

**BIRMINGHAM'S EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCHES  
AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

by

ANDY VAIL

A Thesis Submitted to

The University of Birmingham

For the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

School of History & Cultures

College of Arts and Law

The University of Birmingham

2019

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

**University of Birmingham Research Archive**

**e-theses repository**

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

## **Abstract**

This thesis demonstrates that the First World War did not have a major long-term impact on the evangelical free churches of Birmingham. Whilst many members were killed in the conflict, and local church auxiliaries were disrupted, once the participants – civil and military – returned, the work and mission of the churches mostly continued as they had before the conflict, the exception being the Adult School movement, which had been in decline prior to the conflict. It reveals impacts on local church life, including new opportunities for women amongst the Baptist and Congregational churches where they began to serve as deacons. The advent of conscription forced church members to personally face the issue as to whether as Christians they could in conscience bear arms. The conflict also speeded ecumenical co-operation nationally, in areas such as recognition of chaplains, and locally, in organising local prayer meetings and commemorations. The close of the conflict galvanised support for the League of Nations and for international co-operation which had been interrupted by the conflict. It has shown evidence of combatants and non-combatants alike being sustained through the conflict by their faith. Responses to the conflict varied from enthusiastic support to absolute opposition.

## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Mike Snape and Hugh McLeod, for their support and encouragement. Thanks also to David Beattie for his proof-reading.

I wish also to record my appreciation to the staff in the former Birmingham City Library archives, for their patient assistance in enabling me to consult a wide range of materials from both their archives and local studies. Also thanks to staff at the University of Birmingham Libraries, Dr Williams's Library (London), the Angus Library and Archive (Regent's Park College, Oxford), Friends' House Library, Woodbrooke College Library, John Rylands' Library (University of Manchester), the People's Museum (Manchester) and the British Library for their help. I am particularly grateful to Bournville United Reformed Church, Carrs Lane United Reformed Church, the People's Chapel, Beacon United Reformed Church (Rubery), Stratford Road Baptist Church and the Birmingham Battalion of the Boys' Brigade for allowing me to consult their locally-held archives, and for the many churches across Birmingham that permitted me to explore and photograph their buildings.

I am grateful to my wife, Carol, and our children, Jess, Josh, Rachel and Dan for tolerating the time it has taken me to do this research.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to two Birmingham free church Conscientious Objectors who gave their lives for their faith during the First World War: H. Shackleford (formerly of Carrs Lane early morning class) who died whilst serving as a stretcher bearer for a New Zealand regiment, and Ernest Woodward, the leader of Guildford Street Baptist Adult School who died as a consequence of his treatment whilst imprisoned as a Conscientious Objector.

## Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Dedication .....	ii
Contents .....	iii
List of Abbreviations.....	vii
<b>Chapter One - Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Historiographical Survey.....	2
1.2.1. Overviews on Churches and the First World War.....	2
1.2.2 Denominational Studies .....	6
1.2.3 Studies of Anti-War Movements.....	15
1.2.4. Local Studies of Urban Faith/Religion in England.....	18
1.2.5 Studies of Birmingham and the First World War .....	20
1.3. Methodology.....	21
1.4 Birmingham and the First World War.....	26
1.4.1 Birmingham's Free Churches in the Nineteenth Century.....	27
1.4.2 The Civic or Municipal Gospel.....	30
1.5 Numerical Strength: The Religious Censuses of 1851 & 1892 .....	33
1.6 Birmingham Free Church Co-operation.....	39
1.6.1 Evangelical Free Church Councils.....	39
1.6.2 United Missions.....	41
1.7 Other Significant Factors.....	41
1.8 The Anglicans in Birmingham .....	43
1.9 Labour Churches and Allied Movements .....	44
1.10 Birmingham's Nineteenth-Century Free Churches as Pioneers in Ministry ...	46
1.11 Birmingham's Free Churches in 1914.....	48
1.12. Youth and Children's Movements.....	52
1.13 Conclusion.....	54
<b>Chapter 2: The Free Churches and War .....</b>	<b>56</b>
2.1. Christian Theological Approaches to the Issue of War .....	56
2.2. The Outbreak of War: the Free Churches' National Responses .....	58
2.3. Birmingham Dissenters' Pre-war Attitudes to War and Militarism .....	59
2.4 Birmingham Free Church Responses to the First World War .....	66
2.4.1. Birmingham Old Dissenter Responses to the War .....	66
2.4.2. Birmingham Wesleyan Methodist Responses to the War.....	73

2.4.2.1. Case study: Saltley Brotherhood (Wesleyan).....	74
2.5. Birmingham Free Church Members and Military Service .....	76
2.5.1. Birmingham Free Churches and Conscription.....	86
2.6. Birmingham Free Churches and Military Use of Church Premises.....	90
2.7. Military Parades in Birmingham Churches.....	92
2.8 Conscientious Objection to the First World War .....	93
2.8.1 Religious Affiliation of Objectors.....	95
2.8.2. Birmingham Free Church Opposition to the War .....	97
2.8.3 Conscientious Objection and Other Opposition to the War in Birmingham	105
2.8.4. Birmingham’s Military Tribunals - Conscientious Objectors.....	108
2.9. New Christian Movements: Pacifist Traditions.....	113
2.9.1. Case Study: Birmingham Churches of Christ Attitudes to War before 1914	
.....	114
2.9.2. Early British Pentecostals and Warfare .....	121
2.9.3. Birmingham Apostolics/Pentecostals and the First World War .....	123
2.9.4. The Salvation Army and the First World War.....	126
2.10 Birmingham’s Free Churches, Post-war Attitudes .....	130
2.11 Conclusion .....	136
<b>Chapter 3. The Impact of the Great War on Birmingham Free Church life on</b>	
<b>the Home Front.....</b>	<b>142</b>
3.1. Birmingham Free Church Membership and the War .....	142
3.2. Churches and Zeppelin raids .....	146
3.3 Ministry in the local Church .....	147
3.4 The First World War and Women’s Ministry in Birmingham.....	150
3.4.1 Birmingham Deaconesses and Bible Women.....	151
3.4.2 Birmingham Women as Overseas Missionaries .....	153
3.4.3. Birmingham Women Deacons.....	154
3.4.4 A Birmingham Woman Evangelist .....	156
3.4.5 Women Ministers in Birmingham.....	157
3.4.6 Women’s Ministry in Birmingham: Conclusion.....	159
3.5. Impact of the War on Birmingham Ecumenism.....	160
3.7 Conclusion.....	161
<b>Chapter 4: Faith of the Combatants – Birmingham Free Church Members’</b>	
<b>Letters Home from the Front.....</b>	<b>163</b>
4.1. Introduction .....	163
4.2. Prayer and the Presence of God .....	164

