dissenters was the more recent 'moderate Calvinism'. Its label 'moderate' contrasted it with the higher forms of Calvinism that had prevailed in many quarters during previous centuries. The chief influence over its formulation was Jonathan Edwards, the Congregational divine of New England who had been appointed president of Princeton College just before his death in 1758. The English Congregational editor of Edwards's works in 1834, Henry Rogers, barely exaggerated when he claimed that the American theologian enjoyed 'universal homage'.¹⁵ Although Edwards had written celebrated accounts of revival in his congregation and a popular biography of the missionary to the Indians David Brainerd, his profoundest legacy to theology was the distinction drawn in his *Freedom of the Will* (1754) between natural and moral inability. Human beings who refused the gospel offer, Edwards

¹² Archibald McLean, *A Reply to Mr. Fuller's Appendix to his Book on the Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (London, 1823 edn.), p. 3.

¹³ Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1996).

¹⁴ Holifield, *Theology in America*, pp. 224–5.

¹⁵ Henry Rogers, 'An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Jonathan Edwards' [1834], in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, A. M. (12th edn., London, 1879), p. i.

contended, were not constituted by nature so that they could not believe; rather they themselves bore the moral responsibility for rejecting the redemption that God made available. This understanding of the economy of salvation cleared the Almighty of the favourite charge of enlightened thinkers against Calvinism, namely that he made the non-elect with a certain disposition and then condemned them for what they could not do. It was a repudiation of the double predestination, to hell as well as to heaven, which had been common among Calvinist theologians and so formed a version of Reformed teaching that erased the reproach of fatalism. As Thomas Chalmers declared in a warmly appreciative evaluation of Edwards in 1831, the American showed that human actions, though connected by the law of cause and effect, were not subject to 'the interference of a foreign force'.¹⁶ The doctrine of predestination became compatible with the principle of liberty, so beloved by Enlightenment thinkers. Edwards enabled nineteenth-century Calvinists to inhabit their intellectual world with confidence.

The legacy of Edwards constituted the New England theology. This body of thought developed by Edwards and his successors appeared both orthodox, against the liberals who agreed with Channing, and progressive, against hoary systems that the modern age would not credit. It harmonized with evangelistic practice because preachers who believed that all possessed the liberty to believe felt no inhibition about proclaiming the gospel freely to their congregations. Taught at Andover Seminary in Massachusetts from its foundation in 1808 as an orthodox rival to Harvard, the seat of more liberal tendencies, the New England theology was propagated by the erudite journal *Bibliotheca Sacra* from 1843 onwards. It became the norm of theology in nineteenth-century America. It was the prevailing view of the Congregationalists until late in the century, powerfully expounded by Edwards A. Park at Andover down to his retirement in 1880. The New School Presbyterians, who divided from their more traditional Old School contemporaries in 1837, upheld this standpoint. So did the large proportion of Baptists who adopted the New Hampshire Confession of 1833 as their declaration of faith. Likewise in Britain it became the received evangelical pattern of doctrine. Among Congregationalists, Edward Williams, principal of Rotherham Independent Academy, adopted this position in his influential *Essay on the Equity of Divine Government* (1809). The ablest of early nineteenth-century Congregational theologians, John Pye Smith, criticized Williams not for following Edwards too closely but for not doing justice to the power of his argumentation.¹⁷ Among Baptists, Andrew Fuller, pastor at Kettering, acted as the key disseminator of the

¹⁶ Thomas Chalmers, 'Edwards' Inquiry, with Introductory Essay', *Presbyterian Review*, 2 (1831), 253.

¹⁷ John Pye Smith, *First Lines of Christian Theology*, ed. William Farrer (London, 1854), p. 155.

New England theology. Fuller's works, a commentator estimated in 1872, had done more than any other writings to shape modern Calvinism.¹⁸ The prestige of Chalmers ensured that the same standpoint became the core of Presbyterian teaching in Scotland and beyond. The school of Edwardsean divinity dominated evangelical Calvinism.

The prevailing conception of God within this school set him in a judicial framework. 'God', wrote Chalmers, 'is regarded not in the light of a Father only, but of a Sovereign and Judge.' Indeed, he went on, among all human beings 'the sense of His righteousness prevails over the sense of His benignity and love'.¹⁹ The idea that the Almighty is essentially an upholder of the moral law echoed the Enlightenment conception of public justice. In an age when reformers of the state apparatus and the criminal law advocated strict adherence to undeviating standards of rectitude, the ruler of the universe could not be understood as less attached to justice. Accordingly, the doctrine of the atonement took a fresh direction. The predominant theory, derived principally from Edwards's lieutenant Joseph Bellamy, now became the governmental understanding of what transpired at the crucifixion of Christ. God as governor of all things had to exact a penalty proportionate to the wickedness of humanity to maintain the moral equilibrium of the world. Hence his Son had to die. The atonement, according to Edwards A. Park, was 'necessary on God's account' because it enabled him 'as a consistent Ruler, to pardon any, even the smallest sin'.²⁰ The forgiveness of sins turned into an act not of spontaneous generosity but of calculated justice. The theologians of the New England way of thinking did not abandon other theories of the atonement, still believing that Christ died as a substitute for sinners. Yet they subordinated these views to an overriding insistence on equitable government of the universe. Hence they generally held that the scope of the atonement was universal, a breach of traditional Reformed teaching. The sufferings of Christ, taught Andrew Fuller, were 'of *infinite* value, sufficient to have saved all the world'.²¹ Fuller and his contemporaries maintained their Calvinist credentials by holding that, although Christ died for everybody, only the elect would actually be saved. The sacrifice of Christ was sufficient for all but not efficient for all. That axiom accorded far better than the traditional insistence on a limited atonement with the spirit of the age.

Yet the deviations from accustomed paths alarmed more traditional Calvinists. Controversy became fierce among the Baptists. James Haldane,

¹⁸ Edward Steane, *The Doctrine of Christ Developed by the Apostles: A Treatise on the Offices of the Redeemer and the Doxology of the Redeemed* (Edinburgh, 1872), p. ix.

¹⁹ Thomas Chalmers, *Institutes of Theology*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1849), II: p. 71.

²⁰ Quoted by Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805–1900* (Louisville, KY, 2001), p. 116.

²¹ Andrew Fuller, 'Reply to Philanthropos', *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, ed. Andrew Gunton Fuller, 5 vols (London, 1831), II: p. 230.

the doughty pastor of the Edinburgh Tabernacle, took issue with the governmental theory, condemning it as 'precisely the old Socinian doctrine'. He equally rejected the 'new system' according to which Christ died for all but only the elect benefited from his death. A much stronger bond existed between Christ and believers, Haldane insisted, than the Fullerites imagined. Christ so fully identified as 'covenant-head' with his people that when he died, they died.²² Haldane was defending the older federal system elaborated in the seventeenth century. In America, those who preferred the higher Calvinistic teaching of the eighteenth-century Baptist theologian John Gill resisted the advance of Fuller's views, and in Wales a Fullerite college principal who dared to prefer John Wesley's notes on the New Testament to Gill's writings eventually had to resign.²³ The consequence was actual schism, with the minority of higher Calvinists forming their own associations, in America called Primitive Baptists and in England Strict and Particular Baptists. By and large, however, Congregationalists showed favour to the more recent opinions. A visiting high Calvinist preacher who set out to challenge the consensus at a country chapel adhering to the Congregational Union of England and Wales after mid-century saw that some members of the congregation were displaying disgust. 'One man especially, whom I noticed', he reported, 'looked as if he could hurl the Bible at my head.'²⁴ The chapel never invited the preacher again. The great majority of Congregationalists on both sides of the Atlantic adopted the newer views.

Presbyterianism, however, established a bastion of resistance at Princeton Seminary. Founded in 1812, it aligned itself with the Old School Presbyterians, stiffening their opposition to New School views, which led to schism in 1837. Archibald Alexander, its inaugural professor, insisted from the first on rigorous academic standards, but the greatest exponent of what became known as the Princeton theology was Charles Hodge, who served at the college from 1820 down to his death in 1878. Hodge admired common-sense philosophy as much as the Congregationalists of Andover, regularly appealed to reason, and explained that the theologian had merely to organize 'the facts revealed in the word of God'.²⁵ Yet to these bequests from the Enlightenment he added a fierce dedication to the doctrines of the Westminster Confession. He repudiated the governmental theory of the atonement as taught by the contemporary New England divines, instead expounding the meaning of the cross in terms of penal substitution. As editor of *The Princeton Review*, Hodge engaged in

²² J.A. Haldane, 'The Atonement', *Publications of the Baptist Tract Society*, no. 1 (London, n.d.), pp. 7, 11, 12.

²³ Holifield, *Theology in America*, p. 281. D. Mervyn Himbury, *The South Wales Baptist College (1807-1957)* (Cardiff, 1957), pp. 33-4.

²⁴ Ruth Cowell, *Memorials of a Gracious Life with the Diary and Letters of George Cowell* (London, 1895), pp. 88-9.

²⁵ Quoted by Holifield, *Theology in America*, p. 379.

constant warfare with the other theological opinions on offer in America and crowned his career by publishing a *Systematic Theology* (1872–3). His son, Archibald Alexander Hodge, succeeded Charles in his chair, having already issued a more palatable doctrinal summary in his *Outlines of Theology* (1860), much used in other theological colleges. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, in turn Archibald's successor from 1887, sustained the seminary's reputation for cogent polemic against broader outlooks. In the American South, theologians such as James Henry Thornwell adopted even stiffer convictions than those propagated at Princeton. Thornwell, for instance, maintained that the Presbyterian Church order did not just fairly represent scripture principles but that it reproduced the detail of the New Testament.²⁶ Yet it was Princeton that maintained the most influential testimony to an older confessional style of theology. The seminary's nineteenth-century standpoint, what came to be called the 'Old Princeton' position, eventually became a benchmark of sound conservative doctrine in the debates of the twentieth century.

On the other, more liberal, flank of the moderate Calvinism endorsed by the mainstream there stood the New Haven theology. Expounded by Nathaniel William Taylor, a professor at Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut, from 1822 until his death in 1857, its characteristics reflected the twin ambitions to encourage the revivals breaking out in the Second Great Awakening and to counteract the liberals then turning into Unitarians. The system modified the premises of the New England theology so as to reduce the obstacles to sinners repenting and to ensure that doctrine could be defended as reasonable. Accordingly, Taylor taught that the human component of conversion was greater than had previously been supposed. Although claiming to remain a Calvinist, Taylor believed that human beings possess something close to freewill and attracted accusations of denying the need for a distinct work of the Holy Spirit in conversion.²⁷ His academic theology formed a counterpart to the more popular version taught by his contemporary Charles Finney, the outstandingly successful revivalist of the 1820s. Finney's confident mind, shaped by his training as a lawyer, pushed the Enlightenment style of evangelicalism close to its limit, with enormous stress on the power of reason and unqualified endorsement of human freewill. 'By a necessity of his nature', Finney wrote, 'every agent knows himself to be free.'²⁸ The views of Taylor and Finney spread widely, especially through Finney's *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (1835). They travelled across the Atlantic, leading to controversy and schism. In England John Howard Hinton, a rising Baptist minister, attracted criticism by arguing in a book of 1830 that 'a sinner has power to

²⁶ Ibid., p. 392. ²⁷ Holifield, *Theology in America*, pp. 356–60.

²⁸ Quoted by David L. Weddle, *The Law as Gospel: Revival and Reform in the Theology of Charles G. Finney* (Metuchen, NJ, 1985), p. 137.

repent without the Spirit'.²⁹ In Scotland, James Morison adopted Finney's position, subsequently left the United Secession Church, and in 1843 founded the Evangelical Union, a denomination expressly dedicated to vigorous revivalism. In Morison's case the outcome of following Finney's logic was an explicit transfer of allegiance from a residual Calvinism to Arminianism. The Calvinist tradition could decay from within.

ARMINIANISM AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The avowed champions of the Arminian belief that Christ died for all and not just the elect were the Methodists. Their theology in the nineteenth century continued to be that of John Wesley, their founder in the previous century, a firm opponent of Calvinism and a zealot for the compatibility of reason with religion. Wesley's works, along with those of his lieutenant John Fletcher, functioned as the standards of Methodist belief. That remained the case down to 1900 and beyond, even in lands of newer English-speaking settlements such as Canada.³⁰ With its doctrinal stance authoritatively laid down, Methodism had other priorities. 'It teaches men to *feel* religiously first', declared the chief American Methodist periodical in 1858, 'and to *think* and *reason* religiously afterward. And herein it contrasts singularly with the more ratiocinative Congregationalism or Presbyterianism.'³¹ Differences of opinion therefore commonly arose over practical questions such as whether conversion has to be the transaction of a moment or instead can be a protracted process.³² Nevertheless, the Methodist movement did produce theologians, men of a distinctly Enlightenment cast of mind. Adam Clarke, a man of erudition as well as a Wesleyan minister, absorbed enlightened influences at least as fully as any moderate Calvinist. Following the dictates of reason as he saw them, Clarke launched out on an independent line of thought, claiming that Christ was not the eternal Son of God but had been adopted by his Father.³³ Richard Watson, the author of the first Methodist systematic theology, equally devoted himself to explicating doctrine for 'rational beings', but proved far less adventurous,

²⁹ John Howard Hinton, *The Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion* (London, 1830), p. xviii, quoted by Richard Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790–1865* (Westport, CT, 1978), p. 63.

³⁰ Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathaniel Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839–1918* (Kingston, Ontario, 1989), p. 12.

³¹ *Christian Advocate and Journal* (New York), 18 March 1858, p. 41.

³² Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism*, p. 125.

³³ Ian Sellers, 'Clarke, Adam (1762–1832)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.stir.ac.uk/view/article/5483>, accessed 7 August 2014].

contenting himself with setting out in his *Theological Institutes* (1829) a counterblast to John Calvin's *Institutes*.³⁴ In America the denomination also remained wedded to Enlightenment ways of thinking. Daniel Whedon, editor of the *Methodist Quarterly Review* from 1856 to 1885, wanted to appeal only to 'Christian FACTS'.³⁵ Methodists were committed to Wesley, a universal atonement, and reason.

Other bodies concurred with Methodists in repudiating Calvinism and endorsing the Enlightenment. The General Baptists in England and the Free-will Baptists in the United States insisted that Christ's sacrifice availed for all. They were notably attached to an enlightened worldview, with John Clifford, the pre-eminent English General Baptist towards the close of the century, still eloquently advocating its values. On the American frontier, the Cumberland Presbyterians, beginning as a separate revival-orientated presbytery in 1810 but blossoming into a full denomination, tried to follow a middle course between Arminianism and Calvinism by postulating that God acts in accordance with 'universal immutable law', allowing human beings to determine their own destiny.³⁶ The assumptions of the age triumphed over the Westminster Confession. Later in the century, a section of American Methodism became especially attached to the doctrine of entire sanctification, the teaching going back to Wesley that human beings can attain a state of perfect love while still on earth. When, in 1860, some of its most ardent spirits left their parent body to set up the Free Methodist Church, they professed a faith which, for all its exuberance, operated in accordance with rational criteria. In rejecting the claims of those who wished to interpret miracles as merely 'marvellous and poetic', the editor of the *Free Methodist* argued in 1884, its readers could 'love ardently...and think soundly at the same time'.³⁷ In England there existed roughly equivalent groups that adopted a broadly Arminian theology in imitation of the Methodists, but in general they remained small, like the Peculiar People of Essex and the Cokelers of Sussex. Only the Salvation Army, originally inspired by Holiness teaching, became a major force, spreading across the globe, but it, too, rested on the evangelical/Enlightenment synthesis rather than anything that supplanted it.³⁸ A majority of the Quakers of the later nineteenth century accepted the same framework for their

³⁴ Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes, or a View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity*, 3 vols (London, 1829), II: p. 19.

³⁵ Quoted by Leland Scott, 'The Concern for Systematic Theology, 1840-70', in Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt, eds., *Perspectives on American Methodism: Interpretive Essays* (Nashville, TN, 1993), p. 284.

³⁶ Robert Donnell, *Thoughts on Various Subjects* (Louisville, KY, 1856), p. 16, quoted by Ben M. Barrus et al, eds, *A People Called Cumberland Presbyterians* (Memphis, TN, 1972), p. 289.

³⁷ *Free Methodist* (Chicago), 2 January 1884, 1.

³⁸ The Holiness teaching of the Salvation Army was not a symptom of Romantic feeling, as is pointed out by Pamela J. Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley, CA, 2001), p. 75.

thinking, repudiating their former mystical quietism for the sake of the received evangelical teaching of their contemporaries.³⁹ The combination of evangelical doctrine with Enlightenment assumptions extended far beyond the Reformed thinkers who elaborated it most systematically.

ENLIGHTENMENT CHARACTERISTICS

The enlightened intellectual consensus undergirding the theology of most nineteenth-century Nonconformists and their counterparts outside England and Wales fostered a number of significant characteristics. In the first place, it encouraged a pragmatic spirit. Whereas their forebears had been punctilious about points of principle, nineteenth-century believers outside the established churches accepted the possibility of compromise and adjustment. That was particularly true over church order. Methodists did not insist on any specific polity, believing that, as the English Wesleyan J.H. Rigg put it, ecclesiastical structures could alter from time to time and should be determined only by 'need and aptitude'.⁴⁰ Walter Wilson, a Nonconformist antiquarian with a deep nostalgia for older ways, believed that already in the early years of the century Dissent was in decay. 'By giving way too much to that laxity of principle and indiscriminate zeal which distinguish the Methodists', he lamented, 'Dissenters have lost that peculiarity of character for which their forefathers were so eminent.'⁴¹ In England, though rarely in America, Baptists, whose denomination existed to testify to believers' baptism, embraced the compromise of allowing those who in their estimation were unbaptized to become church members. For several decades after 1801 the Presbyterians of Connecticut adopted a Plan of Union with Congregationalists that entailed close cooperation in home mission and even joint congregations. Extra-ecclesiastical societies for mission at home and abroad proliferated on both sides of the Atlantic during the early nineteenth century, often drawing in members of different denominations. The lack of Scripture warrant for such organizations appalled those of stricter views, leading, for example, the conservatives among the Baptists of the American South to be called 'anti-mission Baptists'. Furthermore, the powerful current of revivalism fostered inter-denominational cooperation to the extent that theological differences between participants often faded away. At Dwight L. Moody's urban missions in the

³⁹ *The Friend* (London), 2nd month 1852, 29.

⁴⁰ J.H. Rigg, *A Comparative View of Church Organizations, Primitive and Protestant, with a Chapter on Methodist Secessions and Methodist Union* (London, 1897), p. 223.

⁴¹ Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses in London, Westminster, and Southwark*, 4 vols (London, 1808–14), IV: p. 550.

later years of the century, the preaching needed to avoid any sentiments distinctive of either Calvinism or Arminianism. The outcome was a compromise doctrinal position that would become the norm in twentieth-century evangelicalism. A pragmatic temper exerted far more influence than in the past.

The rational tone of the intellectual atmosphere, in the second place, laid emphasis on evidences of the Christian faith. Apologetic loomed large in the theological enterprise. William Paley's *View of the Evidences of Christianity* (1794) provided many of the stock replies to doubters, whose numbers were swelled by the spread of radical Enlightenment views such as those of the freethinker Tom Paine. Theological courses often aimed to establish the existence of God before proceeding to lay out the teaching derived from revelation. Thus John Hannah, when teaching at the Wesleyan Theological Institution in London in the 1830s, put the evidences at the start of his programme of instruction before the doctrines, duties, and institutions of Christianity.⁴² The type of content can be illustrated from a sermon preached on the being and attributes of God by Hannah's fellow-Wesleyan Adam Clarke in 1826. The five a priori reasons for the existence of God as presented by Aquinas are rehearsed before the a posteriori reasons derived from the works of creation are developed at greater length.⁴³ Likewise, the confession of faith drawn up by the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales in 1823 began with an article on the being of God. Although it cites verses of Scripture in support of its contentions, it adopts a polemical tone: 'The light of nature in man proves the being of God.... The creation proves the being of God, as an effect proves that it had a cause.'⁴⁴ Evidences still appeared as a separate subject on the curriculum of the Presbyterian Lovedale College in southern Africa during the 1870s.⁴⁵ Such argumentation often had the desired effect. Several prominent atheist lecturers who had abandoned a Christian profession returned to their former allegiance in the earlier Victorian years as a result of re-examining the evidences of the faith.⁴⁶ When debate was conducted on terms laid down by the Enlightenment, an appeal to proofs of this kind could be highly persuasive.

A third, and related, feature of nineteenth-century Nonconformity and its equivalents that flowed from their debt to the age of reason was sympathy for

⁴² Isabel Rivers, 'Wesleyan Theological Institution: Hoxton (1834–1842) and Abney House (1839–1843)', *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia*, Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, July 2012, revised September 2012.

⁴³ Adam Clarke, *Discourses on Various Subjects relative to the Being and Attributes of God and his Works in Creation, Providence, and Grace*, 3 vols (London, 1828–30), I, pp. 1–38.

⁴⁴ David Bebbington with Kenneth Dix and Alan Ruston, eds., *Protestant Nonconformist Texts Volume 3: The Nineteenth Century* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 36.

⁴⁵ *Christian Express* (Lovedale, South Africa), 1 February 1876, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Timothy Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt: Honest Faith in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2006).

science. The empirical methods of the Enlightenment seemed to apply equally to theological investigation and scientific discovery. The two were blended in what contemporaries called 'natural theology', the study of nature for indications of divine purpose. The practitioner of natural theology, according to James McCosh, a Scottish Presbyterian minister who became president of the College of New Jersey in 1868, 'sets out in search of facts; he arranges and co-ordinates them, and rising from the phenomena which present themselves to their cause, he discovers, by the ordinary laws of evidence, a cause of all subordinate causes'.⁴⁷ The investigation of the natural order led up to God. The great challenge to the integration of science into theology in the early nineteenth century, however, came from geology. By revealing the vast stretches of time over which the earth had existed, the discipline called into question the Scripture narrative of creation. The Congregational theologian John Pye Smith offered the most thorough response, arguing that the Bible and geology could never be at variance, so that any apparent contradiction required modification of the interpretation of one or the other.⁴⁸ After the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), the state of the debate altered. The book undermined the most powerful argument in the armoury of the natural theologians, the contention that each species showed evidence of design and design implied a Designer. By showing that human beings could have derived from animals, the doctrine of evolution also threatened the theological estimate of humanity. Yet the most common rejoinder was not outright dismissal but an attempt at accommodation, with the Scottish Free Church layman Henry Drummond the most popular writer in that vein. Theologians took Darwin far more in their stride than is normally supposed.⁴⁹ Science and religion generally functioned together harmoniously in the Dissenting traditions during the nineteenth century.

Their understanding of history, the fourth aspect, was equally yoked to religion. Nonconformists and their counterparts generally held optimistic views about the course of events, thinking that, under divine providence, the modern age had risen above anything in the past. Like the philosophers of the age of reason, they believed that affairs were steadily improving and would continue to improve. Furthermore, their eschatology reinforced their confidence in the future. They were generally postmillennialists, believing that the Bible predicted a millennium when Satan would be bound and so the divine will would be fulfilled on earth as in heaven. Only after ('post-') this period, which might or might not last a literal thousand years, would Christ return in

⁴⁷ James McCosh, *The Method of the Divine Government, Physical and Moral* (London, 1878 edn.), p. 17.

⁴⁸ John Pye Smith, *On the Relation between the Holy Scriptures and Some Parts of Geological Science* (London, 1839).

⁴⁹ James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1870–1900* (Cambridge, 1979).

glory. Hence history could be seen as flowing towards better days. 'The general faith of the Church', declared an editorial in the main American Methodist periodical in 1872, 'is that the prophecies of Holy Scripture point to the universal diffusion of the Gospel among men, and a period, greater or less in duration, of the supremacy of righteousness on the earth, before the Lord's personal and visible appearing.'⁵⁰ The idea, which had been entertained by Jonathan Edwards, seemed to be vindicated by the triumphs of the gospel not only in Britain, America, and the rest of the English-speaking world but also in new lands through the overseas missionary movement. Secular benefits would follow in the train of gospel victories. Justice would prevail in public affairs and culture would be diffused in private. Again that hope appeared to be on the verge of realization. In mid-century London, prosperous Dissenters seemed to be enjoying a lifestyle that anticipated the blessings of the millennium itself. Hence in 1852 Thomas Binney, minister of the King's Weigh House Congregational Church, could lecture to young men on the theme, 'Is it Possible to Make the Best of Both Worlds?' Could they enjoy not only eternal life in the world to come but also comfort in the present world? His answer, a resounding yes, rested on his conviction that a new age was dawning.⁵¹ Like his secular contemporaries, Binney upheld the idea of progress, but gave it a theological slant. Postmillennialism had become a potent force in the minds of Nonconformists and their spiritual kin.

The expectations about the future of a few in the Nonconformist traditions, however, altered drastically. The pioneer of the novel viewpoint was Edward Irving, a minister of the Church of Scotland in London who later became the inspiration for a new denomination, the Catholic Apostolic Church. In 1827 he published *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, a translation from Spanish of a work arguing that Christ would return within a short span of time. Because the second coming would take place before ('pre-') the millennium, this stance is called premillennialism. Irving denounced as an error the prevailing opinion that 'the present reign of Christ [is] hastening, of its own accord, into the millennial reign of Christ'.⁵² Instead there would be cataclysms announcing the imminent second advent.

A second early advocate of premillennialism was John Nelson Darby, a leading figure in the emergence of the so-called 'Plymouth' Brethren. He turned his version of the new teaching into a system, dispensationalism, which divided history into a series of eras or dispensations, each ending with a time of judgement. The present church age, he maintained, would

⁵⁰ *Christian Advocate*, 22 August 1872, 268.

⁵¹ David Bebbington and Timothy Larsen, 'Introduction', in David Bebbington and Timothy Larsen, eds., *Modern Christianity and Cultural Aspirations* (London, 2003), pp. 1–3.

⁵² Margaret Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving, Minister of the Scotch National Church, London, Illustrated by his Journals and his Correspondence* (London, 1862), p. 190.

soon end with the return of Christ to snatch away his people. This prophetic school, though dominant among the Brethren and influential among Anglican Evangelicals, attracted very few Nonconformist supporters in nineteenth-century Britain. Towards the end of the century, however, partly because of its espousal by Moody, it spread widely in the United States. Dispensationalism created a radically pessimistic worldview that gave backbone to the rising fundamentalist movement after 1900.⁵³ During the nineteenth century, another form of premillennial teaching, labelled 'historicist' because it linked historical events with passages in the book of Revelation, became more widespread in Britain, but, again, only a small number of Nonconformists adopted it. This style of understanding the world was altogether more broad-minded, showing affinities with contemporary liberal developments in theology.⁵⁴ It displayed, in fact, the characteristics of the Romantic movement, a phenomenon to which we must now turn.

ROMANTIC INFLUENCES

The way of thinking associated with the Enlightenment on which this chapter has dwelt so far was challenged during the nineteenth century by a fresh intellectual mood. The temper of the age of reason gave way to an enthusiasm for values of will, spirit, and emotion. High hopes of progress in the future were replaced by delight in the fascinations of the past. Human beings came to be conceived less as cogs in a machine-like universe and more as growths in the world of nature. This mood, the fruit of Romanticism, emerged from around the opening of the century. The subsequent spread of Romantic feeling profoundly affected religion, causing churches to be erected in the Gothic style of the Middle Ages and worship to become florid rather than austere. William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the poets who heralded the Romantic revolution in the English-speaking lands, exercised particular influence. Wordsworth, with his semi-mystical appreciation of the power of nature over human development, attracted wide admiration. An extraordinary encomium on the poet's death in 1850 appearing in the newspaper of the Free Church of Scotland hailed him as no less than a prophet. 'It was a high and sacred mission his', wrote the author, '—even to stand between God and man, interpreting to men His words as written in the revealed volume of nature.'⁵⁵

⁵³ Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875–1925* (New York, 1979).

⁵⁴ Martin Spence, *Heaven on Earth: Reimagining Time and Eternity in Nineteenth-Century British Evangelicalism* (Portland, OR, 2015).

⁵⁵ 'G' in *The Witness*, 27 April 1850, 2.

Coleridge exercised an even greater sway over the churches, partly because his *Aids to Reflection* (1825) addressed religious issues directly. He denounced outspokenly the favourite methods of previous generations. 'Evidences of Christianity!', he exploded, 'I am weary of the word.'⁵⁶ Instead of reasoning about the grounds of religious belief, people should follow their sense of need for the supernatural. Coleridge's approach, more concerned with evoking than with defining, became a solvent of sharp doctrinal statements. The Coleridgean influence, often mediated through other thinkers, became the primary way in which milder, more diffuse theological views advanced over subsequent years.

The change can be traced in most denominations, but especially among Unitarians and Congregationalists. The assault on older Unitarian theology commenced in 1833 with an essay by the young James Martineau criticizing Joseph Priestley. It was Priestley's fundamental mistake, Martineau believed, to hold that all things happen by necessity. Instead human beings, as moral agents responsible to their Creator, are fundamentally free.⁵⁷ The shift could be compared to the almost contemporary break of John Stuart Mill from the mechanistic philosophy of Jeremy Bentham, having its source in an identical discovery of the new currents of thought associated with Romanticism. Martineau, who rose to become principal of Manchester New College, London, in 1869, concentrated on the interior life, seeking religious certainty not in the Bible but in the dictates of conscience. His many writings, culminating in *The Seat of Authority in Religion* (1890), elaborated a position deeply informed by the philosophy of Germany, the heartland of Romanticism. Among Congregationalists similar influences, largely channelled through English-speaking authors including Coleridge and the American Transcendentalists, modified the existing enlightened/evangelical consensus. The pioneer of the development was Horace Bushnell, Congregational minister at Hartford, Connecticut, who in 1849 published a collection of addresses, *God in Christ*, with a dissertation contending that, since language is too imprecise to convey exact theological distinctions, truth should be conveyed in terms of the imagination rather than propositions. Bushnell was followed by Henry Ward Beecher, the enormously influential minister of Plymouth Church in the suburbs of New York, who taught a form of faith in which the beauties of nature and a striving for righteousness played a prominent part. Beecher considered doctrine unimportant; what mattered was 'a heart that breathes kindness and love'.⁵⁸ A new theological sensibility had arisen.

⁵⁶ Quoted by Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: A Survey from Coleridge to Gore* (London, 1980), p. 65.

⁵⁷ James Martineau, 'The Life and Writings of Dr. Priestley', *Essays, Reviews and Addresses*, 4 vols (London, 1890-1), I: pp. 1-42.

⁵⁸ Quoted by Dorrien, *Making of American Liberal Theology*, pp. 209-10.

As a result, the understanding of God underwent transformation. In quarters where the new ideas made headway, the older conception of the Almighty as a sovereign judge seemed lamentably misleading. 'The attempt to establish a fundamental distinction between a father's government and a ruler's', declared James Baldwin Brown, an English equivalent of Beecher, 'has done much mischief, and for a century and a half has exercised a most debasing influence on theology.'⁵⁹ God must be seen, Baldwin Brown contended, as a loving father, consistently displaying the qualities a parent would show towards a child. One consequence of this new estimate of Godhead was an increasing tendency to doubt the doctrine of everlasting punishment, a teaching hard to square with accepted child-rearing practices. It would be a mistake to exaggerate the prominence of hell in the thinking of earlier generations. Although some preachers such as the Irish-American Methodist revivalist James Caughey did dwell on the prospect of hell for impenitent sinners, the general choice was to speak more of death than of hell.⁶⁰ Yet a distinct trend emerged in the later years of the century towards modifying the place of hell in the scheme of things. Some, among whom the English Congregationalist Edward White was prominent, began to teach conditional immortality, the notion that only those trusting in Christ become heirs to everlasting life. Those who refused the gospel offer would not be punished forever but would be allowed a merciful euthanasia. Others, with members of the faculty of Andover Seminary their champions in the 1880s, supposed that there would be a further opportunity for exercising repentance and faith beyond the grave. Similar to the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, this belief in future probation allowed for salvation to be granted in the next life. A few went so far as to embrace universalism. A scholarly Baptist, Samuel Cox, expounded this conviction in *Salvator Mundi* (1877). Although it was unusual for members of the denomination to abandon traditional teaching about hell, another Baptist, Samuel Tipple, who preached on novel lines in south London, argued in the same year that, since God personified 'the perfection of Fatherliness', death could not mean the destruction of any souls.⁶¹ The changing idea of the Almighty generated an alteration of beliefs about human destiny.

A related shift in thinking took place about the work of Christ. The atonement, the pivotal doctrine of evangelical theology, became subject to fresh scrutiny. John McLeod Campbell, who pastored a Congregational church in Glasgow after deposition from the ministry of the Church of Scotland, taught in *The Nature of Atonement* (1856) that the cross of Christ did not alter God's attitude to sinners from wrath to mercy. If the Almighty was forever full of parental pity, then the atonement instead revealed the

⁵⁹ J. Baldwin Brown, *The Divine Life in Man* (London, 1859), p. 26.

⁶⁰ Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism*, pp. 118–19.

⁶¹ Samuel. A. Tipple, *Echoes of Spoken Words* (London, 1877), p. 184.

perennial heart of God, grieving over sin but loving towards his children. That view steadily advanced over subsequent years, appearing, for example, in the pages of William Newton Clarke's definitive *Outline of Christian Theology* (1898) for American Baptists. 'Christ's sin-bearing', wrote Clarke, 'was an expression of God's.'⁶² Some went further, not just reinterpreting the cross but transferring the focus of theology to the incarnation. Anglo-Catholics, Broad Churchmen, and others in the Anglican communion, often swayed by Romantic taste before other Protestants, frequently made the transition at an earlier date. Nonconformists from the evangelical camp generally showed caution. Thus the English Congregationalist R.W. Dale, the author of the most widely used statement of the doctrine of the atonement in the second half of the century, held the compromise position that, although the power of the gospel lay in the atonement, the primacy among doctrines belonged to the incarnation.⁶³ Others, however, took a more decisive step. Thomas Charles Edwards, principal of Bala Theological College of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, published his study of Christology, *The God-Man*, in 1895 to proclaim 'the incarnation of Christ as the revelation of God to the human soul'.⁶⁴ Likewise, two years later John Scott Lidgett wrote *The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement* to persuade his fellow Wesleyans that more fundamental than the event of the crucifixion was the union of God with man in the person of Christ. Although at a popular level the centrality of the cross in the orthodox denominations had barely begun to fade before 1900, by that date it was being supplanted in more scholarly circles.

The advance of Romantic assumptions also led to a fresh emphasis on experience. In a sense Methodism had anticipated the broader cultural shift by expecting converts to have a strong sense of assurance of faith and evangelicals generally had followed their lead.⁶⁵ Only more traditional Calvinist areas such as the remoter Highlands of Scotland retained the older encouragement of doubting one's salvation to obtain, in the end, a firmer grasp on it. Yet the more liberal teachings about experience that emerged from around mid-century commonly dispensed with elements that evangelicals considered essential. In 1847 Bushnell published a book called *Christian Nurture* suggesting that children growing up in Christian families did not need conversion, but slowly developed into a mature faith. Tipple wrote similarly of children

⁶² William Newton Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology* (New York, 1898), p. 346.

⁶³ R.W. Dale, *The Old Evangelicalism and the New, A Discourse* (London, 1889), pp. 48–51.

⁶⁴ Quoted by D. Densil Morgan, 'Theology among the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, c. 1811–1914', in John Gwynfor Jones, ed., *The History of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, III: Growth and Consolidation, c. 1814–1914* (Cardiff, 2013), p. 81.

⁶⁵ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), pp. 42–50, as modified by David W. Bebbington, 'Response', in Michael A.G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart, eds., *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nottingham, 2008), pp. 420–2.

who 'yielded themselves, softly and fluently, as spring buds to the touch of the sun, the moment of whose opening is not observed, so gentle and gradual is it'.⁶⁶ Religious experience, on this understanding, sprang up as a phenomenon of nature. If that was so, people did not require to be convinced of the truth of Christianity by the evidence of prophecies and miracles, for they could readily obtain the internal witness of actual experience. Hence courses on the evidences disappeared from college curricula. So strong had the replacement emphasis on spiritual experience grown by 1877 that liberal Congregationalists held a conference during the Congregational Union meetings in Leicester to dwell on its power to unite believers at a deeper level than any bonds of orthodoxy. The organizer of the meeting declared his ability to hold communion with men like Channing and Martineau who, though rejecting the divinity of Christ, had 'the life of goodness in them'.⁶⁷ An appeal to religious experience superseded any credal boundaries.

By the end of the century, a further theological innovation stemming from Germany began to make an impact. The doctrinal system of the Lutheran Albrecht Ritschl exercised a marked effect on more advanced theologians. Ritschl taught that Jesus's message was essentially the coming of the kingdom of God, which he interpreted as an ethical community. It sustained lofty moral values; and showed communal solidarity, a common feature of social theory developed under Romantic influence.⁶⁸ Andrew Martin Fairbairn, the first principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, a Dissenting graduate theological institution opened in 1889, dwelt on the kingdom of God in his book, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology* (1893). 'How', Fairbairn asked, 'did Christ conceive and describe His society?...His familiar phrase was not "the Church", but "the kingdom of heaven" or "of God."' ⁶⁹ In a similar way S. Parkes Cadman, then a Methodist pastor in New York but later a Congregational minister and radio pioneer, declared in 1897 that Christ came to do more than bring regeneration to individuals. 'He came', Cadman wrote, 'not to establish a Church, but to found a Kingdom.'⁷⁰ For many the kingdom became a symbol of the better society that Christians should build up. In England the Baptist minister John Clifford became an early exponent of a social gospel that would achieve, as he put it in 1888, 'the temporal salvation of the people'.⁷¹ In America Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist pastor with direct knowledge of German scholarship, was already in the 1890s devising a theology for the

⁶⁶ Tipple, *Echoes of Spoken Words*, p. 102.

⁶⁷ Joseph Wood quoted in Bebbington, Dix, and Ruston, eds, *Protestant Nonconformist Texts*, p. 87.

⁶⁸ Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Liberal Protestantism* (London, 1968), pp. 20–34.

⁶⁹ A.M. Fairbairn, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology* (London, 1893), p. 515.

⁷⁰ *Christian Advocate*, 11 February 1897, 108.

⁷¹ *The Freeman* (London), 27 January 1888, 52.

social gospel that he published under that title in 1917.⁷² Its *leitmotiv* was the kingdom of God.

The Romantic trend in theology, largely in a more liberal direction, provoked resistance. As early as 1855 an outburst of protest took place against displacement of familiar doctrines by nature imagery in a collection of hymns called *The Rivulet* published by the English Congregationalist Thomas Toke Lynch.⁷³ The advocacy of future probation at Andover Seminary in the United States in 1886 led to a protracted lawsuit.⁷⁴ And, most seriously, in 1887 Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Baptist pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London who was acknowledged as the finest preacher of the century, sounded the alarm about a serious 'downgrade' of theology. Although Spurgeon was himself swayed by Romantic currents of thought, embracing, for example, premillennial teaching, he set his face against any dilution of doctrine in the areas of biblical inspiration, sacrificial atonement, and future punishment. 'A new religion has been initiated', he warned, 'which is no more Christianity than chalk is cheese.'⁷⁵ As Ian Randall's chapter in this volume notes, few followed Spurgeon out of the Baptist Union in consequence, but many long remembered his call to arms. Hostilities did not end with the Downgrade Controversy. When, in the first decade of the twentieth century, R.J. Campbell, the minister of the Congregationalists' City Temple, went even further in proposing a 'new theology' based on philosophical idealism and political socialism, he drew condemnation from P.T. Forsyth, the greatest of Congregational theologians during these years, for discarding the substance of the faith.⁷⁶ The stage was set for the fundamentalist controversies that rocked American Protestantism in the 1920s.

CONCLUSION

The nineteenth century formed an era when the doctrinal stance of most of those in the Dissenting traditions was shaped by evangelical priorities. Only the Unitarians and a few small groups stood apart from the evangelical common front, but even they shared in absorbing the powerful influence of

⁷² Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York, 1917). See also Bill J. Leonard, 'Baptists in North America', Chapter 9 of this volume.

⁷³ Albert Peel, *These Hundred Years: A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1831–1931* (London, 1931), pp. 221–34.

⁷⁴ Bruce L. Shelley, 'Andover Controversy', in Daniel G. Reid, ed., *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove, IL, 1990), p. 61.

⁷⁵ *The Sword and the Trowel* (London), August 1887, p. 397.

⁷⁶ Keith W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord: Twentieth-Century Theological Controversies in England* (London, 1988), ch. 2.

the Enlightenment. Its legacy appeared clearly in the moderate Calvinism of the New England theology with its governmental theory of the atonement. Some Calvinists resisted the modification of older confessional views, especially at Princeton, but the moderate school was reinforced by the Methodists and related bodies whose theology, though Arminian, shared the characteristics of the evangelical/Enlightenment paradigm. That standpoint gave rise to a pragmatic spirit, a confidence in Christian evidences, an affinity for science, and a postmillennial eschatology. The advent of premillennialism, however, constituted an early sign of the growth of a new perspective on theological issues generated by Romanticism. Affecting Unitarians and Congregationalists more than most of their contemporaries, the Romantic mood found expression in a fatherly conception of the Almighty, a displacement of the atonement by the incarnation, an appeal to experience, and eventually prominence for the kingdom of God. The opposition to these trends saw them as surrendering the core of the gospel. A conclusion must be that the Evangelical Revival of the previous century prepared the way for much of the theology of the period. Yet equally the cultural setting, whether the legacy of the Enlightenment or the novelties thrown up by the Romantic spirit, exercised a powerful sway over doctrinal formulation during the century. Gospel and culture were in creative interaction.

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Preaching and Sermons

Robert H. Ellison

In the opening chapter of *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689–1901*, William Gibson estimates that as many as ‘25 million unique sermon performances’ took place throughout the British Empire between the end of the Glorious Revolution and the death of Queen Victoria. While only a fraction of these sermons were ultimately published, the corpus of available texts is massive as well: extrapolating from the data in John Gordon Spaulding’s *Pulpit Publications* (1996), Gibson estimates that some ‘80,000 individual . . . sermons’ were published during this period.¹ Numbers like this are a mixed blessing for scholars. On the one hand, the sheer size of the canon suggests a virtually endless store of topics to pursue, and advances in digitization have made more texts readily available than ever before. Finding the most relevant texts within tens of thousands of choices, however, can be intimidating and inefficient for even the most diligent researchers.

Charting the pulpit of Protestant Dissent in nineteenth-century Britain and North America is a similarly daunting task. According to a poll taken in 1884 by the *Contemporary Pulpit*, five of the ten ‘greatest living English-speaking Protestant preachers’ were Baptists or Congregationalists,² many of the scores of articles on preaching were published by Protestant periodicals, and biographical surveys published early in the twentieth century devote far more space to Dissenters than to Anglicans or Roman Catholics.³ To make the scope of this project manageable, this chapter focuses on a single genre: lectures on preaching, which reveal the advice that seasoned ministers gave to young men just starting their careers.

¹ William Gibson, ‘The British Sermon 1689–1901: Quantities, Performance, and Culture’, in Keith A. Francis and William Gibson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689–1901* (Oxford, 2012), p. 7.

² ‘A Plebiscite about Preachers’, *Spectator*, 57 (1884), p. 1296.

³ Edwin Charles Dargan, *A History of Preaching*, 2 vols (New York, 1912), II: pp. 470–578; F.R. Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America, Including the Biographies of Many Princes of the Pulpit and the Men who Influenced Them*, 3 vols (Milwaukee, WI., 1952–7), I: pp. 377–746, II: pp. 261–657, III: pp. 175–524.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE GENRE

This chapter draws upon approximately twenty-five volumes of lectures delivered in England, the United States, and Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the best-known works in England during this period are the three volumes of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*, which he delivered to the students in the Pastor's College, the school he founded in 1856 to 'help in the further education of brethren who have been preaching with some measure of success for two years at the least'.⁴ There were no educational prerequisites or financial requirements; all Baptists who had the necessary experience and some 'evident marks of a Divine call' were eligible to be admitted.⁵ Spurgeon's lectures at the College were collected in three volumes, published in 1875, 1877, and posthumously in 1905. An additional collection was published in 1892 by Arthur Tappan Pierson, an American Presbyterian minister who was enlisted to deliver the lectures after Spurgeon became ill. He spoke at the Pastor's College from October 1891 to June 1892, approximately five months after Spurgeon's death.⁶

On the American side, the best-known example of the genre is probably the Yale Lectures on Preaching, which began in 1871 and are still being delivered today.⁷ They were named in honour of the famed Presbyterian minister Lyman Beecher; Henry Ward, Lyman's eighth child and pastor of the Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, delivered the lectures for the first three years. He discussed the parameters of the series in his inaugural lectures, noting that they were not 'to be confounded with a regular Professorship of pastoral theology', but were rather intended to 'secure a more perfect preparation of young men for preaching . . . by providing for them . . . a course of practical instruction in the art of preaching, to be given by those actively engaged in the practice of it'.⁸ Several of his successors echoed this distinction, declaring that they came not to offer a comprehensive treatment of the homiletic arts, but rather to offer a few practical suggestions derived from their years of experience in the ministry.⁹

⁴ C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students: A Selection from Addresses Delivered to the Students of the Pastor's College, Metropolitan Tabernacle*, First Series (London, 1875), p. vii.

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon's *Autobiography Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records by His Wife and His Private Secretary*, 4 vols (London, 1897–1900), IV: pp. 148–9.

⁶ Arthur T. Pierson, *The Divine Art of Preaching. Lectures Delivered at the 'Pastor's College' Connected with the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, England, from January to June, 1892* (New York, 1892), p. ix.

⁷ A complete list of Yale lecturers can be found online at <http://www.library.yale.edu/div/beecher.html>.

⁸ Henry Ward Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching. Delivered before the Theological Department of Yale College, New Haven, Conn, as the First Series in the Regular Course of the 'Lyman Beecher Lectureship on Preaching'* (New York, 1872), pp. v, 1.

⁹ A.J.F. Behrends, *The Philosophy of Preaching* (New York, 1890), p. vii; Howard Crosby, *The Christian Preacher. Yale Lectures for 1879–80* (New York, 1879), pp. 7–8; R.W. Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching. Delivered at Yale College, New Haven, Conn.* (New York, 1878), p. v;

Finally, Canadian preaching and pastoral education is represented by lectures delivered before the Theological Union of Victoria University, in Toronto. They were apparently not part of the initial mission of the Union; its constitution simply stated that it was formed to provide 'sacred and literary fellowship of all Ministers and Preachers of the Gospel in connection with the Methodist Church', and it stipulated that a lecture and a sermon be delivered at each of its annual meetings.¹⁰ As the prefatory note to one of the published volumes indicated, those discourses were 'largely Apologetic in their character',¹¹ addressing such topics as the origin and nature of sin, the relationship between science and religion, and eternal reward and punishment; consequently, they said very little about the practice of preparing and delivering sermons.

There are, however, some additional materials that directly pertain to the study undertaken here. In the 1880s, three series of lectures were delivered 'under the auspices of the Theological Union of Victoria University'. The title pages of two of the published collections included the phrase 'the annual lectures on preaching';¹² the third—which was published first, in 1883—contained an introductory note that explicitly aligns it with the Yale Lectures and other efforts to combine 'scholastic work' with 'the ripe experience and original ideas of men fresh from the pastoral and pulpit work'.¹³

Two things should be noted about these speakers and their lectures. The speakers, admittedly, were not a very diverse group. Most were born in Britain or North America; educated at major seminaries and universities including Edinburgh, Oxford, Princeton, and Yale; and, at the time they delivered their lectures, serving as pastors, professors, or university presidents in major metropolitan areas such as Glasgow, New York, London, and Montreal. The lectures they delivered, however, were not intended to have only a local impact, as might have been the case if they were speaking to their own congregations. Rather, they were meant to reach far beyond the lecture halls,

James Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models: The Yale Lectures on Preaching*, 1891 (New York, 1891), pp. 4–8; William M. Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word* (New York, 1876), preface.

¹⁰ *Constitution of the Theological Union of Victoria University*, pp. 1–2. I am grateful to Mr Ken Wilson, an archivist at Victoria University, for providing me with a copy of this constitution.

¹¹ *Lectures and Sermons Delivered Before the Theological Union of the University of Victoria College*, Vol. I, 1878–1882 (Toronto, 1888), prefatory note.

¹² Edward B. Ryckman, *The Ambassador for Christ: The Annual Lectures on Preaching Delivered under the Auspices of the Theological Union of Victoria University*, Cobourg, March, 1886 (Toronto, 1886); James Awde et al., *The Minister at Work. The Annual Lectures on Preaching Delivered under the Auspices of the Theological Union of Victoria University before the Students in Preparation for the Ministry at Victoria College*, Cobourg, 1887–8 (Toronto, 1888).

¹³ N. Burwash, 'Introductory Note', in H.F. Bland, *Soul-Winning: A Course of Four Lectures Delivered under the Auspices of the Theological Union of Victoria University*, Cobourg, February 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th, 1883, Entitled Respectively 'Student,' 'Preacher,' 'Pastor' and 'Soul-Winner' (Toronto, 1883), p. iii.

as the students who heard them would go on to serve churches across North America and throughout the British Empire.

Moreover, while they were all delivered by Protestant Dissenting ministers, they were not necessarily distinctively Protestant Dissenting lectures. There are, to be sure, clear denominational markers to be found. In the introduction to his second volume, for example, Spurgeon notes that 'we confine our College to Baptists',¹⁴ and references to the Methodist ministry frequently appear in the lectures delivered in Toronto. Yale was more multidenominational, but there were parameters for the lectures delivered there as well; the 'Records of the Corporation of Yale College for April 12, 1871' stipulated that they were to be given by 'a minister of the Gospel of any evangelical denomination who has been markedly successful in the special work of the Christian ministry'.¹⁵

The lectures themselves, however, appear to be generally free of what the Victorians would have called 'party spirit'. The overall content and tone is broadly Christian rather than specifically sectarian; as such, they might not have been out of place in talks delivered to Anglicans, Roman Catholics, or other groups. A full development of this idea is beyond the scope of this chapter; as will be discussed in the conclusion, it is one of several promising avenues of further study.

THE FORM AND CONTENT OF THE LECTURES

These twenty-five volumes are anything but monolithic. They contain between four and thirteen lectures, with the lectures ranging from five to forty pages. Some were printed in 'substantially' the same form in which they were delivered,¹⁶ while other ministers used publication as an opportunity to significantly revise and expand their work.¹⁷ The content of these volumes is

¹⁴ C.H. Spurgeon, *Second Series of Lectures to My Students: Being Addresses Delivered to the Students of the Pastor's College, Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London, 1877), p. vi.

¹⁵ Edgar DeWitt Jones, *The Royalty of the Pulpit: A Survey and Appreciation of the Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching Founded at Yale Divinity School 1871 and Given Annually (with Four Exceptions) since 1872* (New York, 1951), pp. xxiii–xxiv.

¹⁶ H. Clay Trumbull, *The Sunday-School: Its Origin, Mission, Methods, and Auxiliaries. The Lyman Beecher Lectures before Yale Divinity School for 1888* (Philadelphia, PA, 1893 edn.), p. viii; George Adam Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament: Eight Lectures on the Lyman Beecher Foundation, Yale University* (New York, 1901), p. vii. See also the title pages of each of Beecher's volumes, which note that the texts had been prepared 'from phonographic reports'.

¹⁷ A.M. Fairbairn, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology* (New York, 1893), p. x; Henry Van Dyke, *The Gospel for an Age of Doubt: The Yale Lectures on Preaching 1896* (New York, 1896), p. v.

quite varied as well. Some of the Yale lectures addressed preaching only indirectly, and sometimes not at all. Congregationalist John Brown's *Puritan Preaching in England* (New York, 1900) and Taylor's *The Scottish Pulpit from the Reformation to the Present Day* (New York, 1887) are far more historical surveys than 'how-to' manuals for the nineteenth-century pulpit. Two other works—*The Place of Christ in Modern Theology* (New York, 1893) by Scottish Congregationalist A.M. Fairbairn and *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament* (New York, 1901) by George Adam Smith, pastor of the Free Church College in Glasgow—are much more theological than homiletic, and Henry Clay Trumbull, Congregationalist minister and Civil War chaplain, saw his invitation to deliver the lectures in 1888 as a 'providential call' to continue his long-time interest in Sunday School work.¹⁸ Washington Gladden's *Tools and the Man: Property and Industry under the Christian Law* may be the furthest removed of all; as the subtitle suggests, it is a treatise on 'Christian Socialism' and addressed not specifically to ministers, but rather to 'all citizens of the kingdom of heaven'.¹⁹ It should be noted that all of these Yale lectures were delivered after 1882, when a change in the terms of the lectureship allowed speakers to discuss 'a branch of pastoral theology, or... any other topic appropriate to the work of the Christian ministry'.²⁰ These volumes were thus within both the letter and the spirit of the law, but since they are not explicitly homiletic in their focus, they are not included in the works discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

These titles, however, are in the minority. Most of the works under discussion here offer extensive discussions of the pulpit, and many undertake to provide a good deal more. The lecturers recognized, and in some cases explicitly stated, that a minister's work involves much more than preaching,²¹ and their published volumes sometimes take the form of pastoral manuals, offering suggestions for overseeing all aspects of the worship service—the music,²² prayers,²³ Scripture readings²⁴—conducting prayer meetings apart

¹⁸ Trumbull, *The Sunday-School*, p. vii.

¹⁹ Washington Gladden, *Tools and the Man: Property and Industry under the Christian Law* (Cambridge, MA, 1893), p. 8.

²⁰ Jones, *The Royalty of the Pulpit*, p. xxiv.

²¹ John Hall, *God's Word Through Preaching: The Lyman Beecher Lectures before the Theological Department of Yale College*, Fourth Series (New York, 1875), pp. 8–9; Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*, p. 23.

²² Henry Ward Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching. Delivered before the Theological Department of Yale College, New Haven, Conn, in the Regular Course of the 'Lyman Beecher Lectureship on Preaching'*, Second Series (New York, 1873), pp. 114–45; Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, pp. 271–86; Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, pp. 231–40.

²³ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, pp. 53–71; Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, pp. 240–55; Nathaniel J. Burton, *Yale Lectures on Preaching, and Other Writings*, ed. Richard E. Burton (New York, 1888), pp. 187–200; John Watson, *The Cure of Souls. Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching at Yale University, 1896* (New York, 1896), pp. 253–68.

²⁴ Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, pp. 213–28.

from the regular service,²⁵ directing the Sunday School programme,²⁶ planning times of special revival,²⁷ and working with the church officers and other laypersons who assist him in his efforts.²⁸ To do all these well, 'every minister of Christ should seek to become what has been called a *good-all-around* man—good preacher, good pastor, good business man, good in every department of his work'.²⁹

Perhaps the most important of these duties were prayer and pastoral visitation. Several lecturers insisted that the preacher be a praying man.³⁰ This is, of course, a valuable discipline for all believers, but it is especially important to the minister, who is not only responsible for his own spiritual well-being, but must also 'abound in intercession', in 'wrestling with God' on behalf of his people.³¹ While the preacher must spend a great deal of time alone in prayer, he must not allow himself to become a recluse or a hermit. He is rather to be 'a man among men',³² a true *minister* who 'lose[s] himself' in his people's 'service and for their benefit'.³³ The minister stands to benefit from such service as well: through frequent visitation, Beecher says, he will 'reinvigorate himself by contact with life and with men'.³⁴

These endeavours are, moreover, important to his work not only as a pastor, but also as a preacher. Earnest prayer, the lecturers maintained, is the foundation of effective preaching; as Pierson put it, if the preacher 'wants to prevail with man, he must learn, first of all, to prevail with God'.³⁵ Similarly, they discussed what John Hall, an Irish-born Presbyterian and the 1875 Yale lecturer, called the 'interaction between the visiting and the preaching'.³⁶ Frequent visitation, they suggested, not only helps the minister care for his congregants during the week, but it also better equips him to preach to them on Sunday.³⁷ There can be, in fact, a sort of feedback loop as the 'pastorate and

²⁵ Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, Second Series, pp. 53–113; Bland, *Soul-Winning*, pp. 76–8; Matthew Simpson, *Lectures on Preaching, Delivered before the Theological Department of Yale College* (New York, 1879), pp. 265–6.

²⁶ Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, Second Series, pp. 181–90; Simpson, *Lectures on Preaching*, pp. 267–9; Trumbull, *The Sunday-School*.

²⁷ Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, Second Series, pp. 221–301.

²⁸ Simpson, *Lectures on Preaching*, pp. 293–4.

²⁹ Ryckman, *The Ambassador for Christ*, p. 165.

³⁰ Behrends, *The Philosophy of Preaching*, pp. 178–81; Crosby, *The Christian Preacher*, pp. 125–30; Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, pp. 40–52; Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*, p. 53.

³¹ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, pp. 43, 45.

³² Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series, p. 99.

³³ Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, p. 12.

³⁴ Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, Second Series, p. 148.

³⁵ Crosby, *The Christian Preacher*, p. 125; Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, pp. 41–9; Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, p. 26; Pierson, *The Divine Art of Preaching*, p. 151.

³⁶ Hall, *God's Word Through Preaching*, p. 52.

³⁷ Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series, pp. 40–2; Bland, *Soul-Winning*, pp. 93–6; Hall, *God's Word Through Preaching*, pp. 43–50; Pierson, *The Divine Art of Preaching*, pp. 123–6;

the pulpit act and react upon each other': interacting with people before Sunday can help the minister determine what to preach, and visiting them again the following week will give him 'an opportunity to learn the influence of his sermons, and to ascertain accurately the effects which they have produced'.³⁸

THE MINISTER'S QUALIFICATIONS

As important as prayer and visitation are, the lecturers also recognized that preaching is the minister's primary task—one declared that all of his other duties 'either issue from' the pulpit 'or are auxiliary to it'—and they devoted the bulk of their lectures to preparing students for that work.³⁹ The prioritization of preaching had a noticeably gendered dimension. In the nineteenth century, significant numbers of women could be found preaching in Dissenting congregations and reform organizations such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in North America and the suffragist Women's Social and Political Union in England.⁴⁰ Some of the lecturers discussed here explicitly set aside that aspect of their history, insisting that the preacher be a man, and that he exhibit 'manly' traits.⁴¹ If, as they asserted, the goal of preaching is at least in part to 'develop true manliness in others', it would follow that the preacher must be the epitome of masculinity himself.⁴² This involves not only

Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, pp. 259–61; Ryckman, *The Ambassador for Christ*, pp. 87–8; William Jewett Tucker, *The Making and the Unmaking of the Preacher: Lectures on the Lyman Beecher Foundation*, Yale University, 1898 (Boston, MA, 1898), p. 125.

³⁸ Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, p. 259; Simpson, *Lectures on Preaching*, pp. 243–4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740–1845* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998); Jacqueline R. deVries, 'Transforming the Pulpit: Preaching and Prophecy in the British Women's Suffrage Movement', in Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker, eds., *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity* (Berkeley, CA, 1998, pp. 318–33); O.C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching* (Nashville, TN, 2004), pp. 558–90, 749–73; Christine L. Krueger, *The Reader's Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse* (Chicago, IL, 1992); Dorothy Lander, 'The Itinerant Pulpit of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU): Teachers or Preachers?', in Robert H. Ellison, ed., *A New History of the Sermon: The Nineteenth Century* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 367–412.

⁴¹ See Roxanne Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces* (Carbondale, IL, 2003), pp. 40–64 and more broadly, Donald E. Hall, ed., *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (New York, 1994); John J. MacAloon, ed., *Muscular Christianity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds* (London, 2008); and Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge, 1985).

⁴² William Williams, 'The Minister's Relation to the Development of Christian Character and Perfection of Manhood', in *The Minister at Work*, p. 58; Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series, pp. 29–31; Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*, p. 165.

possessing such moral characteristics as sincerity and honour, but perhaps an 'imposing physical' presence as well; as E.B. Ryckman, the Victoria University lecturer for 1886, put it, 'We cannot, of course, demand that our candidates for the ministry shall all be six feet four, but we should not have many four feet six'.⁴³ The nineteenth-century Protestant preacher, then, must be a man, and he must be a *Christian* man. This may seem too obvious to state, but it is a point that Spurgeon and lecturers at both Yale and the Theological Union felt compelled to make.⁴⁴ He must also not be a new or untested convert, but rather 'a mature and advanced believer'.⁴⁵ It was also vital that he be truly *called* to preach. 'The call of God', Canadian lecturer William Williams said, 'is as essential to the validity of the Christian ministry to-day, as it was in apostolic times',⁴⁶ and, as was the case back then, it is 'the gift and calling of only a comparatively small number' of believers.⁴⁷ The notion of a 'calling', moreover, can be something of a double-edged sword: while it would be 'a fearful calamity to a man to miss his calling', it is also the case that 'no one should attempt to enter upon the holy office without a true consecration of heart'.⁴⁸ A prospective minister must therefore see that his own salvation is 'secure', seek wise counsel from other Christians, and, above all else, listen for 'God's voice to [his] conscience, saying, "You ought to preach"'.⁴⁹

Finally, the lecturers were united in their expectation that a preacher would be an *educated* man. This begins, of course, with theological instruction—which, after all, is what brought the students to their respective schools in the first place—but it should not end there. They were careful to note that scholarship is no substitute for spirituality, which is why salvation, not education, is the first prerequisite to preaching.⁵⁰ They also insisted, however, that 'the call of the Divine Spirit' is not a 'substitute for study and for intellectual preparation'.⁵¹ The preacher should therefore be what we might call a 'lifelong learner', familiar first and foremost with the scriptures,⁵² but

⁴³ Ryckman, *The Ambassador for Christ*, p. 19.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 13–14; Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, pp. 3–7; Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, p. 25.

⁴⁵ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, p. 7.

⁴⁶ Williams, 'The Minister's Relation', p. 49.

⁴⁷ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, p. 20.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 22; Crosby, *The Christian Preacher*, p. 173.

⁴⁹ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, pp. 23, 26–7; Burton, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, pp. 39–41; Simpson, *Lectures on Preaching*, p. 46.

⁵⁰ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, p. 44; Crosby, *The Christian Preacher*, p. 13.

⁵¹ Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series, pp. 128–9. See also Crosby, *The Christian Preacher*, p. 32; Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, pp. 27–8; Ryckman, *The Ambassador for Christ*, p. 21.

⁵² Henry Ward Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching: Delivered before the Theological Department of Yale College, New Haven, Conn, in the Regular Course of the 'Lyman Beecher Lectureship on Preaching'*, Third Series (New York, 1874), pp. 26–8; Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*,

also with ancient and modern languages;⁵³ history, politics, and science;⁵⁴ and both classic and contemporary literary works.⁵⁵ Such study will take time and effort, but it will also pay great dividends because it will help the preacher to 'converse understandingly and effectively' with his congregants during the week and deliver interesting, substantive, and factually accurate sermons to them on Sundays.⁵⁶

THE CONTENT AND DELIVERY OF SERMONS

When it comes to the art of preaching itself, several of the lecturers explicitly placed themselves within a certain historical and rhetorical tradition. It is not, however, the tradition of Cicero and Aristotle, but rather that of the ancient church. The apostles were invoked at Yale by Beecher and James Stalker, Scottish minister and lecturer for 1890–1, and at Victoria University by E.B. Ryckman. Beecher declared that 'preaching must come back to what it was in the apostolic times', and he and Stalker looked especially to Paul as not only 'the greatest of preachers', but 'the most complete embodiment of the ministerial life'.⁵⁷ To further emphasize the importance of biblical times and models, Stalker ingeniously borrowed the language of his more liturgically oriented counterparts, stating that, 'Though we may not believe in apostolic succession in the churchly sense, we are the successors of the apostles in this sense, that the apostles filled the office which we hold . . . and illustrated the manner in which its duties should be discharged.'⁵⁸

Stalker and Pierson also looked to an apostle and a church father for guidance on how sermons should be constructed. In the introduction to *The Divine Art of Preaching*, Pierson stated that Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2:14–41, 'was in some sense a model for all subsequent preaching', and set the precedent for the threefold homiletic

pp. 107–9; W.J. Ford, 'The Minister's Workshop—in the Study and among the People', in *The Minister at Work*, pp. 67–8.

⁵³ Crosby, *The Christian Preacher*, p. 40; Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, p. 67; Hall, *God's Word Through Preaching*, p. 87; Ford, 'The Minister's Workshop', pp. 74–7.

⁵⁴ Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, p. 100.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 101–2; Ford, 'The Minister's Workshop', p. 72; Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, pp. 55–6.

⁵⁶ Crosby, *The Christian Preacher*, pp. 63–5; Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series, p. 129; Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, p. 110; Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*, pp. 250–1; Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, p. 53.

⁵⁷ Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series, p. 6; Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, Third Series, p. 24; Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*, p. 18.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

structure of 'an argument, a testimony, and an exhortation'.⁵⁹ Similarly, Stalker cited St. Augustine's belief that 'a discourse should instruct, delight, and convince', and suggests that 'perhaps these three impressions should, upon the whole, follow this order'.⁶⁰

The other lecturers had various opinions about the structure of a sermon. Spurgeon and Yale lecturer Matthew Simpson, for example, advocated—or at least permitted—dividing a discourse into 'heads' and announcing those heads to the congregation to make the sermon easier to follow.⁶¹ On the other hand, Hall chose not to 'dwell' on 'the subject of divisions of sermons', and Taylor declined to 'enter upon minute details concerning such technicalities as exordium, division, discussion, peroration, and the like'. Ryckman made an important distinction between form and function when he said that 'a good sermon is not one that is beautifully composed, logically arranged, and oratorically delivered only, but [also] one that accomplishes the ends for which sermons are preached'.⁶²

What, then, were those 'ends'? E.G. Robinson, Baptist pastor and Yale lecturer for 1882, joined Stalker in echoing Augustine's language, stating that 'Instruction and persuasion are the two chief elements in all true preaching', and Congregationalist A.J.F. Behrends, who lectured at Yale in 1890, emphasized the persuasive element in his declaration that 'Every utterance of the pulpit must urge, either explicitly or implicitly, to moral decision and action'.⁶³ Ryckman and his Victoria University counterpart W.J. Ford invoked all three persons of the trinity in their Canadian lectures: all good sermons, they told their students, should result in 'the reconciliation of rebel souls to their God and King', the 'perfecting of men in Christ', and 'the renewal and sanctification of the heart by the Holy Ghost'. The goal of preaching, in short, is not to help people become smarter, or even wiser, but holier; as Beecher succinctly stated in his second Yale lecture, homiletics is 'the art of moving men from a lower to a higher life'.⁶⁴

All preaching, then, had the same purpose, but could take a variety of forms. The taxonomy of nineteenth-century Protestant sermons was apparently vast: approaches mentioned in these lectures include 'doctrinal' and 'biographical'; 'descriptive, rhetorical, [and] sentimental'; and 'textual', 'topical', 'doctrinal', 'experimental', 'practical', 'hortatory', and 'didactic'.⁶⁵ Sermons may have been

⁵⁹ Pierson, *The Divine Art of Preaching*, pp. xii–xiii.

⁶⁰ Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*, pp. 114–15.

⁶¹ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, p. 95; Simpson, *Lectures on Preaching*, pp. 140–1.

⁶² Hall, *God's Word Through Preaching*, p. 127; Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, p. 109; Ryckman, *The Ambassador for Christ*, p. 163.

⁶³ Robinson, *Lectures on Preaching*, p. 2; Behrends, *The Philosophy of Preaching*, p. 233.

⁶⁴ Ryckman, *The Ambassador for Christ*, p. 161; Ford, 'The Minister's Workshop', p. 89; Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series, p. 29.

⁶⁵ Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, p. 155; Robinson, *Lectures on Preaching*, p. 122; Behrends, *The Philosophy of Preaching*, p. 24.

varied, but some lamented that they were not very effective or successful. English Congregationalist R.W. Dale, the Yale lecturer in 1878, saw 'desultoriness and want of method' as 'one of the gravest faults of our modern preaching', and E.G. Robinson declared that the preaching of the day showed 'little that firmly grasps and wields the profounder doctrines of the gospel'.⁶⁶

The solution, many lecturers maintained, was a renewed emphasis upon 'expository' preaching. The simplest definition of the term is 'telling us precisely what the writers of Scripture meant to say'; others include 'the consecutive interpretation, and practical enforcement, of a book of the sacred canon' and the process whereby 'a minister, having...learned for himself what meaning the Holy Ghost intended to convey in the passage he has in hand...tells it to his people, with clearness, simplicity, force, and fervor'.⁶⁷ Whatever the language used, the benefits of exposition could be legion: it can appeal to both the 'scholar' and 'uncultivated minds', it will 'build up' the church, 'it will promote Biblical intelligence', and it can bring 'both preacher and hearers into direct and immediate contact with the mind of the Spirit'.⁶⁸ The first step in expository preaching, logically enough, is the selection of a topic and a text. Whether topic and text are selected at more or less the same time, or the topic comes first and a text is found to fit it, two things are paramount.⁶⁹ First, as Spurgeon put it in his first series of lectures, the 'matter' of the sermon 'must be congruous to the text'.⁷⁰ The text should never, in other words, be simply a 'motto' or a mere 'pretext' for what the preacher wants to say.⁷¹ The text must then be explained or expounded in a doctrinally sound way. Spurgeon offered a list of some dozen doctrines that all evangelical sermons should emphasize—sin, the atonement, 'justification by faith', and so on—but most of the others simply stated that preachers must be sure to give their people a steady diet of sound teaching.⁷²

It seems somewhat ironic that while 'pulpit presence' was generally regarded as secondary to content—Spurgeon, for example, declared that good delivery means little 'if a man has nothing to deliver'—the lecturers gave

⁶⁶ Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, p. 232; Robinson, *Lectures on Preaching*, p. 122.

⁶⁷ Robinson, *Lectures on Preaching*, p. 171; Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, p. 155; Hall, *God's Word Through Preaching*, p. 71.

⁶⁸ Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series, p. 226; Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, Second Series, p. 25; Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, pp. 170, 161–2, emphases in the original.

⁶⁹ Robinson, *Lectures on Preaching*, pp. 135–6; Ryckman, *The Ambassador for Christ*, pp. 89–91; Simpson, *Lectures on Preaching*, pp. 134–5.

⁷⁰ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, p. 74, emphasis in the original.

⁷¹ Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, p. 124; Ryckman, *The Ambassador for Christ*, p. 93; Hall, *God's Word Through Preaching*, p. 271.

⁷² Spurgeon, *Second Series of Lectures to My Students*, pp. 180–8; Bland, *Soul-Winning*, pp. 53–6; Ryckman, *The Ambassador for Christ*, p. 90; Simpson, *Lectures on Preaching*, pp. 119–20.

considerably more attention to the former than the latter.⁷³ Many recommended that preachers employ the same public-speaking strategies and techniques employed by their counterparts on the secular stage. They should, English Congregationalist and Yale lecturer Robert F. Horton said, get a 'proper course of teaching in elocution', 'cultivate' their speaking voice, and 'study the secret of great orators'.⁷⁴ Some 'secrets' mentioned by some of the other lecturers include 'lucidity', a 'conversational' style; 'plainness, force, and beauty' of expression; well-chosen illustrations and anecdotes; and natural postures and gestures in the pulpit.⁷⁵

These are all components of eloquent oratory, but eloquence should never be the preacher's ultimate goal. As Taylor put it, 'The effort to be eloquent will produce a rhetorician; the concentrated purpose to move men to live for God in Christ, will produce, in the end, an orator, and the two are as far from each other as the poles'.⁷⁶ Rather, they should strive to preach with what some lecturers called 'unction' or, to use a popular Victorian term, 'earnestness'. H.F. Bland, who lectured at Victoria in 1883, noted that unction is 'subtle, indefinable, [and] ethereal', and his fellow lecturers usually discussed it in terms of what it is *not*. It is not found, for example, in 'unnatural tones and whines', 'mere vehemence of manner', or behaving as 'mere actors' in the pulpit.⁷⁷ Rather, it is a spiritual 'intensity' and 'zeal' that 'springs out of an unwavering conviction of the truth of that which we are at the moment preaching, and of the fact that just that truth needs to be spoken to our hearers'.⁷⁸

Finally, the lecturers discussed which method of delivery—reciting a memorized text, reading from a manuscript, or preaching *extempore*—was most compatible with earnest preaching. A previous examination of books and periodical articles from a range of traditions in Victorian Britain has found a rough consensus that, while reading could be appropriate if a preacher needed to gain experience in composition or was speaking to an educated congregation, the extemporaneous approach was by far the preferred method.⁷⁹ The source material used here is different, but the conclusion very much the same.

⁷³ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, p. 117.

⁷⁴ Horton, *Verbum Dei*, pp. 274, 75, 77.

⁷⁵ Watson, *The Cure of Souls*, p. 45; Tucker, *The Making and the Unmaking of the Preacher*, p. 105; Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series, pp. 155–80; Spurgeon, *Third Series of Lectures to My Students: The Art of Illustration: Being Addresses Delivered to the Students of The Pastor's College, Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London, 1905); Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, pp. 183–203; Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series, pp. 136–7; Simpson, *Lectures on Preaching*, pp. 154, 193–5; Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, Second Series, pp. 96–143.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, pp. 20–1.

⁷⁷ Bland, *Soul-Winning*, p. 65; Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, p. 49; Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, p. 131; Spurgeon, *Second Series of Lectures to My Students*, p. 148.

⁷⁸ Watson, *The Cure of Souls*, p. 61; Simpson, *Lectures on Preaching*, p. 183; Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, p. 132.

⁷⁹ Robert H. Ellison, *The Victorian Pulpit: Spoken and Written Sermons in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Selinsgrove, PA, 1998), pp. 33–42.

The Yale lecturers often seem reluctant to be too strident or dogmatic in this debate. Beecher, for example, was rather noncommittal, stating simply that 'If you can do best by writing, write your sermons; and if you can do better by not writing, do not write them.'⁸⁰ Hall declared that there is no 'absolute rule' that all preachers are to follow;⁸¹ Horton had 'no inclination to give any rules for the composition of sermons'; and Robinson asserted that 'experience alone can determine' which method 'will be the best for each one personally'.⁸² Stalker offered a reasonable rationale for such hesitation, writing that if the issue 'were discussed every year for a century, it would be as far from being settled as ever'.⁸³ Despite such disclaimers, the lecturers contributed to the debate nonetheless. They acknowledged that written sermons may be more 'precise' and 'orderly' than extemporaneous ones, but they cautioned that a verbatim reading was also likely to be 'mechanical' and 'stale'.⁸⁴ The best approach, then, was to write out sermons during the week, but take only notes with 'leading lines of thought' into the pulpit on Sunday.⁸⁵ Those who lectured before the Theological Union were likewise proponents of the extempore sermon. Bland advised against both memorizing sermons and reading them from manuscript, and Ryckman declared that 'bad reciting is worse than even bad reading'.⁸⁶

Spurgeon joined his counterparts in rejecting both reading and reciting in favour of extemporaneous delivery, which he called 'an indispensable requisite for the pulpit'. He introduced an additional element to the discussion as well, devoting an entire lecture to 'the faculty of impromptu speech'.⁸⁷ While the extemporaneous method requires some work in advance, preparing the sermon 'so far as thoughts go, and leaving the words to be found during delivery', impromptu speaking is truly spur-of-the-moment, preaching 'without special preparation, without notes or immediate forethought'. The ability to preach impromptu, he says, should be cultivated so that a minister can speak 'with propriety' if an 'emergency' requires him 'to cast away the well-studied discourse, and rely upon the present help of the Holy Spirit'. This should happen, however, *only* in such cases; he cautions his students that 'The method of unprepared ministrations is... theoretically unsound', and should not be adopted as a 'general rule' of preaching.⁸⁸

⁸⁰ Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series, p. 106.

⁸¹ Hall, *God's Word Through Preaching*, p. 134.

⁸² Horton, *Verbum Dei*, p. 279; Robinson, *Lectures on Preaching*, p. 188.

⁸³ Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*, p. 20.

⁸⁴ Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, p. 157; Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series, p. 212; Behrends, *The Philosophy of Preaching*, p. 70.

⁸⁵ Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, p. 166.

⁸⁶ Bland, *Soul-Winning*, p. 61; Ryckman, *The Ambassador for Christ*, pp. 134-5.

⁸⁷ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, First Series, p. 151.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 166, 97, 155, 151, 152.

CONCLUSION

Several epochs of Anglo-American preaching have been described as 'golden ages'.⁸⁹ At a time in which thousands of sermons were delivered to millions of people every week, 'sermons outsold novels',⁹⁰ and the foremost pulpiteers were nearly as popular as royalty,⁹¹ the nineteenth century would certainly seem worthy of the term. Some nineteenth-century observers would have agreed with this assessment. In 1848, the Presbyterian minister Gardiner Spring published a 459-page treatise entitled *The Power of the Pulpit*; later in the century, Protestant periodicals published several articles echoing Spring's belief that 'Not only does the pulpit stamp its impress on the passing times, but it leaves its mark for a long time to come.'⁹²

Others, however, would probably have said that 'golden' was much too strong a term. Around the same time that these lectures were being delivered, Protestant and secular periodicals on both sides of the Atlantic were publishing articles examining what the editor of the *Methodist Review* called 'the want of success of the pulpit'.⁹³ A lengthy, and particularly harsh, critique was *The Decay of Modern Preaching*, published in 1882 by John Mahaffy, a clergyman in the Church of Ireland. In this 'essay', which runs to 160 pages, Mahaffy offered a catalogue of the 'historical', 'social', and 'personal' factors working against the 'success' of preaching throughout the various denominations of the Christian church. He did suggest some 'remedies', but the Epilogue made clear that his 'main object is to exhibit the decay, not to attempt the reform, of modern preaching'.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Siegfried Wenzel, *Preaching in the Age of Chaucer: Selected Sermons in Translation* (Washington DC, 2008), p. xiv; Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590–1640* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 390; Keith A. Francis and William Gibson, 'Preface', in Francis and Gibson, eds., *Oxford Handbook*, p. xiii. For an application of the term to American preaching in the middle of the twentieth century, see Edward Gilbreath, 'The Pulpit King', *Christianity Today* (11 December 1995), 28.

⁹⁰ Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830–1870* (New Haven, CT, 1985), p. 21. See also Ellison, *Victorian Pulpit*, pp. 46–7.

⁹¹ In 1858, the Unitarian minister Andrew Preston Peabody wrote that American tourists returning from England were often asked two questions: "Did you see the Queen?" and next, "Did you hear Spurgeon?" ('Spurgeon', *North American Review* 86 [1858], p. 275).

⁹² Gardiner Spring, *The Power of the Pulpit; or Thoughts Addressed to Christian Ministers and Those Who Hear Them* (New York, 1848), p. 34. Examples of such articles include H.W. Bellows, 'The Alleged Unattractiveness of the Christian Pulpit', *Christian Examiner*, 87 (1869), 28–38; Mary Harriott Norris, 'The Need of the Pulpit', *Methodist Review*, 77 (1895), 430–40; and John M. Titzel, 'The Pulpit: Its Province and Its Power', *Reformed Quarterly Review*, 31 (1884), 134–46.

⁹³ Daniel Curry, 'Some Causes of the Want of Success of the Pulpit', *Methodist Review*, 57 (1887), 269–83. See, for example, J. Baldwin Brown, 'Is the Pulpit Losing its Power?', *The Nineteenth Century*, 1 (1877), 97–112; C.H. Grundy, 'Dull Sermons', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 34 (1876), 264–7; S.J. Herben, 'Is the Power of the Pulpit Waning?', *Methodist Review*, 81 (1899), 896–910; and G. Monroe Royce, 'The Decline of the American Pulpit', *Forum*, 16 (1894), 568–77.

⁹⁴ John Mahaffy, *The Decay of Modern Preaching* (New York, 1882), p. 157.

The lecturers discussed here are more closely aligned with Gardiner than Mahaffy. Their positive outlook was not absolute—Beecher and Pierson, for example, lamented that the pulpit lacked the ‘spiritual power’ it enjoyed ‘a hundred years ago’—but it was apparent nonetheless.⁹⁵ Some degree of optimism could be inferred from the very existence of these lectures; the speakers, presumably, would not have accepted their invitations if they did not believe that preaching was still worth doing, and worth doing well. Several, moreover, explicitly expressed their confidence in the continuing value of sermons. Hall assured his listeners that they were not ‘going to a sinking profession’, Stalker continued to hold to a high ‘ideal . . . of what the pulpit ought to do, and might do’, and even Beecher declared that while others may believe ‘The pulpit has had its day’, he was confident that ‘its day has just begun’.⁹⁶

Two lecturers went so far as to devote entire discourses to this question. In his final lecture, Tucker expressed ‘optimism’ for Christianity in general and preaching in particular. While Matthew Arnold and other poets may have succumbed to ‘a spirit of unwilling doubt’, he believed that ‘the atmosphere of Christianity . . . is charged with hope’.⁹⁷ As the primary means of communicating Christianity to the world, there is nothing that can ‘take the place of preaching in the public mind’.⁹⁸ Simpson’s final lecture of 1878 is entitled ‘Is the Modern Pulpit a Failure?’ He is very precise in how he defines his terms, taking care to distinguish ‘between failures in the pulpit and the failure of the pulpit itself’.⁹⁹ When taken in the first sense, the ‘failure’ is undeniable, as there have undoubtedly been ineffective or even incompetent preachers; when taken in the second, however, the answer is more nuanced. He acknowledges that, for any number of reasons, ‘the pulpit has not accomplished all that could be desired’, but he also believes that it ‘possesses a wonderful vitality’ and continues to hold a position of ‘influence . . . over the popular mind’, qualities that are ‘still greatly needed’ in the final quarter of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁰

There are a number of ways in which historians might now assess this ‘vitality’. One approach could be to compare the theories presented in these lectures to those delivered by non-Dissenters or intended for non-Dissenting audiences. Texts for such a study might include preaching manuals by Anglicans¹⁰¹ and

⁹⁵ Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, Second Series, p. 27; Pierson, *The Divine Art of Preaching*, p. 152.

⁹⁶ Hall, *God’s Word Through Preaching*, p. 232; Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*, p. 23; Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, Second Series, p. 28.

⁹⁷ Tucker, *The Making and the Unmaking of the Preacher*, pp. 202, 222.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁹⁹ Simpson, *Lectures on Preaching*, p. 300.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 301, 324, 329, 331.

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Charles John Ellicott, ed., *Homiletical and Pastoral Lectures* (London, 1879) and William Gresley, *Ecclesiastes Anglicanus: Being a Treatise on Preaching as Adapted to a Church of England Congregation* (London, 1835).

Roman Catholics,¹⁰² and perhaps even the Yale lectures by Bostonian Phillips Brooks and New York minister David Hummell Greer.¹⁰³ Brooks and Greer could be particularly intriguing subjects; they were the only two Episcopalians to deliver Yale lectures in the nineteenth century, and their volumes can serve as case studies in how ministers might adapt their ideas to audiences and occasions in a tradition other than their own.

One might also extend the genre study begun here into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The Yale series has continued, with minimal interruptions, for nearly 150 years. Other series sponsored by Protestant Dissenting institutions include the Charles Spurgeon Lectures on Biblical Preaching at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City and the Heritage Preaching Lectures at Heritage College and Seminary, an evangelical Baptist school in Ontario. The very existence of these lectures suggests a level of institutional investment in the future of the sermon; it would be interesting to gauge the extent to which optimism comes across in the lectures as well. One might also—and perhaps more importantly—examine the sermons themselves. A natural follow-up to this project, for example, would be an article examining the sermons delivered by these lecturers, identifying common themes and assessing the extent to which their practices measured up to their theories.

Valuable as the sermons and lectures assessed here are as sources, they share a significant limitation. Almost all of them were delivered by white men, so we need to look elsewhere to examine the contributions that women and people of colour have made to Protestant Dissenting preaching. A relatively small number of articles have been published in recent years and most of the major monographs date at least to the turn of the millennium,¹⁰⁴ so these are subjects that are ripe for further study.¹⁰⁵

Additional opportunities arise if the scholarly scope is expanded beyond the English-speaking world. In 1857 and 1912, Henry C. Fish and Edwin Charles Dargan published introductions to those whom they regarded as among the most important European preachers of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁶ There appears to be little scholarship, in English at least, either on these individual

¹⁰² John Henry Newman 'University Preaching', in *The Idea of a University* (London, 1852); Thomas Potter, *Sacred Eloquence: The Theory and Practice of Preaching* (Dublin, 1866).

¹⁰³ Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching* (New York, 1877); David Hummell Greer, *The Preacher and His Place* (New York, 1895).

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*; Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons, 1850–1979* (San Francisco, CA, 1998); and Cleophus LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching* (Louisville, KY, 2000).

¹⁰⁵ Some of the most recent publications include Patricia Bizzell, 'Frances Willard, Phoebe Palmer, and the Ethos of the Methodist Woman Preacher', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 36 (2006), 377–98 and Christopher Z. Hobson, 'The Lord is a Man of War: John Jasper, Covenant, and Apocalypse', *African American Review*, 44 (2011), 619–31.

¹⁰⁶ Henry C. Fish, *Pulpit Eloquence of the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1857); Edwin Charles Dargan, *A History of Preaching*. Vol. II (New York, 1912).

figures or the broader European Protestant preaching tradition.¹⁰⁷ While the number of authors and texts may not be as extensive as what can be found in Britain and North America, it ought to be possible to assess how far the developments assessed in these chapters were either informed or paralleled by Protestant traditions in other languages.

The Protestant Dissenting pulpit, then, was diverse in the nineteenth century, and it continues to be diverse today. Technological developments have made it possible to study audio and video recordings as well as manuscripts and printed texts, and new genres continue to emerge as well. In the Introduction to *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, the most recent of the Yale lectures to be published, Thomas G. Long writes that we now have not only 'Multimedia sermons', but also 'first-person sermons, musical sermons, dialogue sermons, sermons preached from bar stools, silent sermons', and 'many other experiments' in preaching.¹⁰⁸ Opportunities for research therefore abound as well. Richard Altick once noted that 'No scholar ever has to peer around for something to do'; those working in this area of religious studies will certainly have enough material to keep them occupied for many years.¹⁰⁹

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¹⁰⁸ Thomas G. Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope* (Louisville, KY, 2009), p. xiv.

¹⁰⁹ Richard Altick, *The Art of Literary Research*, 3rd edn., rev. John J. Fenstermaker (New York 1981), p. 141.

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Part IV

Activism

Evangelism, Revivals, and Foreign Missions

Andrew R. Holmes

Nineteenth-century Protestant Dissent in the North Atlantic world had a dynamism and cultural importance redolent of mid-seventeenth-century Britain. After stagnating for most of the eighteenth century, political and social convulsions after 1770 provided the context and part of the explanation for an unprecedented growth of voluntary Protestantism. The short-lived downfall of the Catholic Church in France during the revolution stimulated among Protestants a vision of a world made Christian, that human effort could bring about the millennial reign of Christ foretold in Revelation 20. This hopeful and progressive vision would dominate Protestant Dissent for the rest of the century, not least because the 1790s saw the formation of practical missionary schemes to achieve the conversion of the world. The expansion of evangelical religion this represented revived and transformed Dissent. Though a focus on personal conversion—the new birth or ‘born-again’ Christianity—was the spiritual and experiential heart of this movement, it was also active, flexible, and enthusiastic, and the commitment of its adherents to extending the gospel through a variety of means would produce both converts and controversy. The routinization of charisma that followed the enthusiasm of the first half of the nineteenth century meant that Nonconformity became increasingly respectable and middle class, yet the evangelistic and revivalist impulse would remain and the twentieth century began with an outbreak of revival in Wales and the beginnings of Pentecostalism in the United States. Generally speaking, the interrelationship between missions and revival throughout this period was based on a progressive and hopeful vision of a world transformed by the gospel and won for Christ. Though respectability and business methods came to characterize late nineteenth-century Nonconformity, the religious populism unleashed in the late eighteenth century would remain a distinctive feature of Protestant Dissent, especially in the religious

free-market of the United States. Matters were different in the United Kingdom and Canada, though respect for tradition did not extinguish the religious fervour of revivalism. It is significant that British Unitarianism, one of the few branches of Dissent little affected by evangelicalism, did not experience significant growth during the nineteenth century.

Once seen as irrational and led by charlatans, religious revivals are now seen as complex and ambiguous phenomena that have been the cause of controversy among those who experienced them and those who have subsequently tried to explain them. Some revivals have been spontaneous, others organized; some have affected local communities, others nations; some have been short-lived, others long-lasting. In comparison with personal conversion, revivals are 'corporate, experiential events', moments of intensified experience that are sometimes accompanied by strange physical manifestations, extraordinary occurrences, conflicts over the authority to interpret events, and the production of new religious forms and organizations.¹ Revivals, of course, predated the late eighteenth century and were often associated with Calvinists. They were important for early-modern Presbyterians whose experience centred on the rituals of the communion season, whereas for Congregationalists, especially in New England, revival focused on the preaching of the word. As Jonathan Edwards had discovered, the desires of religious professionals and the forces unleashed by revival did not always correspond and the Great Awakening ended in divisions and recrimination among Calvinists.

The revivals of the late eighteenth century owed much to a new tradition of Dissent, Methodism. In comparison with Calvinist awakenings, Methodist revivals were Arminian in theology, promoted by lay women and men, characterized by emotional excess and sudden conversions, and associated with various innovations. Scholars on both sides of the Atlantic have grappled with explaining this Methodist revolution, with much of the debate centring on whether to prioritize demand or supply-side explanations; either the social and political upheaval of the 1790s, or the ability of Methodism itself to exploit the opportunities on offer. The twentieth-century academic debate over the growth of evangelical Nonconformity was stimulated in large measure by E.P. Thompson and his Marxist analysis of Methodist experience in England. Yet as David Hempton has demonstrated, such a national focus does not account for the international growth of evangelical Nonconformity, a product of both exogenous and endogenous factors. It is certainly the case that the 1790s saw upheaval on an almost unprecedented scale in Europe as well as the explosion of revivalist Protestantism and the emergence of Protestant missionary activity. Though there had been Methodist and Baptist expansion in the southern states of America in the 1770s and 1780s, it was in the Old World

¹ M.J. McClymond, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religious Revivals in America*, 2 vols (Westport, CT, 2007) I: pp. xx, xxii–iv.

that revival gained momentum in the 1790s with Methodist expansion in Yorkshire, south-west England, and the north of Ireland, in addition to the growth of evangelical Independency in Scotland. The first decade of the nineteenth century saw the United States become synonymous with religious enthusiasm, especially on the western frontier. Between 1799 and 1801, the revivalist preacher Lorenzo Dow became the first American-born revivalist to explicitly evangelize the Old World, and in Britain he helped stimulate camp meetings and encouraged the formation of the Primitive Methodists in 1811. This signalled an important new development that would gradually grow in importance over the course of the century—the education of Old World Dissent in the religious forms and techniques of the New.

The so-called Second Great Awakening in the United States from 1795 to 1835 had a profound impact on American life, dividing Protestants into religious elites and populists, a conflict decisively won by the latter.² The populism of Baptists and Methodists overturned the colonial dominance of Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Anglicans. The spectacular growth of these new groups may be traced to a number of sources, most obviously the pressures of the age of revolutions, and can be characterized by diversity and complexity. Yet they shared a common evangelical identity, partook of the territorial and market expansion of the United States, and benefited from a burgeoning print-culture. Especially noteworthy was the importance of women and children; for every male convert, there were two females, and women were indispensable as facilitators of religious societies and itinerant preachers. The importance of this revival cannot be underestimated in terms of the long-term history of the United States. Mark Noll points out that between 1815 and 1914, ‘the churches of North America experienced expansion all but unprecedented in the modern history of Christianity’, an expansion marked by innovation and voluntary effort but also by failures, antagonisms, and fragmentation.³ Indeed, 1800 marks the lowest point for religious affiliation in the United States; between then and 1950, the number of Protestants increased 143-fold and the increase of affiliation was five times larger than the overall population growth.⁴ In short, the Second Great Awakening ‘provided the impetus for nationwide social and political reform, and displayed an activism and energy perhaps unparalleled in American history’.⁵

² The following discussion is based on David W. Kling, ‘Second Great Awakening’, in McClymond, *Encyclopaedia*, I: pp. 384–9.

³ M.A. Noll, ‘“Christian America” and “Christian Canada”’, in S.J. Stein, ed., *The Cambridge History of Religions in America—Volume 2: 1790–1945* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 359.

⁴ M.J. McClymond, ‘Diversity, Revival, Rivalry, and Reform: Protestant Christianity in the United States’ in *ibid.*, p. 225.

⁵ Kling, ‘Second Great Awakening’, p. 386.

The spectacular beginnings of the awakening are often traced to Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in August 1801.⁶ This was not the first camp meeting, but it became the most recognized, and though it is often interpreted as a product of the frontier, it built upon pre-existing religious structures and traditions. Around 10,000 converged on the Presbyterian meeting house, prepared to camp outdoors, and it was the sense of community this created that increased the intensity of experience and the numbers involved. The Presbyterian minister, James McGready, invited a Methodist preacher, John McGee, to address the gathering at his Red River congregation and it was McGee's address that unleashed a remarkable emotional response that had not been characteristic of previous Presbyterian gatherings. The rapid spread of the movement along the Gasper River Valley converged at Cane Ridge with a separate movement among Baptists in central Kentucky, which led to extraordinary scenes, emotional excess, and the suspension of religious and social norms. For the next two years, revival spread across the South and was reinforced by the separate efforts of Methodists. Indeed, the outbreak of revival benefited primarily Methodists and Baptists who were flexible and attractive enough to meet the demands of the awakened. One commentator has noted that the Methodist Episcopal Church from the outset 'was revivalistic in its constitution, program, structure, style, theology, and rhetoric'.⁷ It was expansive yet also had the structures to organize converts and sustain an intense sense of community through love feasts, female involvement, camp meetings, and itinerant preachers. Methodism grew from fewer than 1,000 members in 1770 to 34 per cent of the total church membership in the United States by 1850; the Baptists comprised 20 per cent in 1850.

The emotionalism and perceived chaos of the revival made Presbyterians uneasy and many withdrew from the movement; revival supporters, on the other hand, formed the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1810. This specifically Presbyterian response is a reminder that revival could also be restrained, and it was this form that flourished in the long-standing social structures of New England and was associated with Timothy Dwight, Lyman Beecher, and Asahel Nettleton. Restrained revival was also the dominant version in Britain, even among Baptists, Congregationalists, and Methodists. Yet even here, the conservatism of the Methodist Conference was not reflected among Cornish Methodists or evangelicals in Wales. Between 1807 and 1809 tensions over camp meetings, which were banned by Conference, led to the formation of the Primitive Methodists in 1811 who continued to attract the lower orders and who maintained a revivalist fervour.

⁶ Ellen Eslinger, 'Cane Ridge Revival', in McClymond, *Encyclopaedia*, I, pp. 88–91; John Wolfe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Nottingham, 2006), pp. 53–9.

⁷ R.E. Richey, 'Methodist Revivals', in McClymond, *Encyclopaedia*, I, p. 272.

The evangelical impulse of British Nonconformity was, as John Wolffe has noted, in some respects better expressed through the formation of societies rather than by revivals. Indeed, it was in Britain that voluntary religious societies were first established to evangelize the heathen overseas and to spread gospel literature and improve morality at home. For instance, the British Sunday School Union (1803) was largely Nonconformist and by 1820 had no fewer than 2,568 affiliated schools containing 274,845 pupils; in 1835, the numbers respectively were 7,842 and 909,618.⁸ Though Americans were somewhat behind British evangelicals in the formation of voluntary societies, they shared the same desire and quickly matched the Old World. One of the main features of the American awakening, 'in both populist and elite forms, was a focus on missionary endeavours and social reforms, including abolitionism, temperance, foreign and domestic missions, Sabbath observance, and other causes'.⁹ For instance, the American Bible Society was formed in 1816, the American Tract Society in 1825, and the American Home Missionary Society in 1826. The explosion of denominational and voluntary societies inadvertently 'served a secular purpose by creating national infrastructures' and a national culture that was at once republican and evangelical.¹⁰

Evangelism at home became a notable feature of all Dissenting groups affected by evangelicalism. As Wolffe has observed, this was the natural outgrowth of local ministry and also reflected a concern with the frontier, which was not merely geographical, but also linguistic, cultural, social, and religious. It encompassed the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Catholic Ireland, Native Americans, enslaved blacks, and the urban working class. The economic margins of rapidly growing urban centres were a particularly important sphere of home mission in the United Kingdom. Inspired by Thomas Chalmers's efforts during the 1810s in St John's Parish, Glasgow, David Naismith formed the Glasgow City Mission in 1826 and a London City Mission was formed in 1835. In similar terms, the massive territorial expansion of the United States before 1865 stimulated American evangelicals to renew their efforts to Christianize the seemingly ever-increasing population of the country. The civilization and Christianization of the west was especially imperative owing to the fear of large-scale Catholic immigration from Europe. Lyman Beecher was convinced that 'the West is destined to be the great central power of the nation, and under heaven, must affect powerfully the cause of free institutions and the liberty of the world'. The west was youthful and exuberant, and 'if she carries with her the elements of her preservation, the experiment will be glorious—the joy of the nation—the joy of the whole earth, as she rises in the majesty of her intelligence and benevolence, and enterprise,

⁸ Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism*, p. 156.

⁹ McClymond, 'Diversity, Revival, Rivalry, and Reform', p. 237.

¹⁰ Noll, "Christian America" and "Christian Canada", pp. 362–3.

for the emancipation of the world'.¹¹ The same concern with the west also affected Canadian Nonconformists. Initially the effort was directed at the conversion of the First Nations, but became increasingly about providing for the needs of the expanding settler population. In the long run, this effort had the effect of producing church union—in 1875 four Presbyterian groups formed the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and in 1884 four groups of Methodists formed the Methodist Church in Canada.