4.3. Conversion and Revival of Faith.....	166
4.4. Trusting in God.....	169
4.5. Involvement in Worship.....	171
4.6. Encounters with the ‘Enemy’ .....	174
4.7. The Reality and Horror of Warfare, and Prayers for Peace.....	176
4.8. Opposition to the War .....	178
4.9 Selectivity and Bias.....	180
4.10. Conclusion.....	181
Appendix: Local Church Journals consulted: .....	185
<b>Chapter 5: Lay Auxiliary Movements.....</b>	<b>187</b>
5.1. Introduction .....	187
5.2. The Early Adult Schools .....	187
5.3. The Brotherhood & Sisterhood (PSA) Movement.....	190
5.4. The Purpose and Methods of the Adult Schools & Brotherhoods/PSAs .....	192
5.5. Adult Schools, Brotherhoods/PSAs and Internationalism.....	199
5.6. The Brotherhood Movement and War and Peace .....	201
5.7. The Adult School Movement and War and Peace.....	204
5.8. Boys’ Uniformed Organisations and the Free Churches .....	211
5.8.1. The Boys’ Brigade and the Boys’ Life Brigade.....	212
5.8.2. Boy Scouts, British Scouts and National Peace Scouts.....	212
5.9. Boys’ Uniformed Organisations and Relations with the Military.....	213
5.10. Origins of Uniformed Boys’ Organisations in Birmingham.....	215
5.11 Growth and Denominational Affiliation of Birmingham Boys’ Uniformed Organisations.....	217
5.12. Birmingham Boys’ Brigade and Boys’ Life Brigade and the War.....	219
5.13. Birmingham Scouts and the War.....	222
5.14. Birmingham Boys’ Uniformed Organisations, Post-war Impact.....	224
5.15. Conclusion.....	226
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>230</b>
6.1. Introduction .....	230
6.2. Birmingham’s Free Churches and the War.....	231
6.2.1 Church Membership .....	231
6.2.2 Birmingham Free Church Members and the Military .....	232
6.2.3 Theological Impact of the Conflict.....	235
6.3. The Impact of the War on Women’s Ministry in Birmingham.....	237

<b>6.4 The Faith of Individual Birmingham Free Church Participants in the Conflict</b>	238
<b>6.5. Lay Auxiliary Movements in Birmingham</b>	239
<b>6.6. The War and Secularisation</b>	241
<b>6.7. Areas for Further Research</b>	244
<b>6.8. Conclusion</b>	245
<b>Appendix I: 1892 Religious Census Summary: Birmingham &amp; Smethwick</b>	<b>248</b>
<b>Appendix II: Summary of Birmingham Free Church Membership</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>Appendix III: – Birmingham Baptist Churches Membership statistics</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>Appendix IV: Birmingham Congregational Churches Membership Statistics</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>Appendix V: Birmingham Presbyterian Churches Communicant Statistics</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>Appendix VI: Birmingham Churches of Christ Membership Statistics</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>Appendix VII: Birmingham Wesleyan Church membership statistics</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>Appendix VIII: Birmingham Primitive Methodist membership statistics</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>Appendix IX: Birmingham United Methodist Church membership statistics</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>Appendix X: Birmingham Congregationalists in the military (1915)</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>Appendix XI: Sunday School teachers &amp; scholars in the military (1914-5) – Baptists</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>Appendix XII: Sunday School teachers &amp; scholars in the military (1914-5) – Congregationalists</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>Appendix XIII: Sunday School teachers &amp; scholars in the military (1914-5) – Presbyterians, Methodists and others</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>1. Primary Sources</b>	<b>258</b>
1.1 Archives	258
1.2. Newspapers, Magazines & Journals: (published in Birmingham unless stated)	278
1.3. Annuals, Handbooks, Yearbooks, Conference reports & proceedings	282
1.4. Other Primary Sources	284
<b>2. Secondary Sources</b>	<b>285</b>
2.1. Books & chapters in collected volumes	285
2.2. Journal Articles	294
2.3. Unpublished Theses	298
2.4. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (DNB) entries	299
2.5. Internet sources	300



## **List of Abbreviations**

- ABC Afternoon Bible Class
- AoG Assemblies of God in Great Britain and Ireland
- ASC Army Service Corps
- BB Boys' Brigade
- BBBA Birmingham Boys' Brigade Archives
- BBS British Boy Scouts
- BCA Birmingham City Library Archives (including local studies)
- BEC Birmingham Evangelistic Co-operation (Churches of Christ)
- BHS Baptist Historical Society
- BLB Boys' Life Brigade
- BMS Baptist Missionary Society
- BoH Band of Hope
- BQ Baptist Quarterly (Baptist Historical Society)
- BSA Birmingham Small Arms
- BSSU Birmingham Sunday School Union
- BU or BUGBI Baptist Union of Great Britain & Ireland
- CLB Church Lads' Brigade
- CO Conscientious Objector
- CoC Church of Christ
- CQ Congregational Quarterly
- CUEW Congregational Union of England & Wales
- EA Evangelical Alliance
- EFCC Evangelical Free Church Council
- FAU Friends' Ambulance Unit

FoR Fellowship of Reconciliation  
FSSU Friends' Sunday School Union  
FWVRC Friends War Victims Relief Committee  
GEC General Evangelist Committee (Churches of Christ)  
GLB Girls' Life Brigade  
ILP Independent Labour Party  
JLB Jewish Lads' Brigade  
JURCHS Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society  
LMS London Missionary Society  
LNU League of Nations Union  
MASU Midland Adult School Union  
NASU National Adult School Union  
NCC Non-Combatant Corps  
NCF No Conscription Fellowship  
NSL National Service League  
NSSU National Sunday School Union  
PMU Pentecostal Missionary Union  
PSA Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Association  
PWHS Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society  
RAMC Royal Army Medical Corps  
SA Salvation Army  
SDA Seventh-Day Adventist  
SoF Society of Friends (Quakers)  
TASCOS Ten Acres & Stirchley Co-operative Society  
TCHS Transactions of the Congregational History Society

UDC Union of Democratic Control

WMBA West Midland Baptist Association

WEA Workers' Educational Association

YMCA Young Men's Christian Association

## Chapter One - Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the impact of the First World War on the theology and practices of the evangelical free churches in England, through the example of their churches to be found in one of their strongholds of the time, the city of Birmingham. It will examine the attitudes nationally of the churches to issues of war and peace prior to the conflict, how they responded locally to the First World War, and then to the coming of peace again. It will also examine the impact of the conflict on local church life, including membership numbers and issues such as lay leadership and the role of women. In doing so, it will seek to engage with previous scholarship. The primary focus is on sources left by the local churches themselves, in an attempt to understand the conflict from local Birmingham church perspectives.

Whilst definitions of Evangelicalism can vary, Bebbington has helpfully identified its four key characteristics: Conversionism – the belief that individual lives need to be changed by a personal encounter with God; Activism – a belief that the Christian faith requires living out in practical action; Biblicism – a high regard for the authority of the Bible as the Word of God; and Crucicentrism – a stress on the sacrificial atoning death of Christ on the Cross.<sup>1</sup> With these characteristics, it is possible to identify most of Birmingham's Trinitarian free churches in the early twentieth century as Evangelical. In common with free church practice, throughout this thesis the term 'church' will be used to describe a gathered local body of believers, and 'chapel' or 'meeting house' their place of worship.

---

<sup>1</sup> D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: 1988), p. 3

This thesis will consider the range of Evangelical free churches: Old Dissent, those originating in the seventeenth century, consisting of Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Quakers; New Dissent, those which grew out of the Evangelical revival, represented by various Methodist connexions; and the new movements of nineteenth- and twentieth-century origin, including the Churches of Christ, Christian (or Plymouth) Brethren, Apostolic/Pentecostal Churches, the Salvation Army and various more specialist missions. A separate chapter will consider the impact of auxiliary lay movements such as the Adult School, Brotherhood and Sisterhood, Brigade and Scout Movements.