Missions in the United States were also directed at the conversion of Native Americans and black slaves. In the first instance, the effort was initially successful but ended in bitterness; in the second it was utterly eclipsed by the self-determination of the slaves themselves. Mission to Native Americans in Kansas and Oklahoma was inevitably shaped by cultural superiority, but this was leavened by a common humanity.¹² Mission was particularly successful among the Cherokee, but after Congress established a Civilization Fund in 1819, these missions were more closely connected with government policy and associated with some of the worst excesses of state policy against the Native Americans, especially their forced removal from ancestral lands. Most notoriously, the Cherokee were uprooted from their homeland by the state of Georgia, despite significant opposition from missionaries and the fact that they had been declared a Christian nation by the War Department in 1825 after many of them had been converted. Missions to slaves were important, but they were fatally compromised by slavocracy in the southern states. Instead, self-organized slave missions to slaves were crucial in the conversion of African Americans to Christianity before 1861, and among 'no other peoples of non-European lineage did nineteenth-century Christianity make such colossal numerical gains'.¹³ Evangelicalism especially offered slaves a form of religion flexible enough to incorporate aspects of their African heritage, access to revival events where they mixed with white Christians, and an emotional outlet for their concerns through spirituals. The importance of Christianity to slaves was underlined once the fires of revival had subsided and black congregations and churches were established. Yet the legacy of this conversion was problematic for white slave-owners. After revivalist religion and political radicalism were linked by some in the Nat Turner rebellion of 1831, there was a widespread desire to regulate more thoroughly the religious instruction and meeting places of slaves. Despite this, black membership of the Methodist church grew from 65,000 in 1835 to 217,000 in 1860.¹⁴

¹¹ Lyman Beecher, *A Plea for the West* (Cincinnati, OH, 1835), pp. 11–12.

¹² B.J. Gundlach, 'Early American Missions from the Revolution to the Civil War', in M.I. Klauber and S.M. Manetsch, eds., *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions* (Nashville, TN, 2008), pp. 69–75.

¹³ P.L. Barlow, 'Religious and Geographical Expansion', in Stein, ed., *Religions in America*, p. 129.

¹⁴ Gundlach, 'Early American Missions', p. 77.

One of the reasons the Civilization Fund pushed churches towards a relationship with the state was because financial contributions to home mission had been adversely affected by the attraction of overseas mission. Evangelicalism was the driving force of nineteenth-century Protestant mission.¹⁵ Once more, it was British Dissenters in the 1790s who led the way with the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, closely followed in 1795 by the London Missionary Society and societies in Edinburgh and Glasgow the following year. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM) was established in 1810, with Baptist and Methodist societies in 1814 and 1820. Despite the short time lag, it was in the realm of foreign missions that a transatlantic evangelical vision was most apparent. According to Andrew Porter, British missionaries 'saw themselves more frequently as collaborators in an international enterprise in which the principals were Protestant colleagues drawn from the many Atlantic communities'. Though national interest played its part, 'they were actually engaged in something that regularly cut across the lines of national competition and transcended national divides'.¹⁶ These transatlantic connections were made at the expense of links with Continental Europe, and in this development can be seen the beginning of British-American hegemony in Protestant missions. The desire to not only convert but also to civilize non-western peoples was present from the start. Even in anti-imperialist America, the close relationship between foreign mission and the mission of America in the world became a prominent trope in mid-twentieth-century scholarship, though in recent times missionary imperialism and the spread of western values has been seen less as a virtue and more as a serious flaw.

It is important for two reasons to underline the fact that modern Protestant missions began among the Nonconformist laity. First, it demonstrates how the fall of the old regime in Europe enthused ordinary believers to take up the missionary challenge. The Baptist William Carey was animated by a confidence and hope founded on the atoning death of Christ.

It is from the same source that I expect the fulfilment of all the prophecies and promises respecting the universal establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world, including the total abolition of idolatry, mohammedanism, infidelity, socinianism, and all the political establishments in the world; the abolition also of war, slavery, and oppression, in all their ramifications. It is on this ground that I pray for, and expect, the peace of Jerusalem; not merely the cessation of

¹⁵ Brian Stanley, 'Christian Missions, Antislavery and the Claims of Humanity, c. 1813–1973', in Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley, eds., *The Cambridge History of Christianity—Volume 8: World Christianities, c.1815–c.1914* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 443–57.

¹⁶ Andrew Porter, 'Church History, History of Christianity, Religious History: Some Reflections on British Missionary Enterprise since the Late Eighteenth Century', *Church History*, 71 (2002), 569.

hostilities between Christians of different sects and connexions, but that genuine love which the gospel requires, and which the gospel is so well calculated to produce.¹⁷

Second, it bequeathed to the first generation of missionaries a less deferential attitude towards established structures that was reinforced by their background in the *petite bourgeoisie*. This was acknowledged by one of the evangelical Anglicans of the Clapham Sect, Henry Thornton, who in September 1795 informed John Venn about the recent formation of the London Missionary Society: 'what a striking thing it is that a Bishop of London is hardly able (as I suspect) to scrape a few hundred Pounds together for the Missionary Plans in his hands among all the people of the Church establishment & that £10,000 shd be raised in such a few days by the Irregulars who are so much poorer as Class of People than the others.'¹⁸ The voluntary character of the earliest missionary societies began to be eroded from the early 1820s as denominational interests were asserted; both the London Missionary Society and the American Board began as interdenominational societies but became predominately Congregational.

Missionaries had a fluctuating and ambiguous relationship with the structures of the British Empire. For instance, Carey saw the collapse of church establishments as a consequence of the conversion of the world and he went first to the Danish colony of Serampore. However, he gradually made peace with the British imperial connection in the guise of the East India Company who hired him as professor of oriental languages. In similar terms, William Knibb's well-known campaign against West Indian slavery mixed unambiguous criticism of the established order, including the Church of England, with an understanding of the British Empire as a means of promoting justice and liberty.

But amidst all, the piety and affection of the Christian slaves had supported the missionaries, and they anticipated spending an eternity with them, where none could offer molestation. He had for nearly eight years trod the burning soil of that island, and often had that meeting been gratified with the tidings of success; but all now had passed away, and they had hung their harps on the willows. Axes and hammers had demolished their chapels; a Church Colonial Society had been formed; the ministers were threatened with destruction; and infidels, clergymen, and magistrates, had been combined to banish Christianity from the island. He could assure the meeting that slaves would never be allowed to worship God till slavery had been abolished. Even if it were at the risk of his connexion with the

¹⁷ William Carey to Eustace Carey [sister], 16 December 1831, in Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey* (London, 1836), p. 568.

¹⁸ Cited in Elizabeth Elbourne, 'The Foundation of the Church Missionary Society: The Anglican Missionary Impulse', in John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor, eds., *The Church of England c. 1689–c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 247.

Society, he would avow this; and if the friends of missions would not hear him, he would turn and tell it to his God; nor would he ever desist till this greatest of curses were removed, and 'glory to God in the highest' inscribed on the British flag.¹⁹

Indeed, as noted by Brian Stanley, the spread of 'commerce and Christianity' for David Livingstone and other Nonconformist missionaries was not about the expansion of western imperialism but the development of self-sustaining indigenous communities that would help prepare the way for the unfettered spread of the gospel. The international missionary conferences at New York in 1854 and Liverpool in 1860 prioritized the formation of indigenous churches, though the discussion was ambiguous and the debate about whether denominational structures were necessary was side-stepped at Liverpool.²⁰ Yet this vision often worked out in practice, though it did often entail a loss of identity among native converts. The first mission of the ABCFM to the Sandwich Islands, which began in 1820, was a remarkable success. By 1840, 'the mission could boast having committed the Hawaiian language to writing, translated parts of the Bible, enrolled thousands in schools, and guided the native government to enact laws against prostitution, drunkenness, profanation of the Sabbath, and gambling'. Thirteen years later there were 22,000 communicants out of an island population of 100,000.²¹

The unprecedented expansion of Protestant foreign missionary activity in the first decades of the nineteenth century was a reflection of the continued importance of religious revivalism. By the 1820s, revival was increasingly organized. The person most associated with this process was Charles Grandison Finney, who had been converted on 7 October 1821 and was ordained a Presbyterian minister in July 1824. Finney was the link between the camp revivals of the early nineteenth century and the business-like revivalism of the Victorian era. Emotion and enthusiasm remained essential to the revivals he helped promote in upstate New York from the late 1820s, but Finney wished to avoid the excesses of Cane Ridge and had a desire to regulate and plan revivals using whatever means were deemed appropriate. During his early ministry in Jefferson County, New York, he developed methods he would use throughout his ministry. 'They were based on civilized decorum—directness, relevance to life, and animation, but without sensationalism. He rejected emotionalism and fanaticism.'²² After the Oneida County Revivals between 1825 and 1827, Finney embarked on a preaching tour of New York State, which led to seven years of intense revival, culminating in the spectacular awakening in Rochester between September 1830 and March 1831. By the

¹⁹ 'Baptist Mission. Home Proceedings. Annual Meeting', *Baptist Magazine*, 24 (1832), 325.

²⁰ Stanley, 'Christian Missions', pp. 452–4.

²¹ Gundlach, 'Early American Missions', pp. 82, 85.

²² K.J. Hardman, 'Finney, Charles Grandison', in McClymond, *Encyclopaedia*, I: p. 171.

mid-1830s he had settled into a Presbyterian congregation in New York, though he soon withdrew from the denomination and became pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle that was erected especially for him by his supporters. In 1835 he became professor and later president of the newly formed Oberlin College, which became synonymous with revivals and abolition.

Finney was remarkably successful and famous, but his methods provoked criticism, especially his use of certain means to promote revivals, his so-called 'new measures'. Finney became disillusioned with the traditional Reformed understanding of revival, which he believed misconstrued the sovereignty of God. He argued instead that a revival 'is not a miracle, or dependent on a miracle in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means'.²³ Conservative Calvinist evangelicals were familiar with the traditional 'means of grace' but the means Finney had in mind included itinerancy, women-led meetings, pointed and colloquial preaching, protracted prayer meetings, and 'anxious benches' at the front of the meeting where individuals fearful about their eternal fate were invited to receive special prayer and attention. 'What was constant was the boldness, frenetic activity, emphasis on public pressures, and general readiness to experiment that marked the exponents of new-measure revivalism.' This revivalism posed no problems for Methodists but caused a serious headache for Calvinists who maintained that a revival was 'prayed down' rather than 'worked up'.²⁴ The problem for them was not the use of means as such but the type of means employed and where they fitted into the scheme of salvation, and revivalism contributed to the Old and New School division among Presbyterians in the United States in 1837–8. Finney's opponents, such as Lyman Beecher and Ashael Nettleton, rebuked him 'for being judgemental and harsh toward fellow ministers, exhibiting spiritual pride, using crude language in the pulpit, allowing women to pray publicly alongside men, and embarrassing people by praying for them by name'.²⁵ Supporters of revival in the United Kingdom shared Beecher and Nettleton's caution, but were nonetheless influenced by Finney, especially through his widely circulated *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*. In the late 1830s, Baptist numbers increased, revivals occurred at Kilsyth in Scotland, and Wales experienced what was dubbed 'Finney's Revival' between 1839 and 1843. During the 1840s, Finney himself began to express reservations about his brand of revivalism. He was concerned that 'the true revival spirit has been in a great measure grieved away from the church, and as far as my observation and knowledge extend, efforts to promote revivals of

²³ C.G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, ed. W.G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, MA, 1960), p. 13.

²⁴ Richard Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790–1865* (Westport, CT, 1978), pp. 8–9.

²⁵ K.J. Hardman and M.J. McClymond, 'Anti-Revivalism, History and Arguments of', in McClymond, *Encyclopaedia*, I: p. 24.

religion have become so mechanical, there is so much policy and machinery, so much dependence upon means and measures, so much of man and so little of God, that the character of revivals has greatly changed within the last few years, and the true spirit of revivals seems to be fast giving way before this legal, mechanical method of promoting them'.²⁶

The late 1850s saw a dramatic manifestation of how significant revivals were to Protestant Dissenters on both sides of the Atlantic. The awakening began in the United States and, according to Kathryn Long, proved to be the closest to a truly national revival in the country's history. It did not focus on an individual revivalist but was sustained by prayer meetings led by the laity, especially businessmen who efficiently organized them. The first such meeting was the Fulton Street Prayer Meeting, formed in New York City on 23 September 1857 by Jeremiah Lanphier, a city missionary. The financial panic between October and December 1857 provided an important stimulus to revival and the secular press proved essential in creating a sense of a unified and extensive movement, especially at its height between February and April 1858. Over 474,000 new church members were added in three years, and, once more, the Baptists and Methodists were especially affected. The revival took other forms elsewhere, including camp meetings in southern Canada, revivals on college campuses, and awakenings among African Americans. The intense focus on individual conversion was expressed through one of the most popular hymns of the revival, 'Just As I Am':

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
...
Just as I am, thou wilt receive;
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Controversial issues such as slavery were deliberately ignored and the American revival 'had very little direct social or ethical impact' and instead 'marked a public triumph of socially conservative revivalism'.²⁷ The focus on prayer, publicity, and organization made revivalism business-like and set the context for Moody's orderly revivalism.

The revival did not remain in North America but spread to Presbyterians in Ulster and Scotland, Nonconformists in England and Wales, and Continental

²⁶ C.G. Finney, 'Letters On Revivals—No. 21', *The Oberlin Evangelist*, 7 (1845), 205.

²⁷ K.T. Long, *The Revival of 1857–8: Interpreting an American Religious Awakening* (New York, 1998), p. 95.

Europe and white-settler communities within the British Empire. Though the revivals shared certain family resemblances, denominational, social, and economic factors helped shape how they were experienced in particular locations. For example, in north-east Scotland there were three types of revival working in parallel between 1858 and 1862—in the sophisticated urban context of Aberdeen, there was an orderly ‘modern revival’ reminiscent of Moodyite revivalism; in the rural hinterland, the revival was in the traditional form of Presbyterian communion seasons that followed the patterns of country life; while in the fishing villages of the east coast, violent and short-lived revivals were the norm and reflected the precariousness of fishing and the heightened supernaturalism of the close-knit coastal communities.²⁸ The revival was especially important to the Protestant community of north-east Ireland who found themselves on an island dominated by Catholics.²⁹ The 1859 revival mobilized more people than any other event in the region between 1798 and 1912, and it was reported that over 100,000 individuals had been converted. The revival attracted significant international interest and for evangelicals throughout Britain and Ireland came to represent an ideal type of revival that they hoped would answer the mounting problems of urbanization and religious indifference. Apart from a handful of notable critics, most evangelical clergymen supported the revival and 1859 did not create a cleavage within Presbyterianism between pro- and anti-revival factions.

Revivals also occurred throughout the American Civil War, especially in the winter of 1863–4.³⁰ Missionary work among the troops was a priority for most churches and was more attractive than foreign mission as it was near at hand, cost effective, and offered a realistic prospect of success. It also promoted various forms of Christian patriotism, which in the North was channelled through the United States Sanitary Commission and the United States Christian Commission, chaired by an Irish Presbyterian immigrant, George Hay Stuart. The latter employed paid agents and thousands of voluntary workers to organize prayer meetings and distribute literature provided by the American Bible Society and American Tract Society. Southern efforts were channelled through churches, especially the Methodists. Inevitably, the revivals were masculine events led by chaplains or evangelists from different denominations. Between 100,000 and 200,000 converts were gained from the Union army, and around 150,000 in the smaller Confederate army. Military commanders welcomed missionaries and revivalists, as converted soldiers were good for discipline and morale.

²⁸ K.S. Jeffrey, *When the Lord Walked the Land: The 1858–62 Revival in the North East of Scotland* (Carlisle, 2002).

²⁹ A.R. Holmes, ‘The Ulster Revival of 1859: Causes, Controversies and Consequences’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 63 (2012), 488–515.

³⁰ D.W. Stowell, ‘Civil War Revivals’, in McClymond, *Encyclopaedia*, I: pp. 117–21; R.M. Miller, Religion and the Civil War’, in Stein, ed., *Religions in America*, pp. 203–21.

The mid-century revivals injected vitality and provided a golden age of religious awakening. One of the most important outcomes was how evangelicals increasingly planned and organized revivals along the lines of a business rather than interpreting them as sudden outbreaks of religious fervour. These modern revivals were designed to appeal to the better-off sections of urban, commercial, and industrial society increasingly worried about social problems and intellectual challenges to conservative Christianity. According to the Free Church of Scotland minister, Robert Rainy, writing in 1860, 'To one who thoughtfully considers the spiritual condition of great masses of our population, it will probably appear, that little hope can be entertained of their being gathered into any Christian fold, except in connection with movements of common conviction and feeling, substantially of a revival character.' These movements would cause problems for the churches, but they would be necessary for future growth.³¹

The person who encapsulated this revivalist assault on the evils of modernity was the quintessential transatlantic personality, Dwight Lyman Moody. He was involved with the United States Christian Commission during the Civil War and was particularly associated with the Young Men's Christian Association and mission work in Chicago. He gained international prominence as a consequence of his evangelistic campaigns in Britain and Ireland between 1873 and 1875. Beginning in the northern English cities of Liverpool, York, and Sunderland, his campaign ignited in Edinburgh and Glasgow before he led a successful crusade in Ireland. He returned to the United States and began a two-year campaign in Brooklyn in October 1875. Among the hallmarks of his revivalism were pragmatism, organization, and earnestness. Moody focused on the love of God and summarized the Gospel as the three Rs—'Ruin by sin, Redemption by Christ, and Regeneration by the Holy Ghost'. Sentimentality was another important aspect of Moody's revivals, reinforced by the sacred songs and solos of his accompanist, Ira B. Sankey, and his meetings provided the space for men to experience emotion in a non-judgemental environment. In a perceptive analysis, James Stalker noted in 1908 that Moody was 'full of activity and business capacity'. His theology 'had a wide range, not omitting the sterner aspects of truth, but culminating in the love of God'. Stalker was relieved that physical manifestations did not characterize Moody's work and made telling reference to those most affected by his ministry: 'The classes chiefly affected by his mission were not the poor and ignorant, though these ultimately benefitted largely from the labours of those in whom the desire for altruistic effort had been begotten, but those who, though connected with churches, were still undecided and living in a prayerless and worldly life.'³²

³¹ Robert Rainy, 'Revivals', *North British Review*, 33 (1860), 512.

³² James Stalker, 'Revivals of Religion', in James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 13 vols (Edinburgh, 1908–26), X: p. 755.

Revival was less about making new converts and more about reviving the spiritually lukewarm who were already connected in some way with the evangelical subculture.

Generally speaking, contemporaries saw Moody as a social conservative whose revivalist religion pacified the lower orders. The concern with reinforcing decent society by instilling the demand to live a sanctified life against worldliness can be seen in Canada. The Canadian equivalents of Moody and Sankey were Hugh T. Crossley and John E. Hunter. They made an ideal double act—Crossley was ‘urban, scientific, courteous, respectable’, whereas Hunter was ‘rural, emotional, confrontational, and flamboyant’. Hunter was an entertainer who theatrically opposed the theatre, alcohol, cards, and dancing. ‘Thanks to Crossley and Hunter, quiet and order prevailed in cities and towns across the Dominion. Souls were saved, bar rooms emptied; wives, mothers, and daughters rejoiced. And many of the local elites were happy too. After all, they reaped the benefits of a quiet town populated by more orderly workers.’³³

Conversion in this context was strictly individualistic and entailed a move to respectable behaviour as well as a state of grace. However, societal norms are subject to change and there would be problems in the following century as mainline Dissenting denominations increasingly adopted forms of the Social Gospel. Though many evangelicals would become very suspicious of this movement, David Bebbington has shown how it was the natural outgrowth of the missionary activism of nineteenth-century evangelicals and their determination to tackle social problems. Nor was revivalism necessarily socially conservative. In Britain during the 1870s, Moody’s brand of revivalism was connected with popular radicalism as it ‘symbolised the possibility of a more democratic social order’, and the zeal of the revival was channelled into political protest.³⁴ Even if this was short-lived and the answer to society’s ills was crippling individualism, it is obvious that the commitment of evangelical Nonconformists to grapple with the problems created by urban and industrial expansion set the scene for the development of the Social Gospel movement.

Social conservatism was shaped in the case of Moody by his personal commitment to dispensational premillennialism, which had begun to replace the postmillennial optimism of earlier evangelicals with the pessimism of a world sinking in sin. More significantly, the Holiness movement of the late nineteenth century signalled a retreat on the part of many more from the

³³ Kevin Kee, ‘“The Heavenly Railroad”: An Introduction to Crossley-Hunter Revivalism’, in G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (Montreal and Kingston, 1997), pp. 323, 335.

³⁴ John Coffey, ‘Democracy and Popular Religion: Moody and Sankey’s Mission to Britain, 1873–1875’, in E.F. Biagini, ed., *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles 1865–1931* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 93–119.

world. In addition to personal conversion, individuals were urged to experience the sanctification of the whole self and to live the 'higher life'. This emphasis emerged in the late 1830s with Phoebe Palmer and her husband Walter, both of whom were Methodists and very involved in the mid-century revival on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1835 Phoebe had established her 'Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness' and began to develop what came to be known as 'Altar Theology', an amalgamation of Wesleyan Holiness and biblical and philosophical realism.³⁵ Later in the century, Robert Pearsall Smith and Hannah Whitall Smith further popularized entire sanctification in Britain at the Brighton convention in May 1875, which attracted 8,000 Protestant leaders from across Europe. Though Robert was implicated in a scandal, the broader movement continued to grow, especially through the Keswick Convention for the Promotion of Christian Holiness. The turn inward reached its climax in the Welsh revival of 1904–5 when the experiences and methods of some, especially Evan Roberts, spilled over into a type of evangelical mysticism. Of course, the focus on heightened spiritual experience would be best expressed in the new century by Pentecostalism.

Revivalism and the turn to Holiness had a profound impact on foreign mission. Many attempts were made to harness the enthusiasm for mission created by the mid-century revivals and, according to Andrew Porter, the period between 1860 and 1914 was one of seemingly relentless expansion for Protestant missions. This occurred owing to a much improved system of global communications, comparative peace, and the rise of the so-called 'new imperialism' in Europe. There were growing numbers of Nonconformist missionaries who were different in character to their predecessors as they were increasingly middle class, female, and lay. Once more, religious enthusiasm stoked evangelical populism and provoked criticism of the accepted methods of overseas evangelism that seemed to produce a poor return for the significant money and effort invested. As a consequence, the so-called 'faith missions' emerged, beginning with Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission in 1865. These missions relied less on bureaucracies and empire, and more on divine protection and provision, and were often shaped by a pessimistic eschatology. This, in part, led them to prioritize evangelism over education and indigenization, their focus being on the salvation of the individual rather than the transformation of society. Others were committed to channelling religious enthusiasm more effectively, not least through the Student Volunteer Movement, which emerged in 1886 at Moody's Bible conference at Mount Hermon School in Northfield, Massachusetts. Led by A.T. Pierson (Presbyterian) and J.R. Mott (Methodist), its motto of 'The Evangelization of the World in this

³⁵ M.E. Dieter, 'Palmer, Phoebe Worrall', in McClymond, *Encyclopaedia*, I. pp. 315–16.

Generation' gripped their contemporaries—100,000 joined the movement and over 20,000 became full-time missionaries.

Nonconformist missionaries of the period have often been characterized as agents of cultural imperialism, the shock-troops of empire who undermined the self-confidence and self-reliance of indigenous societies, thus making them ripe for capitalist exploitation. There is certainly abundant evidence of cultural chauvinism and superiority, and the oft-quoted triumvirate of Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization was often seen by contemporaries as self-evident. Moreover, missionaries relied upon the networks of empire to get them to the mission field. Yet to say that missions and empire interacted with each other does not mean they were synonymous. The terms 'empire' and 'culture' are inherently complex and ambiguous, and the spread of the British Empire was often neither coordinated nor coherent. Furthermore, 'cultural imperialism' tends to strip indigenous groups of agency and fails to acknowledge the variety of missionary experiences and motivations, and the inherently difficult relationships between empire and missions. Ultimately, the success of missions was measured in conversions and the formation of indigenous churches, yet that process involved a seceding of power and influence on the part of the missionary. 'Only as they attended to the diversity of local cultures, adapting their message to the needs expressed by local people, did their impact grow. But the necessary condition for this was a reduction in the claims of missionary culture to dominate and control, and an increase in the likelihood that local peoples would find value for themselves in the Christianity preached to them.'³⁶

Another feature that militates against missions as simply a part of national empire building is the centrality of Anglo-American cooperation. This was increasingly expressed through various ecumenical missionary conferences—Liverpool 1860, London 1878, London 1888, New York 1900—which culminated in Edinburgh 1910. The London conference of June 1888 suffered from a number of problems, including the lack of clerical delegates and the failure to include the Student Volunteer Movement, yet 1,579 delegates from 139 countries attended and it was the first international ecumenical conference on such a scale.³⁷ In addition, it paved the way for increased British–American cooperation and marked the first time North American missionaries had taken a conspicuous role. The conference expressed evangelical unity and a conviction that modern missions would bring about the conversion of the world. At the same time, spiritual egalitarianism was emphasized and the

³⁶ Andrew Porter, "Cultural Imperialism" and Protestant Missionary Enterprise, 1780–1914', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 25 (1997), 376.

³⁷ T.A. Askew, 'The 1888 London Centenary Missions Conference: Ecumenical Disappointment or American Missions Coming of Age?', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 18 (1994), 113–18.

conference was not blind to the problems of the West and the rapacity of certain forms of imperialism. The next conference in New York in April–May 1900 was on a much greater scale. Between 160,000 and 200,000 attended, and ‘it was the largest sustained formal religious event in the history of the Republic to that date and the best-attended international missionary conference ever’. Addresses were heard from Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley, and Theodore Roosevelt; J. Pierpont Morgan was an honorary vice president and J.D. Rockefeller and his wife were honorary delegates. This time the conference took account of students and women, and addressed faith missions and world religions. Once more there was a clear vision of the unity of humanity and the power of the gospel to redeem and civilize the world. Of course, the legitimacy of western colonialism was not seriously questioned but, as noted by President Barrows, ‘It is not the best of Christianity that has always made itself most prominent and pervasive in the non-Christian world.’³⁸

Throughout the nineteenth century, Protestant Dissenters had been at the vanguard of religious revivals and missionary activity. They were the principal promoters and beneficiaries of the expansion of evangelicalism from the late eighteenth century and had a clear vision of a world won for Christ through the activity and zeal of regenerated individuals. Methodism especially, but voluntary Protestantism more generally, experienced remarkable growth in the first half of the nineteenth century. Even though endogenous replaced exogenous growth after 1850, organized evangelism and religious revival remained a fundamental component of Nonconformist experience. That said, though evangelicalism certainly revived Dissent, it also had the capacity to undermine denominational distinctiveness. Indeed, one of the legacies of the zeal and vitality of the nineteenth century was the emergence of new forms of religiosity, most notably Pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity, which would eventually supersede seemingly old-fashioned denominations. At the same time, the success of Nonconformists in spreading the gospel to the two-thirds world means that the numerical heartlands of twenty-first-century nonconformity are to be found in Africa and Asia.

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³⁸ T.A. Askew, ‘The New York 1900 Ecumenical Missionary Conference: A Centennial Reflection’, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 24 (2000), 146, 150.

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Politics and Social Reform in Britain and Ireland

Eugenio Biagini

The nineteenth century was indeed a good one for the Dissenters of the British Isles from the point of view of their political significance and impact on society as a whole. It was a long ‘century’, bookended by, respectively, the major wars and revolutions which started in the 1770s and the outbreak of the Great War in 1914. In between, there was an age of comparative peace, with many Dissenters increasingly feeling that they were on ‘the right side of history’, since they believed that they stood for the ideas of the age—individual liberty and responsibility and respect for an authority founded on the ‘objective’ basis of the Scriptures (rather than on human hierarchies and church traditions). The growth of Nonconformity in terms of its importance and relevance in economic and social life, the example of the United States (perceived as a power based on ‘Nonconformist’ principles), together with moves towards democracy all contributed towards boosting the self-confidence of those communities and churches which collectively comprised ‘Dissent’. The resulting feeling of elation and empowerment was further strengthened by the sense that the nineteenth century was putting right one of history’s great wrongs: in 1662 the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy had humiliated the Puritan wing of the Protestant movement in the British Isles, and for several generations Dissenters saw their numbers decline and their social influence wane. It was ‘the experience of defeat’, in Christopher Hill’s words.¹ In 1862, R.W. Dale—a leading light of English Dissent—could confidently reflect that ‘in . . . the two hundredth year of the operation of the Act which was to reduce all England to uniformity of religious practice, you will find it difficult to discover, not those who dissent from the teaching of the Prayer Book, but those who completely

¹ Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (London, 1984).

and thoroughly accept it'.² Already the eighteenth-century religious revivals—starting with the Methodists—had begun to reverse the decline. However, the process had proved slow and at first the Methodists themselves had been—at best—unwilling fellow-travellers with the 'Old' Dissenters, humble exiles from the Established Church, rather than proud objectors to Episcopalian despotism. Now, from the second half of the nineteenth century, at last both Old and New Dissent seemed to be marching hand in hand towards a brave new world.

Behind the involvement of evangelical Nonconformists in political and social action there was a coherent worldview, inspired by a clear theological and ecclesiological agenda which was rooted in a Congregationalist understanding of both salvation (which required personal conversion) and the nature of the church (as the gathering of the believers).³ This accounted for their preference for voluntarist, non-coercive solutions, their commitment to religious equality for all—whether Dissenters, Catholics, Jews, or other groups—in the conviction that salvation depended on a person's faith commitment, rather than on sacramentally defined membership of a territorial church. With their wide range of beliefs and theological inclinations, they shared a passion for diversity driven by conscience and a radical biblicism—the latter governing the former.⁴

THE RISE OF A HEGEMONIC GROUP?

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, despite their numerical rise, Nonconformists remained social pariahs, excluded from national institutions such as Parliament and the English universities (though not the Scottish ones), a group without even a toehold in the country's ruling élite. However, the situation began to change in 1828, when Dissenters secured political rights one year before the Catholics. Then, in 1832, the Great Reform Act granted the vote to a section of the middle class and established a system under which the vote would be gradually extended to those who were successful in either business or farming. The Parliamentary franchise for borough constituencies had previously consisted of a patchwork of franchises, mostly unrelated to income or residence and some hereditary, like the 'Freeman' qualification; while for the English counties the forty-shilling freehold empowered a wider social group, but was restricted by the difficulty of securing a property in

² R.W. Dale, *Nonconformity in 1662 and 1862: A Lecture Delivered in Willis's Room, St James's, May the 6th 1862* (London, 1862), p. 65.

³ Timothy Larsen, *Friends of Religious Equality. Nonconformist Politics in Mid-Victorian England* (Woodbridge, 1999).

⁴ Timothy Larsen, *A People of One Book. The Bible and the Victorians* (Oxford, 2011), esp. chs. 4, 6, 7, 10, and Conclusion.

freehold. In 1832 these were superseded (or supplemented) by the introduction of a range of rate-paying qualifications designed to reward social mobility and responsibility.⁵ In 1835 the Municipal Corporations Act created a system of elected town councils with wide-ranging powers: they became the political environment within which Dissenter power flourished through 'democracy' (i.e., a system based on male ratepayer vote, which by 1869 was expanded to include female ratepayers as well). Within such a context Dissenters perceived both an opportunity and a duty. As R.W. Dale asserted,

The true duty of the Christian man is...to carry into municipal and political activity the law and the spirit of Christ; to resolve to his part for his fellow-townsmen and his fellow-countrymen all those blessings which municipality and a nation, justly, wisely, and efficiently governed, can secure for them; so that the 'powers' which are 'ordained of God' may fulfil the purpose for which He ordained them, and the Divine will be done by civil rulers on earth as it is done by angels and the spirits of the just in heaven.⁶

It was the beginning of a century of rapid change. Under a series of Whig and Reform governments (1830–41) the state was both responsive and sympathetic to Nonconformist demands in terms of greater participation and toleration. There followed moves towards civil rights: in 1836 Lord John Russell introduced the Marriage Act, establishing a permanent Registration of Births, Marriages, and Deaths which disregarded religious distinctions and freed Dissenters from the need to regularize weddings by temporarily conforming to the Established Church. It was a great step forward, but, by turning Dissenting marriages into legal contracts, it had the side effect of terminating the Ulster Presbyterian custom of granting divorce to couples who wished to terminate their connection.⁷

Whig policies—and indeed those of the Conservatives—were, however, inspired by a strongly erastian approach to the relationship between the churches and the state. Consequently, they had little time for ecclesiastical ambitions of autonomy and were ready to assert the government's authority over both Dissenters and established churches. With the return to power of the Tories (1841–6), this caused conflicts, the most important of which resulted in the 1843 Disruption of the Church of Scotland, when the Conservative Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel refused to countenance the decision of the evangelical majority within the General Assembly that lay patronage in church appointment be discontinued: in protest against Peel's decision, about one half of the Kirk's members and 40 per cent of its ministers left the

⁵ See John Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform, 1640–1832* (Cambridge, 1973).

⁶ R.W. Dale, 'Political and Municipal Duty', in Dale, *The Laws of Christ for Common Life* (London, 1884), p. 204.

⁷ Andrew R. Holmes, *The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice, 1770–1840* (Oxford, 2006), p. 223.

established Church of Scotland to create the Free Church of Scotland, a voluntary body which, while sharing the Kirk's confession of faith, challenged Parliament's claim to sovereignty in ecclesiastical matters and asserted instead the exclusive authority of the Assembly in spiritual matters. The Disruption had nationalist overtones, with some ministers claiming that Peel had violated the 1707 Act of Union, a view for which there was some popular support: one minister recalled exclaiming, 'on the spur of the moment, that such injustice was enough to justify Scotland in demanding the repeal of the Union. With that, to my surprise, the meeting rose as one man, waving hats and handkerchiefs, and cheering again and again'.⁸ No nationalist movement followed, but this remained 'one occasion when hundreds of thousands of ordinary men and women in Scotland challenged the authority set over them. And, unlike other Scottish rebellions, it succeeded, up to a point'.⁹ While the Free Church became solidly Liberal (and the Scottish Liberals a surrogate Scottish nationalist party), within forty years Scots had started to demand the restoration of a parliament in Edinburgh.¹⁰

More changes came in the second half of the century. First, the 1851 census indicated that, both in England as in Scotland, half the churchgoing population worshipped in Nonconformist chapels. In Wales, the proportion was even higher and in Ireland Ulster was solidly Presbyterian. Meanwhile, industrialization boosted the economic power and social influence and prestige of urban Dissent, as so many manufacturers, who seemed to be the vanguard of Britain's power in the world, were Congregationalists, Unitarians, and Quakers. Apart from industry and trade, the spheres in which Dissenters were traditionally more active were journalism and local politics. The spectacular expansion of the local newspaper press after 1855—with the appearance or development of many influential Liberal papers such as *The Leeds Mercury*, the *Newcastle Chronicle*, and the *Manchester Guardian*—was driven largely by Dissenters, often men who had made their money in industry and invested some of their profits in the local newspaper, turning it into an organ of national significance.¹¹ They were mainly Congregationalists—such as Edward Baines and Edward Miall of *The Nonconformist*—and Unitarians—such as Joseph Cowen and Edward Parry, who edited the Kidderminster Liberal newspaper, *The Shuttle*, from its foundation in 1870 to his death in 1926. The daily and weekly press became one of the media through which the

⁸ Rev. W. Wood, speaking at Langholm (Dumfries and Galloway) in January 1843, cit. in M. Fry, 'The Disruption of the Union', in S.J. Brown and M. Fry, eds., *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 42.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁰ N. Lloyd-Jones, 'Liberalism, Scottish Nationalism and the Home Rule Crisis, c.1886–93', *English Historical Review*, 129 (2014), 862–87.

¹¹ J. Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857–1868* (London, 1966), pp. 58–65.

Nonconformists achieved something like a cultural hegemony in many parts of provincial Britain.

Their influence was traditionally stronger in cities than in the countryside, and in industrial centres (where new wealth was rapidly accumulated, giving to the hard-working artisan the opportunity of establishing himself and becoming a man of property) more than in market towns (where 'old money' remained dominant). Birmingham was one of the main sites of Nonconformist religious, intellectual, economic, and political power. The city's economy was based on small-scale factories and workshops—manufacturing a wide range of products, including small arms and guns, buttons, cutlery, locks, nails, and screws—rather than on the large factories of the Lancashire cotton belt. Small scale did not mean lack of productivity or dynamism, but made for a less polarized social structure. From an early stage there was cooperation between middle and working-class reformers, both inspired by the politics of Dissent. As a social group, the latter encompassed a wide variety of incomes and lifestyles. At the upper end of the social spectrum, the political and social and economic prominence of the Dissenting community was illustrated by the fact that almost all the city's mayors from 1840 to 1880 were Nonconformist, particularly Unitarians. The city had the reputation of being 'Radical to its very centre... here artisans have seats on the governing bodies, including the Town Council, the School Board, and the Board of Guardians. If anywhere, surely in Birmingham the democracy is all powerful'.¹² As one of its MPs, the famous Quaker John Bright, once said, 'As the sea is salt [sic] wherever you taste it, so Birmingham is Liberal wherever touched'.¹³ In the intellectual and political sphere, Birmingham was the home of some of the most influential ministers of the Victorian age, social and political reformers such as George Dawson, R.W. Dale, and H.W. Crosskey. Liberal in politics as much as in theology, they refined what became known as the 'civic gospel', making it a duty to improve one's environment, and encouraging the development of social interventionist strategies to supplement the operation of the free market.

It is important to bear in mind that municipal or public action was supposed to supplement—not replace—the market, similar to the way that, in the sphere of social and political ethics, social responsibility was seen as a development from, not an alternative to, private, individual responsibility. As Dale wrote in his commentary on the *Epistle of James*,

it is to individual freedom that the revelation of future judgment appeals. Your life,—the moral character of your life,—is in your own hands, and for that the righteous eternal God will hold you, one by one, accountable. Nearly everything

¹² C. Leach, 'Democracy and Religion', *The Congregationalist*, November 1885, 841.

¹³ Cit. in *ibid.*

else has been determined for you, and is beyond the control of your will; but for your moral conduct you yourself are responsible. Most of us... had very little freedom of choice as to the trade or the profession that we should follow; but we can work honestly or dishonestly in the actual trade or profession in which we are engaged. We could not choose our work; but we can choose whether we shall be industrious or idle in the doing of it. We could not determine what our secular engagements should be; but we can make this great election—whether in these secular engagements we will recognize first of all, always and everywhere, the will of God supreme.¹⁴

Inspired by such writings, there arose a generation of municipal reformers, whose most famous representative was Joseph Chamberlain, a lapsed Unitarian. His career marked the intersection of local and national politics. The National Education League, founded in Birmingham in 1869, was almost exclusively Nonconformist and stood for the separation of state and church in the newly created rate-supported elementary schools. The League, which was chaired by Chamberlain, operated in tandem with the Central Nonconformist Committee (also a Birmingham organization), and in 1870–4 mounted a formidable opposition to the implementation of the Liberal government's newly introduced Education Act, which allowed for public financial support for religious (mainly Anglican) schools.¹⁵ Local School Board elections in England and Wales became heavily politicized, with a general alignment between Nonconformists and radical Liberalism on the one hand, and Anglicans, Catholics, and the Conservative party on the other. From the start, the education campaign had wider goals and political ambitions, and as early as 1872 Chamberlain proclaimed that the League's final aims were 'Free land, free schools and free church'—which stood for, respectively, the abolition of primogeniture and entail (which limited the sale of landed estates), free elementary education for all, and the separation of state and church through the disestablishment and disendowment of the latter.¹⁶

Confidence in this strategy had been boosted by its partial adoption in 1869 by the Liberal government headed by W.E. Gladstone. In an attempt to mitigate religious animosities in Ireland, he deprived the episcopal Church of Ireland of its privileged constitutional status and appropriated part of its endowment for the purposes of social reform. It felt like a turning point, the beginning of a new era of American-style religious equality which Dissenters wished to see extended to the rest of the United Kingdom. Their hopes had been encouraged by the sudden growth in direct political influence that they had experienced

¹⁴ R.W. Dale, *The Epistle of James and Other Discourses* (London, 1900), p. 248.

¹⁵ E.F. Biagini, *Peace, Retrenchment and Reform. Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860–1885* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 198–216.

¹⁶ Peter T. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (London and New Haven, 1994), p. 53.

from 1867, when the Parliamentary franchise in borough constituencies had been extended to all resident householders (both tenants and owners), without a property qualification. This dramatically increased the number of middle-class and artisan voters (often Dissenters) on the electoral register. Its effects were particularly significant in Scotland and Wales, which became Liberal strongholds.¹⁷ In 1877 the foundation of a national caucus for the Liberal party, the National Liberal Federation (NLF), catapulted local Nonconformist politicians into national life. Men like Chamberlain and the NLF's Secretary Francis Schnadhorst, who had previously led the Central Nonconformist Committee, began to act as power-brokers within the Liberal party. In itself, the NLF represented a projection of Dissenting practices, ideas, and politics onto the national canvas. Its representative structure replicated the Presbyterian system of church government, with its hierarchy of elected assemblies, but with a strong Congregational emphasis on local autonomy.¹⁸

Meanwhile, 'municipal socialism' continued to mobilize both private credit and public revenue to sponsor water and gas supplies, improve sewage, and much else. Its success depended on the credibility of the public sector to deliver service of a better quality and at a cheaper cost than that which private companies might provide. Thanks to Dawson's and Dale's rhetoric, reform was articulated in semi-religious language. It was as a gospel of popular emancipation, which seemed consistent with the hegemonic Gladstonian liberalism of the time, while going beyond it, almost as if it were its natural extension and the fulfilment of the expectations of justice and fair play which Gladstone had aroused.¹⁹ Indeed, local politics became Chamberlain's springboard to national fame, and his credibility as a leader depended not so much on the caucus, but on the solid reality of municipal democracy in Birmingham, then widely regarded by many radicals as a model for the rest of the country.

Other towns in the Midlands echoed its Nonconformist reforming zeal. In Wolverhampton, C.A. Berry (minister of the Queen Street Congregationalist Church, 1883–99) preached on the duty to build 'the Kingdom of God in the State', by which he meant the elected local authorities: his appeal either influenced or reflected what his community did as a matter of course, for nine of his church members secured election to the Borough Council in

¹⁷ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868–1922* (Oxford, 1980); I.G.C. Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland, 1832–1924* (Edinburgh, 1986); A.W. MacColl, *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community. Christianity and Social Criticism in the Highlands of Scotland, 1843–1893* (Edinburgh, 2006); Andrew G. Newby, *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands, 1870–1912* (Edinburgh, 2007).

¹⁸ See Barry McGill, 'Francis Schnadhorst and Liberal Party Organisation', *Journal of Modern History*, 34 (1962), 19–39; F.H. Herrick, 'The Origins of the National Liberal Federation', *Journal of Modern History*, 17 (1945), 116–29; Eugenio Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876–1906* (Cambridge, 2007), esp. p. 177.

¹⁹ M.K. Ashby, *Joseph Ashby of Tysoe 1859–1919: A Study of Village Life* (2nd edn., London, 1974), pp. 117–18.

1888–9.²⁰ A little to the south, and just west of Birmingham, Kidderminster was dominated by an industrial elite specializing in the manufacture of carpets. From them hailed many of the city fathers and leading families, such as the Naylor, Greens, and Stookes—all Congregationalist or Unitarian, with two chapels acting as powerhouses of ideas, money, and political muscle. Apart from local government, Nonconformist social activism was displayed in private philanthropy, education (for both children and adults), and the endowment of public amenities such as an art gallery in 1880 (a Quaker benefaction). Other examples are the two parks given to Birmingham in 1873–4 by Louisa Ann Ryland (of George Dawson's congregation) and Aston Hall, donated by the Unitarian iron funders and tools manufacturers Archibald and Timothy Kenrick. The latter came from a family of local philanthropists and politicians who produced, among others, William Kendrick, who married one of Chamberlain's sisters, becoming the city's mayor (1877–8) and MP (1885–9). The Kendricks were also active in the management of the General Hospital and the Nurses' Training Institution.

Besides, Nonconformists remained heavily involved in more traditional activities such as Sunday Schools. The latter sometimes became nurseries of political consciousness and activism, particularly when patronized by radical businessmen, such as the Kidderminster Baptist merchant J.P. Harvey, who championed traditional Dissenting hostility to the landed nobility, the established Church and the drink lobby. Temperance (in more or less strict forms, with many supporting teetotalism, or absolute abstinence) was a major Nonconformist social reform cause throughout the nineteenth century. The excessive consumption of alcohol was identified as the source of major social problems—including disease and crime—especially among the working class. Nonconformists campaigned tirelessly to secure from Parliament restrictive licensing legislation, with the more radical groups demanding that local authorities, instead of the magistrates, be empowered to issue licenses. The United Kingdom Alliance, which coordinated the campaign at a national level, was one of the most powerful lobbies in Victorian Britain, and, together with the Liberation Society (for the disestablishment of the church, or the 'liberation' of religion from state interference), managed to mobilize immense economic and political resources. As Dissenters approached a wide range of political and social issues as matters 'of conscience', their politics began to be caricatured by their enemies as the politics of 'the Nonconformist Conscience'. To many Dissenters, this was almost a compliment. They were happy to appropriate a notion that captured both the primacy of personal responsibility and the idea that the world was a mission field where 'true' Christians exercised practical charity and lived up to Gospel standards.

²⁰ G.W. Jones, *Borough Politics: A Study of Wolverhampton Town Council, 1888–1964* (London, 1969), p. 138.

Politicization was encouraged by the growing awareness that, for all the splendid efforts of the churches, dealing with the full extent of many social problems required state intervention.²¹ Education was a case in point. However, in this as in other areas, state or local authority action were tolerable only if the relevant public agencies were democratically run and organized, and religious discrimination against the Dissenters fully removed—which in turn created a link between democracy and disestablishment of the Church of England. The school curriculum had an inbuilt potential for social criticism, particularly when writing was taught, as well as reading. The latter was shaped by texts such as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* which contained a subversive view of society—one in which wealth meant sin, judges were corrupt, and people living in castles were wicked, while artisans and widows were the heroes and the elect.²²

Perhaps not surprisingly, such an attitude to wealth encouraged social responsibility and a concern for the workers' welfare among employers. The most famous examples are the Cadbury Brothers (Quakers) who created a model village for their employees at Bourneville, outside Birmingham, and the West Yorkshire Congregationalist Titus Salt, a successful and innovative wool manufacturer. In 1851, Salt built a whole town, Saltaire, providing his hand-picked workers with amenities and social services rarely available to the poor at the time. It was like 'a city upon a hill' (Matt., 5:14) in the midst of industrial England. Another illustration is provided by the Chivers family, the Baptist magnates of the food-processing industry based at Histon, in Cambridgeshire. At the forefront of technological improvement in their field (by 1895 they had become the first large-scale industrial canners in Europe), they were model employers who introduced profit sharing for their workers (1891) and an old-age pension scheme (1895). In 1897 they established a medical surgery to serve both factory and village, which they also provided with a fire brigade, and built a Baptist chapel. As Patrick Joyce has shown with his analysis of Lancashire factory towns, these men were not at all unusual: in fact, in the climate of economic success and religious revival of the second half of the century, there were enough of them to reshape industrial relations, their paternalistic care for their workforces going a long way towards assuaging class animosity.²³

Until the crisis of the early 1890s, which saw the beginning of trade-union militancy, employers' paternalism went hand in hand with workers' activism. Throughout the nineteenth century, leadership of the trade unions was almost

²¹ P.B. Cliff, *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England, 1780–1980* (Nutfield, 1986), pp. 148–9.

²² Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious and Factious People: John Bunyan and His Church, 1628–88* (Oxford, 1989); Eugenio Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860–1880* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 196–7.

²³ Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (London, 1980).

entirely Nonconformist. The strength of trade unionism and that of the chapel were closely linked: typical examples would be the miners both in Northumberland and Durham (mainly Methodists) and Wales (Baptist and Calvinistic Methodists), together with the short-lived but intense experience of the farm labourers union in East Anglia (Primitive Methodists). In London, the Congregationalists dominated the building trade and provided most of the leaders of the Trade Union Congress (first established in 1868). They were staunchly committed to the Liberal party and self-help, as caricatured by the socialist Robert Tressell in his novel *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* (1914). Like many historians throughout the twentieth century, he concluded that the early labour movement was influenced more by Nonconformist religion than by Marxism.

Most of these men and indeed women—who had always been prominent in chapel life and Nonconformist campaigns—were inspired by a strict biblicism. However, under the influence of liberal theology and developments in geology, biology, and other sciences in the second half of the century, some gradually rejected the evangelical views of their youth, a trajectory illustrated by the autobiographies of miners' leaders such as Thomas Burt and John Wilson.²⁴ The theological views of their latter years stressed the social side of the gospel and emptied the Cross of some of its power and significance. A later generation held on to social activism, but concluded, unsurprisingly, that they no longer had any need for Christianity. This must be borne in mind when we consider why, by the 1920s, secular ideologies started to replace religion as the main factor in shaping trade-union politics.²⁵ The bulk of the trade-union leaders remained Dissenters, but now the religious culture which had shaped the solidarity between them and many of the industrialists was shaken at both ends of the social scale.²⁶ This also reflected the erosion of Britain's economic leadership in the world, with related anxieties about declining profits and clashes over wages and conditions of employment. Meanwhile, the rise of a more assertive and rights-oriented social gospel gradually alienated the middle classes (a process exemplified by the gradual shift of Nonconformist employers like Alfred Roberts, Margaret Thatcher's father, from Liberalism to free-market Conservatism).

On the whole, the decades between 1862 and 1922 were a golden age for British Dissenters in politics. Their influence was boosted by the establishment of city universities (Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, etc.), where education was cheap and non-sectarian, the opening up of Oxford and Cambridge to

²⁴ T. Burt, *Thomas Burt, MP, DCL, Pitman and Privy Councillor. An Autobiography: With Supplementary Chapters by Aaron Watson* (London, 1924); J. Wilson, *Memories of a Labour Leader: The Autobiography of John Wilson* (London, 1910).

²⁵ Vincent, *Formation*; Biagini, *Peace, Retrenchment and Reform*, ch. 1.

²⁶ Robert Moore, *Pit-men, Preachers and Politics: The Effects of Methodism in a Durham Mining Community* (Cambridge, 1975).

non-Anglicans (1871), and the further extension of the parliamentary franchise in 1884–5 (when the vote was conferred on all the registered, resident householders in county constituencies as well as boroughs, throughout the United Kingdom). In 1868, a Nonconformist, John Bright, had been elevated to Cabinet rank in the government: it was the first time since Oliver Cromwell's days in the seventeenth century. Over the next few years a wider group of confident and assertive Nonconformists came to the fore in politics, headed by Joseph Chamberlain. By the 1890s, some of the brightest and most promising up-and-coming Liberal politicians were Dissenters, including future prime ministers such as H.H. Asquith and David Lloyd George. Meanwhile, however, the political unity of Dissent had been fractured over the question of Irish Home Rule (1886) which alienated many Nonconformist leaders, worried by the prospect of 'Rome Rule' in an autonomous Ireland, where the majority would be Roman Catholic.²⁷

IRELAND

In comparing Ireland with Britain, it is easy to emphasize apparent differences. The most obvious is the centrality of sectarianism in Irish Nonconformist politics, which apparently contrasts sharply with its absence from British liberalism; related to that, there is the precocious conversion of Irish Dissent to the Conservative party. However, this divergence between the political trajectories of the two Nonconformist traditions was not intrinsic to their worldview, nor was it the product of Irish 'tribalism', as is sometimes claimed by the media. On the contrary, it was largely a function of the way the presence and concentration of a large Catholic population provoked Protestant anxiety and a corresponding political reaction. This happened not only in Ireland, but also throughout Europe and North America, as well as Britain.²⁸ For example, in England, regions where Catholics (who were mainly immigrants from Southern Ireland) became a large and influential presence developed 'sectarian' patterns similar to those of Ulster: in south-west Lancashire the Liberal party lost much of its support as early as 1868, when the Dissenters started to vote for the anti-Catholic, anti-Irish party—as the Conservatives were then locally perceived. By the 1880s, Liverpool resembled Belfast, a city whose politics were dominated by Protestant Conservative Unionists and Catholic

²⁷ E.F. Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876–1906* (Cambridge, 2007).

²⁸ Giorgio Spini, *Risorgimento e Protestanti* (Naples, 1956); Jonathan Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals. The Democratic Movement and the Revolution of 1848–1849* (Princeton, 1992); Patrick Cabanel, *Le Dieu de la République: aux Sources Protestantes de la Laïcité (1860–1900)* (Rennes, 2003); Timothy Verhoeven, *Transatlantic Anti-Catholicism: France and the United States in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2010).

nationalists (the Irish National Party actually controlled one of the city's parliamentary constituencies, and sectarian patterns of politics became and remained pervasive in political as much as in social life, including sport).²⁹

The epitome of anti-Catholicism, the Loyal Orange Institution (LOI), was founded in Loughall, Co. Armagh, in the aftermath of a clash between members of a Catholic agrarian secret society (the Defenders) and their Protestant counterparts in 1795. Armagh was a liminal area where Protestants felt particularly insecure and exposed, and the Orangemen appealed to small farmers, artisans, and other groups from the 'lower' ranks of society, who felt vulnerable because of their precarious economic conditions. As a consequence, the organization had strong support among all denominations with a sizeable multi-class, cross-denominational appeal, including most Dissenters. Throughout 1795–1850, revolutionary violence and endemic sectarianism were part of the everyday life of many people in Ireland and resulted in a large-scale movement of people, with 'the desire to escape from violence... second only to the goal of economic independence in explaining why an estimated 500,000 Irish Protestants emigrated during the pre-Famine decades... By 1861 County Longford had, within a generation, lost one third of its Protestant residents'.³⁰ Partly as a reaction, Orange sectarian violence flared up in the urban centres—not only in the north-east, but also in Dublin.

However, many evangelicals distrusted the LOI because of its allegedly perfunctory respect for theological orthodoxy. In the aftermath of the 1859 Revival, for example, William Gibson—who was both an evangelical Nonconformist and a Liberal in politics—interpreted the awakening as a sign that the Almighty would soon shake off the fetters with which the Orangemen 'mislead' Godly people. Moreover, Ulster nurtured a strong Nonconformist radical tradition in the countryside, where tenant farmers were the backbone of the Presbyterian Church. Their politics were defined by demands for both religious equality (against the privileges of the Established Church) and land reform (against their largely Episcopalian landlords). Before 1881, inter-confessional tactical voting on the land issue ensured Liberal electoral strength in rural constituencies in Ulster.³¹

In Ireland, as well as in Britain, the concentration of Nonconformists in a particular town or county affected both their self-confidence and the way in which they were perceived by the wider community. Thus Andrew Holmes,

²⁹ P.J. Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism: A Political and Social History of Liverpool, 1868–1939* (Liverpool, 1981).

³⁰ B. Jenkins, *Irish Nationalism and the British State: From Repeal to Revolutionary Nationalism* (Montreal and Kingston, London, 2006), p. 135.

³¹ Graham Greenlee, 'Land, Religion and Community: The Liberal party in Ulster 1868–1885', in Eugenio F. Biagini, *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective identities in the British Isles, 1865–1931* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 253–75; Brian M. Walker, *Ulster Politics: The Formative Years, 1868–86* (Belfast, 1989).

working on Ulster, has shown how the demographic concentration of Presbyterianism affected the movement's nature and culture, and eventually shaped the distinctiveness of a whole region, where they had reached the critical mass necessary to become culturally hegemonic, with its powerful combination of Scottish and Ulster traditions and creeds. By contrast, in the south, where Presbyterians were comparatively few and dispersed, they were much more influenced by other Dissenting traditions and English-Irish culture. This plurality of identities was facilitated by the Calvinist tradition which encompassed a broad theological and cultural world, with the Presbyterian 'man in the pew' being fully confident of his right to follow the light of his conscience in interpreting the meaning of Scripture. 'Popular' religion then was not a sub-orthodox version of high culture, but consisted instead of the beliefs of the laity in all their variety, as they emerged from the interactive relationship between ministers and congregants.

We have already seen how the politics of the Ultramontane Roman Catholic Church, especially in the aftermath of the 1864 *Syllabus of Errors*, alienated Nonconformists in England as much as in Ireland. However, in the latter case, what prevented many Nonconformists from trusting their Catholic fellow-countrymen was not just an abstract theological or ideological clash, but a painful history of violence and communal conflicts which, as noted above, stretched back to the seventeenth century and beyond. Not surprisingly, 'the experience of organized illegality' in their struggles with Catholic agrarian societies did not encourage Irish Protestants to adopt an ecumenical approach to Nationalist demands for self-government, when the latter became a practical possibility, fearing that any dilution of the Union with Britain would legalize the oppression of the minority by the Catholic majority ('Rome Rule'). Indeed, from as early as the 1840s, some Presbyterian leaders, such as Henry Cooke, had identified pan-Protestant solidarity as a prerequisite for survival in a hostile environment. In 1841, in response to Daniel O'Connell's campaign for the Repeal of the 1800 Act of Union between Britain and Ireland, Cooke delivered a series of celebrated speeches, claiming that 'Popery and liberty are the most perfect incompatibles in nature—they are the antipodes of each other', and denouncing O'Connell for

doing all in his power to stir up and exasperate the Roman Catholics against their Protestant fellow-subjects. With one breath he inculcates ingratitude to their landlords—with another he enkindles their hatred of the Protestant clergy—with a third he denounces the bloody Orangemen (meaning all Protestants)—while he hugs the gentle and extirpating Ribbonmen.³²

Thus, dismissing the call for repeal of the union, Cooke and his supporters wanted to see a close pan-Protestant alliance, including the Church of Ireland,

³² Cit. in W. McComb, *The Repealer Repulsed* (Dublin, 2003 edn.), pp. 148, 160.

against the 'Roman' threat. Such inter-Protestant unity became easier when the Church was disestablished by Gladstone in 1869.

Cooke did not mince words and his rhetoric was certainly sectarian. However, he was inspired not merely by bigotry, but also by fears that at the time were widely shared: after all, anti-Catholicism was a given throughout Europe, with Spanish Freemasons competing with the German *Kulturkampf* in trying to undermine the political power of the Catholic Church. Meanwhile, British as much as Irish Dissenters hoped to see the Reformation triumph in Italy: they had long supported the ailing Waldensian (Presbyterian) Church in Italy, and rejoiced at the fall of the Pope's temporal power in 1870.³³ Later, the Presbyterian Church of Ireland—like other English, Welsh, and Scottish denominations—supported the rapid expansion of Protestantism in Italy (which grew fourfold in the fifty years between 1861 and 1911). Emboldened by these developments, British Dissenters had become more relaxed about Catholicism. However, more immediately exposed to the persistent ugliness of sectarian divides, their Irish brethren had reason to be more circumspect.

TRIUMPH AND CRISIS, 1905–14

The victory of the Liberal party in the 1906 election resulted in a parliamentary majority dominated by Nonconformists to an extent not seen since Cromwell's Protectorate in the seventeenth century. Dissenters—or 'the Free Churches', as they had started to style themselves—were now more than ever persuaded that they were on the side of history. The writing was on the wall: Britain must follow America and France in disestablishing religion—this was a requirement of both modernity and 'democracy' (increasingly seen as the spirit of the age, though the parliamentary franchise continued to be restricted to male householders). A few years earlier, in a book ambitiously called *The Philosophy of Dissent*, J. Courtney James had boldly stated that '[t]he State can no more formulate a man's religious creed, because he has been enfranchised to think for himself. And with freedom of thought there must be liberty to enjoy religious convictions. The state has . . . to respect every man's religion by disestablishing it; in this case there would be legal impartiality and religious equality'.³⁴ Now, in 1906, a national revival in religion was followed by a national affirmation of Nonconformist power in politics. It was not just disestablishment that demanded prompt action, but a whole range of

³³ R.F.G. Holmes, *Our Irish Presbyterian Heritage* (Belfast, 1985), p. 120; Danilo Raponi, *Religion and Politics in the Risorgimento: Britain and the New Italy, 1861–1875* (London, 2014).

³⁴ J. Courtenay James, *The Philosophy of Dissent: Analytical Outlines of Some Free Church Principles* (London, 1900), p. 253.

other issues, for everything seemed to have religious relevance for the 'Non-conformist Conscience'. There was a sense that Dissenters had a special religious call in Parliament. As one Congregational minister commented on his being elected an MP in 1910,

What impressed me most of all, a new member, was the amount of time which the House of Commons devotes to arguing religious questions.... Now we are invited to discuss the whole problem of education, into which this element of religion enters so deeply.... Later on... Welsh Disestablishment is accepted as the opportunity for stating the positive argument for a Free Church in a Free State. The Scotch Temperance Bill comes to us demanded by religious men on religious grounds. The Bill for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic is backed by the whole force of the Churches, and nobody can expect them to be silent on the reconstruction of the Poor Law.... The fact of the matter is, there is no Church meeting held in this country that is more constantly and practically concerned with living religious problems than the House of Commons.³⁵

Within two years the Presbyterian Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman retired and was replaced by H.H. Asquith, a Congregationalist. Yet it was at this stage that a largely Nonconformist Parliament and government was confronted with the threat of a major Protestant, largely Nonconformist, rebellion: in 1912, Ulster Protestants, a majority of them Presbyterians, signed a document they called—with clear reference to seventeenth-century Scottish Presbyterian resistance to Anglican and monarchist oppression—the Solemn League and Covenant. Fearful for their civil and religious rights, the signatories took a pledge never to submit to London with regards to a proposal of constitutional reform which the government had recently introduced. How could such a situation arise?

In answering such a question, we should go back to 1886, the first Home Rule crisis, which divided Dissent and almost destroyed Ulster Presbyterian support for the Liberal party. The first Home Rule Bill involved a moderate form of legislative devolution for Ireland, instituting an Irish parliament with limited competence on purely domestic issues. The proposal was consistent both with British colonial tradition (it was actually inspired by the Canadian precedent of 1867) and with the turn taken by the Liberal party under Gladstone.

Despite resigning the party leadership in 1875 (after his defeat in the 1874 general election), from the summer of 1876 Gladstone presided over something like the political equivalent of a religious revival. Originally, the latter's aim was to force a change of British policy in the Balkans, following the massacre of Christian insurgents by Ottoman forces in Bulgaria in 1875–6. This was one of the first European cases of 'ethnic cleansing' to be reported in

³⁵ C. Silvester Horne, *Pulpit, Platform and Parliament* (London, 1913), p. 203.

graphic detail by the British media, and the latter, more than anyone, started what came to be known as the 'Bulgarian Agitation'—a ground swell of Nonconformist indignation against the Conservative government of Benjamin Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield), for its continuing support for the Ottoman Empire. Becoming a well-organized campaign during the late summer of 1876, the Bulgarian Agitation cemented an already-existing alliance between Dissenters and Gladstone. Over the next three years, as the country meandered into a series of apparently pointless colonial wars, Gladstone's claims that the Conservative government's imperialism—which he dubbed 'Beaconsfieldism'—meant wanton bloodshed. His denunciation of 'unethical' foreign policy almost became an article of faith for many Nonconformists. In 1879 the Baptist Union Assembly passed a resolution declaring that

The present condition of the country demands the serious consideration of the Christian community...in the judgement of this Assembly the policy of the Government has been the cause of needless wars, has involved the nation in grave financial difficulties, and has failed to ameliorate by domestic legislation the social and moral evils under which the country suffers...this meeting, therefore, urges upon all member of the Baptist Union the duty of active and united efforts to return members to parliament pledged to oppose that policy.³⁶

Nonconformists, who had traditionally championed causes such as the abolition of the slave trade and slavery, now became aligned with the politics of what we would now call 'human rights'. The latter had global relevance, but—they thought—ought to be applied to domestic issues as well. In the case of Ireland, such a concern seemed to demand land reform and ending rule by the Coercion Acts, which in conferring special anti-terrorist powers to police and the magistracy reminded Nonconformists of the repressive legislation under which their forebears had suffered in the seventeenth century.³⁷ When Gladstone claimed that Home Rule offered the option to replace Coercion with a 'Union of hearts' between Ireland and Britain, Nonconformists renewed their commitment to his party. However, not all did so, and—driven by hostility to 'Popery' and a concern for the unity for the Empire—some became vocally opposed to the proposal. Among the leaders of this particular group, who split from Gladstone's party to form the Liberal Unionists, the most famous Dissenters were John Bright, who resisted Irish devolution as strongly as he had opposed the secession of the Confederate States from the USA in 1861–5, and the celebrated London Baptist minister Charles Spurgeon, who was concerned with the fate of the Irish Protestants in a Catholic state should Ireland acquire a degree of independence from London.

³⁶ The Baptist Union Assembly, 9 October 1879, *Baptist Handbook*, 1880, pp. 99–100.

³⁷ Bebbington, *Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 97.

By far the most influential of the Nonconformist leaders to oppose Gladstone was Joseph Chamberlain. An advocate of state power as the only antidote to social deprivation which—he feared—would drive workers to embrace class struggle and socialism, he saw the future of the United Kingdom in terms of social imperialism. The latter became his dominant concern from the end of the 1880s. A democrat in the mould of the US President Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919), he felt that national interest, individual liberty, the cause of progress in Ireland, and the greatness of the British Empire all depended on the preservation of the Union. His view of religious freedom amounted to something like secularized erastianism, the traditional Whig approach to ecclesiastical matters: the state had a role to play in moderating separatist nationalism, and Chamberlain insisted on parliamentary control as the only protection against the rise of fanaticism. Parliament would be the adjudicator between rival sectarian and sectional claims. With the rise of mass democracy, the nation needed a strong and united government—and ‘the nation’ to him was the whole of the United Kingdom, not Ireland or England on their own.

In terms of constitutional change, both Chamberlain and some of his allies, like the Irish Presbyterian Liberal Unionists, demanded local government reform rather than parliamentary devolution, with the creation of elected county councils to achieve the legitimate (as against the revolutionary) aims of Home Rule. The point was vigorously made by a woman who was perhaps the greatest late nineteenth-century Irish Liberal, Isabella Tod. As well as being the instigator of the first Irish Women’s Unionist Association, she was a founding member of the Ulster Liberal Unionist Association (ULUA).³⁸ She believed that local government should address real needs—in contrast to allegedly fanciful nationalist dreams—and serve primarily economic objectives: ‘[it] would stimulate agriculture and industry alike’, as she put it.³⁹ By contrast, Home Rule, Tod argued, would both strengthen the powerful (the Catholic Church and the patriarchal farmer) and penalize the socially weaker groups such as labourers and women. Appropriating Unionist rhetoric about minority rights, she claimed that, as an oppressed minority, women ought to be enfranchised and argued that, unlike the men, they were unbiased by old party prejudices and—as reasonable, rational, and public-spirited citizens—would vote for ‘the party, whichever it is, that does them justice’.⁴⁰ However, she felt ‘quite certain’ that a Nationalist government ‘would relegate Catholic

³⁸ *The Ulster Liberal Unionist Association. A Sketch of its History 1885–1914: How it has Opposed Home Rule, and What it has Done for Remedial Legislation for Ireland*, introduction by Mr J.R. Fisher, published by the authority of the Executive Committee of the Ulster Liberal Association, Ulster Reform Club (Belfast, 1913), p. 15.

³⁹ Cit. in Report, ‘Ulster and Home Rule’, *The Northern Whig*, 25 May 1886, 8.

⁴⁰ I.M.S. Tod, ‘Lord Salisbury and Women’s Suffrage’, *The Liberal Unionist*, September 1891, 26.

women in Ireland to a permanently inferior position; and take away from Protestants all hope of public usefulness. The same forces which have kept back the majority of women in Ireland, . . . would, if parted from England, keep them down permanently, would of course have retrogressive effects in other directions'.⁴¹

Many Dissenters shared her concerns and were inspired by Chamberlain's vision. At any rate, throughout the UK, the 1886 Home Rule crisis transformed British politics. The Conservative party, which had traditionally relied chiefly on the Anglican vote, became more religiously inclusive through its new alliance with 'progressive' Unionism, which secured substantial popular support in industrial England, Ulster, and Scotland.⁴² Chamberlain was also the man who, more than anyone else, shaped modern social imperialism. He saw British Africa as an 'estate' to develop by applying to it the colonial equivalent of the interventionist methods which had been experimented in local and Irish government, mobilizing private and public resources for the benefit—as he claimed—of both native Africans and European settlers.

Yet, for as long as Gladstone was at the helm, both the Liberal party and the bulk of the Nonconformist electors remained committed to Irish Home Rule. Despite the demoralization caused by the Parnell divorce scandal (1890–1), which discredited Gladstone's main ally, the Liberals won the election of 1892 and secured a majority for the Second Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons in 1893. The Lords vetoed it together with other Liberal legislation, forcing Gladstone to resign, whereupon, under its new leader, Lord Rosebery, the Liberals suffered a heavy defeat in the general election of 1895. As we have seen, the Liberals returned to power in 1906, securing an overwhelming majority of the seats in the House of Commons—a victory largely due to Nonconformist mobilization against the Conservative and Unionist governments which had been in office since 1895.

Such mobilization had happened in response to Chamberlain's implementation of his social imperialist vision, particularly in the aftermath of the South African war of 1899–1902. Not only was the British invasion of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State an act of cynical expansionism; it also proved expensive and difficult to complete. After crushing the two self-governing Afrikaner (and Presbyterian) republics, the British army struggled to control Boer insurgency. To 'pacify' the country, they adopted a scorched-earth strategy against the farmers. Destitute and without shelter, over 100,000 civilians—including women and children—were moved to hastily organized

⁴¹ I.M.S. Tod, *The Northern Whig*, 1 May 1886, 8.

⁴² G. Walker and T. Gallagher, eds., *Sermons & Battle Hymns: Protestant Popular Culture in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1990); I. Wood, *Scotland and Ulster* (Edinburgh, 1994); D.G. Boyce and A. O'Day, eds., *Defenders of the Union: A Survey of British and Irish Unionism since 1801* (London, 2001).

concentration camps, where disease and inadequate supplies resulted in high mortality rates. When the extent of the Boer suffering was revealed—starting with the enquiry privately conducted by Emily Hobhouse, the daughter of an Anglican rector and sister of the famous Liberal philosopher L.T. Hobhouse—there was outrage in Britain. Liberal party leaders such as the Scots Presbyterian Campbell-Bannerman and the Welsh Baptist Lloyd George denounced the British army for using what they described as ‘methods of barbarism’, and the Nonconformist press was up in arms.

While this eroded domestic support for the Conservative and Unionist government, the latter was also seriously discredited by the ‘Chinese labour’ scandal. The war had created a serious shortage of labour, particularly in the mining industry, and the new South African colony secured the permission to employ indentured labourers, ‘imported’ from China. This alarmed the British trade unions and further upset the humanitarian lobby and the ‘Nonconformist Conscience’. Then, almost as if eager to consolidate a broad social alliance against themselves, the Unionist government passed an Education Act (1902) which suppressed the School Boards created by Gladstone in 1870 to safeguard minority rights, and conferred on the County Councils the power to operate as local educational authorities. This was bound to benefit Anglican and Catholic schools, but offended Nonconformists as much as all the other issues mentioned so far put together. As Joseph Chamberlain himself admitted,

the Bill has brought all the fighting Nonconformists into the field and made them active instead of merely passive opponents. The representations and appeals to the old war cries have impressed large numbers of the middle and upper working classes who have hitherto supported the unionists party without joining the Conservative organisation. The transfer of their votes will undoubtedly have immense importance at a general election, and . . . I do not think that any seat, where there is a strong Nonconformist electorate, can be considered as absolutely safe.⁴³

This was all true, but ironically it was Chamberlain himself who helped to clinch the case against the government when he put forward a proposal to replace free trade with protection. In his view, tariffs would defend domestic British and colonial manufacturing and trade against US and German competition, boost employment, bind together the motherland and colonies, and help the Empire evolve into a Federation. Moreover, the additional revenue generated by the tariffs would fund increased social expenditure at home, for example providing additional revenue to pay for the much-needed old-age pensions that Chamberlain had long tried to establish. However, the project had two main flaws: the first was that protective duties were a highly regressive

⁴³ Quoted in J.L. Garvin and Julian Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, 4 vols (London, 1932–51), IV: p. 495.

form of taxation and challenged the Gladstonian notion that the 'food of the people' ought not be taxed; the second was that it allowed for an increase in state interference in the running of the economy. The workers had reason to oppose this move, especially in the aftermath of the 1901 Taff Vale Judgement, by which the House of Lords, acting in its capacity as supreme court of justice, reinterpreted the 1871–5 labour laws and made trade unions liable for damages caused to their employers in the course of a strike.⁴⁴ From the point of view of workers' leaders, the implication was that the state could not be trusted in labour disputes. In any case, the trade unions were determined to secure a return to the 1871 system, which, under Gladstone, had given them full legal immunity. Thus the landslide Liberal victory of 1906 was a triumph for Gladstonian humanitarianism, free trade, and laissez-faire, together with Nonconformist hostility to any reassertion of Anglican power.

However, the men who led the Liberal government—Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, Lloyd George, and Winston Churchill (a nominal Anglican)—were not content to return to the old Gladstonianism: instead, they were determined to address the problem of poverty and low living standards by introducing a systematic series of reforms, including non-contributory old-age pensions for poor people over the age of seventy, free school meals, unemployment insurance, and much else. While Chamberlain had looked to tariffs on imported duties to pay for welfare, the proposed new developments were to be funded through higher taxes on income and new taxes on wealth and land ownership. When the House of Lords defeated the 1909 Budget, which incorporated these new taxes, the government called two general elections in a year: in January 1910, the electors were canvassed to decide whether the Lords might be allowed to stop a Budget; and in December, they were asked whether the veto power of the Lords should be abolished. In both cases, the electors supported the Liberal proposals, but the government lost seats in the Commons and became dependent on the support of the Irish National Party.

The latter demanded, in exchange, the immediate adoption of a Home Rule Bill. As the Liberals had been committed to it from 1886, this could hardly be denied, but the problem of Ulster remained. As already noted, in protest against the Third Home Rule Bill, 471,414 Ulster people, both men and women, signed a 'Solemn Covenant' (the women's version was called a 'Declaration') which rejected the proposed reform of the Union, and declared that they were ready to resist it in arms, if necessary (28 September 1912). Soon afterwards they organized and began to arm a paramilitary force.

⁴⁴ N. McCord, 'Taff Vale Revisited', *History*, 78 (1993), 243–60; J. Thompson, 'The Genesis of the 1906 Trades Disputes Act: Liberalism, Trade Unions and the Law', *20th-Century British History*, 9 (1998), 175–200. See also D. Powell, *British Politics and the Labour Question, 1868–1990* (Basingstoke, 1992). For the Gladstonian settlement see J. Spain, 'Trade Unions, Gladstonian Liberals and the Labour Law Reforms of 1875', in Biagini and Reid, eds., *Currents of Radicalism* (Cambridge, 1991).

The episode entered the mythology of Ulster Protestantism as the supreme expression of Unionist solidarity, but in fact it was highly divisive. About 25 per cent of Ulster Protestants *refused* to sign, and the proportion was even higher for pastors and clergy, particularly among the predominantly evangelical Methodists, whose ministers (because of the itinerant system) had first-hand knowledge of life in the south and were less inclined to demonize Catholics. Moreover, the Ulster Covenant separated the northern from the southern Protestants, with the latter being left to face the prospect that Ulster—far from averting Home Rule—would actually bring about Ireland's partition (as it eventually did), leaving the Protestant minority in the south isolated and vulnerable.

A further, and equally damaging, effect of the 1912 Covenant was that it erected a barrier of reciprocal distrust between Ulster and British Nonconformists, with the latter condemning the former as both bigoted and subversive of Parliamentary democracy, offering an unwarranted provocation against both Irish Constitutional Nationalists and the government. It is interesting here to compare these responses to the Home Rule crises. Basically, by 1886 a majority at least of British Nonconformists had reached the conclusion that religion was, and ought to be, a *private* matter, to be separated from the state, and were prepared to trust the Irish Constitutional Nationalists, who claimed that they too were committed to religious equality. For them the challenge of the future—the area where Nonconformist humanitarianism ought to focus—was no longer religious freedom (which had been achieved), but the mitigation of poverty and social marginalization.⁴⁵ By contrast, Ulster Dissenters believed that religion continued to be a *public* affair: their only safety was in the Union with Britain, within which Protestants were a majority. Each view was, in its own way, plausible, and the fear of 'Rome Rule' was not assuaged by the Vatican, whose policies were widely repugnant not just to Protestants, but also to supporters of 'modern' and liberal ideas in general, both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, for example in France, Italy, Spain, and Germany. Even religious freedom could not be taken for granted. As late as 1908 the Papal *Ne Temere* Decree—which reaffirmed Catholic discipline on mixed marriages by prescribing that the offspring should be brought up as Catholic—added fuel to the flames, apparently bringing intolerance and clerical authoritarianism to the doorstep of many a 'mixed' family.

We shall never know how such issues might have affected Nonconformist opinion at the next general election. The latter was due in 1915, but was postponed: indeed, like Home Rule, most other political and religious debates were suddenly suspended in the late summer of 1914, when the outbreak of a

⁴⁵ J. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth 1870–1930* (Oxford, 1982); R. Pope, *Building Jerusalem: Nonconformity, Labour and the Social Question in Wales, 1906–1939* (Aberystwyth, 1998).

new crisis—this time of global magnitude—demanded the complete and undivided attention of all parties and creeds. It was the end of an era.

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Social Reform in America

Luke E. Harlow

According to Charles Grandison Finney, the most famous Christian evangelist of the early American republic, two great moral evils plagued the United States during his ministry: the slavery of millions of Americans to alcohol and the slavery of millions of African Americans to white southern masters. In 1835, Finney summarized an argument he had been making for several years linking these two social sins and called upon ‘the churches of all denominations [to] speak out on the subject of temperance; let them close their doors against all who have anything to do with the death-dealing abomination’. That sort of activist stance would make ‘the cause of temperance...triumphant’. As Finney explained, ‘A few years’ of earnest Christian effort ‘would annihilate the traffic. Just so with slavery.’¹

But Finney did not stop there. Although intemperance and slavery drew much of his attention, Finney would also call for a host of other reforms throughout his ministry, including poor relief, Sabbatarianism, and women’s equality in churches and education. By 1846, Finney had clarified his position, arguing that the ‘great business of the church is to reform the world—to put away every kind of sin’. As he explained, ‘The Christian church was designed to make aggressive movements in every direction...to reform individuals, communities, and governments, and never rest until...every form of iniquity shall be driven from the earth.’ Finney, in short, envisioned a completely new social landscape, remade by the power of the Gospel. Christianity would free individuals from any sins that might prevent righteous—and ultimately perfect—living.²

¹ Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (New York, 1835), p. 278.

² Charles G. Finney, ‘Letters on Revivals—No. 23: The Pernicious Attitude of the Church on the Reforms of the Age’, *Oberlin Evangelist*, 21 January 1846. See also Keith J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney, 1792–1875: Revivalist and Reformer* (Syracuse, NY, 1987), pp. 253–7; and Steven Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers: America’s Pre-Civil War Reformers* (Baltimore, MD, 1995), pp. 30–2.

Charles Finney's ambition for the total reform of society serves as only one notable example in a period marked by an explosion of efforts to cure the ills that plagued early America. Starting in the 1810s, a host of voluntary societies appeared dedicated to missionary and reformist efforts. They included the American Bible Society (1816), American Education Society (1816), American Colonization Society (1816), American Sunday School Union (1824), American Tract Society (1825), American Temperance Society (1826), American Peace Society (1828), American Anti-Slavery Society (1833), and the abolitionist American Missionary Association (1846). These organizations comprised the bedrock of what has been called the 'Benevolent Empire' that sought to make the new United States into a Christian America. Like Finney, these organizations were generally products of the evangelical Second Great Awakening that captured the northern and urban United States in the period. They diagnosed the problems of the age as part and parcel of human moral failings.

However, if social reform was an effort overwhelmingly carried out by Protestants from Dissenting traditions, it defies a one-dimensional description. Reformers were by no means unified in their motivations, goals, or geographic locations. Just as many reformers worked outside formal institutions and organizations as within them. Reformist impulses appeared just as much from Quaker, Unitarian, freethinking, or proto-liberal Protestants as they did from evangelicals. And while white southerners rejected the notion that American slavery was sinful in and of itself, they proved overwhelmingly willing to seek many other sorts of social reform. Reformers advocated everything from dietary reform to abstention from alcohol. They sought new approaches to prisons, asylums for the insane and indigent, workhouses for the impoverished, orphanages, and public schools. They attempted communities rooted in utopian socialism (Robert Owen's New Harmony, Indiana community, as well as twenty-five communities influenced by French theorist Charles Fourier) and transcendentalist moral philosophy (Brook Farm in Massachusetts). The Shakers, an eighteenth-century offshoot of English Quakers, formed enclaves in New England, New York, the Midwest, and Upper South, and practised communal living and complete sexual abstinence based on their founder Mother Ann Lee's revelations from God. In the case of one-time Finney disciple John Humphrey Noyes's community in Oneida, New York, the belief in 'Bible communism' led to the implementation of 'complex marriage'—that is, open sexual relationships between his community members because they shared marriage in common.³

While reformers were, in general, middle-class agents of modernization and even cultural imperialism, the sincerity of their action also suggests that they were not simplistically interested in social control. As historian Steven Mintz

³ Ibid., pp. xi–xxii, 146–52; and Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1992), p. 197.

has explained, reformers broadly fell into three categories, which often overlapped. Moral reformers worked first and foremost to alter moral sensibilities and to instill broad Christian values in society. Humanitarian reformers focused on improving human conditions, especially relieving the manifold sources of suffering in the period. Radical reformers sought a more thorough overhaul of society; arguing that social problems belied more fundamental social ills, they advocated root-and-branch solutions to the period's problems.⁴

THE AMERICAN CONTEXT

There was nothing new about Protestants calling for the reform of society, but the shape and scope of the movement that flourished in the pre-Civil War United States was particularly robust and unprecedented for two major contextual reasons. The first concerned the basic demographic, geographic, and political realities of the young nation. The US population in 1800 was roughly 5.3 million, which included nearly 900,000 enslaved African Americans. Although the recent statehood of Kentucky (1792) and Tennessee (1796), soon to be followed by Ohio (1803), indicated a pattern of inland migration to the nation's western boundary at the Mississippi River, the US population was largely concentrated on the Atlantic seaboard because the only efficient methods of large-scale transportation involved non-mechanized water travel. But that situation rapidly changed within sixty years. In 1860, the United States claimed a population of 31.5 million, roughly four million of whom were enslaved. In addition to natural reproduction, from 1820 to 1860 the United States added some five million immigrants, which brought a significant Roman Catholic presence (3.1 million Catholics in 1860) to what was an otherwise overwhelmingly low-church Protestant nation. Furthermore, through a series of wars and negotiated deals, the United States came to possess lands from the Atlantic to the Pacific, approximate to the nation's present-day forty-eight contiguous states.⁵

Revolutions in transportation, communications, and economics made this rapid geographic and demographic expansion possible. After 1815, the emergence of steamboats, canals, and all-weather macadam roads defied the previous limits of the natural American landscape and drastically accelerated transportation times—and that was before the advent of the railroad. The United States' 30,000 miles of track in 1860 outpaced the rest of the world's

⁴ Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers*, p. xiv.

⁵ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, 1988), pp. 9–21; and Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York, 2007).

aggregated mileage. Those railroad tracks were often accompanied by telegraph lines that took information nearly instantaneously from one end of the wire to the other, and made possible a rapid national dissemination of information through an expanding network of printing presses and local newspapers. Although Americans were predominantly rural and agrarian throughout the nineteenth century, these changes in transportation and a massive growth in mechanized industry led to rapid urbanization. From 1810 to 1860, the urban population grew from 6 to 20 per cent (historians generally define urbanity at 2,500 persons in nineteenth-century America), which was the highest rate of urbanization in American history.⁶

The early American republic was thus a growing empire, with a reach that came to spread over the North American continent. But it was held together with a fundamentally weak centralized state apparatus that privileged the rights of states to regulate much conduct within their own boundaries. The railroad, canal, and paved road systems lacked uniform standards that crossed local boundaries because they were most often financed by state or municipal governments or private interests. Moreover, it was not until the 1860s—and the urgency of the Civil War—that the United States would develop a national currency and federal banking and tax systems. Despite the vast antebellum railroad network, it was not until 1869 that track would connect both ends of the continent. The result was, as Alexis de Tocqueville put it in 1835, that ‘Americans are taught from birth that they must overcome life’s woes and impediments on their own.’ According to this aristocratic French observer, the lack of inherited social order and loose national infrastructure led Americans to ‘associate’ voluntarily to deal with all manner of issues: ‘public security, commerce and industry, morality and religion’. The diffuse nature of governmental power meant that many societal ills went unaddressed—at precisely the same time that the ills themselves were on the rise due to the demographic changes in the country. Social reformers sought to address that need.⁷

What de Tocqueville described as Americans’ innate belief in the ‘right of association’ led to the second major reason for the explosion of social reform movements in the early republic: the United States’ voluntary religious system. The United States was, in short, a great experiment in Dissenting Protestant political theology. The country was famous for the white man’s democracy that came to predominate in politics by the 1820s, which marked the American political approach as different from those of the European Old World. So too was the American religious system different. Rather than a high-church alliance of church and state, the United States was marked by a low-church emphasis on democratic, voluntary participation—most notably manifest in

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ McPherson, *Battle Cry*, pp. 442–50; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (1835; New York, 2004), p. 215.

the absence of a state church. Though Connecticut retained its ties to the Congregational Church until 1818 and Massachusetts until 1833, disestablishment became the order of the new United States. The result was—paralleling politics—a ‘free market economy’ in religion, with the most democratized and populist churches growing in leaps and bounds. While power shifted from old colonial denominations such as the Congregationalists and Episcopalians to the upstart Baptists and Methodists, the ‘voluntary system’ enhanced the popular and political reach of American Protestantism.⁸

Ironically, in liberating the church from the state, disestablishment strengthened the voice of those Protestants who hoped to build a Christian America in the early republic. In the United States, Dissenting Protestants were by no means the outsiders their namesake suggested; they in fact became the establishment in ways that make ‘Dissent’ a misnomer. With the weakening of colonial Calvinist orthodoxies—which came through the expansion of Unitarianism in New England, the spread of Samuel Hopkins’ theology of ‘disinterested benevolence’, as well as the general weight given to personal moral agency and ‘holiness’ that came through the Second Great Awakening’s revivals—a new emphasis on activism developed that encouraged believers to mobilize and tackle dilemmas in the public square. Reformers drew from a millennialist belief that true believers might usher the kingdom of God into the here-and-now through concerted effort.⁹

Largely, though by no means exclusively, this northern and post-Calvinist set of convictions led believers to support the aims of the Whig party. But not all dissenting Protestants found that political arrangement to their liking. If the Whigs at times styled themselves as an evangelical party, their Democratic opposition also drew deeply on religious values. Democrats found support especially from those who maintained Calvinist belief, or who came from poorer and working classes, or who held exceptionally localized and anti-authoritarian theological convictions. Collectively, these groups looked askance at moral reformers’ ambition to create an empire of benevolence that appeared, as they saw it, to closely connect the church and state. Historians have noted that among Baptists, Methodists, and Restorationists, particularly in the Lower North, South, and West, Democratic adherence seemed more pronounced than Whiggery. However, American Protestantism was in no sense monolithic in this period and, until the heat of the slavery question burned off the second party system by the 1850s, virtually every northern

⁸ Ibid., p. 216; Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT, 1989); Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy, 1776–2005* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2005); and Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (1957; Baltimore, MD, 1980), pp. 34–44, 95–147.

⁹ Ibid.

denomination contained Democratic members and significant Whig support persisted outside the Northeast.¹⁰

In the loose political context of the early republic, where church and state did not comfortably walk hand in hand, reformers hoped to build their Christian America primarily from the Dissenting tradition's theological resources, especially emphasizing moral suasion over state coercion. By the time of the Civil War, however, that effort proved exhausting. Throughout the antebellum era, reformers sought the higher power of governmental action but a weak national state prevented the full implementation of their aims. The Civil War changed that arrangement, but it also changed the political theology that drove social reform. Thus, for a time the religious and political context of the early American republic made a ready field for the flourishing of reformist labour.

SABBATARIANISM

In many ways, the first major issue to generate national reform interest was that of keeping the Christian Sabbath. All the early American colonies prosecuted those who profaned the Lord's Day, and Massachusetts levied fines for Sabbath breaking as late as 1792. Although such laws had generally disappeared from state books in the wake of the American Revolution, renewed interest in protecting the Sabbath emerged after 1810 with the establishment of the United States Post Office, which called for Sunday mail delivery. Regular petitions began to Congress in 1811, but the issue picked up added energy when it was combined with an emphasis on the rights of workers to a weekly day of rest. With the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 (construction began in 1817), the Great Lakes were suddenly linked to the Hudson River, and thereby the Atlantic Ocean, providing a major—and definitive—transportation and commercial route through the middle of New York State to the interior of the United States. Although New York had a Sabbath law on the books, it was rarely enforced, and those who profited most directly from the Erie Canal's bustling traffic were eager to keep it going. Moreover, debate also persisted over whether it was best for working-class labourers to stay on the job rather than invite the temptations that might come from a weekly day off. The latter point of view prevailed, and business continued on Sunday.¹¹

¹⁰ Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven, CT, 1993), pp. 121–32.

¹¹ Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York, 1994), pp. 111–16; Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers*, pp. 70–1; and Carol Sheriff, *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817–1862* (New York, 1996), pp. 144, 160–5.

That predictably raised the ire of leading evangelicals, who in 1829 formed the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath. Led by New York City evangelical financier Lewis Tappan and prominent Congregationalist minister Lyman Beecher, the General Union came together to 'lament an increasing profanation of the Sabbath, by employing it in the pursuits of pleasure and business'. Though based out of New York City, auxiliary chapters soon appeared throughout the Northeast and began a campaign petitioning the US Congress to suspend postal service on Sunday. Furthermore, in Rochester, New York, a city that had emerged virtually out of nowhere thanks to the Erie Canal, evangelicals organized boycotts of offending businesses and transport lines.¹²

These efforts failed to produce the legislative result Sabbatarians sought. In 1829, Congress determined that Sabbath-keeping was a religious issue and thus outside their purview. By 1832 the General Union had disbanded, leaving reformers to expend their energies on other issues. However, those setbacks did not end the movement. By the 1840s, Sabbatarians were active again and they succeeded in seeing some 80,000 miles of postal routes limited on Sundays. After the Civil War, Sabbatarians continued their efforts; Sunday mail delivery ultimately came to an end in 1912 through a Congressional bill.¹³

TEMPERANCE

Through legislative failure in the early republic, Sabbatarianism provided lessons for other causes, which would also be pursued through voluntary societies. One of the most successful reform campaigns, which emerged at roughly the same time as the Sabbatarian campaign with a similar cast of reformers, was the crusade against alcohol consumption. From 1800 to 1830, the average American adult drank alcohol at rates significantly higher than were seen before or since—roughly seven gallons of absolute alcohol per year, usually in the form of whiskey or cider. But after 1830 those numbers fell precipitously and by 1845 hovered around two gallons annually, a rate that persisted for the rest of the century (and one analogous to American drinking patterns in the early twenty-first century). The drop in consumption after 1830 arguably had much to do with the temperance movement.¹⁴

¹² Ibid.; and *First Annual Report of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* (New York, 1829), p. 4.

¹³ Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), pp. 193–204.

¹⁴ W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York, 1979), p. 233.

Temperance advocates were moralizing in their condemnation of liquor consumption, arguing that it undermined the United States' providential place in world history. As Lyman Beecher explained in a representative sermon in 1827, 'intemperance' threatened the American 'experiment of civil liberty' in the form of a 'river of fire which is rolling through the land, destroying the vital air and extending around an atmosphere of death'.¹⁵ Beecher helped launch the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance in 1826, which provided a new model for moral reform by creating a national voluntary association. By the mid-1830s, the United States claimed more than 5,000 localized temperance organizations, with perhaps as many as 1.5 million members and more than two million Americans pledging to abstain from hard liquor. In 1833, the movement had become so organized that multiple temperance societies met in Philadelphia and united to create the national American Temperance Union, presided over and funded by Stephen Van Rensselaer of New York, one of the richest men in America.¹⁶

As Rensselaer's early involvement indicates, not all temperance advocates were avowed evangelical clergy such as Beecher. Overwhelmingly, temperance advocates called for self-discipline, an idea that appealed especially to middle-class capitalists who believed in the 'redemption of society' and saw their political values represented by the Whig Party, a number that included the young Abraham Lincoln. Urban reformers cited alcohol as a primary reason for blighted cities and especially their notorious slums. Women connected alcohol consumption with domestic violence. Business leaders argued that liquor undermined their workers' efficiency. In the South, temperance appealed to a master class who hoped for more dutiful slaves. Furthermore, as increasing numbers of immigrants appeared in the United States after 1830, temperance was deployed in the service of nativism against predominantly Catholic Irish and German arrivals who had no moral qualms with alcohol consumption.¹⁷

Although the early temperance movement followed Beecher's lead in calling for moral suasion and the reforming of individual hearts towards alcohol, by 1840 temperance advocates started taking a different approach and engaging more directly in the political and legal process. Evangelical temperance activists initially saw their goals at cross-purposes with the non-sectarian and more

¹⁵ Lyman Beecher, *Six Sermons on the Nature, Occasions, Signs, Evils, and Remedy of Intemperance* (New York, 1827) pp. 7–8.

¹⁶ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, pp. 167–8; Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers*, pp. 72–6; and Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815–1860*, rev. ed. (New York, 1997), pp. 129–31.

¹⁷ Ibid.; Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago, IL, 1979), pp. 9, 158–60, 266; Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800–1860* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1980), pp. 130–58; and John W. Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1998), pp. 337–8.

secular Washingtonian Society (founded in 1840 by a group of former alcoholics), which advocated total abstinence and self-help, and whose membership came more from the ranks of workers rather than clergy elites. Though the Washingtonians did not last long, their approach was similarly followed by other non-sectarian organizations such as the Sons of Temperance, and evangelical advocates ultimately came to embrace political action as useful—and necessary—to the temperance crusade.¹⁸

In 1838 and in 1839, Massachusetts and Mississippi passed laws restricting the amount of alcohol that could be sold, and several other states followed suit with similar laws restricting alcohol distribution and manufacturing. Although some of these laws were later overturned, as happened in Massachusetts in 1840 and New York in 1847, temperance advocates set their sights on more localized victories, and towns and counties across the country came to prohibit alcohol within their boundaries. The signal achievement came in Maine in 1851 when, under the leadership of Neal Dow, a merchant and former Quaker, the state completely prohibited alcohol. Maine's example was followed by thirteen other states—all of New England, along with Delaware, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—that had passed 'Maine laws' by 1855. In large part these laws did not survive the Civil War—only five prohibitionist states remained in 1865—but they were a striking testament to the wide reach and political appeal of temperance activism in the early republic. Although the character and geographical reach of the movement changed significantly in the post-bellum United States, temperance remained one of the most enduring moral crusades in American history.¹⁹

INSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES AND THE UNITARIAN CONSCIENCE

As moral suasion gave way to political action among temperance advocates, other reformers sought institutional solutions to problems that seemed to evade purely moral approaches. In part this institutionalism drew from different moral sources than those evangelicals had embraced: it had to do with Unitarian suspicion of orthodox Trinitarian Christian—and especially Calvinist—verities about human nature. As famously given voice by leading exponent William Ellery Channing in 1819, Unitarians did not believe human beings were innately tainted with the stain of original sin, thus separated from

¹⁸ Walters, *American Reformers*, pp. 133–6; Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*, pp. 204–7.

¹⁹ Walters, *American Reformers*, pp. 138–40; and Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers*, pp. 75–6.

God and destined to do evil. Instead, they argued humans were born with a capacity that needed to be properly conditioned and cultivated. In a natural state, humans might achieve great potential, and even attain perfection, but the rough and tumble of human social interaction—to say nothing of traditional Christianity's supposedly perverse ideas of a wrathful God who took vengeance on sinners and damned the unrepentant—interfered with these ends. In the otherwise loose social order of the early American republic, several New England Unitarians endeavoured to show that rightly ordered institutions might work against the restraints of society and help individuals reach a higher state of life.²⁰

This belief led the director of Boston's Perkins Institution for the Blind, Samuel Gridley Howe, to embark in 1837 on a fascinating experiment with a blind and deaf woman named Laura Bridgman. Born in 1829, shortly after her second birthday Bridgman came down with scarlet fever, which robbed her of both hearing and sight. At the age of seven, she entered Perkins' and Howe's care. For Howe's part, Bridgman—for whom he came to develop deep affection—was a case study in both science and the virtues of Unitarian theology. Ultimately Bridgman became the first blind and deaf person in history to learn language, demonstrating the incredible potential of all human people for improvement, and providing a model for future educational efforts with—and egalitarian attitudes towards—the disabled. Bridgman's case was widely publicized in the United States and Europe, and in and of itself became the inspirational example for a later blind and deaf woman who learned language and championed disabled rights—Helen Keller. Laura Bridgman's example was a triumph from that vantage point.²¹

But it failed to produce the result Howe sought as a theological experiment in human nature. Howe assumed that Bridgman, as a kind of blank slate, would come to discover religious values for herself and reject orthodox Christianity. But Bridgman instead embraced her family's Baptist faith. Moreover, as time went on, Howe came to see a number of flaws in Bridgman's character—telling occasional lies, exhibiting a quickness to anger—which Howe's Calvinist opponents understood through the traditional language of human sinfulness but which Howe attempted to explain through the period's phrenological science. Bridgman, Howe argued, simply had a small brain that made her incapable of reaching a higher and more perfect life. Howe found himself forced to concede that 'native dispositions, and tendencies, and peculiarities may never be eradicated or entirely changed'. The education of Laura Bridgman may have failed to produce the theological proof that Howe

²⁰ Daniel Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805–1861* (Cambridge, MA, 1970), pp. 93–120; and Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, pp. 613–15.