## **1.2 Historiographical Survey**

### **1.2.1. Overviews on Churches and the First World War**

Previous scholarship has been produced on the churches and war and peace in the twentieth century, of which the most thorough is Wilkinson's 1986 book *Dissent or Conform?* which focuses on the period 1900-1945.<sup>2</sup> He devotes his first three chapters to the free churches and the First World War, in which he briefly considers the Boer War, arguing that 'the majority of Free Churchmen vigorously led by [the Methodist Hugh Price] Hughes, supported the war', but he also acknowledges the movement against it led by the Baptist minister, John Clifford, and the Peace Manifesto Clifford organised against the war in 1901 which was signed by 5,270 free church ministers.<sup>3</sup> He goes on to examine in some detail the official response of the Primitive Methodist

---

<sup>2</sup> Alan Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform? War, Peace and the English Churches, 1900-1945* (London: 1986)

<sup>3</sup> Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?*, p. 18 & D.W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience, Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914* (London: 1982), p. 124

Connexion to the First World War, including the debates which took place in their journal the *Primitive Methodist Leader* and motions passed at their Annual Conferences. Unfortunately, he overlooks the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches (which represented all the major Trinitarian Free Churches at that time) and the Annual Meetings of all the other British Free Churches. Apart from a few references to the *Christian World* and *British Weekly*, other contemporary free church journals appear to have been overlooked too. He identified prominent free church supporters of the war, including William Robertson Nicoll, a Free Church of Scotland minister who edited the *British Weekly* (1886-1923), and Dr Campbell Morgan, minister at one of London's best-known Congregational churches, Westminster Chapel. He also identified prominent Congregationalist opponents of the war, such as the ministers Leyton Richards and C.J. Cadoux, and the divisions amongst Quakers but gave no indication of the attitude towards war of newer movements such as the Salvation Army or the Churches of Christ. He claimed that a higher percentage of millenarian groups such as Christadelphians, Jehovah's Witnesses<sup>4</sup> and Plymouth Brethren than Quakers were conscientious objectors.<sup>5</sup> He did not explore the pacifist traditions within the newly emergent Churches of Christ, Apostolic/Pentecostal Churches or the Seventh-Day Adventists.

Robbins, in his wide ranging 2003 essay on 'Protestant nonconformists and the peace question,'<sup>6</sup> recognised the diversity of opinion amongst leading nonconformists over the Boer War, and quoted leading nonconformist supporters of the First World War,

---

<sup>4</sup> The movement was then known as International Bible Students.

<sup>5</sup> Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?*, p. 53

<sup>6</sup> Keith Robbins, 'Protestant Nonconformists and the Peace Question' in Alan P.F. Sell, & Anthony R. Cross, eds., *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century* (Carlisle: 2003), pp. 216-239

including the concern of the *British Weekly*'s editor, Robertson Nicoll, that 'if it did not play its part in the war... Nonconformity would have lost its place in English life.'<sup>7</sup> He identified nonconformist involvement in the Christian pacifist organisation, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, but suggested they were not active in the Union for Democratic Control<sup>8</sup> which was a campaign group seeking a negotiated peace, and pointed to the opposition of some leading nonconformist supporters of the war to conscription.<sup>9</sup> Robbins' essay is a useful introduction to the wider chronological context, but tends to focus on individual prominent ministers. He, therefore, lacks detail on responses within individual denominations, ignores the newer denominations and provides no case studies at a local level.

Of more value to this thesis is Ruston's essay in the same volume on 'Nonconformist attitudes to the First World War'.<sup>10</sup> Largely through examining the columns of the *Christian World* and the *Unitarian Inquirer*, he sought to chart leading nonconformist responses to the war and issues arising from it such as nationalism and conscription. Whilst he provided a valuable overview, he focused predominantly on Baptists, Congregationalists and Unitarians, largely ignoring all the Methodist connexions and the newer evangelical free church movements. Ruston himself admitted: 'It is impossible to summarize the viewpoint of Nonconformity to the war over the four year period. It is an area worthy of more research, and so far the surface has just been

---

<sup>7</sup> Robbins, 'Protestant Nonconformists and the Peace Question', p.224

<sup>8</sup> Local evidence from Birmingham suggests this is a false assumption – see later chapters.

<sup>9</sup> e.g. F.B. Meyer, see Robbins, 'Protestant Nonconformists and the Peace Question', p. 227

<sup>10</sup> Alan Ruston, 'Protestant Nonconformist Attitudes towards the First World War', in Alan P.F. Sell & Anthony R. Cross, eds., *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century*, (Carlisle: 2003), pp. 240-63

scratched.’<sup>11</sup> This is the challenge this thesis seeks to address, by focusing on the local example of the evangelical free churches in Birmingham. He concluded: ‘Between 1914 and 1918 Nonconformity chose to forget this vital principle [freedom of conscience] in following the seemingly overwhelming desire, almost an imperative, to support the war effort in every way possible. The result was the loss of Nonconformist influence in national affairs which it was never to recover.’<sup>12</sup> Whilst this is an interesting thesis, it appears to ignore the free churches with a pacifist tradition such as the Quakers, the Brethren and the Churches of Christ, the Christian pacifist organisation, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the denominational peace societies, and the active individual opponents such as the Baptists, identified by Dekar (see 1.2.2. below).

Ian Randall’s article on ‘British Evangelicals and the First World War’<sup>13</sup> is also helpful, in that he considered the responses across the denominations, and looked for the theology behind them. He usefully identified key supporters and opponents of the war, including those such as the Baptist John Clifford who changed his opinion, and the support of some pro-war free church leaders such as the Baptists John Clifford and F.B. Meyer for conscientious objectors. He identified what he described as ‘a grassroots movement of evangelical pacifism’ generally based on a literal interpretation of the New Testament.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, he misunderstood the conscientious objector statistics, citing the predominance of Christadelphians. He

---

<sup>11</sup> Ruston, ‘Protestant Nonconformist Attitudes towards the First World War’, pp. 261-62

<sup>12</sup> Ruston, ‘Protestant Nonconformist Attitudes towards the First World War’, p. 263

<sup>13</sup> Ian Randall, ‘British Evangelicals and the First World War’, *Anabaptism Today*, 11 (Feb 1996), pp. 9-15

<sup>14</sup> Randall, ‘British Evangelicals and the First World War’, p. 13



cites the figures that Rae extracted from the report of the Pelham Committee,<sup>15</sup> but his conclusions were misleading as Rae only refers to the religious allegiance of the 3,964 conscientious objectors who were willing to undertake non-military work at the direction of the Pelham Committee, out of an estimated total of about 15,900,<sup>16</sup> thus ignoring the religious affiliation of absolute objectors who refused cooperation with the Pelham Committee, and of those whose application for C.O. status was refused, resulting in them being arrested and detained as military prisoners.