²¹ Ernest Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman: First Deaf and Blind Person to Learn Language* (Cambridge, MA, 2001).

sought about innate human abilities, but it nevertheless served as a model example of the potential of education to uplift a marginalized class of people.²²

Howe's close associate and fellow Unitarian Horace Mann achieved more sweeping success in his own efforts at institutional reform—principally through the development of a system of free public education. While some forms of open and 'public' education existed in the colonial period and early republic, Massachusetts pioneered a new approach in 1837 when they established a state board of education, headed by Mann as secretary. Mann worked to centralize the Massachusetts system by placing control over curriculum and teacher training in the hands of the state—efforts that were paralleled by his associate Henry Barnard in Connecticut and Rhode Island. Following Mann's direction, in 1852 Massachusetts became the first state to require school attendance, and he is often referred to as the 'father of American public education' as a result.²³

Mann was certainly not the only champion of compulsory public education in the period—along with Barnard, he was joined by Calvin Stowe, Caleb Mills, Emma Willard, and Catharine Beecher, among other leading reformers. But Mann's secularizing and universalizing approach raised much ire, and that flowed directly from his Unitarian suspicion of traditional Christian claims about human nature. Mann was particularly interested in the democratic potential of a common school system to offer equal opportunity to all of his state's citizens, regardless of their family's class or social status. Although Mann argued that he was not establishing a particularly Unitarian approach to education—that his approach was instead meant to serve all students equally and universally, regardless of religious persuasion—traditional Christians from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds protested his reforms and regularly sought to have the Massachusetts Board of Education closed. Those efforts did not succeed in Massachusetts, though they indicated the sort of resistance that thwarted public education efforts elsewhere in the United States in the period, especially in the slaveholding South.²⁴

The Unitarian conscience that pricked Howe and Mann to action also influenced their friend Dorothea Dix in her efforts to reform the way that Americans treated the mentally ill. Dix had been a schoolteacher, but in 1841 she volunteered her time at an East Cambridge, Massachusetts, prison. To her horror, Dix discovered—as she would later explain to the state's legislature in a memorial delivered by Howe—that 'insane persons confined within this Commonwealth' were being held 'in cages, closets, cellars, stalls, pens! Chained,

²² Ibid., pp. 122–204, quote p. 204.

²³ William W. Cutler III, 'Horace Mann and Common School Reform', in *American Reform and Reformers: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Randall M. Miller and Paul A. Cimbala (Westport, CT, 1996), pp. 331–45.

²⁴ Ibid., and Freeberg, *Education of Laura Bridgman*, pp. 127–8.

naked, beaten with rods, and lashed into obedience’. Dix also had much support from Mann, who helped make the case that the state should treat the mentally ill in hospitals, not prisons. The legislature approved funds to expand the state’s mental hospital, and Dix expanded her work, racking up 30,000 miles travelling to petition other states to create or expand existing asylums. Her efforts bore fruit in twenty-eight states, including several in the South. Dix saw the US Congress pass legislation in 1854 to create a federal system of asylums, only to be vetoed by President Franklin Pierce. Frustrated, but not defeated, Dix took her message to Europe and continued the crusade.²⁵

WOMEN’S RIGHTS

The place of Dorothea Dix in American life spoke to another one of the period’s major areas of social reform energy: the effort to expand public roles for women as citizens and political actors. There had been a number of efforts on behalf of women in the early republic, though they were not necessarily unified in their purposes. For many middle-class women, the gendered ideal for their lives was expressed through what historians have called the ‘cult of domesticity’.²⁶ While this view emphasized the appeal of a comfortable life of hearth and home, it also produced some sincere efforts to reform cities. Evangelical activists led by Lydia A. Finney—the wife of Charles Finney—formed the New York Female Reform Society in 1834 and determined to undermine prostitution in Gotham. Similar moral reform organizations emerged, dedicated to the cause of protecting poor women’s virtue and closing brothels, which exposed middle-class evangelicals in new ways to the problems of urban poverty and added new emphases to the gendered limits of social mobility.²⁷

In other sectors of the economy, especially for poorer working women, a tranquil domestic life without labouring outside the home was a bourgeois illusion. In the New England mill villages that boomed in the 1820s, thousands of women came to labour in their early adult years—where they also found themselves empowered to speak out against the daily injustices of long

²⁵ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, pp. 603–5; Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers*, pp. 96–7; Elizabeth Lasch-Quinn, ‘Dorothea Dix and Mental Health Reform’, in *American Reform and Reformers*, p. 154; Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*, pp. 162–3; and Dorothea L. Dix, *Memorial to the Legislature of Massachusetts, 1843* (Boston, 1904), p. 2, italics in original.

²⁶ See S.C. Williams, ‘Gender’, Chapter 19 of this volume.

²⁷ Walters, *American Reformers*, pp. 105–6; Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers*, pp. 69–70; and Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, CT, 1990), pp. 58–9.

working hours in grimy conditions. The most notable example was the town of Lowell, Massachusetts, which was founded in 1821. By 1840, it had become a monument to booming American industrial capitalism, with thirty-two weaving mills and a largely female labour force of 8,000 workers. Most of Lowell's women workers were young adults in their twenties who put up with hard working conditions for a chance at an independent life before settling into marriage. Lowell saw strikes of women workers in 1834 and 1836, which both failed. But those failures led to the creation of the Female Labor Reform Associations of the 1840s, which shifted tactics from strikes to petitions to agitate for shorter working hours (they sought a ten-hour workday instead of twelve) in New England.²⁸

Those earlier middle and working-class efforts launched women into new public roles, but the energy for women's rights galvanized around calls for the vote. Those women who met in July 1848 for a convention in the Wesleyan Chapel of Seneca Falls, New York drew from the era's ethos of reform and launched the first wave of feminist activism in the United States. The two leaders at Seneca Falls both drew from radical religious traditions—Quaker minister Lucretia Coffin Mott proved a key influence on the freethinking Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who was the primary author of the convention's 'Declaration of Rights and Sentiments'.²⁹

The Seneca Falls Declaration reflected the aims of middle and elite classes of white women and followed closely the language of the Declaration of Independence, arguing that 'all men and women are created equal' and, furthermore, that the 'history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman'. The Declaration condemned the misogyny that had 'usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as [men's] right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God'. These arguments cut against the grain of a 'country' that practised the 'entire disfranchisement of one-half of the people' in it. The Declaration called for the 'immediate admission' of women 'to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States'—which included 'their sacred right to the elective franchise'.³⁰

The call for the vote was a controversial one, even for the delegates at Seneca Falls, who did not approve that resolution with unanimity. But the convention

²⁸ Walters, *American Reformers*, pp. 113–14; and Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, pp. 303–5, 546–7.

²⁹ Sally G. McMillen, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement* (New York, 2008); and Kathi Kern, "'Free Woman Is a Divine Being, the Savior of Mankind": Stanton's Exploration of Religion and Gender', in Ellen Carol DuBois and Richard Cándida Smith, eds., *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Feminist as Thinker: A Reader in Documents and Essays* (New York, 2007), pp. 93–110.

³⁰ McMillen, *Seneca Falls*, with the full text of the 'Declaration of Rights and Sentiments', pp. 237–41.

nonetheless touched off a wave of women's activism that made the franchise the centrepiece of women's rights efforts in the United States for the next seven decades. Local organizations sprang up, following the lead of Seneca Falls, and the first National Woman's Rights Convention met in Massachusetts in 1850. That meeting featured a range of speakers from the radical religious spectrum of reform: Lucretia Coffin Mott, Lucy Stone, William Ellery Channing, William A. Alcott, Wendell Phillips, Harriot Hunt, Stephen and Abby Kelley Foster, William Lloyd Garrison, Sojourner Truth, Ernestine Rose, and Frederick Douglass all appeared on the dais. In addition to smaller local meetings, the 1850 convention launched a series of annual national conferences held in the major cities of the Northeast and Midwest that persisted to the Civil War.³¹

One of the chief arguments that early feminists made was that along with the abolition of slavery in the American South, the United States also needed to abolish the 'slavery of sex' that kept women bound to marriage and the domestic sphere. As the roster of speakers at the National Woman's Rights Convention in 1850 indicates, the suffrage movement and the most significant reform movement of the period, abolitionism, had grown up in tandem. But antislavery and women's rights did not always align in their goals.³²

THE SLAVERY QUESTION

The antislavery movement came to overshadow all other reform movements in the period; on its own terms it is a lesson in the multifaceted nature of American reform. Nowhere was that more clear than in abolitionist controversy over women's roles in the movement. Abolitionists organized the American Anti-Slavery Society (AAAS) in 1833 to advocate for the immediate end to slavery in the United States. Aside from that overarching goal, their interests and religious motivations were mixed. In 1840, leading white abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison of Boston, editor of the weekly *Liberator*, advocated for the inclusion of Abby Kelley (later Foster) to the AAAS business committee. Evangelicals and other more conservative voices within the movement walked out and created a rival antislavery organization, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Later that summer, the meeting of the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London refused to recognize Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton—and this in spite of her husband Henry

³¹ Ibid., pp. 104–48.

³² Blanche Glassman Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America* (Urbana, IL, 1978).

B. Stanton's prominent role at the meeting. As abolitionist debate over women's roles in the movement indicates, not all abolitionists were radicals.³³

In point of fact, most antislavery activists were not abolitionists. Instead, the dominant view of disposing of slavery in the United States, from the Revolution to the Civil War, was gradualism. This approach was interested in the use of legal and constitutional means to achieve its ends. Gradualism focused on a slow end to slavery and largely emphasized white supremacy: gradual emancipation focused on ensuring the United States remained a white man's country and that yeoman whites—average white workers—would find their jobs and livelihoods protected. Oftentimes gradualism was connected to colonization programmes that called for the complete removal of America's black population to West Africa or perhaps the Caribbean.

The United States was birthed as a proslavery nation, and when the states were colonies under British authority they all held slaves. In the aftermath of the Revolution, however, several northern states put antislavery provisions into their constitutions. Even though most of these states ended the slave trade outright, all of them were exceptionally gradual in their approach to ending slavery itself. Between 1780 and 1804, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey enacted emancipation laws. But none of these laws freed a single slave immediately. They instead freed enslaved children, but only when they reached a certain age: twenty-one to twenty-eight, depending on the state and the slave's gender. Massachusetts and New Hampshire also moved to end slavery, but only through a series of complex legal decisions, rather than constitutional means. The result was a rather protracted process of emancipation in the North, with slaves there well into the nineteenth century. Slavery did not actually end in practice until 1827 in New York, 1847 in Pennsylvania, 1848 in Connecticut, and 1857 in New Hampshire. Even so, some states still had slaves after these dates, notably as late as 1865 in New Jersey.³⁴

At the same time that these states were moving towards gradual emancipation, virtually every northern state passed a series of black exclusion laws designed to protect and maintain white supremacy. Included were not just the old colonial states, but also the new states in the West—Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin—those that came in after the Northwest Ordinances of 1787, which had barred new slaves from moving to the region, but did not free those enslaved peoples already there. For example, enforcement of Ohio's 'Black Laws' in 1829 compelled some 1,100 to 2,200 African

³³ Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism After 1830* (Boston, MA, 1980), pp. 9–10; Lois W. Banner, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: A Radical for Woman's Rights* (Boston, MA), pp. 23–5.

³⁴ Steven Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), pp. 7–9.

Americans to leave Cincinnati for a settlement in Upper Canada (today western Ontario). For American whites in the early republic, racial exclusion overwhelmingly seemed the solution to the problem of race.³⁵

In 1816, the white gradualist movement took a major organizational step, with the creation of the American Colonization Society (ACS) in Washington, D.C.—whose stated purpose was sending free American blacks to West Africa. Members of the ACS came from a variety of ideological frameworks: colonization was invoked for proslavery, antislavery, and ‘separationist’—not dealing with slavery per se, but seeking a means of removing blacks from American soil—ends. But a racist assumption was shot through each of these positions: colonization’s supporters held a paternalistic view of African Americans and believed that free blacks could not thrive side-by-side with whites. Slavery may have been wrong, but so too was an interracial society. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, some African Americans had supported colonization. The most notable example was Paul Cuffe, a black sea captain and devout Quaker, who patronized colonization and the British Sierra Leone colony as a way of affirming black aspirations to be independent of white control. Cuffe gained approval from some leading blacks—including Daniel Coker and Richard Allen, founders of the United States’ first African-American denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME)—for the idea of colonization. But Cuffe died in 1816 just as the ACS was organizing, and the overtly racist agenda soured others on the scheme. Up to the Civil War, African Americans proved overwhelmingly resistant to the idea of colonization. Between 1820 and 1860, the ACS sent roughly 13,000 blacks to their Liberia colony, a miniscule number compared with the more than 4.5 million free and enslaved African Americans in 1860.³⁶

It was, in fact, the ongoing resistance of African Americans to colonization that led to the origins of the radical abolitionist movement. Some of the most vocal protest came from within Boston’s free black community, and especially an AME congregation pastored by Samuel Snowden. One of Snowden’s parishioners was a man named David Walker, who had been born free in North Carolina. In 1829, Walker published one of the most visceral attacks on slavery and white supremacy to appear in the period, his *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*. Drawing from a deep well of evangelical moral reasoning and biblical textual analysis, Walker excoriated the ‘white Christians of America’ for their endorsement of slavery and—especially relevant for free blacks north of slavery—blind acceptance of white supremacy. As Walker had

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 9–14; and Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790–1860* (Chicago, IL, 1961), pp. 72–4.

³⁶ David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York, 2006), pp. 256–8; Luke E. Harlow, *Religion, Race, and the Making of Confederate Kentucky, 1830–1880* (New York, 2014), pp. 22–3; and James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic, 1760–1830* (New York, 2007), pp. 11–13.

argued, even the biblical Hebrews, enslaved ‘by the Egyptians’ and ‘*under heathen Pharaoh*’, were treated better than nineteenth-century African Americans ‘under the *enlightened Christians of America*’. Moreover, no white American Christian could make an honest claim to the title of that faith when, in Walker’s analysis, there had not been a single pagan civilization in world history that ‘ever treated a set of human beings, as the white Christians of America do us, the blacks, or Africans’. For Walker, there was no distinction between ending slavery and ending racism. To that end, colonization was nothing more than a ploy that served the interests of the slaveholding class itself.³⁷

Walker’s arguments impressed themselves directly upon one white anti-slavery Bostonian: William Lloyd Garrison. Though Garrison had supported colonization, he found himself moved by Walker’s prose. Thanks to a legacy of African-American religious activism against colonization, Garrison launched antislavery in a new direction when he began publishing the *Liberator* on 1 January 1831. When later that year Nat Turner led an insurrection of slaves in Southampton County, Virginia that left some sixty whites dead, more conservative activists found themselves unwilling to accept the logical conclusion of radical abolitionism—that violence might be required to end slavery immediately. In turn, abolitionists rejected colonization as a legitimate means of seeking to end slavery; when the American Anti-Slavery Society was founded in 1833, it expressly denounced colonization. Thus 1831 decisively split radical abolition from gradualism.³⁸

The first decade of abolitionist activism included a religiously diverse cast of characters. Many, including Theodore Dwight Weld, Arthur and Lewis Tappan, and James G. Birney, came to their position through Finneyite revivalism. These individuals were instrumental in the early years of Oberlin College (founded 1833), where Finney became a theology professor in 1835. Others, such as James and Lucretia Mott, James S. Gibbons, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Sarah and Angelina Grimké—Angelina would marry Weld in 1838—came from Quaker backgrounds. Charles and Eliza Follen, David and Lydia Maria Child, Francis Jackson, Edmund Quincy, Theodore Parker, and Samuel J. May were Unitarians. William Lloyd Garrison himself had been Baptist, and at one point attended Lyman Beecher’s congregation in Boston, but ultimately embraced freethinking scepticism—questioning the authority of the Bible and emphasizing human reason.³⁹

³⁷ Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 258; Stephen Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829–1889* (New York, 2012), pp. 13–83; and David Walker, *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, ed. Peter P. Hinks (1829; University Park, PA, 2000 edn.), pp. 11, 16, 76, italics in original.

³⁸ Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, pp. 258–9; and Harlow, *Religion, Race*, p. 21.

³⁹ Walters, *Antislavery Appeal*, pp. 37–53.

This religious diversity did not at first glance make for a unified movement. Besides the controversy over the 'woman question', the 1840 fracture of the AAAS had much to do with debates between evangelical abolitionists and those who were more freethinking. However, virtually all abolitionists were united in their condemnation of the United States' dominant churches for their tacit or overt acceptance of American slavery. Although the early republic's three largest Protestant denominations—Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians—split in different ways on the slavery question in the 1830s and 1840s, the northern churches that remained were by no means hotbeds of radical abolitionism. As a landmark treatise by James G. Birney written in the wake of the World Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840 stated bluntly: the 'American churches' were 'bulwarks of American slavery'. While Garrisonian sceptics understandably saw churches as beyond the pale of influence, so too did evangelical abolitionists. They argued for 'come-outerism'—that is, for antislavery believers to leave traditional churches for those that refused fellowship with slaveholders. That position fully coalesced in 1846 with the creation of the American Missionary Association by Lewis Tappan, George Whipple, Gerrit Smith, Joshua Leavitt, and other prominent evangelical abolitionists.⁴⁰

The ultimate success of the abolitionists came in the arena of formal politics, which was also a source of division in 1840. Frustrated with the moral suasion approach of the Garrisonians, James G. Birney led the creation of the Liberty Party, and ran for US president in 1840 and 1844 to offer voters a legitimate abolitionist candidate. Those elections produced miniscule returns for Birney (under 7,000 votes in 1840 and 62,000 in 1844), but paved the way for later antislavery political action—first in the Free Soil Party of the late 1840s and early 1850s, and then in the formation of the Republican Party in 1854. Neither Free Soil nor Republicanism was as fully committed to immediatism as many radical abolitionists hoped, but its genius as a political movement was its ability to build an antislavery coalition that united both abolitionist and gradualists. The Republican platform of 1856 famously castigated slavery as a 'relic of barbarism' and John C. Frémont's presidential candidacy that year succeeded in winning 33 per cent of the popular vote. Four years later, the election of Abraham Lincoln—who never campaigned in the South—to the presidency with under 40 per cent of the national popular vote, but all the electoral college votes from free soil states, signalled the triumph of antislavery politics. Lincoln's election proved, on its own terms, to many white southerners a provocation against their slaveholding

⁴⁰ John R. McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830–1865* (Ithaca, NY, 1984); Lawrence J. Friedman, 'Confidence and Pertinacity in Evangelical Abolitionism: Lewis Tappan's Circle,' *American Quarterly* 31 (1979), 87–106; and James G. Birney, *The American Churches, The Bulwarks of American Slavery*, 3rd edn. (Newburyport, MA, 1842).

way of life. They saw in it cause to leave the Union, form the Confederate States of America, and engage in war against the United States of America.⁴¹

THE CIVIL WAR AND THE NEW SHAPE OF REFORM

The Civil War brought death to some 750,000 Americans, but Abraham Lincoln argued in his Second Inaugural Address in March 1865 that it had not been fought in vain. Instead, it served the purpose of destroying the sin of slavery and maintaining the Union. Lincoln, who rarely darkened the door of a church, memorably quoted Psalm 19:9 to argue that ‘if God wills that [the war] continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether”’.⁴²

There was much in Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address that echoed—and indeed stood in continuity with—a generation of abolitionist activism. But something significant had changed. When Lincoln delivered his Second Inaugural, the force of the American state, the US Army, had been brought to bear upon the southern slaveholders’ attempt to create an independent republic. Though conservative estimates suggest that only 500,000 enslaved people had achieved freedom when Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse in April 1865, the army’s occupational spread throughout the South soon brought liberation to millions of bonded souls. Furthermore, by that point the Thirteenth Amendment was making its way through the state ratification process. It officially abolished slavery everywhere in the United States when it became part of the Constitution in December 1865. The previous four years of war-making had launched what historians often call the ‘Second American Revolution’, which modernized and centralized the American state, turning *it* into the primary site for social reform. In the next five years, two more constitutional amendments, the Fourteenth (1868) and Fifteenth (1870), made multiracial birthright citizenship and the franchise for men, regardless of race, the law of the land.⁴³

⁴¹ James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York, 1976), pp. 89–177; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York, 1970); and Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville, VA, 2001).

⁴² Abraham Lincoln, ‘Second Inaugural Address’, 4 March 1865, online at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lincoln2.asp.

⁴³ James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York, 1991); and McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*; Steven Hahn et al, eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861–1867*, ser. 3, vol. 1, *Land and Labor, 1865* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2008), pp. 1–4.

The Civil War's abolition of slavery and subsequent extension of rights achieved what had previously evaded reform movements: social change on a national scale. It thus provided the model for reform going forward. Reformers persisted in their activism, but rather than the early republic's tactics of moral suasion, the new order required appeals to a centralized state apparatus, eventually leading to the bureaucratic and pragmatic approaches that would become hallmarks of the Progressive Era. Undeniably, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's Social Gospel movement grew from antebellum evangelical reformist roots, but that later movement tended to lack the participation of more conservative believers, in contrast with earlier evangelical reform. For evangelicals who had long been divided over whether changes of heart should also necessitate changes in society, the Civil War accelerated what historian Kathryn Long has called the 'privatization of northern revivalism': the old reformist aspect of evangelicalism was winnowed off and true faith came to be seen as a matter of the individual heart alone. While evangelicals obviously still agitated for reform, the post-war revivals of Dwight L. Moody and other evangelists decoupled reform from conversion. Rather than emphasizing the ability of humans to hasten the arrival of the millennial kingdom of God, pessimism about social change predominated.⁴⁴

Since moral suasion had lost its appeal, this pietistic emphasis in revivals was matched by the emergence of a new lobbying effort by believers to use the government's power to enforce social morality. In the South, where the doctrine of the 'spirituality of the church' had traditionally insulated white believers from the sting of antislavery attacks, the end of slavery opened up a new willingness to embrace the powers of the state to regulate morality. As was the case before the Civil War, the range of issues that drew reformers' attention was similar—and similarly broad—but familiar ones like temperance and women's suffrage loomed large. The Eighteenth Amendment (1919) brought prohibition to the United States and the Nineteenth Amendment (1920) extended the franchise to women. Local laws in both cases preceded the amendments. Twenty-two states had women's suffrage before 1920. Prohibition was more complex, but before 1919 nine states were completely dry and thirty-one had laws that enabled localities to ban alcohol.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Smith, *Revivalism and Reform*; Kathryn Teresa Long, *The Revival of 1857–58: Interpreting and American Religious Awakening* (New York, 1998), pp. 93–109; and Gaines M. Foster, *Moral Reconstruction: Christian Lobbyists and the Federal Legislation of Morality, 1865–1920* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002).

⁴⁵ Foster, *Moral Reconstruction*; and Laura Rominger Porter, 'From Sin to Crime: Evangelicals and the Public Moral Order the Nineteenth-Century South' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Notre Dame, 2013); Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of and Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848–1869* (Ithaca, NY, 1978); and Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890–1920* (New York, 1981 edn.).

As the pioneering case of the Civil War's end of slavery made plain, it would take a central government that the early American republic's reformers lacked to see their goals realized. But that altered the very nature of social reform itself. Reformers did not give up their attempts to make a Christian America. Dissenting Protestants led in these efforts after the Civil War as much as they had before it. But they pushed and pulled on different levers of power. Society would not be changed through moral means alone. The project of building a Christian America on voluntary assent had failed. Reformers would thus attempt to build their Christian America through the coercive power of the state. That project itself was still always beholden to the fundamental rule of democratic action in nineteenth-century America: that majoritarian might made right. Thus the attempt to reform America in the post-Civil War United States would still be done through 'voluntary' democratic approaches, in a fundamentally bottom-up, Dissenting, and low-church style. Rather than through the altar call and the anxious bench, however, it would happen at the ballot box and through the legislative process.

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Part V

Congregations and Living

Gender

S.C. Williams

The family government underlies all forms of government; and woe to the state where the children are not governed under this older law.¹

Any discussion of nineteenth-century religious Dissent must look carefully at gender. Formed by the ongoing experience of political and cultural alienation, Nonconformity involved an inherent critique of the norms and structures of contemporary society, including social and theological constructions of masculinity and femininity. To dissent *was* to redefine the place of men and women in community before God and within the wider life of the nation state. Drawing on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformation and Puritan antecedents, nineteenth-century Dissenters continued to shift attention from the sacramental and mediatory role of the religious establishment as the singular hub of Christian influence to the household as a major locus of spiritual formation.² Although distinct from one another in many important respects, most Nonconformist congregations were patterned on the primary model of the household as the first unit of God-given society and the foundation for the wider functioning of the social and political order. Such a model necessarily fostered questions both implicit and explicit about the primary relationship between male and female. In this context, ideas of gender coalesced with theology and praxis to shape expectations that were central to the cultural ethos of Nonconformity.

Images of masculinity and femininity shaped understandings of piety and spiritual practice as part and parcel of the meaning of religious voluntarism. Piety was mediated through gendered images of spirituality that pertained not just to the appropriate roles of men and women in positions of leadership, but

¹ S.S. Pugh, *Christian Home-Life: A Book of Examples and Principles* (London, 1864), p. 3.

² For a discussion of this idea of the household in the Canadian context see Nancy Christie, ed., *Households of Faith: Family, Gender, and Community in Canada, 1760–1969* (Montreal and Kingston, 2002), pp. 3–33.

more fundamentally to a reservoir of norms and ideals from which religious believers drew their understanding of self and society. Moreover, these gender styles were part of a shared culture that cemented local chapel communities within an identifiable trans-local and increasingly global culture of Protestant religious Dissent during the course of the nineteenth century.³ This chapter explores how and in what ways this was so. Through a consideration of communal belonging, male and female spiritual formation, and ideas of marriage and mission, this chapter pays careful attention to the interrelationships between gender and nineteenth-century Nonconformity. It does so by drawing the specificity of Dissenting culture into critical dialogue with existing historiographical interpretations of gender and religion that use the model of separate spheres. The complex and dynamic role of gender is highlighted as a vital part of the ongoing formulation of Dissenting ecclesial identity over and against the perceived threat of religious and cultural conformity.

A strong connection already exists in the historiography of this period between evangelicalism, as a broad trans-denominational category of religious belief, and nineteenth-century gender ideals. The work of Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall has been formative in this respect. In their book *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (1987), Davidoff and Hall argued that from the late eighteenth century men and women of the provincial middle class employed evangelicalism as an ideology to establish their own distinctive moral autonomy as a social group. As they elevated the primacy of the interior life of prayer and godliness, critiquing landed wealth as the only form of social legitimacy, these groups carved out a particular definition of domesticity which became foundational to middle-class identity by 1850. The convergence of evangelical discourse and middle-class socioeconomic and cultural identity produced the ideal of home as a private sphere of piety, comfort, and retreat, woven around the person of wife and mother. By mid-century, the woman, as guardian of the spiritual welfare of her family, found herself confined within the private domestic sphere and excluded from the corrupting influence of the competitive public sphere of the male.⁴

As an explanatory model this ‘separate spheres’ argument has become the paradigmatic analytical framework for understanding cultural configurations of gender and religious belief in nineteenth-century Britain. It has also been

³ For example, Norman Vance argues for a common cult of trans-Atlantic manliness in *Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge, 1985).

⁴ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago, IL, 1987). See also Catherine Hall’s subsequent article, ‘The Early Formation of Domestic Ideology’, in Hall, *White Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, 1992) and Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London, 1982).

readily applied to studies of the United States⁵ and Canada⁶ and with some variations to Continental Europe,⁷ Scandinavia,⁸ and Australia.⁹ As with all groundbreaking work, this argument has been subject to substantive criticism;¹⁰ nonetheless, the basic idea of an association between evangelicalism and a gendered construction of separate spheres continues to operate as a backdrop for ongoing reconstructions of nineteenth-century gender. Indeed this model has recently been re-vitalized in Callum Brown's innovative book *The Death of Christian Britain* (2002).

Using insights drawn from gender studies and linguistic theory, Brown modifies Davidoff and Hall's approach by displacing economic class as the pre-eminent socio-structural framework for analysis and develops in its place a definition of what he calls 'discursive Christianity'.¹¹ By this he means religiosity

⁵ For examples of American material, see Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven, CT, 1977); Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860', *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966), 151–74; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (Oxford, 1986); Nancy Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822–1872* (Ithaca, NY, 1984); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: the Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (Cambridge, 1981).

⁶ For examples of Canadian material, see Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton, eds., *Separate Spheres: Women's Worlds in the 19th-century Maritimes* (Fredericton, New Brunswick, 1994); Cecilia Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women: The Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Upper Canada, 1791–1850* (Toronto, Ontario, 1996); Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839–1918* (Montreal, Québec, 1989); Sharon Anne Cook, 'Through Sunshine and Shadow': *The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874–1930* (Montreal, Québec, 1995).

⁷ For examples of European material, see Victoria Lorée Enders and Pamela Beth Radcliff, eds., *Constructing Spanish Womanhood: Female Identity in Modern Spain* (Albany, NY, 1999); Barbara Caine and Glenda Sluga, *Gendering European History: 1780–1920* (Leicester, 2000); Deborah Simonton, *The Routledge History of Women in Europe Since 1700* (New York, 2006); Bonnie G. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: The Bourgeoises of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ, 1981); Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann, and Catherine Hall, eds., *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2000).

⁸ For examples of Scandinavian material, see Heidi Hansson, 'Henrietta Kent and the Feminised North', *Nordlit*, 11 (2007), 71–96; Inger Marie Okkenhaug, 'Gender and Nordic Missions in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 28 (2003), 73–82.

⁹ For examples of Australian material, see Robert Hogg, *Men and Manliness on the Frontier: Queensland and British Columbia in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2012); Marjorie R. Theobald, *Knowing Women: Origins of Women's Education in Nineteenth-Century Australia* (Cambridge, 1996); Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard* (Cambridge, 2003).

¹⁰ See in particular Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), 383–414; Linda Kerber, 'Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Women's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History', *The Journal of American History*, 75 (1988), 9–39; and E. Gordon and G. Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family, and Society in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, CT, 2003).

¹¹ Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London, 2001), p. 12.

based on collective subscription to protocols of identity, custom, and behaviour drawn upon to promote a coherent 'puritan' and highly gendered Christian discourse. In Brown's analysis, it is individual and communal subscription to this discourse that creates a compelling religious culture at the heart of British life. Brown identifies a set of encompassing definitions of masculinity and femininity that emerged after 1800 to constrain behaviour and shape cultural expectations. As with Davidoff and Hall, so for Brown, women were at the centre of these ideals. It was their piety which reinforced the validity of evangelical sensibilities in society as a whole and required their judicious separation from 'the world', an arena Brown interprets as synonymous with the public sphere.¹² Conversely, just as female piety was centrally located in the home, so masculinity was constructed in antithesis to religiosity. Brown's definition of masculinity revolves around the susceptibility of the male to worldly temptations and his need of a female influence to morally edify his natural tendencies. From the 1840s right through to the 1960s, these two dimensions of gender and piety/impiety became what Brown calls 'mutually enslaved discursive constructions'.¹³ Together they formed a web of moral prescription that characterized the nation's 'last puritan age'.¹⁴

Brown's work is helpful in many respects. It draws gender more firmly into the social history of modern Christianity and it recognizes the formative role of language in the creation of cultural identity.¹⁵ However, by separating the public male and private female spheres from one another, Brown's analysis, like that of Davidoff and Hall, tends to neglect the complex and multiple ways in which these spheres overlapped, critiqued, and reformed one another during the course of the nineteenth century, particularly within the context of Protestant Dissent. These historians assume that evangelicalism was a hegemonic movement about which it is possible to generalize. Davidoff and Hall's account relies on a stereotypical middle-class version of evangelicalism while the Christian discourse that Brown assumes is both unitary and dominant and is applied as a singular definition of 'Christianity' across a variety of denominational contexts. Although Dissenting communities did share many points of commonality with evangelicals within the mainstream Anglican Church, the unique history and structures of Nonconformity ensured a high degree of particularity within the core identity of Dissent. Nonconformist groups had different expressions not only of worship and devotion but also of family life and male/female relationships. To deploy a singular discourse about gender, therefore, as if it were typical of nineteenth-century Christianity as a whole, is to overlook the subtle ways in which gender styles were

¹² Ibid., p. 61.

¹³ Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁵ For a fuller discussion of this point see Sarah C. Williams, 'Is There a Bible in the House? Gender, Religion, and Family Culture', in Sue Morgan and Jacqueline de Vries, eds., *Women, Gender, and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800–1940* (London, 2010), pp. 11–31.

interpreted and renegotiated as part of the specificity of Dissenting culture over and against the perceived norms and practices of the mainstream. The autobiography of William Kent, a Methodist, provides a clear example of the ways in which participation in a local Methodist congregation shaped practices of family life. Kent describes the Methodist community of his youth as a 'whole sub-society', one in which his family culture revolved around the Kennington Methodist chapel community in which he was raised.¹⁶ His family socialized almost exclusively with other Methodists, all of whom used the same forms of prayer, mealtime customs, and hospitality to pattern their family lives in common with other fellow chapel members. Within this environment the boundaries between home and chapel were blurred in ways that influenced all aspects of family life. The same idea is expressed in the autobiography of another Methodist, W.H. Lax, when he writes, 'There is in my opinion a distinction between the Methodist type of family life and all others. Just as Methodism presents its own form of Evangelicalism among the churches so it has introduced to the world a specific type of family life.'¹⁷ In both of these autobiographies, family life pivoted on identification with a local chapel community. In turn, particular expectations of male/female behaviour were reinforced by a shared sense of belonging within the Methodist tradition.

Linda Wilson evokes a similar world of chapel, home, and gender in her study of particular Baptists, Congregationalists, Wesleyan Methodists, and Primitive Methodists in Britain between 1825 and 1875. Wilson explores the interrelationship between local denominational affiliation and patterns of domesticity, ideals of femininity, and customs of marriage and child-rearing. Her analysis highlights denominational subcultures as the primary shaping factor in the construction of gender ideals and in so doing she challenges the application of an undifferentiated model of evangelicalism. Wilson points to the ways in which Dissenting communities integrated home and chapel to create a third sphere in which activities such as Sunday School teaching, hospitality, and almsgiving functioned as extensions of household practices of nurture and economy that combined, rather than separated, public and private spheres.¹⁸

The self-identity of Dissenting communities continued to depend crucially on a discourse of belonging to a gathered community within which certain mentalities and practices, including gender styles, were assumed to be an outworking of personal conversion and regeneration.¹⁹ Within communities

¹⁶ William Kent, *The Testament of a Victorian Youth: An Autobiography* (London, 1938), p. 23.

¹⁷ W.H. Lax, *Lax, His Book: The Autobiography of Lax of Poplar* (London, 1937), p. 54.

¹⁸ Linda Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality amongst Nonconformists, 1825–1875* (Carlisle, 2000).

¹⁹ See also S.C. Williams, 'Evangelicals and Gender: Critiquing Assumptions', in Donald M. Lewis and Richard V. Pierard, eds., *Global Evangelicalism: Theology, History and Culture in Regional Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL, 2014).

of this kind, expectations of male and female behaviour were configured in ways that deliberately sought to interweave the various spheres of human activity into coherent definitions of piety as the distinguishing hallmark of Dissenting religious life in contrast to the 'worldly' patterns of the culture at large. Both masculine and feminine spiritual formation centred on the deliberate integration of belief and praxis, rarefied piety, and everyday life. Just as women were drawn into 'public' through the overlapping context of home and church, so men were drawn into 'private' through the interconnection between church and society.

John Tosh's work on nineteenth-century masculinity is highly instructive in this respect. His careful study of three Nonconformist men, Joshua Pritchard, a Manchester excise man, Isaac Holden, a West Ridging Mill owner, and Cornelius Stovin, a Lincolnshire farmer, shows how within Methodism, godly masculinity was defined as much by the private life of the home as it was by public action in the marketplace.²⁰ In each case, Tosh demonstrates how a binary model of separate spheres is unhelpful in reconstructing the history of gender and Christianity in this particular context.²¹ This point is developed further in Tosh's book, *A Man's Place* (1999), in which he examines the male-oriented evangelical literature that circulated widely in Dissenting communities as well as in evangelical enclaves within the Anglican tradition. The material suggests that these groups deliberately sought to cultivate a definition of manhood that demanded a coherence of life between the public and private arenas. To be a mature Christian man was to establish a home, to protect it, to control it, and to train one's children for responsible citizenship within it.²² Public virtues were formed first and foremost in the relational crucible of marriage and the family. It was here that the spiritual maturity necessary for public life was cultivated and honed. Far from operating as the antithesis of faith, as Brown suggests, the 'godly' man was the central focus for practices of family prayer and devotion around which domestic spirituality coalesced. In this way a man's home was indeed 'a mirror of his moral character'.²³

These particular masculine virtues were then simultaneously required of the Dissenter in the marketplace. Practices such as financial giving were framed within Dissenting communities as foundational to personal spiritual formation and as an attempt to stem the tide of greed in the wider society. Jane Garnett's work on the Congregational minister R.W. Dale demonstrates the increasing attention paid by Dissenting leaders to ethical engagement with the

²⁰ John Tosh, 'Methodist Domesticity and Middle-Class Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century England', in R.N. Swanson, ed., *Gender and Christian Religion* (Rochester, NY, 1999).

²¹ See also the further and fuller development of these ideas in John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, CT, 1999).

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., p. 24.

sphere of commerce and economic competition in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁴ As minister of Carrs Lane Congregational Church in Birmingham, Dale propagated a vision of society in which all aspects of life were subject to Christian reflection at a time when Nonconformist identity was threatened by 'worldliness'. He called for the application of masculine virtue in the marketplace as well as home and chapel as a moral antidote to a 'worldly' culture that was trying to pull the spheres apart.

Garnett traces evidence for this idea in popular exemplary biographies of 'businessmen-saints'.²⁵ These works include *The Successful Merchant*, written by the secretary to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and later president of the Wesleyan Conference, William Arthur. Published in 1853, *The Successful Merchant* spawned forty-three editions by 1885 and was translated into Dutch, German, and French and circulated widely in the US.²⁶ Arthur's book describes the life of Bristol-based Methodist merchant Samuel Budgett as an example of a Nonconformist businessman who exhibited exemplary Christian character both in public business practice as well as in private life. In his sketch of Budgett's life and business practice, Arthur presses for a moral synthesis of public and private spheres, weeklong faith, and Sunday observance as the only lasting solution to the engulfing worldliness of the wider society. He calls on preachers to understand the day-to-day temptations and anxieties that threaten 'to sink men under their load'.²⁷ Such understanding on the part of the preacher is seen by Arthur as a vital precursor to the Christian formation of congregants in the ordinary course of their business life in areas as detailed as the adulteration of foods,²⁸ 'money-mad' speculation,²⁹ and thoughtful management of employees for the common good.³⁰ In this way the moral integrity of the Nonconformist was distinguished from those for whom mere outward conformity was a sufficient indicator of Christian identity. It was the coherence of moral expectation between two sharply drawn arenas that marked an essential characteristic of Dissenting self-identity, which in turn pivoted on certain expectations of masculine character.

In this way, particular ideals of manliness were fostered in the subcultures of evangelical Dissent in contrast to the perceived norms of contemporary masculine behaviour within mainstream culture. Mangan and Walvin, in their

²⁴ Jane Garnett, 'Nonconformists, Economic Ethics and the Consumer Society in Mid-Victorian Britain', in Alan Kreider and Jane Shaw, eds., *Culture and the Nonconformist tradition* (Cardiff, 1999), p. 99.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁶ Jane Garnett, 'Evangelicalism and Business in Mid-Victorian Britain', in John Wolffe, ed., *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain, 1780-1980* (London, 1995), p. 65.

²⁷ W. Arthur, *The Successful Merchant: Sketches of the Life of Mr Samuel Budgett, Late of Kingswood Hill* (New York, 1853), p. 34.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 196-285.

work on nineteenth-century masculinity in Britain and the US, define the distinctive qualities of the 'Christian gentleman' in contradistinction to the so-called 'masculine achiever' that dominated the public culture.³¹ For the masculine achiever, manliness depended above all on independent action that required dislocation from the restraints of home and a commitment to vigorous self-reliance on the part of the man. For a man to prosper in a competitive world, he must be free from the emotional attachments that threatened to constrain action and distort rational judgement in a profit-orientated market arena. In contrast, the Christian gentleman exerted his effort to maintain moral balance at a time when communal and familial values were threatened by individualism and competition. Self-seeking and aggressive moneymaking are contrasted in Mangan and Walvin's study with consistent benevolence and philanthropic concern as the essential ingredients of Christian manliness. Such men did not reject commerce per se but rather Christian sincerity was morally defined by consistency of character. It was the mutual infiltration of the different spheres of life that was the true hallmark of vital religion over and against the artifice of belief that relied simply on conformity of practice in certain spheres of life and not in others.

Images of femininity were likewise layered and sharpened in relation to the distinctive characteristics of Dissenting belief and praxis. Just as masculine spiritual formation interwove domestic and public arenas into a coherent understanding of virtue, so feminine ideals also fostered a distinctive connection between home, chapel, and society that is easily overlooked when the separate spheres model is too readily applied as an analytical framework. The religious voluntarism that is characteristic of Dissent created an environment in which the family functioned as the foundation of the social order with both church and socio-political community understood as extensions of household polity. In this context, feminine spiritual formation was expressly directed towards strengthening the link between individual piety and the larger sacred households of both church and society. The idea of the family as a rarefied private sphere existing simply for the benefits of its members was heavily critiqued. Indeed the privatization of domesticity was seen as a product of selfishness and materialism that must be resisted by the 'godly'. Jemima Luke, a staunch supporter of the London Missionary Society and the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East, called upon women not to settle for 'the luxurious ease of a beautiful country home, reading interesting books, writing chatty letters to friends, receiving and paying calls'.³² Luke saw such a

³¹ J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1940* (Manchester, 1987).

³² Jemima Luke, *Early Years of My Life* (London, 1900), p. 107, as quoted in Taylor Huber and Nancy Lutkehaus, eds., *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1999), p. 48.

life as a waste. In contrast, women were called upon as active agents in the reform and regeneration of the nation in their role as nurturers and educators of the young, and, in the case of middle-class women, in their wider household function as servant keepers.³³

Alison Twells, in her study of Congregationalist Mary-Anne Rawson, also paints a vivid picture of the family within this Nonconformist subculture.³⁴ Twells uses the phrase 'missionary domesticity' to describe the intimate connection between women's daily lives, the active formation of children, and philanthropic engagement, all of which were aimed towards the reconstruction of society with Christian principles influencing all spheres of life.³⁵ Motherhood in particular was redefined and elevated as the mediating force between the individual and society. The use of the title 'Mothers in Israel' for prominent female leaders within Primitive Methodist communities captures well the idealization of motherhood, both biological and spiritual, as an image of exemplary feminine moral character essential for the spiritual formation of the community as a whole. Drawing on the biblical character of Deborah in the book of Judges, the term 'Mother in Israel' carried strong connotations of powerful feminine leadership, both political and spiritual, among the people of God. Phyllis Mack traces the use of this image in the literature and language of early Methodist communities as a means of emphasizing godly femininity as a pattern for spiritual and moral leadership of both younger women and men in the congregation.³⁶

In a particular sense, therefore, feminine piety within the Dissenting tradition must be understood, like masculine piety, as the integration of public and private spheres rather than the separation of arenas. Similar moral expectations were applied to men and women equally. This is seen most clearly in the Quaker context where, as Phyllis Mack points out, 'Friends were striving for a synthesis of masculine and feminine values in a world where masculine and feminine were coming to denote two increasingly rigid categories of biology and behaviour.'³⁷ Claire Midgley's work on British Quaker Elizabeth Heyrick highlights the ways in which women from Rational Dissenting, Unitarian, and Quaker backgrounds emphasized gender equality.³⁸ Quaker theology and

³³ See Vanessa D. Dickerson, *Keeping the Victorian House: a Collection of Essays* (New York, 1995); James T. Covert, ed., *A Victorian Family: As Seen Through the Letters of Louise Creighton to her Mother, 1872-1880* (Lewiston, NY, 1998).

³⁴ Allison Twells, 'Missionary Domesticity, Global Reform and "Women's Sphere", in Early Nineteenth Century England', *Gender & History*, 18 (2006), 266-84.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 267.

³⁶ Phyllis Mack, 'Methodism and Motherhood', in Shaw and Kreider, eds., *Culture and the Nonconformist Tradition*, pp. 26-42.

³⁷ Phyllis Mack, 'Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency: Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Quakerism', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 29 (2003), p. 165.

³⁸ Clare Midgley, 'The Dissenting Voice of Elizabeth Heyrick: An Exploration of the Links Between Gender, Religious Dissent, and Anti-Slavery Radicalism', in Elizabeth J. Clapp and Julie

practice stressed the similarity of men and women in their pursuit of godliness. Both were expected to express the central hallmarks of Quakerism in restraint, benevolence, and passivity and both masculine and feminine piety linked private virtue to the moral mission of society. As Heyrick insisted, 'The grand principles of human duty are the same for both sexes.'³⁹ Linda Wilson makes a similar point in the case of Baptist, Congregational, and Methodist congregations. Wilson argues that chapel communities offered an environment in which men and women received teaching that emphasized the common pursuit of Christ rather than the bifurcation of practice on the basis of gender.⁴⁰

This insistence on inherent spiritual equality is imaged most clearly in marriage. The husband/wife relationship was also understood as an equilibrium of public and private, inner and outer life, in which men and women were charged equally with spiritual guardianship of the home and the society. Male and female in their marital union in the home were understood to image the relatedness and difference of elements of society, which must be reconciled within a political relationship of balance and equality rather than hierarchy.⁴¹ We see this imagery at work in the poetry of Congregationalist Anne Taylor Gilbert. Her poem 'Remonstrance', published in 1810, reproached the civil disorder generated by 'jealousy and strife' between the man and the woman. Gilbert located the source of social unrest in a marring of the divine design through friction and competition between the sexes. She called upon husband and wife to model mutuality, harmony, and common service in their interdependence and to express spiritual equality through sexual difference.

In this respect, Gilbert's work illustrated an enduring strand in Nonconformist theology in which the dis-calibration of the male/female relationship was understood as a product of the Fall rather than an inherent part of the natural order of things. Methodist and Holiness teacher Catherine Booth employed similar language in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women to Preach*, published in 1859. Here Booth appropriated biblical examples to show how male/female relations are fundamentally altered in Christ. Using Scripture as the foundation of her authority, Booth argued for an idea of redemption and sanctification in which men and women alike were called to participate in the re-ordering of male and female relationships into a harmonious balance in which two equal but different parties mutually complete the

Roy Jeffrey, eds., *Women, Dissent and Anti-Slavery in Britain and America, 1790–1865* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 88–110.

³⁹ Elizabeth Heyrick, *Familiar Letters, Addressed to Children and Young Persons of the Middle Ranks* (London, 1811), pp. 30–1, as quoted in Midgley, 'The Dissenting Voice of Elizabeth Heyrick', p. 99.

⁴⁰ Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*.

⁴¹ For further discussion of this point, see Tosh, *A Man's Place*, pp. 53–79.

characteristics of the other and thereby offer society with a model for mission, ecclesial structure, and political life.⁴²

Baptist minister Samuel Sargent Pugh expressed the same idea forcefully in his short book *Christian Home-Life: A Book of Examples and Principles* (1864). Pugh was quick to connect familial relationships with their profound philosophical and theological implications for the public sphere. Arising from his experience as a Congregational minister in Wiltshire, Pugh addressed Christian parents in their united task as husband and wife in forming the overall pattern of civilization through godly parenting.

A well-conducted family is a school of every social virtue. Reverence for a supreme authority; the existence of mutual rights, and the necessity of mutual service and subordination; the happiness resulting from a very unselfish regard to other's interests,—are lessons which, learned at home, best prepare us for the wider associations of life. The law of God and the welfare of the state most obviously coincide here. The family government underlies all forms of government; and woe to the state where the children are not governed under this older law.⁴³

In this way the union of husband and wife was seen to transcend the limitations of the public/private divide and to offer a structural model in both church and state. Just as the local church was inseparable from the pivotal marriage relationship upon which families were built, so society was understood as an association of multiple families into the national household of the state.

Missionary initiatives that emerged from Dissenting communities of this kind relied on a similar coherence of public and private spheres. Frank Prochaska, Susan Mumm, and Anne Summers have all shown how philanthropic work emerged out of a perception of the task of mission and societal reform as a continuation of the work of the home and the mother.⁴⁴ Domestic structures fostered charitable engagement both in and beyond the home. The growth of district visiting, ragged schools, and the expansion of children's charities, for example, emphasized the family and the home as the first step towards the regeneration of society as a whole. As Prochaska has shown, the moral emphasis of much philanthropic work rested on the assumption that 'the home, the very fountain of the nation's life, was the most invigorating image in the philanthropic world and was commonly raised to metaphor.

⁴² C. Booth, *Female Ministry; or a Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel* (London, 1859).

⁴³ Pugh, *Christian Home-Life*, p. 4.

⁴⁴ F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1980); Susan Mumm, 'Women and Philanthropic Cultures', in Sue Morgan and Jacqueline deVries, eds., *Women and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800–1940* (London, 2010), pp. 54–71; Anne Summers, 'A Home from Home: Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century', in Sandra Burman, ed., *Fit Work for Women* (London, 1979), pp. 33–63.

The state itself became the family fully extended, in need of moral regeneration based on familial virtue'.⁴⁵

The specific emphasis on voluntarist models of mission within the Nonconformist tradition lent a structural and political edge to this insistence on the family as the primary unit of moral and social reformation in the heart of the public sphere. As Twells notes in the case of the Read sisters, Congregationalists from Wincobank Hall in Sheffield, 'their understanding of themselves as primarily "domestic" did not mean seclusion from worldly commitments. On the contrary, their domestic lives were shot through with "social" and global concerns... their involvement in public missionary culture was as a family.'⁴⁶ To uphold the familial ideal in mission was to ensure that the vital principles of mutuality and consent were written large in the work of regeneration towards which mission was directed in the first place. Keeping the voluntary principle at the centre of mission, just as it was in the organization of congregational life, fuelled ongoing critiques of impersonal bureaucratization, centralization, and professionalization that threatened to subordinate the organization of large-scale mission to many of the destructive tendencies of both the market and the modern state. Indeed, some historians have argued that this factor slowed down the process of professionalizing mission in the nineteenth century.⁴⁷

A similar confluence of domestic imagery and ideas of mission is apparent in foreign as well as domestic missionary endeavours. During the first half of the nineteenth century, missionary wives were acclaimed for their role in carrying the benefits of a godly home to the remote parts of the earth and for civilizing all those within their sphere of influence. The missionary wife was described as a 'civilised feminine icon'⁴⁸ representing Christian civilization, domesticity, and purity. The historian of the London Missionary Society, C. Silvester Horne, wrote in 1894 that the 'influence of a missionary's wife is simply incalculable, and the spectacle of a true Christian home the most powerful, concrete argument for Christianity'.⁴⁹ Within this paradigm the central role of the missionary wife was in one sense to render the private public. She was called upon to provide a 'vision of an Angel from Heaven', but to do so in the distant corners of the globe.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ F.K. Prochaska, 'Philanthropy', in F.M.L. Thompson, ed., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750–1950 Volume 3: Social Agencies and Institutions* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 361.

⁴⁶ Twells, 'Missionary Domesticity', p. 268.

⁴⁷ See for example Rhonda Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism, and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Rochester, NY, 2003).

⁴⁸ Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800–1860* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 50.

⁴⁹ C. Silvester Horne, *The Story of the LMS, 1795–1895* (London, 1894), p. 431, as quoted in Johnston, *Missionary Writing*, p. 47.

⁵⁰ R. Cust, 'The Female Evangelist', *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, 10 (1885), 706.

Language of this kind was deliberately harnessed in the missionary recruitment drive. Mrs A.E. Ball wrote that, 'Among all nations the religious instinct is even stronger in women than in men; should not we Christian women make use of this advantage which we have over men and take the message of peace to these questioning women of heathendom? Womanhood is supposed to be endowed with greater pitifulness and power of sympathy and tact and gentle patience than the sterner sex.'⁵¹ While language of this kind stresses male/female difference, at the same time it expands the parameters of the female sphere to include the 'nations' that are ripe for missionary harvest by men and women.⁵² The language of bifurcated masculine and feminine piety is employed at a rhetorical level but in practice, the underlying meaning of separate spheres was undermined in the practical outworking of mission. Once recruited, women occupied a much wider field of influence in overseas mission work.⁵³ Gradually, the missionary wife was redefined as a missionary in her own right. From the start of the China Inland Mission in 1865, the equality of men and women was stressed in the work of mission. Deeply influenced by the Holiness revival of the mid-century, Hudson Taylor addressed married male applicants to the Chinese mission field directly on this point: 'Unless you intend your wife to be a true missionary, not merely a wife, homemaker and friend, do not join us.'⁵⁴ In this way, Taylor provided a bridge forward into the latter part of the nineteenth century, when missionary societies began to send single women abroad in larger numbers to work alongside men in an independent capacity as trained and paid personnel. The call for single women came most strongly from India, where high-caste Indian women lived in secluded rooms called Zenanas, open only to other women.⁵⁵ Organizations such as the Ladies Female Education Society (1824) and the Promotion of Female Education in

⁵¹ A.E. Ball, 'The Need and Scope of Women's Work', *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, 20 (1895), 40.

⁵² See in particular Jocelyn Murray, 'The Role of Women in the Church Missionary Society, 1799–1917', in Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley, eds., *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799–1999* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2000).

⁵³ See Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford, CA, 1999) and Semple, *Missionary Women*.

⁵⁴ See Peter Williams, '“The Missing Link”: The Recruitment of Women Missionaries in some English Evangelical Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century', in *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* 63 (Oxford, 1993), pp. 43–69.

⁵⁵ Claire Midgley, 'Female Emancipation in an Imperial Frame: English Women and the Campaign against Sati (Widow Burning) in India, 1813–1830', *Women's History Review*, 9 (2006), 95–121; Laura Lauer, 'Opportunities for Baptist Women and the Problem of the Baptist Zenana Mission, 1886–1913', in Sue Morgan, ed., *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750–1900* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 213–30.

the East (1834) were formed with the deliberate intention of sending women to meet this need.⁵⁶

Annual Conventions, such as the trans-denominational evangelical conference at Keswick in Cumbria, became fertile ground for missionary recruitment for single women and single men in the period after 1875. Appeals to women at Keswick were framed as alternative routes for the bearing of 'spiritual offspring' through the work of mission rather than married domesticity.⁵⁷ Such calls not only hint at the expanded range of female participation in mission; they also redefined images of feminine piety by expanding the repertoire of acceptable feminine behaviour.

While for women the image of 'spiritual offspring' was emphasized, for men, discursive links were strengthened between ideas of the missionary and the explorer-adventurer. Heroic images of masculine prowess, physical strength, and protective violence expanded ideals of Christian manliness and connected imperial expansion to the missionary adventurer heroically striving beyond the familiar territory of home and nation. When a group of ex-Cambridge graduates (affectionately known as the Cambridge Seven) set out for China in 1885 after being selected for Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission, they were hailed as the cream of British youth: virile, athletic, and totally dedicated as Christian men to the gospel.⁵⁸ The February 1885 edition of *The Christian* recorded the reaction of students at the University of Edinburgh to the visit of C.T. Studd, member of the Cambridge Seven and an ex-English Cricketer:

Students, like other young men, are apt to regard professedly religious men of their own age as wanting in manliness, unfit for the river or cricket-field, and only good for psalm-singing and pulling a long face. But the big, muscular hands and long arms of the ex-captain of the Cambridge eight, stretched out in entreaty, while he eloquently told out the old story of redeeming love, capsized their theory.⁵⁹

In the same pamphlet, an account by *The Nonconformist* of a visit by four of the seven to Exeter Hall noted their athletic and military careers and lauded them for 'plunging into [the] warfare' of an unknown mission field, an ambition that was 'a striking testimony to the power of the uplifted CHRIST to draw to Himself not the weak, the emotional, and the illiterate only, but all that is noblest in strength and finest in culture'.⁶⁰ While individual foreign

⁵⁶ Aparna Basu, 'Mary Ann Cooke to Mother Teresa: Christian Missionary Women and the Indian Response', in Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood, and Shirley Ardener, eds., *Women and Missions: Past and Present* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 187–208.

⁵⁷ *The Keswick Week*, 1892, p. 105.

⁵⁸ Benjamin Broomhall, *Evangelisation of the World, a Missionary Band: A Record of a Consecration and an Appeal* (London, 1885).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

missionaries like the Cambridge Seven were rare and atypical, they were nonetheless revered within the relational networks of Protestant Dissent. As semi-mythologised models of what it meant to be 'muscular Christians', they provided overtly contrasting exemplars of piety to rebalance feminine imagery that had begun to dominate the evangelical mainstream in the mid-nineteenth century.⁶¹

Ongoing reformulation of masculine and feminine styles remained a central feature of Dissenting identity throughout the nineteenth century. Attuned as they were to the role of personal conversion as the primary impetus for participation, many Nonconformist groups remained committed to dynamic internal spiritual fervour as a hallmark of Dissenting identity. Recurrent periods of such fervour led to subtle transformations of denominational gender cultures. Religious revival involved a re-sharpening of the distinctions between societal custom and religious belief even if this meant cutting across denominational expectations. Pamela Walker's work on the Salvation Army, for instance, demonstrates how norms of female behaviour were overturned in the practices of the Salvation Lassies in ways that were strongly disapproved of by the majority of Wesleyan Methodists.⁶² As a subculture within the Methodist tradition, the Salvation Army positioned itself on the vanguard in critiquing formalized and potentially constraining definitions of men and women. The 1875 Moonta Revival in Australia also resulted in a renegotiation of roles for women among Bible Christians, as distinct from those Wesleyan Methodists in the area who remained committed to more traditional gender roles.⁶³ David Bebbington highlights the leadership role played by Selina Lake in this revival. Lake was preaching at the Moonta chapel on the evening of 16 May 1875 when the Township revival broke out.⁶⁴ Bebbington notes how the revival brought with it a 'diminution of gender distinctions'.⁶⁵ Following the revival, the local Baptist Minister in Moonta supported the founding of a Sister's Members' Association for the organization of weekly prayer meetings for mine workers.⁶⁶ By 1891, the Township had female class leaders who were formative in leading the denomination.⁶⁷

⁶¹ For a discussion of the feminization of nineteenth-century religion see Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850–1914* (New York, 1996).

⁶² P. Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley, CA, 2001).

⁶³ D.W. Bebbington, *Victorian Religious Revivals: Culture and Piety in Local and Global Contexts* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 224–7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 225, citing *Bible Christian Magazine* (August 1875), 101 and Yorke's *Peninsula Advertiser* (18 May 1875).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, citing 'Letter of the Baptist Church, Moonta', *Truth and Progress*, November 1875, 134.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 226, citing Moonta [Wesleyan Methodist] Circuit Members' Roll, 1891–1929, State Library of South Australia, SRG 4/65/1.

Holiness Revivals in Britain and the US were likewise characterized by an expansion of female preaching. Olive Anderson's work, for instance, draws important connections between the traditions of female preaching and the revival in Ulster, as does Catherine Berkus's work on American Revival traditions.⁶⁸ Indeed, Charles Grandison Finney himself encouraged the stirring up of revivals by 'taking measures', including female preaching, to get people's attention.⁶⁹ The influence of Holiness teacher Phoebe Palmer was significant in this respect. While her own involvement in church leadership remained circumspect, the implications of Palmer's teaching extended far beyond her personal remit. When Palmer spoke in public, she always did so with her husband. She chose to exhort from the front of the church rather than the pulpit and throughout her life she remained committed to the primary influence of the woman in the home. Yet her work became a formative bridge into more radical practices later in the century. In the hands of Catherine Booth, Palmer's Holiness teaching became the means of vindicating women's right to preach on the basis of an ordinary call of the Holy Spirit that came to both sexes as part of the general expression of Christian discipleship. Booth's treatise was written initially as a defence of Phoebe Palmer and it was then applied to the practices of the Salvation Army. At the first Annual Conference of the Salvation Army in 1870 it was decided that:

As it is manifest from the Scriptures of the Old and especially the New Testament that God has sanctioned the labours of Godly women in His Church; godly women possessing the necessary gifts and qualifications shall be employed as preachers itinerant or otherwise and class leaders and as such shall have appointments given to them on the preachers plan; and they shall be eligible for any office, and to speak and vote at all official meetings.⁷⁰

Jacqueline de Vries has argued that it is language of this kind within the Salvation Army that provided formative precedents in the women's suffrage movement at the end of the nineteenth century.⁷¹

More subtly, periods of religious fervour not only led to wider opportunities for women's public leadership but they also stimulated demand for women's

⁶⁸ Olive Anderson, 'Women Preachers in Mid-Victorian Britain: Some Reflexions on Feminism, Popular Religion and Social Change', *Historical Journal*, 12 (1969), 467–84; Catherine A. Berkus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740–1845* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998). See also Deborah M. Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England* (Princeton, NJ, 1985).

⁶⁹ Charles Grandison Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (New York, 1868 edn.).

⁷⁰ Minutes of the First Conference, the Christian Mission, 1870, as quoted in Pamela J. Walker, 'A Chaste and Fervid Eloquence: Catherine Booth and the Ministry of Women in the Salvation Army', in Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker, eds., *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity* (Berkeley, CA, 1998), p. 295.

⁷¹ Jacqueline R. de Vries, 'Transforming the Pulpit: Preaching and Prophecy in the British Women's Suffrage Movement', in Kienzle and Walker, eds., *Women Preachers and Prophets*, pp. 318–34.

religious writing. Philadelphia Quaker and later advocate of holiness teaching Hannah Whitall Smith was read avidly by men and women in the wake of holiness revivals. *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (1875) became a transatlantic bestseller in Protestant revival communities. Whitall Smith's writings were formative in reshaping gender styles in the imagination of readers. Although in the preface to the 1885 version of *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, Smith disclaimed any theological intention in her writing, in the very next sentence she told her reader that the Lord himself has taught her 'experimentally and practically certain lessons out of his Word'.⁷² These are the lessons that Whitall Smith imparts to her readers, imploring them to overlook any mistakes she may make as a theologically untrained woman while simultaneously authorizing her own role as a biblical teacher through spiritual autobiography. In this sense, Whitall Smith was illustrative of an emergent popular and influential genre of female religious writing that Julie Melnyk points to in her work on women's theology in nineteenth-century Britain: 'These women authors almost never claimed to be writing theology, and, naturally, they did not propose overarching, self-consistent theological systems, but they did reinterpret the nature of God and of Christ, the relationship between God and humans and the scriptures.'⁷³ The slow and subtle influence of theologically infused writings of this kind should not be overlooked as part of the dynamic reformulation of gender and religious identity within Dissent.

From the start of the nineteenth century to its end, distinctive interpretations of gender remained central to Dissenting self-identity. This chapter has explored the interrelated themes of gender and Dissent in the areas of congregational life, spiritual formation, marriage, and mission. Two primary themes have emerged as central to masculine and feminine identity within Dissenting culture: an emphasis on spiritual equality combined with a sharpened perception of sexual difference. For the religious Dissenter these emphases were at once theological images informing personal piety and the basis for balance and order both in the family and in society at large.

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⁷² Hannah Whitall Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (Boston, 1885 edn.), p. iii.

⁷³ Julie Melnyk, ed., *Women's Theology in Nineteenth Century Britain: Transfiguring the Faith of their Fathers* (New York, 1998), p. xii.

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Ministers and Ministerial Training

Michael Ledger-Lomas

When J. Oswald Dykes of the Presbyterian Church of England ruminated in 1870 on *The Conditions of Ministerial Success*, his starting point was the ‘quite oppressive sense of helplessness, and . . . awful fear for the fruitlessness of their ministry’ that so many of his colleagues experienced. ‘While other men labour at that which brings in tangible profit, according to known principles, and in reasonable certainty, we alone, of all men, may sometimes seem to ourselves to toil at an impossible undertaking, or to be like those who are beating at the air.’ They were in a funk because they failed to treat their occupation as one just like any other: the failing minister ‘fears hard work as a curse, and dreamily looks for a resting place which should be sacred to spiritual indolence’. He should instead emulate St Paul the tentmaker and recognize that his job required elbow grease and care for his ‘tools’: Scripture and centuries of theological reflection on it. But ministers must also be trained to move in the secular world, among ‘living men, whose habits, accessible sides, and practical requirements, we may daily observe’.¹

This chapter suggests that the training of Dissenting ministers in the English-speaking world was dogged throughout the nineteenth century by such anxieties about what they were to do. It was difficult to prepare men—with the exception of preachers in some branches of Methodism, some isolated American examples, and increasing numbers of lay home and foreign missionaries by the century’s close, they were all men—for a vocation that lacked clear definition. Did ministers need to be preachers or scholars, cultivated pastors to settled congregations, or roving missionaries? Was it more important that their preparatory studies plumb the erudition of the past or acquaint them with scientific research, modern literature or philosophy? How far should ministers develop the habit of free inquiry before it distanced them from their flocks? As Andrew Fairbairn, like Dykes a Scot who settled in

¹ J. Oswald Dykes, *The Conditions of Ministerial Success: A Sermon* (London, 1870), pp. v, 9.

England, put it in 1877, 'ignorance of men is impotence with men': ministers would be useless unless they grasped what Matthew Arnold had called the 'Zeitgeist'.²

It is tempting for historians to identify a successful response to these quandaries with the foundation and improvement of the academic institutions that resemble those in which they work today. Dykes's career exemplifies this narrative of institutional progress, which we could tell about ministers in almost any branch of Protestant Dissent. Educated at Dumfries Academy, he prepared for ministry in the Free Church of Scotland by studying at Edinburgh, Heidelberg, and Erlangen. Having sojourned in Australia and ministered in Edinburgh, he became minister of Regent Square, London—the nexus of the young Presbyterian Church in England—and lectured at the Church's theological college in Bloomsbury before becoming its Principal and Barbour Professor of Divinity in 1888, superintending its 1899 refoundation as Westminster College to provide ministerial training for Presbyterians who migrated to Cambridge after the repeal of university tests. His career moreover shows how British ministers seeking higher academic standards collaborated with ministers elsewhere in the Anglophone world. During his stint in Victoria, Dykes set up a Dissenting hall of divinity in Melbourne and remained an authority for its Presbyterians, who courted him as the first head of their Ormond College.³ Nor did such transfers of institutional thinking just run from Britain to its colonies, but rather in multiple directions. Ormond's backers had wanted to make Dykes both its theological professor and president, in emulation of James McCosh's role at Princeton College, while texts by American Presbyterian seminarians were staples of both it and Dykes's teaching.⁴

This chapter's opening section duly notes that most sects and denominations of Protestant Dissent did invest in the professionalization of ministry. Even ministers in the most demotic strains of Methodism were quickly expected to become literate and grammatical, if not erudite. British and American Unitarians, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, with their traditions of scholarly ministry, aspired to degrees or even doctorates, achievements that paid off in higher, occasionally princely stipends.⁵ We shall see that the character of training institutions varied sharply in ways that reflected the

² Andrew Fairbairn, *The Christian Ministry and its Preparatory Discipline* (London, 1877), p. 11.

³ Don Chambers, 'The Creation', in Stuart Macintyre, ed., *Ormond College Centenary Essays* (Melbourne, Victoria, 1984), p. 30.

⁴ See M. Prentis, 'John Mathew and Presbyterian Theological Education in Victoria from the 1880s to the 1920s', in Geoffrey Treloar, ed., *The Furtherance of Religious Beliefs: Essays on the History of Theological Education in Australia* (Sydney, New South Wales, 1997), p. 83.

⁵ See Kenneth Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800–1930* (Oxford, 1988); E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795–1860* (Durham, NC, 1978).

developing, often contested identities of the denominations that built them and the political and economic contexts in which they were placed. Yet the heavy investment in paper qualifications for ministry made by most denominations nonetheless stands out. So too though does the growing dissatisfaction with an overly academic approach to preparing ministers.⁶ The chapter goes on to note the increasing preference of Nonconformists for vocational over purely academic training, which was driven by the pressing need to conquer new environments—in inner cities or on the colonial frontier—and by the spectacular success of lowbrow gossellers such as the Salvation Army. Moreover, the third section notes the logistical and financial problems many institutions experienced in trying to maintain high academic standards. British colleges struggled to be schools, seminaries, and universities all at once, offering everything from basic grammar to that late nineteenth-century shibboleth: ‘research’. By 1900, many had amalgamated or were becoming postgraduate appendages to universities. No wonder historians have implicated them in the cultural dissolution of Dissent.⁷ Outside Britain, the attraction to the Scottish model of the postgraduate divinity hall or to the Anglican one of the collegiate university meant that institutions often relied on assistance from universities, which created its own problems. The heresy trials that rattled many later nineteenth-century training institutions reveal a struggle to reconcile two core aims: on the one hand, an ethos of free academic inquiry that earned the respect of comparable institutions; on the other, a responsibility to their denominations to produce combative preachers able to give a forcible, not to mention reassuring, sketch of what the Bible said. The wars over biblical criticism and theological authority touched on in many chapters of this volume were then also and perhaps essentially institutional conflicts about what could be taught and by whom.

INSTITUTIONAL PROLIFERATION

The training of Dissenting ministers at dedicated institutions long predated the nineteenth century. In England and Wales, it was an artefact of the Restoration settlement, which had prevented Puritan Dissenters from taking degrees at Oxford or Cambridge and favoured the creation of Dissenting academies.⁸ Some, such as the college founded at Manchester before moving

⁶ See Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume III: The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity* (Oxford, 2015), ch. 11 for a sceptical view.

⁷ Mark D. Johnson, *The Dissolution of Dissent* (New York, 1987).

⁸ Herbert McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts: Being the History of the Nonconformist Academies, 1662–1820* (Manchester, 1931), is the classic account.

to York, then back to Manchester, then on to London and finally to Oxford, survived, even thrived throughout the nineteenth century, even as their denominational character shifted. Founded by Presbyterians, Manchester College was populated by Unitarians by the early nineteenth century, even though it was never a formally Unitarian institution. Strange compromises prevailed elsewhere. By convention, the Presbyterian College at Carmarthen in North Wales had a Trinitarian principal but a Unitarian theological tutor, while Cheshunt College (1791) in Hertfordshire was the descendant of a college founded by Lady Huntingdon at Trevecca. Its statutes, which stipulated that students must subscribe to most of the Thirty-nine Articles and that worship take place according to the Book of Common Prayer, remained in force even when it was taken over by Congregationalists.⁹

In changing the balance of power between Unitarians and Trinitarian, Calvinist Dissenters in Britain by hugely boosting the latter's numbers, the Evangelical Revival made it necessary to create additional academies for ministers and possible to fund them. The new colleges were either in or near London and provincial towns, their elaborate architecture and pompous opening ceremonies making it evident that they were shows of strength as much as considered responses to skills shortages. George Hadfield, the Congregational promoter of the Lancashire Independent College (1843), alleged in its prospectus that Manchester needed a counterweight against the menace of Unitarianism and Roman Catholicism. Until proceedings were disrupted by driving rain and the collapse of a platform that held the invited dignitaries, the laying of its foundation stone had been a red letter day for Lancashire Congregationalists. A Bible, a list of subscribers, and silver Hanoverian coins, among other symbolic objects, were deposited in the diggings. When completed, a ninety-two-foot-high Gothic tower, faced in Yorkshire stone, symbolized the determination of Congregationalists to dominate the city. Other ventures were similarly ambitious. New College, London (1851) had a building 'in the Tudor style of the fifteenth century' that groaned with 'gurgoyles', while Airedale College, Bradford had a Grecian building on a fine site overlooking the city—at least until Undercliffe Cemetery opened next door—then an elaborate Gothic one after its relocation to Saltaire.¹⁰

If the Revival challenged Old Dissenters to reaffirm their commitment to an educated ministry, then in Methodism it created a mass movement which its enemies alleged was fuelled by ignorant zeal. Because Methodists believed the Holy Spirit was active in the spread of their movement, formal training for ministry initially looked superfluous or mischievous. Quite quickly, however,

⁹ See *Centenary Celebration of Cheshunt College, 25th June, 1868* (London, 1868), pp. 32–3.

¹⁰ *New College, London: The Introductory Lectures Delivered at the Opening of the College, October 1851* (London, 1851), pp. v–vii; Elaine Kaye, *For the Work of Ministry: Northern College and its Predecessors* (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 110ff.

the Wesleyan Conference realized the advantages of bureaucratizing ministerial charisma.¹¹ Its decision to found a training institution inflamed the latent tensions between centre and locality, generals and foot soldiers which Janice Holmes analyses in Chapter 5 of this volume. Samuel Warren assailed the committee of Conference that had not only appointed its staff from their own number but hatched the 'astounding proposal' to make Jabez Bunting, not only its president but also its theological tutor. To give Bunting a 'sole Dictatorship' would imperil Methodists if he developed '*Episcopal propensities*'.¹² Warren was sidelined as a malcontent, but Bunting declined to add the theological tutorship to the presidency of the new institution at Richmond. He insisted that it not be called a 'college', a word that called to mind overbearing clerics—ironic, coming from the dictatorial Bunting. The choice of Richmond, with its royal associations, hinted at the Wesleyan yearning for respectability and for 'smooth lawn[s]... suggestive of the best traditions of academicism'.¹³ The Didsbury training institution (1842) was just as genteel, its governor reading the liturgy of the established church at its opening ceremony in its 'old English' chapel.¹⁴ The Wesleyan Conference thus created institutions in its timid yet bullying image. When Hugh Price Hughes was at Richmond in the late sixties, he was anathematized by Conference when he led opposition to its high-handed plan to pack off students for domestic ministry up north.¹⁵

Not only did Methodism in Britain enter the nineteenth century already split between Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodism—which acquired institutions of its own at Bala and Trevecca—but the Conference's actions provoked repeated secessions. The defections provoked by the 1849 Fly Sheet controversy dented fundraising for ministerial training, yet the shying off of rebel denominations also meant more colleges, at least in time. By 1850 the Primitive Methodists had created a Ministerial Association and by 1878 laid the foundation stone of Hartley College. The United Methodist Free Churches founded Victoria Park College (1871) and the Methodist New Connexion, Ranmoor (1860). Moreover, while the centralizing instincts of Methodists provoked repeated rebellions, they also empowered fundraising. Responding to a call by J.H. Rigg, the Wesleyan Conference drew on the princely

¹¹ Dale Johnson, 'The Methodist Quest for an Educated Ministry', *Church History*, 51 (1982), 304–20.

¹² Samuel Warren, *Remarks on the Wesleyan Theological Institution for the Education of the Junior Preachers: Together with the Substance of a Speech Delivered on the Subject* (London, 1834), pp. 18, 23–4.

¹³ Dorothea Hughes, *The Life of Hugh Price Hughes* (London, 1904), p. 41.

¹⁴ William Bardsley Brash, *The Story of our Colleges, 1835–1935: A Centenary Record of Ministerial Training in the Methodist Church* (London, 1935), 56; idem and C.J. Wright, *Didsbury College Centenary 1842–1942* (London, 1942).

¹⁵ Hughes, *Hughes*, pp. 52–6.

Thanksgiving Fund (1878) to create a new college at Handsworth. Similarly, Hartley College escaped its dependence on casual donations when it started to draw on 'The Connexion Fund' set up by Primitive Methodists (1888).¹⁶

Due to such initiatives, levels of academic training among Methodist ministers shot up in the last quarter of the century. About 90 per cent of Wesleyan ministers were college trained by 1890 and 77 per cent of Primitives, figures which compared well with those in other denominations.¹⁷ The embrace of an educated ministry would be as marked in Canada, whose Episcopal Methodists were as pushy as British Wesleyans were obedient. After repeatedly lobbying the reluctant authorities, they finally chartered Victoria College, Cobourg (1841), which proved the first of the many Methodist institutions which moderated without wholly dispelling their suspicion of paper qualifications.¹⁸ By 1900, around 50 per cent of Methodist ministers were college trained.¹⁹

The pattern in Scotland, Ulster, or wherever Scots and Irish Presbyterians travelled was different. Presbyterian Dissenters had long contrasted the systematic instruction in theology of their ministers while or after attending university with the 'low and lax' learning picked up by English Dissenters in hole and corner academies. American Presbyterian and Congregational ministers were initially educated at devout, but not specialist, colleges such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. The foundation of postgraduate divinity schools at Harvard and Yale continued this tradition, its faculty looking snobbishly on Protestants who scratched learning elsewhere.²⁰ Yet evangelical dread of Harvard's drift to Unitarianism, which as Stephen D. Shoemaker notes in Chapter 10 of this volume was deepened by the delivery there of Emerson's Divinity School Address (1838), and Presbyterian disquiet with the orthodoxy of Princeton's professors, pointed to the need to separate out theological instruction, even if a considerable overlap of personnel between Princeton Seminary (1812) and the college continued.²¹ Once Princeton had been established, Presbyterian seminaries proliferated before the war. Canadian Presbyterians too founded a spate of institutions, such as the Presbyterian

¹⁶ Brash, *Colleges*, pp. 81, 127, 83, 93.

¹⁷ Brown, *Social History*, p. 82.

¹⁸ Nathanael Burwash, *The History of Victoria College* (Toronto, Ontario), pp. 29–35.

¹⁹ Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal and Kingston, 1991), p. 49; Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *Christian Churches and their Peoples, 1840–1965: A Social History of Religion in Canada* (Toronto, Ontario, 2010), p. 89.

²⁰ Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-century America* (Philadelphia, PA, 2011), p. 23.

²¹ Mark A. Noll, *The Princeton Theology, 1812–1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1983), p. 21.

College in Halifax, Pictou (1816), Knox College, Toronto (1844), and the Presbyterian College, Montreal (1865).²²

The crackle of theological conflict both bedevilled these institutions and increased their number. Evangelical members of the Church of Scotland attacked Pictou, which had been founded by Secessionists, as overly elitist and flocked to Dalhousie College (1821), which trained missionaries for Cape Breton.²³ In Ulster, the college department of the Belfast Academical Institution ('Inst') was designed to overcome Presbyterian divisions by allowing different sects to appoint their own theological professors, but also became an arena for conflicts between Arians and evangelicals which first strained and then in 1829 broke apart the Synod of Ulster.²⁴ American Presbyterianism's Scottish parent was just as fissile and productive of new institutions. Shortly after its creation in 1820, the United Session Church founded a divinity hall at Glasgow (1820), with the Relief Church creating a permanent hall at Edinburgh (1841). The merger of both churches (1876) led to one United Presbyterian Divinity Hall in Edinburgh.²⁵ If the Presbyterian quest for purity generated halls that worked alongside the universities, then the Evangelical Revival boosted independency and generated academies, such as the Glasgow Theological Academy (1809) and James Morison's training institution, which furnished ministers for his Evangelical Union. One graduate of that institution was Andrew Fairbairn. Finding it hard as a Union minister to obtain Scottish university posts, he was pushed south of the border to become principal of Congregational Airedale in 1877. Such Dissenting graduates of Scottish or northern Irish training institutions and universities often went south to monetize their attainments. Samuel Davidson, appointed by the evangelicals who now controlled the Synod of Ulster to a professorship at Inst (1835) before he moved to the professorship of Hebrew at Lancashire Independent College, was another example, although eventually an unhappy one.²⁶

The Disruption was the greatest stimulus to Dissenting education in nineteenth-century Scotland, because it rendered it impossible for Free Churchmen to get a theological education at universities where their conscientious ministers were now debarred by tests from theological chairs. They needed independent training institutions, the first of which would be New

²² B. Anne Wood, 'Schooling for Presbyterian Leaders: The College Years of Pictou Academy', in William Klempa, ed., *The Burning Bush and a Few Acres of Snow: The Presbyterian Contribution to Canadian Life and Culture* (Ottawa, Ontario, 1994), p. 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 25–7.

²⁴ Andrew R. Holmes, 'The Common Sense Bible: Irish Presbyterians, Samuel Davidson, and Biblical Criticism, c.1800–1850', in Michael Ledger-Lomas and Scott Mandelbrote, eds., *Dissent and the Bible in Britain, c.1650–1950* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 181–4.

²⁵ P. Landreth, *The United Presbyterian Divinity Hall, in its Changes and Enlargements, for One Hundred and Forty Years* (Edinburgh, 1876), pp. 6, 277–8.

²⁶ Holmes, 'Common Sense', pp. 188–9.

College, Edinburgh. It had a splendid site on the Mound, snapped up by canny laymen for a thrifty £10,000, and imposing buildings designed by the architect of the National Gallery of Scotland. John Ruskin mocked its massive tower as a redundant excrescence, but it was a splendid demonstration of Free Church virility. In the College's foundations were placed copies of the Claim of Right, the Protest of 1843, the Act of Separation and Deed of Demission, Thomas Chalmers's lecture on ecclesiastical establishments, and other writings which constituted its textual building blocks. For Thomas Chalmers, its foundation was an opportunity to rethink the creaking fabric of ministerial training in which theological lectures in the universities had been delivered only once over a four-year cycle and student absenteeism had been rife. He believed that by appointing professors in classics, philosophy, and the natural sciences they might supplant the 'State Colleges' altogether, encouraging not just trainee ministers but men of every denomination to get a liberal education there. At its opening, its new professor of philosophy, Alexander Campbell Fraser, stressed its bracing novelty: 'no line of fancy' joined their thrusting pile with the 'scholastic studies of a former age, as in Paris, Salamanca, Oxford'.²⁷

If New College was created by the Disruption, then later attempts to solder the cracks in Scottish Presbyterianism nearly destroyed it. The 1904 decision of the House of Lords for the minority that had resisted union with the United Presbyterian Church temporarily sequestered the Free Church's former property, forcing the College's professors into borrowed classrooms. It was a dramatic instance of how national denominational politics could dent local institutions. Throughout the period across Britain, the civic patriotism that generated colleges inhibited the central planning for a denomination's needs. In the early years of New College, its principal William Cunningham, who sought to emulate Charles Hodge's Princeton, argued that it must be allowed to monopolize the church's education budget to be truly efficient. His opponents alleged bias to his native Edinburgh and asked why ministers in Aberdeen or Glasgow had to travel for their education. As usual, money rather than strategy settled the point, with wealthy Aberdonians and Glaswegians funding colleges for their towns. This unplanned, wasteful growth thus mirrored the pattern in England, where leading Congregationalists pressed vainly for what they called 'The amalgamation of the colleges'. Little colleges might be a 'reckless waste of tutorial power', but for alumni and donors they were home. Dr Falding, the principal of Rotherham College, was grief-stricken when it was decided to house the new Yorkshire United Independent College in Airedale's buildings rather than Rotherham's, even though he got to be its head.²⁸

²⁷ Hugh Watt, *New College, Edinburgh. A Centenary History* (Edinburgh, 1946), pp. 5, 27, 31, 47. It is said that Chalmers was over-enthusiastic with his spade in digging the hole for the foundation stone and cracked the jars that held the documents.

²⁸ Kaye, *Ministry*, pp. 89, 127.

Because the Church of Scotland was an imperial entity, the Disruption generated churches and training institutions to serve them abroad. The prime mover of Knox College and its first professor of divinity was the Glaswegian Robert Burns, who had pleaded the Free Church cause in Canada. The union with the United Presbyterian Church strengthened the hand of those who favoured voluntary provision for ministerial training. As in Britain, it was psychologically important that the college be a built expression of ecclesiological principle. Decreeing that 'the walls of our School of the Prophets should stand forth visible to observers, a testimony not by gaudy and extravagant appurtenances, yet by solid—and why not somewhat ornamental architecture', a building committee snapped up Lord Elgin's Elmsley Villa (1855). In 1875, the expanded church aspired to something grander and spent 130,000 dollars on buildings at what was becoming a prime site, Spadina Crescent.²⁹ This synthesis between patriotism, denominational assertiveness, and universities prevailed elsewhere in Canada. The Presbyterian president of McGill University, William Dawson, was a prime mover in the foundation of Montreal's college as a centre of 'missionary and aggressive effort' against Québec's Francophone priests. Its buildings, 'in the Gothic style of architecture, with slight touches of the Scottish baronial intermingled', were opened on a site adjacent to the university and later much expanded.³⁰ For Canadian as for British Presbyterians, local pride and denominational assertion trumped rational planning. Knox had opposed Montreal's foundation, fearing that it would be a drain on donations and students; by 1886 a committee of the General Assembly was recommending that the six colleges of the Canadian Presbyterian Church be amalgamated. Yet resistance from the colleges scotched the plan and reversed a move to throw donations to particular colleges into a common pot.³¹

In Australia, the Disruption stoked arguments over how to establish and fund ministerial education. Throughout the century, Presbyterian ministers throughout Australia were imported, not made: during Queen Victoria's reign only about 5.75 per cent of New South Wales's ministers would be locally trained, a figure that rose to 20 per cent for Victoria.³² Scottish settlers in New South Wales had shipped over Church of Scotland ministers, then obtained livings for them from the state. Yet John Dunmore Lang, the most prominent middleman for this traffic, assumed a free-floating relationship to the Church of Scotland and then from 1842 began to preach against state aid. Lang contrasted the

²⁹ Brian Fraser, *Church, College, and Clergy: A History of Theological Education at Knox College, Toronto, 1844–1994* (Montreal, Québec, 1995), p. 85.

³⁰ Keith Markell, *History of the Presbyterian College, Montreal, 1865–1986* (Montreal, Québec, 1987), p. 15; John H. MacVicar, *The Life and Work of Donald Harvey MacVicar DD LLD* (Toronto, Ontario, 1904), pp. 75–6.

³¹ Fraser, *Church*, pp. 86–7, 108.

³² Susan Emilsen, *A Whiff of Heresy: Samuel Angus and the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales* (Kensington, New South Wales, 1990), p. 8.

Church of Scotland's apathy with American Presbyterianism's energetic creation of seminaries despite but also because it did not look to the state. Yet Lang's attempt to turn the failing Australian College (1836) into a training institution ended in debt and acrimony. The successful creation of St Andrew's College (1867) had to wait for the passage of the Affiliated Colleges Act (1854), which encouraged the subsidized creation of denominational colleges in connection with the University of Sydney and the reunion of the colony's Presbyterian factions as the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales (1865). Even so, Presbyterian misgivings about the 'semi-monastic peculiarities' of colleges meant they were slower to take up the offer than Anglicans (1857) or Roman Catholics (1860) and lost a plum site on Missenden Road to the Methodists.³³ An ugly row over who should head the College hinted at continued divisions in New South Wales Presbyterianism. Furious at his failure to be elected as principal, the aged Lang alleged that a 'conclave' of Free Church ministers had sewn up its subscribers and thus its voter base to install as its principal the 'second-rate' Andrew Thomson, in 'the most outrageous exhibition of party-spirit and party-jobbing that has ever disgraced that Church either at home or abroad'.³⁴ He refused to attend its opening on the grounds that it had been 'conceived in sin'.³⁵ In Victoria, state aid was a less divisive question because a greater proportion of its Presbyterians were from the outset Free Churchmen, yet institutional provision lagged there too, with the exception of Dykes's divinity hall in Melbourne (1866). Ormond College (1870) was eventually founded in affiliation with the University of Melbourne—despite Free Church misgivings at the 'snobbery and profanity' said to cling like ivy to Oxbridge-style colleges—and would absorb in time Dykes's hall (1881). Francis Ormond, its eponymous funder, appears to have been as interested in its architecture as in its usefulness to the ministry: he gladly paid for turrets and a tower in Barrabool Hills freestone (1879) as well as for a subsequent enlargement. He insisted that the new buildings be called the 'Victoria front', a mere 'wing' not being sufficient tribute to the British Queen.³⁶ By 1903, about two thirds of Victoria's Presbyterian ministers were home-grown, though this development owed more to the economic depression that made Australian stipends less attractive to Scots than to Ormond's undoubtedly high standards.³⁷

³³ Ian Nish, 'The Foundation of the College', in *The Andrew's Book: Being a Book about St. Andrew's College within the University of Sydney* (Sydney, New South Wales, 1964), p. 1.

³⁴ John Dunmore Lang, *Free Church Morality! In Three of its Developments in New South Wales: Embodying a History of the Founding of St. Andrew's College* (Sydney, New South Wales, 1876), p. 29; Lang, *St. Andrew's; or, The Presbyterian College: and How it has Fallen into its Present Anomalous and Discreditable Condition* (Sydney, New South Wales, 1872), p. 3.

³⁵ Archibald Gilchrist, ed., *John Dunmore Lang: Chiefly Autobiographical, 1799 to 1878: Cleric, Writer, Traveller, Statesman, Pioneer of Democracy in Australia* (Melbourne, Victoria, 1951).

³⁶ Jim Davidson, 'Francis Ormond, Patron', in Macintyre, ed., *Ormond College*, pp. 1–21; Don Chambers, 'The Creation', in *ibid.*, pp. 23, 33.

³⁷ Chambers, 'Theological Hall', p. 107.

Australia's Baptists, Congregationalists, and Methodists resembled Presbyterians in moving only slowly from reliance on the metropole for their trained ministers. The institutions they eventually founded were usually parasitic on the state's universities and staffed by British imports. The Methodists founded Newington College (1860) in affiliation with Sydney University and Queen's College (1888) in connection with the University of Melbourne. The latter's promoters quashed Methodist unease with university cloisters by stressing that Wesley's Methodism had been 'born in a university'.³⁸ The Congregationalists founded Camden College (1863) in Sydney and the Congregational College of Victoria (1862). When Camden celebrated its half-centenary in 1914, it had placed twenty students in New South Wales and ten in other states—twenty-seven of them being university graduates.³⁹ Baptists were slower still to embrace formal education: if their ministers had received any training at all, it was in England or at Congregational colleges.⁴⁰ In Victoria, they did not act until the Victorian Baptist Fund set up in Jubilee Year made it possible to create a college (1891). The Yorkshireman W.T. Whitley was chosen as its head on the advice of the English preacher Alexander Maclaren and the demanding intellectual regime he instituted was a legacy of his postgraduate training at Rawdon College.⁴¹ This flurry of foundations aroused fears that the jam was being spread too thinly and there were calls to follow the English 'tendency towards combination' of smaller colleges.⁴²

The experience of non-Presbyterian denominations in the United States partially conformed to the patterns identified for Britain's colonies. Evangelical Christianity in early nineteenth-century America was primarily spread by those who had spent little or no time in formal institutions. In 1853, it was said that only about a fifth of southern preachers had been 'regularly educated' for it.⁴³ There was a healthy tradition, particularly among Baptists, of denouncing clerical education as a harmful luxury.⁴⁴ What tipped the balance in favour of formal clerical education was the quickening urbanization of American society. With new or expanding towns and cities attracting dense

³⁸ Renate Howe, 'Methodism in Victoria and Tasmania', in Glen O'Brien and Hilary Carey, eds., *Methodism in Australia: A History* (Aldershot, 2015), pp. 45–58.

³⁹ John Garrett and L.W. Farr, *Camden College: a Centenary History* (Sydney, New South Wales, 1964), p. 36.

⁴⁰ Walter Phillips, *Defending 'a Christian Country': Churchmen and Society in New South Wales in the 1880s and After* (St Lucia, Queensland, 1981), p. 47.

⁴¹ See Roslyn Otzen, *Whitley: The Baptist College of Victoria, 1891–1991* (South Yarra, Victoria, 1991).

⁴² *Report of the Intercolonial Conference held in Pitt Street Church, Sydney, May 15th to 23rd, 1883, under the auspices of the New South Wales Congregational Union, to celebrate the Jubilee of the Introduction of Congregationalism to Australia* (Sydney, New South Wales, 1883), pp. 138–40.

⁴³ Holifield, *Gentlemen*, p. 25.

⁴⁴ Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Intellect: The Aims and Purposes of Ante-bellum Theological Education* (Atlanta, GA, 1990), p. 325.

clusters of boosterish professionals, even ministers from humble, itinerant traditions found themselves preaching to, appointed by, or aspiring to enjoy the status and higher incomes of that class. They needed institutions where, much like other professionals, they could master and display a recognized corpus of knowledge as well as picking up social graces. Samuel Miller's *Letters on Clerical Manners and Habits: Addressed to a Student in the Theological Seminary, at Princeton, NJ*, which was widely read in many seminaries, warned against 'jerking chairs and other moveables', 'SPITTING ON THE FLOORS', and 'PICKING THE TEETH' in company.⁴⁵ Opinions differed on the best way to rub in that social polish. Neither the Baptists, who tended to be poor, nor the Methodists, who were supplanting Presbyterians as the largest Protestant denomination, displayed much initial enthusiasm for seminaries. They preferred non-denominational colleges in which ministers might be trained, or founded divinity schools as a formal part of or at least near to universities. Garrett Biblical Institute (1855), founded by a wealthy Methodist widow at Evanston, Illinois, was for instance well placed to develop ties with Northwestern University.⁴⁶

While the domestic demand for ministers was crucial in the foundation and expansion of institutions, training missionaries was just as urgent a concern for evangelical denominations. Despite Sydney Smith's sneers that they relied on little detachments of maniacs, sending societies quickly applied themselves to training missionaries, particularly those destined to work in what was understood to be civilized and therefore obdurate India. The London Missionary Society (LMS) had initially favoured 'Godly Men who understand Mechanic Arts' but was soon persuaded by David Bogue to set up a seminary at Gosport, which by the time of his death (1825) had trained two fifths of all LMS missionaries, including seven tenths of those sent to India. As a Scot with a degree from Edinburgh University, Bogue insisted on turning out scholars, appointing his son to lecture in classics in the belief that Greek or Latin offered a key to Oriental languages. Gosport did not long outlive Bogue's death and its subsequent move to Hoxton, but there were other Congregational experiments with dedicated missionary institutions, such as John Jukes and William Alliot's Bedford Missionary Training College, while from 1861 onwards LMS missionaries were sent to the Highbury training college for one year's training.⁴⁷ Methodists also invested heavily in this field. Despite opposition to the decision from the student body, the Wesleyan Conference decided to ship candidates for the domestic ministry to a new college at Headingley and reserved Richmond

⁴⁵ Samuel Miller, *Letters on Clerical Manners and Habits: Addressed to a Student in the Theological Seminary, at Princeton, NJ* (2nd edn., New York, 1827), pp. 55, 72, 74.

⁴⁶ Miller, *Piety*, p. 426.

⁴⁷ Stuart Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries, 1789–1958: The Social Background, Motives and Training of British Protestant Missionaries to India* (Abingdon, 1984), pp. 157–9, 169.

for missionary instruction.⁴⁸ Presbyterians too were fiercely attached to mission. A speaker at Princeton Seminary's centennial celebrations claimed that in sending one in thirteen of its graduates to the foreign mission field, it had vindicated the 'conception of the whole church as a missionary society'.⁴⁹ Some of the Free Church of Scotland's college professors had been leading figures in its Jewish missions, while New College created a Professorship of Evangelistic Theology for Alexander Duff, a celebrated Indian missionary.

Lasting exceptions to these patterns can be found among sects whose insistence that a 'professional ministry' was unscriptural vexed other Nonconformists. Critics of the Plymouth Brethren noted that this conviction left them 'lamentably incapable of perpetuating a race of leaders'.⁵⁰ The ancient suspicion among Quakers of 'hireling ministry' left them reliant until the 1920s on 'recording' the utterances of spirit-filled individuals in their meetings. Yet misgivings at numerical decline caused a rethink. A Home Mission Committee was set up to fund, if not explicitly to train, evangelists, with reformers such as John Wilhelm Rowntree urging that the Society had never given 'properly sustained recognition of the intellectual qualifications for a searching ministry'. The Summer School in Theology, funded by George Cadbury's chocolate money, and first convened at Scarborough in 1897, was a partial answer to the problem. Unlike Dissenting colleges, its aim was not to mould a distinct caste of ministers but to improve ministry by opening Quaker minds to modern biblical criticism, so that when they broke silence in Meeting they would have interesting things to say.⁵¹ It gained a permanent home at Woodbroke near Birmingham in 1903.

'BUTTON-HOLE THEOLOGY': VOCATIONAL VERSUS ACADEMIC APPROACHES

The acceptance by Dissenters that ministerial training must be institutionalized did not mean that they agreed on how academic it should be. Given the secondary literature's preoccupation with the theological clout of tutors, it is salutary to recall that some highly successful denominations and training enterprises were built on suspicion of donnish intellect. Britain's Particular Baptists had academic traditions, with Stepney College (from 1857 in Regent's

⁴⁸ Brash, *Colleges*, p. 76.

⁴⁹ Robert Speer, 'Princeton in the Mission Field', in *The Centennial Celebration of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, at Princeton, New Jersey* (Princeton, NJ, 1912), pp. 419, 434.

⁵⁰ William Blair Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren* (2nd edn., London, 1901), p. 338.

⁵¹ Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism, 1860–1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 173–95.