### 1.2.2 Denominational Studies

There have also been a range of denominational studies published relating to this period, of which the most detailed are on the Baptists. Dekar's 1993 book, *For the Healing of the Nations: Baptist Peacemakers*, provides a helpful transatlantic overview. His chapter on 'British Baptists in Nineteenth-Century Peace Societies'<sup>17</sup> is particularly significant in setting the scene for the issues raised by the First World War. He claimed that for most of the nineteenth century, the role of Secretary of the Peace Society was held by a succession of three Baptist ministers.<sup>18</sup> He also charted, through their lifetimes, the views on war of the prominent Baptists John Clifford and J. H. Rushbrooke.<sup>19</sup> Dekar's work is valuable in that it set out to tell what he saw as the under-represented story of Baptist peacemakers, but it, therefore, did not seek to

---

<sup>15</sup> John Rae, *Conscience and Politics: The British Government and the Conscientious Objector to Military Service, 1916-1919* (London: 1970), pp. 250-51

<sup>16</sup> This figure is made up of c.3,300 in Non-Combatant Corps, 100 in RAMC, 6,250 exempted for performing 'work of national importance' (including Friends' Ambulance Unit) and 6,261 refused CO status, arrested and taken into the army. See: Constance Braithwaite, *Conscientious Objection to Compulsions under the Law* (York: 1995), pp. 141, 153 & 156

<sup>17</sup> Paul R. Dekar, *For the Healing of the Nations: Baptist Peacemakers*, (Georgia, USA: 1993), pp. 33-46, chapter previously published as 'Baptist Peacemakers in Nineteenth-Century Peace Societies', *Baptist Quarterly*, 34 (1991) pp. 3-12

<sup>18</sup> James Hargreaves, William Stokes and Arthur O'Neill – the latter two had Birmingham pastorates.

<sup>19</sup> Dekar, *For the Healing of the Nations*, pp. 61-86

portray a full range of Baptist views on war and peace. Clements' 1975 article on 'Baptists and the outbreak of the First World War'<sup>20</sup> was a thorough study of the attitudes of the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, and of contributors to the *Baptist Times* to the outbreak of the conflict. He also set their views in helpful context by exploring Baptist internationalism, particularly in Europe, in the preceding years, and responses to other international conflicts. He also briefly considered national Baptist responses to the introduction of conscription in 1916. The nature of his sources meant that he did not consider Strict Baptists or unaffiliated Baptist churches. Because his article focused on the outbreak of the conflict, it did not monitor any changes of attitude during or immediately after the conflict, nor did it have any local focus.

Other denominational studies include Hughes (2008) *Conscience and Conflict: Methodism, Peace and War in the Twentieth Century*,<sup>21</sup> whose conclusion on the First World War Bebbington has summarised as follows: 'When the First World War broke out, initial hesitations soon gave way to enthusiastic endorsement of the struggle against the violators of Belgium. Conscription in 1916, however, put iron into the soul of many. S.E. Keeble, a long-standing radical, turned into an absolute pacifist, and a Methodist Peace Fellowship sprang up. Consequently, once more Methodism was divided, though the debate was between pacifists and pacificists (*sic*) rather...[than] between those less or more inclined to warmongering.'<sup>22</sup> Hughes had previously

---

<sup>20</sup> Keith Clements, 'Baptists and the Outbreak of the First World War', *Baptist Quarterly*, 26 (1975), pp. 74-92

<sup>21</sup> Michael Hughes, *Conscience and Conflict: Methodism, Peace and War in the Twentieth Century* (Peterborough: 2008)

<sup>22</sup> David Bebbington, review of Hughes, *Conscience and Conflict: Methodism, Peace and War in the Twentieth Century* in *English Historical Review* (2009) CXXIV (508), pp. 750-52

written an article exploring the pacifist tradition amongst Methodists in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> The other major work was Pugsley's 1995 thesis on *The Great War and Methodism*.<sup>24</sup> Pugsley declared a debt to Wilkinson, his former tutor, and sought to argue that in 1914 Wesleyan Methodism was more closely aligned to nonconformity and to Liberal politics than in any other period, yet Conservatism and affluence were also to be found.<sup>25</sup> He claimed that by 1914 Wesleyans, like most nonconformists, supported international arbitration, opposed conscription and militarism and distrusted arms manufacturers. His central argument was that not only were the three main Methodist connexions which went on to unite in the 1930s (Wesleyan, Primitive and United Methodist) closer together, but that it was possible to identify a general nonconformist position of which Methodism was a part. He concluded that Methodism 'after some initial hesitations' became a source of enthusiastic support for the war. He recognised the existence of opposition within Methodism, citing some (mostly Wesleyan) examples of it.<sup>26</sup> He made little attempt to analyse the different theological positions taken by supporters and opponents of the war. Although most of his evidence appeared to be Wesleyan, Pugsley ranged across the three largest Methodist connexions, and indeed into Anglican, Baptist and Congregational opinions. He did not investigate the attitudes to the war within smaller Methodist denominations, such as the Wesleyan Reform Union, the Independent Methodist Connexion and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists.

---

<sup>23</sup> Michael Hughes, 'The Development of Methodist Pacifism, 1899-1939', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 53 (Oct 2002)

<sup>24</sup> David P. Pugsley, *The Great War and Methodism: the assimilation of Dissent?*, University of Birmingham M Phil Thesis (1995)

<sup>25</sup> Pugsley, *The Great War*, p. 4

<sup>26</sup> E.g. the foundation of the Wesleyan Peace Fellowship in 1916, Pugsley, *The Great War*, p. 177

In contrast to the studies of Evangelical Free Churches, the other denominational study was Ruston's 1998 article on 'Unitarian attitudes towards World War 1'.<sup>27</sup> In it he charted the response of Unitarians throughout the conflict, as shown in official statements from the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and in the columns of their main denominational journals, the *Inquirer* and to a lesser extent *Christian Life*. He acknowledged that a more detailed examination of Unitarian attitudes towards conscientious objection is needed.<sup>28</sup> He suggested: 'Unitarians were not alone amongst nonconformists in their overwhelming support for the War effort and all that it meant.' However, he sought to justify this with a quote from an article by Stuart Mews (whom he called Stanley Mews), which seemed more relevant to Anglicans, in which he argued that 'the gap between Church and State which had been widening throughout the Nineteenth century was easily overcome.'<sup>29</sup> He highlighted the Unitarians responses to particular issues such as conscription, conscientious objection and poison gas, and the existence of organised opposition to the war in the form of the Unitarian Peace Fellowship.

Studies of lesser known pacifist traditions in the newer movements include Brock's 1984 article 'The peace testimony of the early Plymouth Brethren',<sup>30</sup> which covers the period prior to outbreak of the First World War, and Casey's 2000 article on 'The

---

<sup>27</sup> Alan Ruston, 'Unitarian attitudes towards World War 1', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, 21.4 (1998), pp. 269-84

<sup>28</sup> Ruston, 'Unitarian attitudes towards World War 1', p. 270

<sup>29</sup> Ruston, 'Unitarian attitudes towards World War 1', pp. 273-74

<sup>30</sup> Peter Brock, 'The Peace Testimony of the Early Plymouth Brethren', *Church History*, 53:1 (1984), pp. 30-45

overlooked pacifist tradition in the old paths Churches of Christ<sup>31</sup> which provides a helpful overview, but is narrow in that it focuses on the ‘Old Paths’ or non-instrumental churches rather than the wider Churches of Christ movement. Ackers’ 1993 article ‘Who speaks for the Christians?’<sup>32</sup> considered the impact of conscription on the Churches of Christ in one of their strongholds, Wigan, making use of local church minutes and their national journal *The Bible Advocate*. This thesis uses a similar local case study model, applying it to all the evangelical free church traditions in Birmingham for which local records have survived.