Park) educating a modest proportion of its ministers. Yet as late as 1871 only 58 per cent of their ministers had a college education, a figure which had crept up to 84.5 per cent by 1911, while their most charismatic leader, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, had no such training.⁵² His attempt to enrol at Stepney ended in farce when he sat in a Cambridge house for hours awaiting an interview with its principal Joseph Angus, only to discover later that the maid had forgotten to announce him. His rise to celebrity confirmed him in his belief that preachers did not need a Dr Angus. His venture into ministerial training began casually, with an attempt to help one preacher mend his mangled consonants. Together with the Rev. G. Rogers, he was soon polishing many such rough diamonds in the basement of his Metropolitan Tabernacle. Headed first by Rogers and then by David Gracey, the Pastor's College had educated 863 students by the time Sturgeon died near Montpellier in 1892, 627 of whom had become Baptist ministers.⁵³ His graduates founded half of new Baptist chapels in that period, had baptised 1,000 persons, and enjoyed an important presence in the colonies.⁵⁴ By contrast, the Preacher's Institute that Spurgeon's donnish counterpart John Clifford founded at his Westbourne Park Church turned out only thirteen ministers in thirty years.⁵⁵

Spurgeon wrote that he aimed to produce a 'class of ministers... who can speak the common language, the plain blunt Saxon of the crowd'. His weekly lectures generally put unction before erudition, coaching students in the figures of speech, tones of voice, even the postures which made good preachers. He carried his point with impersonations: of the failed preacher 'with the hot dumpling in his mouth... [another] with his hands under his coat-tails, making the figure of a water-wagtail'. The Pastor's College was distinguished from Regent's Park in its funding as well as in its curriculum, with Spurgeon's happy-go-lucky Calvinism trusting to the 'bounteous care of the Lord' for donations. When the College moved into a permanent building, Spurgeon raised only enough to fund rates and maintenance but not an endowment—as that made for sloth.⁵⁶ The Pastor's College eclipsed Dr Angus altogether. As Ian Randall notes in Chapter 2 of this volume, J.H. Shakespeare condemned Regent's Park as a place where Latin, Greek, and Hebrew 'reign like dead kings' and which churned out 'theologians, essayists, Hebraists, Dryasdusts, and men with brilliant degrees' rather than preachers.⁵⁷

⁵² Brown, *Social History*, p. 35ff.

⁵³ Ian Randall, *A School of Prophets: 150 Years of Spurgeon's College* (London, 2005), p. 28.

⁵⁴ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Autobiography: Compiled from his Diary, Letters, and Records by his Wife and his Private Secretary*, 4 vols (London, 1897–1900), IV: p. 330.

⁵⁵ James Marchant, *Dr. John Clifford, C. H.; Life, Letters and Reminiscences* (London: Cassell and Co., 1929).

⁵⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, III: p. 129, 143, 153–4.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Ian Randall, 'Conscientious Conviction': *Joseph Angus (1816–1902) and Nineteenth-Century Baptist Life* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 8–11. See also Chapter 2 of this volume.

Spurgeon nicknamed one early favourite 'Professor of Button-hole Theology' for his constant attempts to make converts. Other British denominations were soon favouring 'Button-hole Theology' too. Spurgeon admittedly exaggerated the divorce between learning and practice in more academic colleges. Most insisted on a testimonial of conversion as a condition of admission, charged modest fees, and encouraged students to spend weekends preaching in nearby chapels. Yet leaders in many denominations still felt they lost out on humble candidates—'domestic missionaries' rather than neck-clothed clerics—who could connect them with the urban working classes. Joseph Parker's Cavendish Theological College for horny-handed Congregationalists was one answer to that problem: it transferred from Manchester to Nottingham under the leadership of the Scot John Brown Paton, who combined an interest in German theology with the devout pursuit of simplicity. The Nottingham Congregational Institute looked as pretentious as other colleges, with its fourteenth-century Gothic building bankrolled by the wealthy Samuel Morley and a course that crept up to four years in duration. Yet Paton concentrated on coaching gospel pugilists rather than Dryasdusts: the statutes forbade the teaching of Hebrew and his long list of 'Sermon Class Canons' coached his lay evangelists in serving up spicy sermons rather than 'calf's meat'.⁵⁸ Wesleyan Methodists had the 'Joyful News Home Training Institution', created by the pious journalist and autodidact Thomas Champness at Castleton Hall in Rochdale and later in Derbyshire.⁵⁹ This no-frills enterprise was kept going by the willingness of its trainee evangelists to do menial jobs and by donations from anonymous Methodists, such as 'Call it "Hot Water"', who gave 15s 3d she would have otherwise spent on hot water for her tea breaks.⁶⁰ The very name of the Unitarian Home Missionary College (1854) showed that even the most elitist of Nonconformists recognized the need for domestic missionaries as well as scholars.

Leaders of Australia's Dissenting traditions shared these anxieties, not least because in a rapidly expanding society it was never possible to insist that all ministers should be university graduates with a leisurely theological training. The Presbyterians came closest, with 45 per cent of ministers in New South Wales university graduates in the later 1870s—though the percentage fell thereafter, while in Victoria 47 per cent of ministers in 1900 were graduates. By the late eighties, Ormond had still only trained a third of Victoria's ordained ministers and by the early twentieth century it was decided that it should be incorporated into a dual system, in which its professors would give a

⁵⁸ Kaye, *Ministry*, pp. 138–41.

⁵⁹ W. Fiddian Moulton, *The Story of Cliff: A College of the Unprivileged* (London, 1928), pp. 5–6, 22.

⁶⁰ Henry Smart, *The Life of Thomas Cook, Evangelist and First Principal of Cliff's College* (London, 1913), p. 211.

basic examination to home missionaries who did not have to attend their classes.⁶¹ Critics of the colleges felt that the demanding standards imposed by ambitious heads—such as the requirement to hold an arts degree—made it still less likely that intending ministers would make use of them. Whitley's work in Victoria was punctuated by complaints that his standards induced breakdowns among the dwindling number of overworked students. In 1899, he surrendered his post rather than scale down his ambitions and the college briefly folded. Congregationalists likewise debated whether a high academic path was the best or only one. After all, of the sixty-four ordained Congregational ministers in New South Wales in 1890, only ten had attended Camden.⁶² Speaking on ministerial education at the Intercolonial Conference of 1883, the principal of the Victoria Congregational College was convinced that while beefing up the academic content of their colleges, they must also provide shorter paths to ministry. He noted that of the 200 Victorian ministers listed in the Congregational Yearbook, only thirty-three had been educated at the colleges and only five were university graduates.⁶³

William Booth's Salvation Army was the most remarkable British attempt to prioritize the training of missionaries through practice. The young Booth had been as cocksure of his abilities as Spurgeon, shying away from entering a Congregational college, refusing to serve a probation in the Methodist New Connexion and reluctantly entering Regent's Park College, where he 'might often have been found on his face in an agony of prayer', fretting that 'men and women were perishing of iniquity while he turned the pages of textbooks'. His missionary organization put little trust in textbooks. In a letter written to his son Bramwell, he stressed that he could avoid colleges, most of which 'while improving the mind, do, I fear, injure the heart', and concentrate on 'the actual work of the Mission, by visiting in turn the different stations and remaining occasionally a little time in each place'. Speaking at the annual conference of the mission in June 1876, Booth claimed 'the best qualification for managing a station must be to *make one*; the next best plan for this is to help work one that is made'.⁶⁴ Only slowly did institutional training supplement baptism by fire, with the Army acquiring its first training home at Clapton in 1881. Booth's skeletal catechism for this and subsequent homes consisted in biblical proofs for basic teaching on salvation and sanctification, mixed with advice on conversion techniques and tips on avoiding such snares as invitations to gossip tea parties.⁶⁵ Not until the construction of Giles Gilbert Scott's William Booth Memorial Training College at Denmark Hill, South London (1929) did the

⁶¹ Chambers, 'Theological Hall', pp. 106, 112.

⁶² Phillips, *Christian Country*, pp. 52, 56.

⁶³ *Intercolonial Conference*, p. 133.

⁶⁴ Harold Begbie, *The Life of William Booth, Founder of the Salvation Army*, 2 vols (London, 1920), I: pp. 141–2, 206, 221, 225, 397, 417–18.

⁶⁵ *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Salvation Army Prepared for the Training Homes* (London, 1881).

Army acquire what other denominations had long considered essential: an imposing building with a whopping great tower.⁶⁶

Spurgeon and Booth's emphasis on vocational training for men with a vocation was echoed in the new institutions for missionary training. Many late Victorian evangelicals considered missionary societies to be too complacent and hidebound by formalities to recruit zealous men for the battlefronts opened by 'faith' missionaries. Henry and Mrs Grattan Guinness founded the East London Institute for Home and Foreign Missions in the conviction that the only valid test for missionary work was the 'actual doing of it'. Dissenting students in their non-denominational Institute learned theology, medicine, and some Greek, but were also tested by their ability to endure 'manual labour' and incessant preaching in the bad lands of Stepney and Mile End. Like a training course for the Marine Corps, the drop-out rate testified to its value, winnowing out those who lacked 'spiritual power' before they could reach the extra-European world.⁶⁷

Exposure to the Guinnesses strengthened the unease of American evangelicals at overly elaborate ministerial education and its connection to what Arthur Tappan Pierson called *The Crisis of Missions* (1886). Francis Wayland had warned American Baptists during an inaugural sermon at Rochester Seminary (1852) that such institutions risked producing an introverted caste rather than the great army of ministers needed. God 'requires, and he employs in his vineyard, all classes of laborers', argued Wayland, noting that institutions fit only for one in twenty candidates would never make up the current deficit of 4,000 ministers.⁶⁸ Adoniram Judson Gordon, a fervent Baptist preacher in Boston who had sat under Wayland at Brown University, extended such thinking. In a December 1887 address to the Evangelical Alliance in Washington, he had warned that the Protestant ministry might be 'impoverished by excess of learning' and laboured the superiority of 'unschooled lay preachers' to over-educated theology graduates. His Boston Missionary Training School (1889), which replicated much of what he had learned about the Guinnesses and other European pioneers of rudimentary training, was attacked for introducing a 'short cut' to ministry but would be defended just as vigorously by Wayland.⁶⁹ Gordon's School was one of a spate of Bible schools and missionary institutes designed to train self-sacrificing, zealous 'gap men'

⁶⁶ Rosemary Hill, 'William Booth Memorial College', in *100 Buildings, 100 Years* (London, 2014), p. 48.

⁶⁷ Mrs H. Grattan Guinness, *The Wide World and our Work in it, or, The Story of the East London Institute for Home and Foreign Missions* (London, 1886), pp. 27, 44.

⁶⁸ Francis Wayland, *The Apostolic Ministry: a Discourse, Delivered in Rochester, New York* (Rochester, NY, 1853), pp. 65, 79–80.

⁶⁹ Ernest B. Gordon, *Adoniram Judson Gordon: A Biography, with Letters and Illustrative Extracts drawn from Unpublished or Uncollected Sermons and Addresses* (New York, 1896), pp. 172, 267–72.

(and women) who reached people neglected by wooden seminarians. Even more than Spurgeon, they downplayed linguistic study in favour of mastery of the English Bible and of the extrapolation from it of a dispensational eschatology. These institutions were often run on a shoestring and designed to produce the quick results which that eschatology required.⁷⁰ The Moody Bible Institute (1889), for which Moody successfully raised 250,000 dollars, was expressly designed to attract funding from businesspeople now less interested in building memorials to themselves or their denominations than they were in efficiency. Its students engaged in manual labour when they could not pay fees and followed an elaborate system of metrics for progress.⁷¹

PECTUS FACIT THEOLOGUM: THE CURRICULUM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Many an English tutor would have winced at Spurgeon's quip that 'our Professor is venerated as a bishop in Nonconformity. He is expected to write good books, to preach third-rate sermons, to have reached the goal of perfection in classical acquirements, and to be well read in the Church Fathers'.⁷² They were haunted by the thought that in attempting to drum a liberal education into their students as well as the essentials of the faith, they had become smatterers, their spiritual fires extinct. Speaking at the opening of the Lancashire Independent College, John Harris reassured his audience that their aim was not to puff up students by cramming their heads with everything and anything but the Bible. What bound together the diverse subjects at Lancashire was the inculcation of 'mental developement [sic] and discipline': thanks to the mathematics, classics, rhetoric, logic, and natural science that preceded their theology course, today's ministers would not, like yesterday's itinerant evangelicals, be 'desultory and vagrant' in their 'mental habits'.⁷³ Debates about the content and scope of ministerial education were always more moral than intellectual. Founded to allay fears about the future of the ministry, training colleges often intensified them as debates about how to balance intellect, culture, and faith in Protestantism swirled around them. In an 1864 address at Rawdon College, Alexander Maclaren warned students against

⁷⁰ See Virginia Brereton, *Training God's Army: The American Bible School, 1880–1940* (Bloomington, IN, 1990).

⁷¹ Timothy Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Durham, NC, 2015), pp. 87–8.

⁷² G. Holden Pike, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: Or, an Historical Account of the Society* (London, 1870), p. 172.

⁷³ John Harris, *Importance of an Educated Ministry, a Discourse in Manchester, Preparatory to the Opening of the Lancashire Independent College* (London, 1843), pp. 7, 19–22.

becoming so engrossed in literary studies that they became 'correct pulpit-icicle[s]', 'dwindle[d] into some kind of a literary man', or fell to weighing the 'comparative pecuniary advantages of vacant churches' with 'cynical coarseness'.⁷⁴ A college education must always be informed by and help to form a minister's piety: *Pectus facit Theologum*.

Deciding what to teach was a financial and managerial problem as much as it was a spiritual question. Colleges fretted over how much of their resources to devote to theology and how much to the preparatory arts course that brought their recruits up to a minimum standard. The problem was that tutors were easily overburdened by teaching philosophy or mathematics in addition to theology or biblical criticism. When he started out at Montreal, Donald MacVicar was teaching maths, Latin, Greek, logic, and moral philosophy in addition to systematic theology, apologetics, and church history.⁷⁵ Purely theological tuition often suffered. The lectures of the Didsbury tutor John Hannah may have been sadly typical: sparsely illustrated by elderly texts, they were read in a 'harsh' gabble impenetrable to students. His memoirist commented that their paucity did not matter much as the priority for Methodist colleges was to create preachers, not accomplished theologians.⁷⁶ Late into the century, many tutors not only relied on but even gloried in cramming. Cunningham's lectures in Edinburgh on doctrine drummed home the perfections of the Westminster Confession, for 'a class to which students are required to devote a large proportion of their time, ought to perform a clear, definite professional service', namely to convey truth.⁷⁷ Then as now, students tolerated tyrants and eccentrics but rarely bores or time-servers. One student at New College, London in the 1880s noted the 'continual grumbling about the lectures and a threat of mutiny' against the superannuated teachers.⁷⁸ For their part, tutors grumbled at their workload. The complaints of Marcus Dods of New College, Edinburgh epitomize a century of grouching. He wrote to a friend who grumbled of business worries that things could be worse—he could be a professor, 'have £600 a year with no possibility of a rise, and the possibility of finding that your Church has not the wherewithal to pay you, and the certainty that she has not any provision for your retiring allowance, so that when you are worn out and bronchitic, you must all the same turn out through winter at 8-15 and grind your soul away teaching'.⁷⁹ MacVicar in Montreal went one

⁷⁴ Alexander Maclaren, *Counsels for the Study and the Life* (London, 1864).

⁷⁵ MacVicar, *MacVicar*, pp. 81–2.

⁷⁶ John Hannah, *Introductory Lectures on the Study of Christian Theology, to which is Prefixed a Memoir of John Hannah* (London, 1875), pp. 35–40.

⁷⁷ Robert Rainy, *Life of William Cunningham, D.D.: Principal and Professor of Theology and Church History, New College, Edinburgh* (London, 1871), p. 231.

⁷⁸ Basil Martin, *An Impossible Parson* (London, 1935), p. 48.

⁷⁹ Marcus Dods, *Later Letters of Marcus Dods, D.D. (1895–1909), Late Principal of New College, Edinburgh* (London, 1911), p. 105.

better, dying at his desk of a heart attack as he looked over his notes for a lecture on pedagogics.⁸⁰

One answer for colleges who believed in liberal education as well as theological instruction was to assist tutors by adding to their number, subdividing the theological instruction and bringing in staff to carry the arts course. New College, London retained the lexicographer William Smith to teach classics and Edwin Lankester to teach natural science. The increasingly expensive commitment to natural science was one test of how willing institutions were able to offer holistic training. The tower of New College, London housed a 'Philosophical Lecture Room and the Laboratory, which are fitted up with every convenience for chemical and scientific experiments' and the College also had a Museum with a thirty-foot-high ceiling, 'furnished with cases for Philosophical Instruments and specimens of Mineralogy, Natural History, and Fossils'. Lankester's inaugural lecture to students insisted that the Christian minister who was 'most gladly heard... would be he who, in the midst of all this beating of iron, glowing of forges, turning of wheels... should be able to point out, that in the very nature and properties of these material things, God is all in all, and ruling all'.⁸¹ This expansive approach was emulated in institutions founded by New College graduates, such as the short-lived Union College Adelaide, where the Congregationalist James Jeffries taught maths and physical science.⁸² In Scotland, too, natural science raised the question of whether a training institution could be a self-sufficient liberal arts college as well as a seminary. When John Fleming—professor of natural science at New College since its foundation—died in 1857, there were doubts about whether to replace him. The College scraped along with a temporary lecturer before an 1869 donation endowed his chair. When his replacement retired in 1903, natural science was subsumed into apologetics. The apologist Henry Drummond was worried that his lectures as professor of natural science at the Free Church College in Glasgow might seem 'rudimentary' to students who had already studied science as undergraduates. He made it up to them by laying on paleontological jaunts he laid on to the isle of Arran.⁸³

If the division of labour among the tutors was one answer to overload, then the other was to parcel it up among institutions. Ministerial colleges in England and Wales followed their colonial colleagues in realizing the benefits from associating themselves with the increasing number of universities. Growing numbers of students chose to take the Bachelor of Arts examination at the University of London. John Clifford's education began when he left the Midland Baptist College in Leicester for a pastorate in Paddington and then

⁸⁰ MacVicar, *MacVicar*, pp. 341–2.

⁸¹ *Introductory Lectures*, pp. v–vii, 138–9.

⁸² Walter Phillips, 'University College Adelaide, 1872–86: A Brief Experiment in United Theological Education', in Treloar, ed., *Furtherance*, p. 61.

⁸³ George Adam Smith, *The Life of Henry Drummond* (London, 1899), p. 249.

took a London University BA, BSc, MA and law degree in quick succession.⁸⁴ Students at Lancashire made a beeline for the lectures of the magnetic, heterodox A.J. Scott at the newly founded Owens College, a major influence on the liberalization of Congregationalism. These exchanges prompted the thought that academies could improve their theological instruction by farming out secular education altogether, turning themselves into postgraduate institutions run by research-active professors. So did the 1857 removal of tests for undergraduates and the 1871 abolition of subscription to the articles for all but theological fellowships at Oxford and Cambridge. Scots such as Fairbairn instinctively favoured that option because their own theological training had been postgraduate. 'Literary' institutions for ministerial training would rescue professors from being a 'creature of burden upon whom is to be packed the utmost multitude of heterogeneous work'; 'a college will never be a college if it is only a grinding mill'.⁸⁵ In 1889, Fairbairn became head of Mansfield College, Oxford, which offered such postgraduate training to Nonconformists who had migrated there after the repeal of tests. The opening of Manchester College, Oxford (1891) for Unitarians then Westminster College, Cambridge (1899) for English Presbyterians showed that other denominations were thinking similarly. Mansfield's honey-coloured Cotswold stone could of course be read as marking the conquest of Dissent by Oxford, rather than the reverse. It was embarrassing that Fairbairn failed to get its staff recognized as non-collegiate lecturers in theology, while pride prevented its registration as a private hall.⁸⁶ The integration of colleges with red brick, secular universities went more smoothly. Fairbairn thus helped recast ministerial education in Wales, nudging Nonconformist colleges into preparing students for the postgraduate BD degree in theology offered by the new university of Wales. He also advised on the creation of a non-denominational faculty of theology at the University of Manchester, which aggregated the teaching offered in the town's Nonconformist colleges. Arthur Peake, its first professor, had been a student and teacher at Mansfield and was at the same time principal of Hartley College.

The geographical and institutional proximity of colonial and American colleges and seminaries to universities made similar debates inevitable there. The secularization of King's College in Toronto (1849) inaugurated a protracted debate as to whether Knox should suppress its preparatory department and concentrate on postgraduate theological education. In the end, the preparatory department limped on until 1898.⁸⁷ By the early twentieth century, the colleges of New South Wales were dealing with the manpower problem by pooling lecturing among themselves.⁸⁸ Seminaries in the United States

⁸⁴ Marchant, *Clifford*, p. 44.

⁸⁵ Fairbairn, *Ministry*, p. 18.

⁸⁶ W.B. Selbie, *The Life of Andrew Martin Fairbairn* (London, 1914), pp. 219–21, 287.

⁸⁷ Fraser, *Church, College, and Clergy*, pp. 57, 78, 85, 105.

⁸⁸ Garrett and Farr, *Camden*, p. 37.

continued to rely on liberal arts colleges and universities to deliver them educated graduates, though this stored up problems for the future. On the one hand, seminaries failed to appreciate that the classical languages were becoming less central to degrees in liberal arts, so that graduates came to them less well equipped for advanced study of the Bible. On the other, the foundation of Bible and religion departments, whose courses could be taken as electives, turned colleges and universities from collaborators to competitors for students who might be tempted to dispense with seminary altogether.⁸⁹

‘THAT TERRIBLE TORPEDO’: TRAINING INSTITUTIONS AND THEOLOGICAL CHANGE

John Gibb was sanguine when in 1877 he addressed students of the Presbyterian Theological College in London on ‘Biblical studies and their influence on the Church’. As its professor of New Testament exegesis, Gibb extolled ‘modern exegetical science’, which he presented as a fusion of Renaissance philology, Reformation zeal, and modern revivalism. That ‘terrible torpedo, higher criticism’ had fizzled out. The archaeological ‘excavation’ of an ancient treasure like the Scriptures inevitably attracted crowds of idle scoffers but should not be discredited on that account.⁹⁰ Gibb’s confidence is belied by the list of students expelled and staff defenestrated from institutions across the English-speaking world in the mid and late nineteenth century. It includes both students, such as the abolitionists expelled from Lane, Cincinnati in the mid-thirties or William Hale White (‘Mark Rutherford’), kicked out of New College in 1852, and their professors. Samuel Davidson was forced to resign from Lancashire in 1857; William Robertson Smith was removed from his chair at the Aberdeen Free Church College in 1881; while Charles Briggs was expelled from the American Presbyterian Church merely for his inaugural address at Union seminary. These expulsions reinforce the impression that colleges epitomized Dissent’s bind in the nineteenth century. Either they ignored higher criticism and persisted with theological systems that depended on stereotyped affirmations of scriptural infallibility, or else they exposed future ministers to an awareness of the Bible’s fractured and uncertain composition that might alienate congregations if openly communicated to them. Though scholarship on Congregational academies in England suggests that their teaching underwent a productive ‘transition’ in the later nineteenth

⁸⁹ Glenn Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870–1970* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2007), pp. 115–25.

⁹⁰ John Gibb, *Biblical Studies and their Influence upon the Church: An Introductory Lecture Delivered in the College of the Presbyterian Church of England* (London, 1877), pp. 3, 19.

century, for others the challenge of keeping students abreast of higher criticism while also encouraging them to preach a simple gospel remained severe.⁹¹

The tutors and trustees of many older colleges remained stubbornly attached to an evidential approach to the Bible and a Calvinist vision—of varying degrees of severity—of the soteriology which could be drawn from it. Theology, proclaimed John Eadie at the opening of the United Secession Church's divinity hall in 1845, was a 'perfect science' which had no truck with 'novelty'.⁹² Joseph Angus stressed in 1892 that it was not 'progressive' in the sense of the natural sciences: it was 'simply the complete meaning of Scripture' and thus its 'accumulation of materials is [already] at an end'.⁹³ Such attitudes led tutors to forget Fairbairn's caution that theology was not an 'authoritative' discipline and to trot out lectures that moved from evidences that Scripture was authentic and infallible on to the Calvinist conclusions induced from its data.⁹⁴ The 'Common Sense' defence of Scriptural Calvinism was particularly strong at Princeton Seminary in the writings and lectures of Charles Hodge, which were influential in Presbyterian institutions around the world, particularly once codified in his *Systematic Theology* (1871–3) and extended in his son and successor Archibald's writings.⁹⁵ The granular linguistic study of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures that was central to Presbyterian seminaries marked a decided preference for 'hermeneutical science to the deprecation of theological systems'. In Canada, a cross-denominational consensus sprang up in the colleges that theology was the straightforward exposition of the historical truth of Scripture, history itself being understood as testament to and vehicle of redemption.⁹⁶

Tutors and trustees of early and mid-nineteenth-century British academies had often come of age as revolution and war closed off access to the German universities in which new approaches to the Bible flourished. When the Homerton tutor William Walford sold off his library in a fit of depression after the Napoleonic Wars, he did so at a loss because the books were 'extremely depreciated by the return of peace, which opened a free intercourse

⁹¹ Dale Johnson, "'The End of the Evidences': A Study in Nonconformist Theological Transition", *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 2 (1979), 62–72; Johnson, *The Changing Shape of English Nonconformity, 1825–1925* (Oxford, 1999).

⁹² John Eadie, *Theological Study; and the Spirit in which it Ought to be Pursued: The Lecture Delivered at the Opening of the United Secession Divinity Hall, Session 1845* (Edinburgh, 1845), pp. 15–17.

⁹³ Joseph Angus, *Theology an Inductive and a Progressive Science* (London, 1891), pp. 19–21.

⁹⁴ Fairbairn, *Ministry*, p. 13.

⁹⁵ Noll, *The Princeton Theology*; Paul Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (Oxford, 2012), chs. 17–19; Prentis, 'John Mathew', p. 78; William Vaudry, 'Canadian Presbyterians and Princeton Seminary, 1850–1900', in Klempa, ed., *Burning Bush*, p. 228.

⁹⁶ Michael Willis of Knox College, quoted in William Vaudry, *The Free Church in Victorian Canada, 1844–1861* (Waterloo, Ontario, 1989), p. 54; Gauvreau, *College and Creed*, chs. 2–3.

with all parts of the world'.⁹⁷ Those who did reach the Continent after 1815 were often confirmed in their insularity. Thomas Raffles, who pressed for Davidson's resignation from Lancashire College, was appalled on his 1816–17 tour by Parisian pastors who enjoyed cards on the Sabbath and Genevans who were 'almost to a man, Arians or Socinians'.⁹⁸

The conservatism of early nineteenth-century teachers and governors was inevitably challenged by younger tutors who benefited from open borders, steam ships, and railways; spent time in Germany; got interested in Romantic Continental politics; or, in the United States, championed abolitionism. The same went for their pupils, who participated in the shift identified by David Bebbington in Chapter 14 of this volume from enlightened, moderate Calvinist to romantic apologetics.⁹⁹ In intimate residential colleges, students built up an unofficial understanding of what counted as good theology from books, conversation, or sermons heard outside college.¹⁰⁰ When the Scottish Congregationalist John Hunter attended Spring Hill, he was too intent on 'sermon making' to derive much benefit from a curriculum heavy with classics and mathematics. What really counted were friends who exposed him to the romantic and Incarnational critique of Calvinist atonement theology and biblical inspiration in F.D. Maurice and other authors. Hunter and his friends left Spring Hill ready to perplex their first congregations with their samizdat romanticism. In rigid colleges, such explorations led to confrontation. Accused by his tutor Dr James Gibson of laughing at his lectures at Trinity College, Glasgow, Robert Howie riposted that 'if he is to believe others, possessing a physiognomy in which the play of the muscles is more than usually observable, he incurred peculiar risk of having the expression of his countenance made subject of remark'. He admitted that he might have displayed a 'broad look of astonishment' at some of Gibson's remarks, such as his claim that God could have created space. That 'broad look' was probably a Kantian one: another of Gibson's pupils ostentatiously 'read German, philosophical, and other books' during class.¹⁰¹

Tensions over what students should learn about Scripture were not simply generational, however. Davidson's most strident persecutors were two recent students, Enoch Mellor and James Guinness Rogers, political militants who disliked trifling with the touchstone of their evangelical politics: the Word

⁹⁷ John Stoughton, ed., *Autobiography of the Rev. William Walford* (London, 1851), p. 183.

⁹⁸ Thomas Raffles, *Letters During a Tour Through... France, Savoy, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands* (Liverpool, 1818), pp. 119, 165.

⁹⁹ See David Bebbington, Chapter 14 of this volume.

¹⁰⁰ See Mark Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation* (Carlisle, 2004), p. 41.

¹⁰¹ *Letter to the College Committee of the Free Church in Reference to the Pamphlet of Professor Gibson* (Glasgow, 1859), p. 62.

of God.¹⁰² Nor did all students instinctively privilege what hindsight anoints as the progressive cause. A ‘tendency to practical joking’ among the students was cause for concern at the Pastor’s College, not any spirit of intellectual insurrection.¹⁰³ When Spurgeon withdrew from the Baptist Union, the Pastor’s College Association was an important powerbase for his unyielding Calvinism, particularly once he had stiffened its spine by remodelling it as the Pastor’s College Evangelical Association with a creedal test for admission.¹⁰⁴ When William Hale White described Mark Rutherford’s martyrdom at the hands of an elderly college President for whom ‘the word “German” was a term of reproach signifying something very awful, although nobody knew exactly what it was’, he gave a quotable but rather misleading impression of Congregational colleges.¹⁰⁵ Many of those who cautioned against ‘German’ approaches to Scripture knew exactly what they were. Hunter’s biographer noted that even though he ‘never turned to the Germans’ in his rebellion against Calvinist exegesis, German texts were much studied at Spring Hill. This was thanks to the Socratic and Germanophile principal, David Worthington Simon, who sent pupils to study in Halle. Tutors in Simon’s Congregational tradition had always been interested in German exegesis and philology and sought to put their teaching of systematic theology on a scientific frame, even as they lumbered through denunciations of ‘neology’. John Pye Smith at Homerton was an early, discerning enthusiast for hermeneutics, while William Farrer, the librarian of New College, translated Schleiermacher’s *Brief Outline of Theological Study* (1850) with an effusive dedication to Pye Smith. Across the Atlantic, celebrated defenders of Scripture against ‘neology’ in the seminaries had often studied in Germany and freely cited conservative German voices in their support. Moses Stuart at Andover did much to encourage interest in German hermeneutics, while his colleague E.A. Park wrote a reverent biography of Tholuck which extenuated his wobbly orthodoxy and extolled his bond with ‘pious students’.¹⁰⁶ One of Hodge’s treasured possessions was the photograph that Tholuck sent him with ‘warm expressions of love’. As a student in Germany, he had been impressed by Tholuck and by the aggressive Berlin neo-pietist Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, influences which developed his ‘Common Sense’ theology into a searching, even

¹⁰² On Davidson see Roger Tones, “‘We are Hardly Prepared for this Style of Teaching Yet’: Samuel Davidson and Lancashire Independent College”, *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 5 (1995), 398–414.

¹⁰³ Pike, *Tabernacle*, p. 177.

¹⁰⁴ Hopkins, *Romantic*, pp. 202–9; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, IV: p. 332.

¹⁰⁵ William Hale White, *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, Dissenting Minister* (London, 1881), p. 17.

¹⁰⁶ E.A. Park, in ‘Sketch of Tholuck’s Life and Character’, in Park and B.B. Edwards, eds., *Selections from German Literature* (Andover, MA, 1839), p. 211.

emotional Calvinist anthropology rooted in the riches of Reformation divinity.¹⁰⁷ The fierce disagreement of many American professors with Straussian higher criticism disguises the fact that their approach to theology—its division into biblical, historical, theological, and practical elements, which could then be broken up into specialist disciplines—was indebted to the manifestoes and encyclopaedias produced by scientific but pious theologians from Schleiermacher to Hagenbach.¹⁰⁸ The hesitant development of sub-disciplines such as church history in divinity schools by pioneers such as Philip Schaff of Mercersburg and later Union Seminary took German textbooks as its basis.¹⁰⁹

The scope for higher critical study varied according to denomination as well as personality and generation. Tutors in Unitarian colleges engaged with higher criticism from the late eighteenth century and even conservative Unitarian tutors, such as John Rely Beard of the Unitarian Home Missionary College, led students through discussions of what might be defective in Strauss rather than anathematizing him. Because the premier Unitarian institution, Manchester College, did not have an avowedly 'Unitarian' trust deed but was a 'College of Free Theology', professors enthusiastic about higher criticism faced suspicion but never sanctions.¹¹⁰ In 1852, its conservative trustees sought to block James Martineau from following the college to London as professor of philosophy; five years later they protested against allotting him theological lecturing because he left students needing 'a year of quarantine before they were fit for ministerial duty'.¹¹¹ Martineau's supporters successfully invoked the college's open constitution in his defence. Next summer, he could joke to a holidaying colleague that it was just as well he had stayed home; for 'what would our friends...augur for the College if *both* Professors ran off to Germany as soon as the Session was over, to get up their work for the next?'¹¹² His opening addresses to the college presented it as a powerhouse of 'scientific theology', whose lectures could be 'transposed to an auditorium at Berlin or Halle'.¹¹³

Robertson Smith's deposition from Aberdeen implies that freedom to ask questions about the composition of the Old Testament, let alone the New, remained limited in Presbyterian institutions. It is important to note though that agonies over higher criticism were complicated by the deference most

¹⁰⁷ Alexander A. Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge, D.D., L.L.D.* (London, 1881), p. 117; Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge*, chs. 17–19; Annette Aubert, *The German Roots of Nineteenth-century American Theology* (Oxford, 2013), chs. 6 and 7.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, intro, chs. 1–3.

¹⁰⁹ Clark, *Fathers*, 73–83.

¹¹⁰ *Inquirer*, 16 April 1857, 279.

¹¹¹ *Inquirer*, 16 April 1857, 276–8.

¹¹² James Drummond and C.B. Upton, *The Life and Letters of James Martineau*, 2 vols (London, 1902), I: p. 362.

¹¹³ See James Martineau, 'The Transient and the Permanent in Theology' [1862], in *Essays, Reviews, and Addresses*, 4 vols (London, 1890–1), IV: pp. 93–108; 'Theology in Relation to Progressive Knowledge' [1865], pp. 109–23; 'Ideal Substitutes for God', pp. 269–91; 'A Word for Scientific Theology', pp. 129–32.

institutions were obliged to pay to the Westminster Confession. Presbyterian heresy-hunting often revolved around the degree to which higher critical attitudes were outlawed by a document whose authors had never dreamt of Strauss or Julius Wellhausen. The colleges certainly harboured Presbyterian ostriches, such as the New College librarian who dealt with Wellhausen and other bogies by hiding their books from students. Yet there was deep interest in 'German' among Scottish tutors, even if for most Presbyterian tutors this meant neo-Lutheran defenders of Scripture such as Hengstenberg rather than the romantic philosophers who interested Mark Rutherford. Teaching in Secession and Relief halls was dominated by scholars such as John Eadie and John Cairns who regarded the literal and plenary inspiration of Scripture as compatible with a commitment to advanced philology. In 1845, Eadie invited students to scoff at Anglicans who claimed that Germany's Lutherans professors fell into error because they weren't watched over by bishops. 'The successful corrective must be one of deeper and holier energy', rather than tightening episcopal or creedal bridles on scholarly inquiry.¹¹⁴ Despite Robertson Smith's fate, Free Church tutors circumvented the restrictions imposed by the Westminster Confession, not least because this document had more to say on ecclesiology than inspiration. Moreover, today's tutors had once been disaffected students themselves and could sympathize with younger men. Both Robertson Smith's mentor, A.B. Davidson, the professor of Oriental languages (1863) at New College, and Marcus Dods, its professor of New Testament exegesis (1889), had as students at the College been drawn to John Duncan, the Calvinist but Carlylean professor of Hebrew, and recoiled from the 'dogmatist' Cunningham.¹¹⁵ Dods remarked that Davidson's inaugural address was 'guardedly orthodox' on inspiration yet had a 'decidedly liberal tendency'. In the decades before his appointment, Dods had grappled with Renan and Colenso, translated mediating German criticism, and abandoned his belief in literal inspiration of the Scriptures.¹¹⁶ With the assistance of his pragmatic principal Robert Rainy, he survived an attempt in the General Assembly of 1890 to unseat him from New College for heresy. Dykes, the star speaker at New College's jubilee, represented it as a laboratory rather than a fortress, which kept 'aliens from the faith' off its staff but allowed believers liberty to pursue their scholarship.¹¹⁷

The colonial picture was similar. The application of the Westminster Confession to teaching staff could provoke isolated acts of defenestration, but the drive to unify Presbyterian denominations into federated colonial churches ultimately created incentives to relax subscription to them. At Montreal

¹¹⁴ Eadie, *Theological Study*, p. 23.

¹¹⁵ A.B. Davidson, *The Called of God*, ed. J.A. Paterson (Edinburgh, 1902), pp. 28–32.

¹¹⁶ Marcus Dods, ed., *Early Letters of Marcus Dods, 1850–1864* (London, 1911), p. 266.

¹¹⁷ Watts, *New College*, p. 85.

the tone was set by MacVicar, who claimed to respect free enquiry but whose lectures were remarkable for their 'archaic expressions' and displays of 'sometimes explosive temper'.¹¹⁸ In 1893, MacVicar supported the presbytery of Montreal in its attempts to depose his colleague John Campbell for questioning the infallibility of Scripture and the permanent value of the Westminster Confession.¹¹⁹ Knox College was long dominated by adamant defenders of the Confession and exponents of the Princeton theology, but the appointment of William Caven as principal in 1870 marked a slow change. For Caven, theology was a 'progressive science'. He averted a full-scale student revolt against Knox's stiff professor of systematic theology in 1881 and brought forward more flexible teachers.¹²⁰ The appointment in 1890 of Dods and Davidson's pupil Robert Yuile Thomson marked a further changing of the guard and embracing of idealist and evolutionist approaches to biblical criticism. Australian Presbyterians too had their brushes with heresy. In Victoria, attempts to depose the Melbourne minister Charles Strong, a member of Ormond's council, on the grounds that his sympathy with the supposedly immoral Schleiermacher breached the Westminster Confession raised awareness that few if any teaching staff believed everything the Confession said. The passage of a Declaratory Act (1882), which softened the terms of subscription to the Confession, eased the problem.¹²¹ Yet Andrew Harper, lecturer and professor of New Testament at Ormond, also faced questioning of his orthodoxy (1890) and only after the appointment of David Stow Adam as professor of systematic theology (1907) did the college adopt an openly progressive approach.¹²²

The Confession was also central to American arguments about the correct way to teach students about the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures among American Presbyterians. This was particularly true at seminaries such as Princeton, whose professors were directly appointed by or otherwise scrutinized by local presbyteries or the General Assembly itself.¹²³ Presbyterian teachers thus found themselves in the dock throughout the century. In 1886, James Woodrow of Columbia seminary insisted on (then won) a heresy trial rather than be quietly dismissed for teaching evolution, while it was telling that the most celebrated heretic of all, Charles Briggs of Union Seminary, had first raised the hackles of his local presbytery by alleging that exaggerated respect for the Westminster Confession had led Presbyterians into zombie scholasticism. Briggs won the heresy trial provoked by his inaugural lecture's remarks on the Bible, but the General Assembly dismissed him from his ministry in

¹¹⁸ Macvicar, *Macvicar*, pp. 113, 115, 117; Markell, *Montreal*, p. 19.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24. ¹²⁰ Gauvreau, *College and Creed*, pp. 147–53.

¹²¹ C.R. Badger, *The Rev. Charles Strong and the Australian Church* (Melbourne, Victoria, 1971), pp. 53–4, 86–7.

¹²² Emilsen, *Heresy*, p. 20. ¹²³ Miller, *Piety*, p. 105.

1893 and likewise suspended his supporter Henry Preserved Smith of Lane Seminary, Cincinnati.¹²⁴

Outside Presbyterianism, heresy trials in colleges could be caused less by the dead hand of the Westminster Confession than by modern attempts to tighten Calvinism's grip. Andover had been founded amid dissatisfaction with Harvard's liberalism and its creed (1807) was an intricately woven net, designed to assure its 'associate founders' that their demanding soteriology would be respected in its teaching.¹²⁵ Even a professor such as Stuart who insisted that 'common honesty' required signing up to its every jot and tittle found it difficult in live out his claim that there was nonetheless 'not a School of Theology on earth, where more free and unlimited investigation is indulged, nay inculcated and practised'.¹²⁶ Only four years after uttering those words, his commitment to the scientific study of the biblical text led to the appointment of a committee to investigate his unorthodoxy. Moreover, the provision in the college's constitution for visitors to watch over that creed made it impossible for the college's management to engage in strategic liberalization. They cancelled Newman Smyth's appointment as professor of church history in 1882 and investigated and punished a clutch of professors on charges of heterodoxy. The professors and their defenders eloquently argued that 'the Creed was made for the Seminary, not the Seminary for the Creed' and that they should now have the power to interpret its provisions as liberally as possible. Yet those acting for the visitors argued that the issue was a legal, not a rhetorical one: the defendants violated the meaning that the creed's authors had imparted to it. As one put it, anyone saying they wanted to go to Charleston, South Carolina was pretty clear that they did not want to go to Malaga, or Canton. Their heterodoxy was not only patent, but also damaging: students were scared off.¹²⁷

Andover's visitors insisted that the piety of founders should count for more than the insistence of its staff that the theological understanding of Scripture required timely modernization. But they were quite unusual in having such a whip hand over their institution.¹²⁸ Elsewhere, by the end of the century trustees were minded to allow a greater independence to their staff, who accordingly survived spasms of panic in the wider denomination. This did not mean that professors either in the United States or in Britain and its Empire could breathe freely. Heresy-hunting was not quite dead. Archibald Duff, a Scots-Canadian inoculated against 'neology' from Tholuck at Halle, was nonetheless threatened with dismissal from his professorship at the Yorkshire United Congregational College in 1891, when subscribers

¹²⁴ Miller, *Profession*, pp. 86, 107.

¹²⁵ *The Andover Case* (Boston, 1887), p. 1.

¹²⁶ Miller, *Piety*, p. 73; Moses Stuart, *A Sermon Occasioned by Completion of the New College Edifice for the Use of the Theological Seminary at Andover* (Andover, MA, 1821), pp. 28, 31.

¹²⁷ *Andover Case*, p. xxv, 150.

¹²⁸ Miller, *Profession*, pp. 138–44.

complained.¹²⁹ Among Methodists, Joseph Agar Beet had to resign from Richmond over his views that the Bible did not support eternal punishment in the afterlife, while at Victoria College in Toronto in 1890 the Rev. George Workman's views on messianic prophecy made him an unacceptable professor of the Old Testament.¹³⁰ Samuel Angus, an Ulster Scot who taught at Princeton before heading in 1914 to Australia, spent much of the nineteen-thirties embroiled in heresy proceedings with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and railed against the 'orthodox totalitarianism' of St Andrew's College, where he had been a professor.¹³¹

The victories of free enquiry were moreover pyrrhic. The professors who spoke up for higher criticism or against creedal restrictions on teaching sought to ensure the intellectual credibility of their colleges. Yet their efforts often coincided with a crisis in recruitment. Perhaps Spurgeon was right: a 'down-grade' in theology destroyed the authority of a profession that could no longer define its role as preaching an infallible Bible. Reuben Torrey, the first principal of the Moody Bible Institute, was a successful trainer of 'soul winners' precisely because his gap year in German universities had pushed him away from higher criticism.¹³² He told students that what they needed to study the Bible was a '*child like* mind'; Professor Delitzsch's teaching at Leipzig had been valuable because 'worked out...upon his knees'.¹³³ Yet both proponents and enemies of higher criticism overestimated its significance in determining the fate of training institutions. If they stuttered, it was because ambitious men did not want to be trained for a career that began to look less prestigious or well remunerated in comparison to an expanding range of other professions and less securely integrated in the universities, while humbler candidates found they could improvise their own training. In turning the Dissenting ministry from a vocation to one credentialed profession among others, training institutions did as much to endanger as to secure its future. If Dykes was right to diagnose in his colleagues a 'dreary sickening apprehension of failure which is the death of effective labour', then he had been wrong to think that building more classrooms would cure it.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Kaye, *Ministry*.

¹³⁰ See D. Carter, 'Joseph Agar Beet and the Eschatological Crisis', *Proceedings of the Wesleyan Historical Society*, 51 (1998), 197–216; Gauvreau, *College and Creed*, pp. 178–9.

¹³¹ Samuel Angus, *Alms for Oblivion: Chapters from a Heretic's Life* (Sydney, New South Wales, 1943), p. 97.

¹³² J. Kennedy Maclean, *Torrey and Alexander: The Story of their Lives* (London, 1905), p. 41. So stern was his puritan zeal that he had refused to drink even 'one drop of German beer' on German summer days.

¹³³ Reuben Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit: The Methods and Fundamental Conditions of the Bible Study that Yield the Largest Results* (London, 1903), pp. 104, 115.

¹³⁴ Dykes, *Conditions*, p. 6.

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Spirituality, Worship, and Congregational Life

D. Densil Morgan

Preaching from the pulpit of St Mary's church in Oxford in 1836, John Henry Newman warned his congregation of the evils of Protestant Dissent. 'The mind of dissent', he claimed, 'viewed in itself, is far other than the mind of Christ and His Holy Church Catholic. . . . It is full of self-importance, irreverence, censoriousness, display and tumult.'¹ It was, however, 'seductive', as the vicar of St Mary's readily admitted. By the 1830s, more and more Englishmen and women, to say nothing of the Scots, the Irish, the Welsh, and those in the American states and colonial territories, were being drawn away from a formal adherence to conventional religion, usually in their parish churches, to what they believed was a more satisfying spiritual commitment in Methodist chapels or Dissenting meeting houses. For those who were staunchly attached to the Church of England for erastian reasons or, in Newman's case, on catholic grounds, the fear that baptized Christians should 'detach themselves, more or less' from authoritative ecclesiastical discipline was heinous indeed. To separate from the one true church was to put one's salvation at peril. In ecclesiastical terms it was schism, and schism was a sin. For individuals 'to take part in this or that religious society; to go to hear strange preachers, and obtrude their new feelings and opinions upon others' was not only impertinent but impious.² Whereas to 'join sects and heresies' may provide temporary relief for those 'excited minds' who had been seduced by a deceptive zeal, there could be no true consolation in Dissent: 'Men begin well, but being seduced by their own waywardness fall away.'³

Three years after Newman's sermon, when the Catholic renewal within the Church of England was well underway, the anonymous author of *An Account*

¹ J.H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 8 vols (London, 1907), III: p. 342.

² *Ibid.* ³ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

of Religious Sects at Present Existing in England, Tract 36 of the 'Tracts for the Times', compared 'the English Church, which is a true branch or portion of the "One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church" of Christ', with those parties that had separated from it. They were divided into three: those who had rejected the truth; those who still affirmed part of the truth; and those who had added to the truth. Along with Jews and atheists, both the Deists and the Socinians had denied the truth. If the Jews had rejected Christ and the atheists had rejected God, the Deists disbelieved in the biblical revelation, whereas the Socinians, 'so called from Socinus, a chief teacher of their error', though believing in God and the Bible, deny the deity of Christ and the personhood of the Holy Spirit: 'These men commonly call themselves Unitarians.'⁴ Among those who held to part of the truth were the bulk of English Dissenters: the Presbyterians; the Independents; the Methodists 'subdivided into an immense variety of sects', including the Wesleysans, the Whitefieldians of Lady Huntington's Connexion, the Primitive Methodists or 'Ranters', the Bible Christians, the Tent Methodists, the Independent Methodists, and the Kilhamites; the Baptists who reject apostolic authority not only by opposing the laying on of episcopal hands, but by excluding children from the covenant; and then the Quakers. 'Beside these are', he continued, 'especially in Wales, Jumpers and Shakers, a chief part of whose religious worship consists in violent exercise and contortions of the body.'⁵ Those who added to apostolic truth included the Roman Catholics, the Swedenborgians, the followers of Joanna Southcott, and the Irvingites, whose speaking in tongues, prophecies, and extraordinary revelations 'like all under this head [comprise] a mixture of delusion and imposture'.⁶ Truth had been vouchsafed by the established church alone, and it was through her ministrations that genuine salvation could be attained.

Across the Atlantic, the one theologian who had reacted most forcefully against the dissenting prevalence towards sectarianism was the Presbyterian John Williamson Nevin. A graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, despite being reared in the dour catechetical tradition of Old Side Presbyterianism, he had undergone a revivalist conversion experience as a youth. After having been re-initiated into his native Calvinistic high ecclesiasticism while at seminary, he spent two years as Charles Hodge's teaching replacement while the latter, Princeton Seminary's professor of biblical exegesis, was on study leave in Europe.⁷ After having spent a decade teaching at Western Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Nevin joined the faculty of the German Reformed Church seminary at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, in 1839, and along with his

⁴ 'An Account of Religious Sects at Present Existing in England', in *Tracts for the Times by Members of the University of Oxford*, Volume I, for 1833-4 (Oxford, 1839), no. 36, p. 2.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

⁷ D.G. Hart, *John Williamson Nevin: High Church Calvinist* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 2005), pp. 36-52.

younger colleague, the Swiss Phillip Schaff, would spearhead a churchly and sacramental challenge to revivalist individualism, destined to be called 'the Mercersburg Theology'.⁸ The formation text of the Mercersburg system was Nevin's critique of exuberant revivalism of the Finney type, *The Anxious Bench* (1843). If this criticized the tendency to look for signs of convertedness through introspection and minute diagnoses of the individual soul, Schaff's *Principle of Protestantism* (1845)—the Swiss theologian had joined the faculty a year earlier, fresh from his studies in Tübingen and Berlin—interpreted the Protestant Reformation as a renewal movement within the Catholic Church in which external forms such as liturgy, catechetical teaching, and sacramental grace were essential to its nature.