Of the wider denominational histories, most helpful are Randall’s and Argent’s histories of twentieth century Baptists<sup>33</sup> and Congregationalists<sup>34</sup> respectively. Randall set the context by identifying that English Baptists were divided over the Boer War, with many leading Baptist ministers opposing it, including John Clifford, Alexander Maclaren, F.B. Meyer and J.C. Carlisle.<sup>35</sup> He also drew attention to a *Peace Manifesto* published in George Cadbury’s *Daily News* signed by 5,270 nonconformist ministers on 14 December 1901, and revealed that 14,609 nonconformist ministers had signed, including 50% of Baptist ministers, but only 20% of Wesleyans. He also revealed that official statements at Baptist Assemblies were rather vague: war as a whole was condemned, and the International Court held at the Hague was welcomed – in 1901 they expressed a desire for ‘an honourable and

---

<sup>31</sup> Michael W. Casey, ‘The overlooked pacifist tradition in the old paths Churches of Christ, Part I: The Great War and the Old Paths Division’, *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 6:6 (2000), pp. 446-60

<sup>32</sup> Peter Ackers, “‘Who speaks for the Christians?’” The Great War and Conscientious Objection in the Churches of Christ: A view from the Wigan Coalfield’, *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society* 5.3 (1993), pp. 153-67

<sup>33</sup> Ian Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century* (Didcot: 2005)

<sup>34</sup> Alan Argent, *The Transformation of Congregationalism, 1900-2000* (Nottingham: 2013)

<sup>35</sup> Randall, *The English Baptists*, p. 41

lasting peace'.<sup>36</sup> Randall drew attention to active Baptist involvement in the The Associated Councils in the British and German Empires for Fostering Friendly relations between the Two Peoples, identifying John Clifford, F.B. Meyer, J.H. Shakespeare, Charles Brown, Sir George Macalpine and Sir George White as vice-Presidents of the British Committee and J.H. Rushbrooke as editor of their journal *The Peacemaker*. He cited the examples of John Clifford and J.H. Rushbrooke: Clifford in early 1914 was preaching 'Militarism belongs to the dark ages; it is not fit for our time. It must go. It is going,'<sup>37</sup> and travelled with Rushbrooke to the August 1914 Conference in Constance to establish an international equivalent to the 'Associated Councils', yet by September he was preaching in support of involvement in the war.<sup>38</sup> He reported the Baptist Union Council's support for the war in the same month: 'We believe the call of God has come to Britain to spare neither blood nor treasure in the struggle to shatter a great anti-Christian attempt to destroy the fabric of Christian civilisation' although this was accompanied by a call for prayers of penitence and prayers for Baptists in Germany and Austria.<sup>39</sup> He identified concerns raised by Baptists, including rising casualties, alarming theological trends implying death in warfare would bring redemption and concerns over conscription, with some leading Baptist ministers such as F.B. Meyer personally visiting conscientious objectors in France and reporting back on their conditions.<sup>40</sup> As with most denominations, he drew attention to 'general Baptist support for the work of the League of Nations' after the conflict.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Randall, *The English Baptists*, p. 42

<sup>37</sup> Clifford preaching at Westbourne Park BC, 1/1914, cited in Randall, *The English Baptists*, p. 78

<sup>38</sup> Randall, *The English Baptists*, p. 79

<sup>39</sup> Randall, *The English Baptists*, p. 80

<sup>40</sup> Randall, *The English Baptists*, pp. 81-83

<sup>41</sup> Randall, *The English Baptists*, p. 196

Argent writing about the Congregationalists claimed ‘They could not pretend that the war did not affect them, as may have been possible during the Boer Wars’ whilst noting that they had divided opinion, with some such as Silvester Horne actively opposing participation.<sup>42</sup> He also helpfully summarised pre-war statements on war and peace, drawing attention to the Congregational Union of England and Wales (CUEW) Council’s endorsement of Foreign Secretary Edward Grey’s welcome of US President Taft’s overtures which they believed might point ‘to a world-wide peace between all Nations, and to relief from the crushing burden of armaments’, and in their noting in 1912 ‘the growing desire in Germany and England for a better understanding’. He also noted that the CUEW’s May 1913 Assembly was addressed by the Dean of Worcester, Moore Ede, and Dr Gensichen (Director, Berlin Mission), on ‘The cultivation of National Peace, particularly as between England and Germany’, and the same assembly passed a motion condemning the increase in armaments, yet with the outbreak of war a reversal occurs.<sup>43</sup> The CUEW’s Council report for 1914-15 argued ‘We could do no other than champion the rights of the weak against the brutally strong, and...liberty against enslavement’ and reported at least 40,000 Congregationalists had signed up. He drew attention to Lloyd George’s pro-war speech at a Free Church Convention at London’s (Congregational) City Temple, in November 1914, where he claimed that when war began 3-4,000 Baptists and Congregationalists were in the Army, but this was up to 30-40,000 in three months.<sup>44</sup> It is not clear how these statistics relate to those cited above from the CUEW report.

---

<sup>42</sup> Argent, *The Transformation*, p. 90

<sup>43</sup> Argent, *The Transformation*, pp. 90-91

<sup>44</sup> Argent, *The Transformation*, pp. 91-92

He also revealed that at the 1915 Congregational Assembly, Arthur Haworth, CUEW Chairman, proposed a motion which regretted the ‘present calamitous war’, and went on to argue that the government had no option but to participate, whilst also respecting the pacifist position. Argent argued this motion, by implication, and acknowledged the existence of Congregationalist pacifists – disproving the claims of Robertson Nicoll that ‘nonconformity’s resistance to pacifism had been absolute’.<sup>45</sup> He identified prominent Congregationalist ministerial opponents to the war including Leyton Richards, Nathaniel Micklem and T. Rhondda Williams, whilst others such as R.F. Horton, although supporters of the war, opposed conscription.<sup>46</sup> T. Rhondda Williams who was travelling to the Constance peace conference when war broke out, on his return initially supported calls for British neutrality.<sup>47</sup>

The closest Argent gets to a Birmingham reference is his claim that the former Carrs Lane minister, J.H. Jowett, ‘argued for the allied position’ in New York.<sup>48</sup>

Argent identified Congregationalists active in the Peace movement, such as the Christian pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR), founded in 1914, with active involvement of Leyton Richards, C.J. Cadoux and Ebenezer Cunningham, and the launch of the League to Abolish War in 1916, by the Congregationalist minister, F.H. Stead (brother of the late anti-war activist W.T. Stead).<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Argent, *The Transformation*, pp. 93-94

<sup>46</sup> Argent, *The Transformation*, pp. 94-96

<sup>47</sup> Argent, *The Transformation*, pp. 80-81

<sup>48</sup> Argent, *The Transformation*, p. 88

<sup>49</sup> Argent, *The Transformation*, p. 98



Argent's most helpful insights are his identification of two specific outcomes for Congregationalists and Baptists from the conflict: the first was a changed attitude towards the state, a reversal in their opposition to accepting state pay for their ministers, as both Baptist and Congregationalist ministers accepted paid military chaplaincies. He said of such appointments that 'their appearance flew in the face of tradition and principle', but recognised they would lead in the future to other appointments in prisons, hospitals, universities etc. Argent's concern comes from his understanding of Congregationalist (and Baptist) ecclesiology, whereby it is the local church (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit) that calls and appoints ministers, which may then be recognised by a national union of churches. Who therefore was calling and appointing the chaplains, and by which church's authority? He also suggested that greater wartime co-operation may have prompted moves towards greater ecumenism and church unity generally.<sup>50</sup>

Some denominational histories, such as the multi-volume *History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, had disappointingly little to say about the conflict – although Turner in his chapter did acknowledge the protests of A. S. Peake (Primitive Methodist) and S. E. Keeble (Wesleyan) at the treatment of conscientious objectors, and that 'the War, whilst disruptive, does not appear to have been followed by any mass exodus from church membership'.<sup>51</sup>

Histories of individual denominations tend to stress issues such as the difficulties caused to ordinary church life by the war, the shortage of lay leadership, or the

---

<sup>50</sup> Argent, *The Transformation*, pp. 105-07

<sup>51</sup> J. M. Turner, 'Methodism in England, 1900-1932' in R. Davies, A. R. George & G. Rupp, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, Vol 3* (Peterborough: 1983), p. 357

numbers killed or awarded Victoria Crosses. There appears to be no comparative study of the impact of the First World War on church life and theology across the free churches, nor any detailed local studies. A detailed local study is particularly helpful in avoiding the trap of focusing on particularly strident or unusual views but enables a deeper study of individual and church responses at a local level in a particular location, rather than focusing on the views of prominent national leaders.

### 1.2.3 Studies of Anti-War Movements

There have been many detailed studies of the anti-war movements of the period,<sup>52</sup> but few focus in detail on the churches' role, other than Ceadel's essay on 'Christian Pacifism in the era of two world wars'<sup>53</sup> and Wallis's short history of the main Christian pacifist group, the Fellowship of Reconciliation.<sup>54</sup> Others have studied the role of faith in the British Army, such as Snape's thorough 2005 work, *God and the British Soldier*.<sup>55</sup>

An earlier work of value is Peter Brock's chapter on nineteenth-century British pacifism.<sup>56</sup> As well as offering an overview of nineteenth-century British peace movements, and particularly highlighting Baptist and Quaker involvement in them, he also helpfully identified a number of newer Christian pacifist traditions, such the Brethren, the Restoration Movement (Churches of Christ/Disciples of Christ) and the

---

<sup>52</sup> E.g. Peter Brock, *Twentieth Century Pacifism* (London, 1970) & Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-45: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: 1980)

<sup>53</sup> Martin Ceadel, 'Christian Pacifism in the era of two world wars' in W.J. Sheils, ed., *The Church and War*, Studies in Church History 20 (Oxford: 1983), pp. 391-408

<sup>54</sup> Jill Wallis, *Valiant for Peace: A History of the Fellowship of Reconciliation 1914 to 1979* (London: 1991)

<sup>55</sup> Michael Snape, *God and the British Soldier, Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars* (Abingdon: 2005)

<sup>56</sup> Peter Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914* (Princeton, N.J., USA: 1972), pp. 367-406

Pentecostals,<sup>57</sup> key individual pacifists such as the Quaker-turned-Salvationist A.S. Booth-Clibborn, and non-Trinitarian pacifists such as the Christadelphians and International Bible Students.<sup>58</sup> He appears unaware of Booth-Clibborn's subsequent conversion to Adventist/Pentecostal views and the impact of his anti-war book *Blood against Blood* which was republished during the conflict, and also failed to identify the Christadelphian's founder Thomas's origins in the pacifist Restorationist U.S. Disciples of Christ movement. Perhaps most helpful is his identification in groups such as the Brethren, Churches of Christ and the Pentecostals of a Bible-centred pacifism in the tradition of earlier evangelical pacifists such as Thomas Clarkson, alongside the more theologically liberal 'politico-economic case against war' of the peace societies.<sup>59</sup>

Ceadel's book on the British peace movement from 1854-1945 covers similar ground but provides some useful information on the allegiances of conscientious objectors in the First World War. Using Fellowship of Reconciliation and No Conscription Fellowship sources, he concludes that of Britain's 16,500 conscientious objectors 'a substantial proportion' were from groups such as the Christadelphians, Seventh-Day Adventists or Plymouth Brethren. He argued that 'by far the largest category were ill-educated Christian sectarians who based their objection on Biblical literalism',

---

<sup>57</sup> Although he mistakenly identifies Pentecostals as 'fairly recent imports from the United States'

<sup>58</sup> The movement later known as Jehovah's Witnesses

<sup>59</sup> Brock, *Pacifism in Europe*, pp. 403-06

compared to an estimated 1,191 socialist objectors<sup>60</sup> and 750 Quaker objectors.<sup>61</sup>

Laity has published an historical monograph on the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British peace movement.<sup>62</sup> His thorough examination, unlike previous works, is largely based on the archives of the Peace Society and reveals strong Quaker involvement in the early movement, including the influence and financial support of prominent Quakers such as Birmingham's Joseph Sturge. He also drew attention to the League of Universal Brotherhood, a competing peace organisation led by the Birmingham-based American Congregationalist and peace activist, Elihu Burritt, which lasted until the organisations merged in the 1860s. He identified a high level of nonconformist involvement in the British Peace Movement through the nineteenth century – a fact which seems to set it apart from many peace movements on the European mainland.<sup>63</sup> He also identified diversity of opinion as to how to respond to events taking place in Europe: he quoted Carrs Lane Church's minister, R.W. Dale, as advocating: 'While we maintain a large army and a splendid fleet to protect our own shores, I trust that we shall never shrink from using both on behalf of justice and freedom whenever our national duty and our national honour require us to afford the good cause material as well as moral support.'<sup>64</sup>

There are a few local studies of opposition to the conflict: Pearce in his 2001 book

---

<sup>60</sup> Here Brock appears confused – the 1,191 figure relates to Socialist objectors out of a total of 6,261 who were imprisoned, so the comparable Quaker figure is 279 – J.W. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience, a history, 1916-1919* (London: 1922), pp. 350-52

<sup>61</sup> Martin Ceadel, *Semi-detached Idealists: the British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945* (Oxford: 2000), p. 220

<sup>62</sup> Paul Laity, *The British Peace Movement 1870-1914* (Oxford: 2002)

<sup>63</sup> Laity, *The British Peace Movement*, p. 16

<sup>64</sup> Laity, *The British Peace Movement*, p. 24

*Comrades in Conscience* has produced a detailed local study on opposition to the First World War in Huddersfield, but this focused primarily on political rather than faith-based objectors.<sup>65</sup>

#### **1.2.4. Local Studies of Urban Faith/Religion in England**

As Birmingham was predominantly urban by this time, there is also some value in considering other local studies of faith in urban areas from around this period.