Nevin's most original contribution to nineteenth-century American theology was his striking assessment of Calvin's theology of the Lord's Supper, *The Mystical Presence: A Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (1846).⁹ It was his searing critique of evangelical sectarianism, however, which made him notorious. In his belligerently entitled *Antichrist; or the Spirit of Sect and Schism* (1848), he contrasted the multifarious sects of contemporary Protestantism with the biblical, patristic, and Reformation concept of the unity of the church. The twin ideals of scriptural sufficiency and private judgement had spawned such sects as the Adventists, the Albright sect, the Freewill Baptists, the Free Communion Baptists, the Old School Baptists, the Seventh Day Baptists, the Six Principle Baptists, the Bible Christians, the so-called 'Church of God', Alexander Campbell's Disciples of Christ, and many more: 'What are we to think of it when we find such a motley mass of protesting systems all laying claims so vigorously here to one and the same watchword?—namely the Bible, and the Bible alone.'¹⁰ Whereas the Reformers had striven to maintain the unity of the church on the basis of a catholic and apostolic creed, the unrestrained individualism of popular religiosity had served to 'divide it always more and more into sects'.¹¹ When sectarian Christianity had privileged the inviolable right of free judgement, the result (in fact) was spiritual tyranny:

Is it not notorious that every one of them has a scheme of notions already at hand, a certain system of opinions and practice, which is made to underlie all this boasted freedom in the use of the Bible, leading private judgment along by the nose, and forcing the divine text always to speak in its own way?¹²

⁸ James Hastings Nichols, *Romanticism in American Theology: Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg* (Chicago, IL, 1961).

⁹ See Brian A. Gerrish, 'The Flesh of the Son of Man: John W. Nevin on the Church and the Eucharist', in Gerrish, *Tradition and the Modern World: Reformed Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, IL, 1978), pp. 49–70.; idem, 'John Williamson Nevin on the Life of Christ', *Thinking with the Church: Essays in Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2010), pp. 199–226.

¹⁰ James Hastings Nichols, ed., *The Mercersburg Theology* (New York, 1966), p. 97.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 100.

For Nevin at Reformed Mercersburg, like Newman in Anglican Oxford, the only remedy for the anarchy of sectarianism was to restore 'the old Church consciousness embodied in the Creed'.¹³ Both Catholic Anglicans in Britain and Reformed confessionalists in America condemned the apparent perils of popular Dissent: 'We have no hesitation, then, in saying that all redemption from the power of the sect plague must begin with a revival of true and hearty faith in the ancient article of One Holy Catholic Church'.¹⁴

CONVERSION

What Catholic Anglicans held to be the ostentatious display of religious feelings, many Dissenters considered the mainstay of their spirituality. Nurturing a warm, experiential piety in fellowship meetings and heeding the exhortations of 'strange preachers' was the way in which their souls were fed. Having been renewed in the previous century's Evangelical Revival, orthodox Dissent eschewed formalism in favour of 'the religion of the heart'. In returning to the undemonstrative piety of his Old Light upbringing, even Nevin affirmed the need for true conversion or the spirituality of the saved soul.¹⁵ Although baptism was the means of incorporation into the fellowship of the church, conversion was the mode of entry into the Christian life. This was true not only of the enthusiastic sects, but of the principal denominations as well.¹⁶

In assessing the characteristics of conversionism in evangelical Dissent between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, both Michael Watts and David Bebbington are essentially agreed.¹⁷ Conversion entailed a conviction of the reality of sin, an act or attitude of repentance on the part of the convert, a conscious response to the gospel message of Christ's atoning death on the cross, and the subsequent experience of freedom and relief. It could be sudden or gradual, emotionally charged or emotively low key; it was, however, the essential prerequisite for embarking on the Christian life. 'The line between those who had undergone the experience and those who had not was the sharpest in the world', claimed Bebbington. 'It marked the boundary

¹³ Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁵ Theodore Appel, *The Life and Work of John Williamson Nevin, DD, LLD* (Philadelphia, PA, 1889), pp. 31–3.

¹⁶ Whereas this chapter deals exclusively with evangelical Dissent, Unitarians and rational Dissenters eschewed the explicit need for conversion, on which see Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters Volume II: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity, 1791–1859* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 81–99.

¹⁷ Watts, *The Dissenters Volume II*, pp. 49–80; David W. Bebbington, 'Evangelical Conversion, c.1740–1850', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, 18 (2000), 102–27.

between a Christian and a pagan.’¹⁸ Citing the words of George Redford, Independent minister at Angel Street, Worcester, he notes that conversion entailed

a change, or a turning about of the mind or heart, and signifies a reversing of our moral and religious state, a complete transformation of the character—from irreligion to piety, from sin to holiness, from unbelief to faith, from impenitence to contrition and confession, from the service of the world to the service of God, from uneasiness to peace, from fear to hope, from death to life.¹⁹

Whereas the description implies a dateable experience occurring at a decisive location, that was by no means always the case. Henry Rees, Welsh Calvinistic Methodism’s most influential preacher of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, could never point to a time when he had not been conscious either of his own sinfulness or of the redemptive love of Christ. Although he became a church member aged fourteen, during a local awakening at Llansannan, Denbighshire, in 1812, his religious experience had evolved imperceptibly through having been raised in a godly home.²⁰ Similarly, on seeking membership in London’s King’s Weigh House Independent church, London, early in 1830, a Miss Brown was said to have received religious impressions through her parents at an early age, ‘& though she was unable to specify the precise time of her conversion & had not had those awful views of the evil of sin which some have, yet she placed all her dependence on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ’. Consequently, on 30 March, she was ‘unanimously admitted into communion with the church’.²¹ It was reported of the unnamed wife of a Baptist minister, John Stock, in the same vein: ‘So early and gradual was the work of grace upon her soul that she could never refer to any particular period at which she was conscious of its commencement.’²²

Spiritual experience, due to its very nature, does not yield readily to stereotyping; nevertheless, evangelical conversions during the nineteenth century held certain traits in common. Usually they occurred among the young. The average age of converts was between fifteen and twenty-five.²³ Again, there was little difference in receptivity to the gospel message between women and men; Bebbington refers to ‘the fundamental sameness of the conversion experience

¹⁸ David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), p. 5.

¹⁹ George Redford, *The Great Change: A Treatise on Conversion* (London, 1844), p. 1; cited in Bebbington, ‘Evangelical Conversion’, p. 107.

²⁰ Owen Thomas, *Cofiant y Parchedig Henry Rees*, 2 vols (Wrexham, 1891), I: pp. 17–23.

²¹ King’s Weigh House church records, cited in Charles D. Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home: Life in British and American Reformed Congregations, 1830–1915* (University Park, PA, 2000), p. 101.

²² *The Baptist Magazine*, January 1850, 129.

²³ Watts, *The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity*, p. 57; Bebbington, ‘Evangelical Conversion’, p. 107.

for the two sexes'.²⁴ Also, few converts came from a completely unreligious background; most had a residual knowledge of Christian faith and practice, and often had lived ostensibly moral, though spiritually unfulfilled, lives. Whereas Watts is insistent that the most potent factor in inducing repentance and saving faith was 'fear . . . of eternal punishment in the torments of hell', for Bebbington the key factor was the individual's consciousness of having contravened the divine law: 'What was emphasized in . . . evangelical teaching was not so much the prospect of future punishment as the guilt of the sinner before God.'²⁵ The evidence from Wales, as exemplified by the preaching of the Baptist Christmas Evans, concurs with the latter view.²⁶ If guilt was assuaged through Christ's death on the cross, the proclamation of forgiveness frequently had precedence over the preaching of the law. Maria Bossington of Burston, Norfolk was only one convert who had been 'drawn by the cords of love rather than by the terrors of the law'.²⁷ Whether fleeing from the divine wrath or being allured by the appeal of redemptive grace, the result was the same. Countless throngs of mostly young men and women embarked on, what was for them, the stirring adventure of the Christian life.

PREACHING AND REVIVALISM

This occurred, for the most part, through preaching. According to Michael Watts, the Evangelical Revival brought a new style of preaching to Dissenters: 'extempore, emotional, passionate, dramatic, designed to bring the hearer to a pitch of excitement at which he [*sic*] would respond to the call to confess that he was a sinner and that he was in need of salvation.'²⁸ Yet by mid-century, two contradictory forces were affecting the spirituality of Dissent. On the one hand, instantaneous or climactic conversions, which were believed to have been wrought solely through the sovereign working of the Holy Spirit, were being replaced by gradualist, developmental spiritual growth. On the other, a theological shift from divine sovereignty to human response was in danger of making conversion itself less a mystery and more a technique. The immensely significant doctrinal change from divine transcendence to evolutionary immanence which could already be felt during the 1870s but had registered universally by the end of the century would transform the feel

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 111–12.

²⁵ Watts, *The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity*, p. 72; Bebbington, 'Evangelical Conversion', p. 118.

²⁶ See D. Densil Morgan, *Christmas Evans a'r Ymneilltuaeth Newydd* (Llandysul, 1991), pp. 166–72.

²⁷ *The Baptist Magazine*, July 1850, 436.

²⁸ Watts, *The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity*, pp. 177–8.

of Dissenting life.²⁹ No longer would progressive ministers, especially among the Congregationalists, emphasize humankind's wholesale depravity through the fall, but individuals' potential for goodness and the *imago Dei*, the image of God borne by all. Christ, though still the divine redeemer, was the One who revealed the love of the Father, not the One who had suffered the retributive wrath of an angry God.³⁰ Consequently conversion became an affirmation of all that was good in the convert's previous religious experience and an untroubled decision to follow the Lord. When Ben Bowen applied for entry to the Bangor Baptist College in 1898, he wrote: 'I attribute my conversion largely to some kind of growth of which I can hardly give any account, but I have confidence in its reality.'³¹ Bowen was soon to create a furore among the Welsh Baptists by rejecting not only the rite of baptism but also the physical resurrection of Christ himself.³² The description of his conversion showed how gradualist and evolutionary categories were now becoming more acceptable in Dissenting circles.

This late-century move towards philosophical Idealism had been preceded by a change of emphasis within the Calvinism that had characterized mainstream orthodox Dissent since the Puritan period. In the name of effective evangelism, Edward Williams among the English Independents and Andrew Fuller for the Baptists had challenged the influence of high Calvinism within their respective denominations to provide a sound theological underpinning for the startling practical successes of preachers and itinerants. A much greater stress was now put on the unfettered response of those who were being challenged by the evangelistic message irrespective of the concept of the divine sovereignty and the bondage of the will.³³ In America, the New Haven-based Calvinist Nathaniel Taylor had rejected the idea of divine determinism and posited that human beings were not only duty-bound to respond to the gospel message but, notwithstanding their inherited sinfulness, had a natural capacity to do so.³⁴ Both evangelical Calvinism in England and Wales and 'the New Haven Theology' in the United States shifted the doctrinal axis from divine agency to human response. With the advent of Charles Grandison Finney's

²⁹ Dale A. Johnson, *The Changing Shape of English Nonconformity, 1825–1925* (New York, 1999), pp. 77–162; Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters Volume III: The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 3–82.

³⁰ Mark Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation: Evangelical and Liberal Theologians in Victorian England* (Carlisle, 2004), pp. 15–121.

³¹ David Bowen, ed., *Cofiant a Barddoniaeth Ben Bowen* (Treorchy, 1904), p. xiv.

³² D. Densil Morgan, 'Yr Enaid Aflonydd: Ben Bowen (1878–1903)', *Transactions of the Welsh Baptists Historical Society* (2003), 1–34.

³³ W.T. Owen, *Edward Williams DD: His Life, Thought and Influence* (Cardiff, 1966 edn.); P.J. Mordern, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life* (Carlisle, 2003).

³⁴ E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, CT, 2003), pp. 352–61.

'new measures', the unfettered human response within the conversion process became paramount. For Finney, a Presbyterian revivalist theologian at Ohio's Oberlin College, the Holy Spirit was understood in synergistic fashion, enabling prospective converts to 'give themselves to the Lord'. In crowded, emotionally charged and protracted meetings, burdened souls were called forward to 'the anxious bench', prayed over and incited to undergo the new birth. Although controversial at the time—Nevin's critique in *The Anxious Bench* has already been mentioned—the 'new measures' became immensely popular and widely effective, while Finney's *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (1835) were read avidly on both sides of the Atlantic. A best-selling Welsh translation, *Darlithiau ar Adfywiadau Crefyddol*, was issued in 1839. The heightened evangelistic activity in England and Wales which led to the immensely powerful revival of 1859 was influenced strongly by Finney's ideals.³⁵ When the overt excitement and emotional pressure had abated, much of the revivalist technique was retained. Consequently, the tendency was for conversion to become 'a simpler, shallower experience, less a wrestling with the angel and more a scientific experiment'.³⁶ Nevertheless, for evangelical Dissenters throughout the nineteenth century, Christianity remained an experiential faith rather than a matter of religious formalism, and its spirituality was wedded to the conversion of the individual soul.

Preaching, of course, retained its centrality. Such was its influence that in many places, it became the defining characteristic of Protestant Dissent, while as Ellison shows in Chapter 15 of this volume, the art of the sermon was the subject of intense study and reflection.³⁷ The Welsh, for their part, took pride in providing the home for 'preaching second to that of no other nation under the sun'.³⁸ In his biography of the Pembrokeshire Calvinistic Methodist Thomas Richard, Edward Matthews provides a vivid vignette describing its popular appeal:

When the time approached, the whole locality where the service was announced would be gripped with excitement; the farmer would unhitch his horses from the plough; the carpenter would cast his mallet aside; the blacksmith would douse his fire; the cobbler would take off his leather apron and put it on one side as though never to be needed again; the women would finish their chores promising to return after worship; then you would see them all coming from each direction

³⁵ Richard Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790–1865* (Westport, CT, 1978), pp. 159–330; idem, 'The Welsh Evangelical Community and "Finney's Revival"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 29 (1978), 463–80.

³⁶ Bebbington, 'Evangelical Conversion', p. 126.

³⁷ Robert H. Ellison, 'Preaching and Sermons', Chapter 15 of this volume.

³⁸ Edward Matthews, *Bywgraffiad y Parch: Thomas Richard, Abergwaen* (Abertawe, 1863), p. xi, original in Welsh; cf. W.P. Griffith, "'Preaching Second to No Other under the Sun": Edward Matthews, the Nonconformist Pulpit and Welsh Identity during the Mid-nineteenth Century', in Robert Pope, ed., *Religion and National Identity: Wales and Scotland, c.1700–2000* (Cardiff, 2001), pp. 61–83.

hurrying towards the meeting, giving the impression that they had forgotten everything apart from attending worship. After having arrived he [Richard] would preach to them perhaps for two hours, and after having concluded they could hardly believe how much time had passed; they thought they had been there for some ten minutes or a quarter of an hour.³⁹

Even at the end of the century, preaching, in both Wales and elsewhere, was felt to be as potent as ever. Among the English Congregationalists the proto-liberal James Baldwin Brown of Clapham, latterly Brixton; R.W. Dale of Carrs Lane, Birmingham; Joseph Parker at London's City Temple; and R.F. Horton at Lyndhurst Road, Hampstead, despite marked divergence in emphasis, all exercised outstanding pulpit ministries. The same was true of the Baptists Alexander MacLaren at Union Chapel, Manchester; Charles Spurgeon, 'commonly regarded as the greatest preacher of the nineteenth century in the English speaking world';⁴⁰ and the remarkable John Clifford at Westbourne Park, London.⁴¹ Among those whom Sydney E. Ahlstrom listed as 'princes of the pulpit' in late nineteenth-century America were Henry Ward Beecher at the Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn; T. DeWitt Talmage at Central Presbyterian in New York; Theodore Munger and Newman Smyth, both Congregationalists and both ministering to Yale students and New Haven townspeople from their twin churches side by side on the city green; as well as George Angier Gordon at Boston's historic Old South Church.⁴² Although not a prince of the pulpit as such, the lay revivalist Dwight L. Moody contributed mightily to the spirituality of the Word on both sides of the Atlantic. The two-year mission that he and his musical associate, Ira Sankey, held in key British cities between 1873 and 1875 made a profound impression.⁴³ 'Dwight Lyman Moody was in a class by himself in the provision of spirituality.... He was not intense like Charles Finney, nor did he engage in the theatrical antics of Billy Sunday, his best-known successor. Rather, Moody tried to talk sense to his audiences about God and the need for a Saviour.'⁴⁴ Conversion, however it was assessed, remained paramount within Dissenting spirituality, and it was inculcated through the preaching of the Word.⁴⁵

³⁹ Matthews, *Bywgraffiad Thomas Richard*, p. 83, translated from the Welsh; cf. D. Densil Morgan, *Edward Matthews, Ewenni* (Caernarfon, 2012), pp. 55–63.

⁴⁰ David W. Bebbington, in Bebbington, ed., *Protestant Nonconformist Texts*, Vol. 3, *The Nineteenth Century* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 19.

⁴¹ Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: from Newman to Martineau, 1850–1900* (Princeton, 1962), pp. 282–348; Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*.

⁴² Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (Yale, 1972), pp. 738–40.

⁴³ See John Kent, *Holding the Fort: Studies in Victorian Revivalism* (London, 1978), pp. 134–68; Janice Holmes, *Religious Revivals in Britain and Ireland, 1859–1905* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 69–98.

⁴⁴ Mark A. Noll, *The Work We Have To Do: A History of Protestants in America* (New York, 2000), pp. 84–5.

⁴⁵ See, however, Watts, *The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity*, pp. 92–100.

Neither did revivalism wholly abate as the century progressed. The earlier part of the century had witnessed scenes of revivalist excitement in which stirring gospel preaching had elicited an emotional response in innumerable hearers. In Wales the Beddgelert Revival of 1817–18 had replenished chapel members, principally among the Calvinistic Methodists, not only locally at the foot of Mount Snowdon, but within a year it had spread to parts of South Wales as well. Local revivals occurred regularly throughout the 1820s. The Brynengan Revival on Caernarfonshire's Llŷn Peninsula in 1832 spread to most of North Wales in the course of two years, while the so-called 'Silent Revival', characterized by reflective seriousness rather than noisy exuberance, began, again in North Wales, in 1840.⁴⁶ In South Wales, the Independent leader Thomas Rees reported on what he termed 'the Great Revival' of 1848, prompted by the circulation of Finney's lectures in their Welsh language guise: 'One very peculiar feature of this wonderful movement was the great number of converts who pressed together, at the same time, to the anxious meetings.'⁴⁷ Across the Atlantic, accounts of revivals pepper the immensely informative narrative written by Andrew Reed and James Matheson on behalf of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, relating their visit to the American churches in 1833–4. After having journeyed west by steamboat along the Rappahannock River, the travellers made their way to a camp meeting at Merry Point, Virginia. It was a Monday, and the crowds had congregated together in a clearing in the woods. A morning meeting replete with prayer, hearty singing, and exhortation led to small groups being convened in a range of different tents for counselling. An afternoon meeting followed and an evening one as well, this time by lamplight, with three lengthy exhortations by different ministers. The 1,500 listeners, including 300 African Americans, were attentive, and despite the zealous preaching, praying, and availability of the anxious bench, nothing very dramatic occurred. Activities were reconvened the next morning, with an eight o'clock prayer meeting and a preaching service at eleven. There was a spirit of expectancy abroad, and suddenly stillness descended over the hearers.

Every moment, the silence, the stillness became overpowering. Now, here and there, might be heard suppressed sobbing arising out of the silence. But it could be suppressed no longer—the fountain of feeling burst open, and one universal wail sprung from the people and ministers, while the whole mass sank down to their knees. . . .

⁴⁶ Goronwy Prys Owen in J. Gwynfor Jones, *Hanes Methodistiaeth Galfinaidd Cymru, Cyfrol III, Y Twf a'r Cadarnhau, c. 1814–1914* (Caernarfon, 2011), pp. 42–51; for a much-curtailed précis, see idem, *The History of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, Vol. III, Growth and Consolidation, c.1814–1914* (Caernarfon, 2013), pp. 38–42.

⁴⁷ Thomas Rees, *Miscellaneous Papers on Subjects Relating to Wales* (London, 1867), p. 95.

Thus closed the most remarkable service I have ever witnessed. It has been my privilege to see more of the solemn and powerful effect on large bodies of people than many; but I never saw anything equal to this; so deep, so overpowering, so universal. And this extraordinary effect was produced by the divine blessing on the ordinary means, for none other was used... I shall never forget that time—that place.⁴⁸

From 1857 onwards there was a heightened spiritual sensitivity in Ulster, Scotland, America, and Wales, leading to the great revival of 1859,⁴⁹ yet even during the following decades, revivals still occurred. In 1916 the Revd W.H. Lockley, a preacher in the Methodist New Connexion, recorded his memories of a revival that had occurred in Cornwall over thirty years earlier:

I had experience of a revival in the sparsely populated district of Lady Downs, a very lonely & difficult-to-find hamlet, midway between St Ives and Penzance... Special services were held in Jan. & Feb. 1882 of which I conducted several. Here we had an old fashioned revival in all its primitive character. The services went on quietly for several nights & then suddenly the people were roused as though a bomb had fallen. Moans & groans, lamentations and strong crying & tears burst on every side... A young man at my left... fell to his knees & began to hammer the pew with his hands in a violent way... then swift as a gunshot darted out of the chapel. In a few minutes he came back, fell on his knees on the sanded floor in front of the little pulpit, shrieked for mercy in a way to alarm sensitive souls. He was soon on his feet again: he had got the blessing.⁵⁰

Despite such occurrences becoming scarcer, due, in no small measure, to increasing bourgeois respectability within late nineteenth-century evangelical Dissent, they did not wholly abate.⁵¹ Moreover, in some parts they would remain an important part of the essence of Dissenting spirituality, as the remarkable Welsh Revival of 1904–5 would show.⁵²

⁴⁸ Andrew Reed and James Matheson, *A Narrative of the Visit to the American Churches by the Deputation from the Congregational Union of England and Wales*, 2 vols (London, 1835), I: pp. 283–4, 285.

⁴⁹ Apart from Kent, *Holding the Fort*, pp. 71–193, Watts, *The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity*, pp. 656–69, and Holmes, *Religious Revivals in Britain and Ireland*, pp. 3–50, see Kathryn Teresa Long, *The Revival of 1857–58: Interpreting an American Religious Awakening* (New York, 1998), Kenneth S. Jeffrey, *When the Lord Walked the Land: The 1858–62 Revival in the North East of Scotland* (Carlisle, 2002), and Ian Randall, *Rhythms of Revival: The Spiritual Awakening of 1857–1863* (Milton Keynes, 2010).

⁵⁰ 'A Cornish revival in 1882', in Rupert Davies et al, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, 4 vols (London, 1988), IV: pp. 558–9; by far the best assessment of late nineteenth-century revivals is to be found in David W. Bebbington, *Victorian Religious Revivals: Culture and Piety in Local and Global Contexts* (Oxford, 2011).

⁵¹ David W. Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity* (Bangor, Wales, 1992), pp. 71–81; Watts, *The Dissenters The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity*, pp. 101–19.

⁵² R. Tudur Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation: Wales, 1890–1914*, ed. Robert Pope (Cardiff, 2004), pp. 283–369; Noel Gibbard, *On the Wings of the Dove: The International Effects of the 1904–5 Revival* (Bridgend, 2002); idem, *Fire on the Altar: A History and Evaluation on the 1904–5 Welsh Revival* (Bridgend, 2006).

WORSHIP AND THE SACRAMENTS

Preaching, for all its importance, was linked for the most part to the ongoing rhythm of congregational life. For every 'popular' preacher or revivalist, there were scores of ordinary, hardworking, and devoted local pastors whose aim was to nurture spirituality through the weekly round of regular worship among their flocks. The preaching of the Word occurred within the context of public prayer and praise. Sunday morning worship commenced, usually, at eleven o'clock in Britain and, in America, at ten-thirty and was led, almost invariably, by the minister.⁵³ It began with either a hymn or an opening prayer, followed by a scriptural lesson, either from the Old Testament of the New, but rarely from both; sometimes this would be accompanied by a commentary or brief exposition. A second hymn would be followed by 'the long prayer', then a sermon, which could take the best part of an hour, then another hymn concluding with a benediction. If enthusiasm was still expected among Methodists (but not the more staid Wesleyans) and some of the smaller, less inhibited, denominations, then Reformed or Puritan worship among Presbyterians and Congregationalists was more austere and grave. Although modification would occur as the century progressed, the shape of Dissenting worship would be characterized more by continuity than by change.⁵⁴

Preaching would be, for the most part, expository along with practical application and personal appeal. The Independent Thomas Binney, minister of the King's Weigh House then located in the city of London, is credited with creating a consensus whereby sermons were shortened from an hour or more to thirty or forty minutes, and although still doctrinal in content, more conversational than rhetorical in style.⁵⁵ He became ever more insistent that the sermon was only one aspect of true worship, and that congregations should partake more discriminatingly of common prayer and the sacrifice of praise. 'Dissenters have no idea of a congregation being anything else *but* an audience', he claimed. 'Hearing with them is everything. In fact they have very little else to do.'⁵⁶ This was a common complaint. A Baptist pastor in the West of England lamented that preaching had long been overemphasized at the

⁵³ Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home*, p. 37.

⁵⁴ The best description and assessment of nineteenth-century Dissenting worship in England is still to be found in chs. III (pp. 65–89) and VIII (pp. 219–43) of Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*; curiously, there is very little on Dissenting preaching in Keith A. Francis and William Gibson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon, 1689–1901* (Oxford, 2012), but see now Ellison, 'Preaching'.

⁵⁵ See Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, pp. 222–9; Elaine Kaye, *The History of the King's Weigh House Church: A Chapter in the History of London* (London, 1968), pp. 62–84.

⁵⁶ Preface to C.W. Baird, *A Chapter on Liturgies: Historical Sketches* (London, 1856), p. xxvi; italics in original.

expense of all else: 'Do we not sometimes make prayer and praise, which should be of the first importance, incidental to our services, so that people are said to go to the house of God to hear the preacher?'⁵⁷ The common perception remained, however, that 'Dissenters go to chapel chiefly to hear sermons'.⁵⁸

Just as preaching was at times overtly didactic, the tendency of the 'long prayer' was to be repetitive and diffuse. Christmas Evans warned young preachers against the deadening effect of verbose prayers. Even the longest prayers in Scripture, Daniel's prayer in the ninth chapter of his prophecy and Solomon's prayer in dedicating the Jerusalem temple, could be read comfortably, well within ten minutes: 'There are many things that cause us to pray apart from grace, and there are too many who pray at length in public who spend little time in preparation upon their knees.'⁵⁹ This, too, was Binney's burden in his address to his fellow ministers of the Congregational Union, *The Closet and the Church* (1849). Neither free prayer nor prayers according to a liturgy were effective apart from true piety on the part of the one who prayed. A congregation would immediately detect a pious fraud.

It was not lack of piety, however, but lack of decorum which was the principal cause of unease with much ministerial prayer. For the novelist William Hale White ('Mark Rutherford'), the 'long prayer' of the 1820s and 1830s was 'a horrible hypocrisy... Anything more totally unlike the model recommended in the New Testament cannot well be imagined'.⁶⁰ It began with a blanket confession of unspecified sin, leading to 'a kind of dialogue with God, resembling the speeches which in later years I have heard in the House of Commons'. The minister was faulted for 'maundering' into the divine presence with nothing particular to say, but what was said was expressed in cliché and platitude: 'Our minister seemed to consider that the Almighty, who had the universe to govern, had more leisure at His command than the idlest loungee at a club.'⁶¹ However bilious the agnostic White's description, there is ample evidence to support his contention that 'in all the religion of that day, nothing was falser than the long prayer'.⁶² The customary division of prayer into adoration, supplication, confession, intercession, and thanksgiving seems

⁵⁷ Anon, *On Things Relating to Public Worship* (Cirencester, 1867), p. 5; cf. J.H.Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot, 1994), pp. 33–5.

⁵⁸ Charles Kingsley, *The Good News of God: Sermons* (London, 1885), p. 53.

⁵⁹ William Morgan, *Cofiant, neu Hanes Bywyd Christmas Evans* (Caerdydd, 1839), p. 150, translated from the Welsh; for worship in the Welsh churches, see D. Densil Morgan, 'Preaching in the Vernacular: The Welsh Sermon, 1689–1901', in Francis and Gibson, eds., *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 199–214.

⁶⁰ William Hale White, *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, Dissenting Minister* (London, 1881), p. 22.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*; for White's critique, see Horton Davies, *A Mirror of the Ministry in Modern Novels* (New York, 1959), pp. 52–62.

often not to have been observed. As early as 1812, *A New Directory for Nonconformist Churches containing Remarks on their Mode of Public Worship, and a Plan for its Improvement* had been issued, suggesting a modest use of liturgical prayer interspersed with a more disciplined practice of free petitions. The authors' proposal was 'to continue use of *extemporary prayer* in a certain degree, and so far as all valuable ends of it will be secured; but with it to make use of those *forms* of devotion with which we are amply supplied in the Holy Scriptures'.⁶³ Worshippers were bidden to sit for prayer and stand for the singing of praise. The fear of formalism prevented anything more radical being expressed, though by mid-century some Dissenters had become more vocal in their critique. Charles M. Burrell, Baptist minister of Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, suggested that several short prayers should be substituted for 'the long prayer': 'One prayer, for example, might be occupied principally with adoration and praise; another with petitions founded on the subject brought to the attention of the assembly.'⁶⁴ He also called for kneeling at prayer, rather than sitting or standing. There were, of course, many ministers who were supremely gifted in prayer whose supplications, whether long or short, were a blessing to their congregations.

As the century progressed, there was less disquiet with the idea of prepared or liturgical prayers, and a move towards drawing congregations into participating actively in public worship. The London Congregationalist Newman Hall, minister of Christ Church, Westminster Bridge, followed Binney in advocating the responsive use of psalms, a vocal confession of sin, kneeling at prayer, the occasional use of the Apostles' Creed, and regular congregational recitation of the Lord's Prayer.⁶⁵ A parallel development had occurred in America. The 1850s saw liturgical worship being introduced into St Peter's Presbyterian Church, Rochester, New York. Use of the Gloria in prayer, congregational repetition of the Apostles' Creed, and a more elaborate use of choral music had become one of the attractions of the Second Presbyterian Church at Philadelphia a decade later, while by the 1870s Brooklyn's Clinton Avenue Congregational Church drew enthusiastic crowds to partake of worship through chanted psalms, the sung doxology, and similar devotional practices.⁶⁶ By then the praying of the Lord's Prayer in unison had become an accepted part of most services on both sides of the Atlantic, and the use of responsive readings was appreciated by many. Slowly, use of the liturgical calendar or church year became more acceptable. Wales was something of an

⁶³ Anon, *A New Directory for Nonconformist Churches containing Remarks on their Mode of Public Worship, and a Plan for its Improvement* (London, 1812), p. 13; italics in the original.

⁶⁴ C.M. Burrell, *The Worshipping Church, or, Observations of a Manner of Public Worship* (Oldham, 1845), p. 6.

⁶⁵ Newman Hall, *Free Church Service Book: Five Short Services, with Supplementary Collects and Anthems* (London, 1867).

⁶⁶ Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home*, p. 43.

exception. Rather perversely, Welsh Nonconformists would hold *eisteddfodau* or competitive meetings on Good Friday or even Christmas afternoon, but it was soon felt to be inappropriate and by the 1890s preaching meetings, especially at Easter and Whitsuntide, had taken their place. According to R. Tudur Jones, 'the Nonconformists rejected the traditional church year, and then promptly proceeded to draw up a new one of their own'.⁶⁷ As well as embracing the Good Friday *eisteddfod* and Whitsun preaching festival, it included watch night services, harvest festivals, and the week of prayer for Christian unity at the beginning of each new year.

Liturgical worship, even in the attenuated form favoured by nineteenth-century Dissenters, afforded an important place for the administration of the sacraments. Unlike the Scottish tradition of partaking of the Lord's Supper annually, Independents and Baptists in England and Wales held communion services monthly, American Congregationalists six times a year, and American Presbyterians once a quarter, though by the end of the century, they were moving towards more frequent celebration.⁶⁸ Calvinistic Methodists in Wales would also celebrate communion once a month, though William Morris, one of the connexion's leaders in Pembrokeshire, made an impassioned appeal in an ordination charge of 1853 for instituting the primitive practice of weekly participation in what was, for him, a richly sacramental rite.⁶⁹ The consensus view by mid-century, nevertheless, was towards a Zwinglian or memorialist understanding of the ordinance, especially among the Independents or Congregationalists.⁷⁰ There were those, however, both among the Independents and beyond, who were adamant that the rite possessed a deeper meaning. Adam Clarke, the leading Wesleyan preacher-theologian of the early part of the century, expounded a virtually sacrificial concept of what he termed 'the Eucharist'. The Supper, he claimed, 'is the only ordinance, instituted by divine appointment among men, in which anything of the ancient sacrificial forms yet remains'. Both the form of the rite, namely the breaking of bread symbolic of Christ's body and the wine symbolizing his blood, along with the manner of its administration, 'partake so much of the ancient expiatory offerings, *literally* considered', as to show forth the atoning virtue of the Saviour in a uniquely realistic way.⁷¹ Many English Baptists, under the influence of Robert Hall, who was, along with Andrew Fuller, their principal theologian of the

⁶⁷ Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation*, p. 102.

⁶⁸ Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home*, p. 46.

⁶⁹ Owen in J.G. Jones, *Hanes Methodistiaeth Galfinaidd Cymru, Cyfrol III, Y Twf a'r Cadarnhau*, c. 1814–1914, p. 88.

⁷⁰ See R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England* (London, 1962), p. 226.

⁷¹ Adam Clarke, 'The Nature and Design of the Holy Eucharist', in *Discourses on Various Subjects, Relative to the Being and Attributes of God*, 3 vols (London, 1830), III: p. 222; italics in original.

early century, had virtually a Calvinistic (rather than Zwinglian) understanding of the rite.⁷² This was perpetuated, surprisingly perhaps, by the otherwise decidedly unsacramental C.H. Spurgeon during the later Victorian era, who held to a concept of the real, if spiritual, presence of the risen Christ in the reception of the elements.⁷³

A strongly realist conception of the Lord's Supper conflicted with the tendency, ever more prevalent during the latter part of the century, to replace fermented wine with a non-alcoholic alternative. With the impact of the temperance movement by the 1840s, the thrust towards improved public health, as well as the Victorian trend towards an ever sturdier individualism, it was inevitable that some would question the propriety of congregations drinking fermented wine from a single cup or communal chalice.⁷⁴ By the 1880s, both the Congregationalists and the Baptists (despite their higher Eucharistic teaching) were switching from alcoholic to non-alcoholic wine.⁷⁵ Because drunkenness was a scourge in some quarters, the reasons given were often more social than theological, though proponents of change sometimes indulged in casuistic absurdities in an attempt to prove that the wine at Cana in Galilee and that used in the Last Supper was unfermented. Yet such was the strength of popular opinion that biblical usage was forced to yield to the demands of the hour. For those who held to the absolute authority of God's Word in Scripture, it was anomalous indeed: 'The dilemma was to be resolved by the established by a new orthodoxy based upon accepted practice rather than scriptural principle.'⁷⁶ The equally powerful scriptural ideal of sharing the one cup as a symbol of the unity of the Body of Christ, as propounded by the Apostle Paul, fell foul of Victorian squeamishness concerning the spread of germs and the possibility of communicating disease. The dignified simplicity of celebrating the Lord's Supper from a pewter flagon or even a silver chalice now yielded to the use of fastidious thimble-like individual glasses half filled with grape juice. The consensus in favour of such innovations was formalized by the Union of Welsh Independents in its meetings in Caernarfon in 1902.⁷⁷ A decade earlier John G. Thomas, an enterprising expatriate Welsh Congregational minister at Lima, Ohio (a stronghold of Welsh Independency in the United States), patented an apparatus which dispensed grape-wine into a tray of twenty-four individual cups in one go! The fact that the 'Thomas

⁷² Michael Walker, *Baptists at the Table: The Theology of the Lord's Supper amongst English Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot, 1992), pp. 42–64.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 165–81.

⁷⁴ James Munson, *The Nonconformists: In Search of a Lost Culture* (London, 1991), pp. 194–7.

⁷⁵ Albert Peel, *These Hundred Years: A History of the Congregational Union, 1831–1931* (London, 1931), p. 283; Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, pp. 151–3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁷⁷ R. Tudur Jones, *Yr Undeb: Hanes Undeb yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg, 1872–1972* (Abertawe, 1975), p. 169.

Communion Service Company' of Lima became a successful commercial venture shows that demand for such Eucharistic hygiene was brisk.⁷⁸

As for the sacrament of initiation, the Baptists, as one would expect, had the most to say. For them baptism was by immersion and for believers only, though children of church members would be 'named' or dedicated, in a non-sacramental way, before the congregation in the course of Sunday worship.⁷⁹ Whereas Hall, Spurgeon, and others had a sacramental understanding of the Lord's Supper, virtually none of them held to a sacramental interpretation of baptism. The threat of baptismal regeneration as championed by the Tractarians and seemingly enshrined in the otherwise Protestant Book of Common Prayer was too potent for them fully to accept, or even to understand, the scriptural realism of Paul's Eucharistic teaching in the New Testament: 'All too many Baptist apologists were at once too Protestant, too rational, too didactic and too individualistic.'⁸⁰ Among paedo-baptists, the classic Reformed or covenantal understanding of baptism as bestowing God's blessing on believers' children had (in places) all but disappeared. *The Declaration of the Faith, Church Order and Discipline of the Congregational or Independent Dissenters* (1833) was embarrassingly minimalist in its doctrine of baptism. The rite was to be administered, according to article XVIII, 'to all converts to Christianity and their children, by the application of water to the subject, "in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Ghost"', and that was that. The sacramental articles (XXXV–IX) of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists' otherwise doctrinally robust Confession of Faith of 1823 are seriously deficient in their understanding of both baptism and the Lord's Supper, and mark a declension from the rich sacramental teaching enshrined in Thomas Charles's overwhelmingly popular catechisms of 1807.⁸¹ The sacramental teaching of English Methodism, Adam Clarke apart, was similarly debilitated during these decades.⁸² Despite this, there is no doubt that, throughout the century, solid Christian orthodoxy was being perpetuated among evangelical Dissenters on both sides of the Atlantic and—further investigation might establish—in the British Empire, that spirituality was thriving, and that worship was grounding countless thousands in the experiential verities of what they regarded as being the true faith.

⁷⁸ Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home*, p. 54.

⁷⁹ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, pp. 237–8, citing the church book of Capel-y-ffin, Breconshire.

⁸⁰ Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 52; cf. Stanley K. Fowler, *More Than a Symbol: The British Baptist Recovery of Baptist Sacramentalism* (Carlisle, 2002), pp. 57–86.

⁸¹ D. Densil Morgan in J.G. Jones, *Hanes Methodistiaeth Galfinaidd Cymru, Cyfrol III, Y Twf a'r Cadarnhau*, c. 1814–1914, pp. 112–18, 135–40; with a brief précis in idem, *The History of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, Vol. III, Growth and Consolidation, c.1814–1914*, pp. 71, 76.

⁸² Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, pp. 258–61.

HYMNS AND MUSIC

All the while the faithful were singing heartily the praises of God. 'Let me write the hymns of a church', wrote R.W. Dale, 'and I care not who writes the theology.'⁸³ It was through their hymns as much as through preaching that the people remained sound in the faith. In the absence of an externally imposed prayer book or a standardized liturgy, hymns provided Dissenters with both devotional aids and a massively powerful collective identity. As Bernard Lord Manning was later to say: 'Hymns are for us Dissenters what liturgy is for Anglicans.'⁸⁴ Hymns fulfilled the same function as responsive prayers: they were a corporate expression of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession. In the words of the Congregationalist Josiah Conder, editor of *The Eclectic Review*: 'Instead of the rule of praying is the rule of believing (*lex orandi, lex credendi*), the rule of singing is the rule of believing (*lex cantandi, lex credendi*).'⁸⁵ Indeed, 'hymnody was at the heart of the identity and mission of nineteenth-century Nonconformity'.⁸⁶ As the century progressed, congregations moved from unaccompanied hymn or psalm singing in which the hymn was 'lined out' with the people repeating the minister or precentor's words, two lines at a time, to musically sophisticated choral singing and often the employment of an organist and choirs. For some the change had already occurred by the 1850s, for others it would take considerably longer, but by 1900 the standard and practice of congregational praise had been revolutionized.

The transition from psalmody to hymnody occurred with the abiding popularity of the compositions of the older Dissenters Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge,⁸⁷ whereby the Augustan propriety of the older Puritan tradition blended with the new evangelicalism to smooth the way for the exuberant genius of the Wesleys and, in Wales, William Williams of Pantycelyn.⁸⁸ The most popular hymns sung by American congregations were by the English authors Watts, Charles Wesley, the Baptists John Rippon and Samuel Stennet,

⁸³ Quoted in L.E. Elliott-Binns, *Religion in the Victorian Era* (London, 1946), p. 374.

⁸⁴ Bernard Lord Manning, *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts* (London, 1942), p. 133.

⁸⁵ Josiah Conder, *The Poet of the Sanctuary: A Centenary Celebration of the Life and Work of Isaac Watts* (London, 1851), pp. 95–6.

⁸⁶ Ian Bradley, 'Nonconformist Hymnody', in Robert Pope, ed., *The T & T Clark Companion to Nonconformity* (London, 2013), pp. 235–46 [235]; for Conder see David M. Thompson, 'Finding Successors to "the Poet of the Sanctuary": Josiah Conder in Context', in Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes, eds., *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 124–50.

⁸⁷ See J.R. Watson, 'The Hymns of Isaac Watts and the Tradition of Dissent', and F. Deconinck-Brossard, 'The Circulation and Reception of Philip Doddridge's Hymns', in Rivers and Wykes, eds., *Dissenting Praise*, pp. 33–67, 68–94.

⁸⁸ E. Wyn James, 'The Evolution of the Welsh Hymn', in *ibid.*, pp. 229–67.

and the Methodist Edward Peronnet.⁸⁹ At the outset, singing was unaccompanied or with the minimal assistance of pitch-pipe, bass viol, or flute. With the spread of literacy, hymn books gained in popularity and the woeful practice of 'lining out' was discontinued. Increasingly discipline came to be prized. 'Singing', claimed Thomas Binney in 1843, 'is no more to be performed by instinct, or miracle, than any other duty.'⁹⁰ By then weekly singing classes were being established, and a decade or so later the musical ability of the average Dissenting congregation had increased immeasurably. Especially effective was the introduction of Tonic Sol-Fa, a system perfected by the Congregational minister John Curwen, which simplified the reading of music by use of letters rather than staff notation. It also had the huge advantage of being considerably cheaper to produce than traditional musical scores. By the 1860s people were reading music as fluently as they were reading their Bibles. Singing classes occurred across the evangelical denominations,⁹¹ while in Wales this gave rise to the so-called *cymanfa ganu* or 'singing festival' in which hundreds, or sometimes thousands, of worshippers would be called together under a charismatic musical leader to voice their praise:⁹² 'The development of the *cymanfa ganu* in the nineteenth century... did more than anything else to promote the proverbial Welsh love of congregational singing: it encouraged the learning of tunes in four parts, and gave vent to powerful singing and powerful emotions.'⁹³

It came to be felt that the most appropriate accompaniment for such robust singing was the organ. In some places Puritan prejudice against what had been regarded as a badge of popery was slow in disappearing. This had not been nearly as problematic in America than in Britain (some Scots-American Presbyterian congregations notwithstanding), but by 1825 Carrs Lane Church in Birmingham had introduced an organ, the Handsworth Congregationalists had done the same by 1842, and by 1848 Congregationalists throughout the whole of Yorkshire's West Riding were reported to have followed suit, as had Fish Street Independent Church, Hull, by 1853. Although there was fear in some quarters that middle-class taste and growing social aspirations would quench the spirit of piety and devotion, the move towards a higher standard of musical excellence was irresistible. Smaller and more rural churches went

⁸⁹ Mark A. Noll, 'The Defining Role of Hymns in Early Evangelicalism', in *ibid.* and Richard J. Mouw, *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History in Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004), pp. 3–16.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Kaye, *King's Weigh House Church*, p. 74.

⁹¹ As with so much else, the tradition among rationalist Dissenters was substantially different; see Alan Ruston, 'James Martineau and the Evolution of Unitarian Hymnody', in Rivers and Wykes, eds., *Dissenting Praise*, pp. 173–96.

⁹² James, 'The Evolution of the Welsh Hymn', pp. 263–4.

⁹³ Rhidian Griffiths, 'Songs of Praises', in J.G. Jones, ed., *The History of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, Vol. III, Growth and Consolidation, c.1814–1914* (s.l., 2013), p. 141.

usually for a reed organ or harmonium whereas town churches and large congregations preferred a more sophisticated instrument with ornately painted cigar-shaped pipes. This cohered with wide-ranging architectural changes. By the mid- and latter part of the century, 'the churches began to look like churches, neither like a city hall or a warehouse in the urban areas, nor a barn in the rural areas'.⁹⁴ In 1900 there was hardly a Dissenting chapel which had neither its pipe organ nor harmonium, though, in Cashdollar's droll observation, 'the organ question took more than a century to play itself out'.⁹⁵

With the advent of gas street lighting in towns and cities, more churches were holding evening services to complement congregational worship on Sunday mornings and sometimes in the afternoons. In Britain, six-thirty was the preferred time and seven-thirty in the United States,⁹⁶ with the pattern of worship replicating closely that of the morning. If there were differences, one service would be geared to evangelism, aiming at the conversion of the uncommitted, and the other to the nurturing of the faithful. Whereas the expectation earlier in the century was for members to attend both services—'No professing Christian should allow himself to be satisfied with only one service on the Sabbath, unless prevented by age, infirmity or distance from attending twice' was the stipulation of the King's Weigh House in 1835—the obligations lessened with the passing of the years.⁹⁷ When James Baillie commenced his ministry at the Bloomsbury Baptist Chapel in London's Shaftesbury Avenue in 1887, he found that the evening congregation of 200 was only a third of that which would attend on Sunday mornings. He immediately set about drawing those from beyond the church's current ambit and membership. 'God's house has been too long in the possession of the rich and the middle classes', he claimed. 'Now the poorest man will be made heartily welcome.'⁹⁸ Perhaps this says as much as anything about the trend prevalent throughout British and American Dissent during the nineteenth century.⁹⁹ Whatever the case, and in the larger churches indubitably, by the end of the period many members would attend public worship only once each Sunday.

Congregational life in Dissenting churches during the century was by no means confined to worship services on Sundays. Even during the Sabbath there would be afternoon Sunday school for children and sometimes for adults

⁹⁴ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Newman to Martineau, 1850–1900*, p. 70; for the architecture of nineteenth-century Dissent see Clyde Binfield, *The Contexting of a Chapel Architect: James Cubitt, 1836–1912* (London, 2001) and the appropriate sections of Robert C. Broderick, *Historic Churches of the United States* (New York, 1958).

⁹⁵ Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home*, p. 86.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Quoted in Faith Bowers, *A Bold Experiment: The Story of Bloomsbury Chapel and Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 1848–1999* (London, 1999), p. 194.

⁹⁹ Cf. Watts, *Crisis and Conscience*, pp. 120–41.

as well, and during the weekdays a plethora of different meetings catering for all sorts of spiritual, and latterly social, needs. There would be prayer meetings, often led by laymen; missionary meetings; women's or 'sisterhood' meetings; young men's meetings; Bible classes; band meetings, class meetings and love feasts among the Methodists; the society meeting or *seiat* for the sharing of religious experience for Welsh Calvinistic Methodists; and the *cyfeillach* or fellowship meetings for the Baptists and Independents. 'These meetings', reported Thomas Rees, 'are considered by all evangelical Dissenting denominations in Wales as the most important and useful of our religious services. Those churches who practically neglect them are the least spiritual and efficient, and those members...who seldom or never frequent them, are generally the most inactive and worthless professors we have.'¹⁰⁰ Despite the tirade, there were recurrent complaints that only a small percentage of the members attended prayer and society meetings, though they remained vital in nourishing the spirituality of Dissent. After mid-century, devotional meetings were complemented by discussion circles and debating societies, temperance gatherings and Bands of Hope, literary guilds and various fora for fellowship and self-improvement. By the end of the century an all-embracing Nonconformist or Dissenting culture was flourishing as never before.¹⁰¹ According to David Bebbington: 'The chapels tried to embody the loftiest aspirations in a concrete pattern of social life that, for all its flaws and follies, gave fulfilment to millions.' Worship and spirituality remained essential to its nature. In fact, 'Victorian Nonconformity formed a vibrant Christian counter-culture'.¹⁰²

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¹⁰⁰ Rees, *Miscellaneous Papers Relating to Wales*, p. 77.

¹⁰¹ Watts, *Crisis and Conscience*, pp. 85–230.

¹⁰² Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, pp. 80–1.

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