Cox, in his study of Lambeth, 1870-1930, drew attention to the rise in liberalism in some branches of nonconformity and went on to suggest it was these churches that suffered most from the impact of the First World War, as he argued: ‘The ideology of liberal Nonconformity simply proved less adaptable to new circumstances than either evangelical Nonconformity, with its emphasis on transcendence and the doctrine of sin, or the Church of England, more firmly rooted in a group of historical institutions rather than in a particular way of looking at the world.’<sup>66</sup> He also drew attention to the prominence of the Nettlefolds in Lambeth Unitarianism – a name which is also prominent amongst Birmingham Unitarians.

Morris’s study of Croydon, 1840-1914, came to some interesting conclusions as to why all denominations were falling behind population growth in the late Victorian period. He argued that where growth existed, it could be attributed to children of members joining the churches and/or churches with prominent preachers or occurred

---

<sup>65</sup> Cyril Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience: The Story of an English Community’s Opposition to the Great War* (London: 2001)

<sup>66</sup> Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in Secular Society, Lambeth, 1870-1930* (New York/Oxford: 1982), p. 246

in areas of population growth. He also highlighted financial challenges, and the creation of Croydon Corporation, resulting in a reduction in need for some of the services that the churches had previously been providing.<sup>67</sup>

Binfield in his chapter on Sheffield, c1840-1950, made an observation which could equally have been written about Birmingham in this period: 'Sheffield's Quakerism and Unitarianism have been more distinguished in individuals than numbers.'<sup>68</sup>

Doyle in his articles on Norwich in the period from 1900 to 1935 identified parallels with Birmingham and Sheffield as he noted the political strength of Unitarians and Quakers, including Martineaus and Gurneys/Frys respectively, but he also detected differences, with politically active Baptists and Congregationalists such as the Colmans and Jewsons, and demonstrated a continued Liberal-Nonconformist relationship after the First World War which was far less evident in Birmingham.<sup>69</sup>

Williams' work on Southwark is of little relevance to this study as she focuses primarily on 'popular religion' rather than on the faith of church members.<sup>70</sup>

Yeo's study of Reading, 1890-1914, although not exclusively focusing on churches, also provided some items of relevance. Amongst the significant factors he saw in play

---

<sup>67</sup> J.N. Morris, *Religion and Urban Change, Croydon, 1840-1914* (Woodbridge: 1992), p. 182

<sup>68</sup> Clyde Binfield, 'A crucible of modest though concentrated experiment, Religion in Sheffield, c1840-1950' in Hugh McLeod, ed., *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities, 1830-1930* (London: 1995), p. 213

<sup>69</sup> Barry M. Doyle, 'Urban Liberalism and the 'Lost Generation': politics and middle-class culture in Norwich, 1900-1935', *The Historical Journal*, 38:3 (9/1995), pp. 617-34 & Barry M. Doyle, 'The structure of elite power in the early twentieth-century city: Norwich, 1900-35', *Urban History*, 24:2 (1997), pp. 179-99

<sup>70</sup> Sarah Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark, c.1880-1939* (Oxford: 1999)

at Reading were the expression/containment of working-class consciousness and the action/inaction of religious and voluntary organisations. He identified as particularly significant a movement which had been founded in the West Midlands – the Brotherhood Movement or Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Association. He recognised the strength and wider social and political influence of the Brotherhood/PSA Movement as he claimed: ‘On each occasion when working-men delegates came together to discuss a common objective, such as furthering the WEA branch, the PSA formed a strong constituency of its own.’<sup>71</sup> A contrast with Birmingham, however, was to be found in the actions of the Quaker employer, Huntley and Palmer, who seemed less progressive than the Cadburys – as he reported a Socialist being sacked, and industrial disputes leading to strikes taking place.

It can therefore be seen that these other contemporary studies of urban faith provided a few helpful pointers for the situation in Birmingham in the early twentieth century.

### **1.2.5 Studies of Birmingham and the First World War**

For Birmingham, there are available a range of general histories of the period, and some studies of the city’s involvement in the war.<sup>72</sup> Also of value is Barnsby’s 1998 book on the Birmingham and Black Country Labour movement<sup>73</sup> in which he sought to record local opposition to the conflict, including documenting local conscientious objectors, but there appears to have been no local study on the influence of or impact on the churches.

---

<sup>71</sup> Stephen Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis* (London: 1976), pp. 280-83

<sup>72</sup> e.g. Reginald J. Brazier & Ernest Sandford, *Birmingham and the Great War, 1914-1919* (Birmingham: 1921)

<sup>73</sup> George Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country, 1850-1939* (Talybont: 1998)

Whilst many denominational and individual church histories reported and reflected on the impact of the conflict, there appears to be no previous detailed comparative local study focusing on local churches and the First World War. Of the more recent studies, Roberts' 2014 volume drew attention to what took place in the city, the impact of conscription, and the challenges faced by key Quaker families such as the Cadburys and Lloyds as members of the families took up positions for and against the conflict. Her survey considered Quaker and political opposition to the war, but not the opposition to the war of other Christians outside of Quakerism (other than the ILP activist and Primitive Methodist, Jim Simmons) or the impact on the churches of the conflict.<sup>74</sup>

### **1.3. Methodology**

In the remaining chapters, by primarily focusing on local and regional Birmingham free church records, compared and contrasted where appropriate with other sources and previous scholarship, this thesis sets out to investigate the attitudes to the First World War amongst the evangelical free churches in Birmingham and the impact of the war on the individual local churches, seeking to identify theological, political or other factors that were coming into play. Where possible, these are compared and contrasted with any evidence of views or practices prior to the conflict.

Local and regional sources utilised include local church and auxiliary organisations minute books, annual reports, directories, local church magazines, membership/communion lists, circuit plans, rolls of honour, monuments, war memorials and local

---

<sup>74</sup> Sian Roberts, *Birmingham, Remembering 1914-1918* (Stroud: 2014), pp. 105-24



church histories. Other local sources where churches or church members were mentioned, such as local labour movement publications and local newspapers, were also consulted. National sources consulted include denominational handbooks/yearbooks and newspapers. Most records were consulted at the (former) Birmingham City Library archives and local studies. Other sources were consulted at the British Library, Dr. Williams's Library (including the Congregational Library), The Angus Library and Archive (Regent's Park College, Oxford), Woodbrooke College Library, Friends' House Library, John Rylands' Library (University of Manchester), Labour History Archive (People's Museum, Manchester), University of Birmingham Library, Worcestershire County Records Office, Birmingham Boys' Brigade Battalion archives and a range of archives still held by individual local Birmingham churches. Many local chapels and meeting houses (including some former places of worship) were also visited to record surviving First World War memorials.

Priority was given to local church sources, to seek to understand and interpret the impact of the conflict at a local level and from local church perspectives. Whilst priority was given to materials from the 1914-1920 period, to cover the war and its immediate aftermath, earlier sources were also consulted to reveal any identifiable changes in attitudes or activities as a consequence of the conflict, particularly in comparison with the Boer War, where any evidence had survived.

All available local Baptist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Churches of Christ, Evangelical Free Church Council, Friends' Institutes, Labour Church, Adult School, Brotherhood/PSA, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Birmingham Medical Mission, Boy Scout and Boys' Brigade primary sources for the periods 1899-1902 and 1914-1919

were examined. The much larger volume of surviving Methodist material meant that this had to be sampled rather than examined in totality: efforts were made to ensure that the sample included a range across the Methodist traditions and across the city, including all available local church magazines and circuit plans/directories. No local Apostolic/Pentecostal, Brethren, Salvation Army, or Seventh-Day Adventist primary sources from the period were identified, and therefore secondary and national sources were used for these.

The consideration of Quaker sources was complicated by two factors: the move nationally towards more liberal theology within Quakerism during this time (taking some of them outside of the remit of this thesis) and the lack of availability of most local Quaker records at the time of the research, other than from some of the Friends' Institutes. Quaker involvement was therefore considered through the lens of their involvement in wider evangelical movements in the city, such as the Evangelical Free Church Councils, Adult Schools, the Brotherhood/PSA Movement and the Boys' Life Brigade/Peace Scouts, as well as the local political involvement of significant evangelical Quaker families such as the Cadburys.

All surviving local and regional church magazines and journals for the period 1899-1919 were examined, including those from Evangelical Free Church Councils, auxiliary movements such as Adult Schools, Brotherhoods/PSAs, Sunday School Union, Temperance and Boy Scouts as well as local Labour, Co-op and Trade Union movement journals. Local newspapers were sampled, particularly around key dates such as the outbreak of the war and the introduction of conscription.

Amongst the national primary sources, all available denominational yearbooks and directories for the period 1914-1920 were consulted and national denominational publications were sampled. Local and national Yearbooks from auxiliary movements such as the National Adult School Union and the Brotherhood Movement were also consulted, where available.

All sources potentially have issues of selectivity and bias. Those which proved of most value in identifying local church or members' opinions or understanding were the local church magazines. It was here that opinions were most likely to be found, whether of the editor or the minister, or of leaders of local church auxiliaries (e.g. Sunday school, Adult School, Bible Class, Brotherhood, Brigade company) who provided reports to the magazines. Sometimes individual correspondence could also be found in them. Of particular value were publications such as the *Midland supplement* to the Adult School publication *One and All* and the Moseley Road circuit's *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, as they contained reports from a range of churches. Whilst they would all have been subjected to differing levels of editorial censorship, it is still possible to detect a range of opinions coming through.

Annual Reports, whether from individual churches (which often contained detailed reports from each local church auxiliary) or from regional organisations such as the West Midland Baptist Association or the Midland Adult School Union were also a valuable source of local church opinion. Annual Reports could also be used to trace the numbers from each church involved or the numbers killed through the conflict, and the effect on local church auxiliaries – e.g. which diminished in membership or were forced to temporarily close due to lack of leadership. The reports benefit from the fact that they tend to be multi-authored, again increasing the possibility of a range

of voices being heard. Another advantage was that they tended to reflect on the previous year, rather than simply reporting events.

The least valuable sources proved to be the minute books: once again a range were consulted, including local church meetings, deacons' meetings and Brotherhood meetings, as well as minutes of district or regional committees and assemblies. These were helpful in providing basic factual information, including the impact on church activities, war-related charities supported, military units or speakers invited to church events etc., but were less helpful in revealing opinion or interpretation of events. An advantage they have over other sources such as magazines, however, is that minutes usually had to be signed off as a true record at the next meeting, hopefully reducing the possibility of the minute-takers' bias showing through. Quality of minutes varied hugely – some provided detailed reports of decisions made, whilst others frustratingly assumed much knowledge on the part of the reader – such as reporting a motion had been passed on a war-related issue and to whom that motion was sent – but not reporting the actual content of the motion. As the focus of most of the minute books was on the regular activities of that church or auxiliary, those consulted from the period of the Boer War provided little information of relevance to this thesis because, with no conscription or blackout regulations, the war generally had little reported impact on local church life.

Where more than one source existed from the same church for the same period, it was at times possible to cross-check them against each other. Evidence discovered in the sources was considered to seek to identify theological responses to the conflict, including evidence for conscientious objection and the impact on local church

activities. This thesis also includes a chapter examining auxiliary lay movements, which were particularly significant in Birmingham, and a chapter focusing on extracts from participants' letters home, as reported in local church magazines, to seek to interpret the impact of faith on church (or auxiliary) members who participated in the conflict, whether as combatants or non-combatants.

#### **1.4 Birmingham and the First World War**

Birmingham had been growing in both size and significance through the nineteenth and early twentieth century – it had become a city in 1889 and been extended to take in many of its neighbouring districts in 1891, 1909 and 1911. The inclusion of urban districts as far from the city centre as Kings Norton meant that in 1911 Birmingham became the second most populated city in England.<sup>75</sup> To avoid confusion caused by these frequent changes to the city boundaries, all statistics included in this thesis will define the city by its current boundaries.

Birmingham was a major contributor to the war effort. Initially there was much volunteer enlistment – 4,500 signed up in the first week and three City Battalions were raised. The advent of conscription increased the numbers – by the end of the conflict at least 148,000 men had signed up (around 54% of men of military age), and 12,400 died in the conflict. Birmingham with its Quaker influence was also a recruiting ground for forms of non-military service such as the Friends' Ambulance Unit.

---

<sup>75</sup> *Birmingham Illustrated: Cornish's Stranger's Guide through Birmingham* (Birmingham: 1913), pp. 25-26 & 32

Another significant Birmingham contribution was in the area of munitions. Birmingham was already significant for arms manufacture prior to the conflict, through the presence of Birmingham Small Arms (BSA) and Kynoch's. These companies were hugely expanded during the war, becoming Birmingham's two largest employers. New factories were established such as the National Shell Factory at Washwood Heath and other local manufacturers, such as Wolseley Motors and Austin's Longbridge plant, were turned over to military production. The scale of the work was huge, with Birmingham manufacturers producing 15 million shells during the war. Kynoch's were supplying 24 million rifle cartridges and 300,000 revolver cartridges a week and BSA 10,000 rifles and 2,000 Lewis guns per week. Birmingham's jewellery quarter also benefited by engaging in button production for the military.

The workforce required also resulted in some migration into the city, including around 15,000 women workers. Refugees also settled in the city – some 4,600 refugees from the Low Countries, and 30 Serbian boys who were housed in Selly Oak.<sup>76</sup>

#### **1.4.1 Birmingham's Free Churches in the Nineteenth Century**

This thesis examines the evangelical free churches within the city of Birmingham during the First World War. To understand the context, it is necessary to consider the strength and significance of Protestant nonconformity in the city of Birmingham in the nineteenth and early twentieth century prior to the war. The key issues usually

---

<sup>76</sup> Eric Hopkins, *Birmingham, the Making of the Second City, 1850-1939* (Stroud: 2001), pp. 129-30 & Chris Upton, *A History of Birmingham* (Chichester: 1993/1997), pp. 193-94

identified by students of faith communities in nineteenth-century Birmingham tend to centre around Birmingham's role in the national debate over education, and the significance of 'Free Christians'/Unitarians such as George Dawson and the Chamberlains in the development of the 'Civic Gospel' or 'Municipal Gospel', including the political influence of key Quaker families such as the Sturges and the Cadburys.

One of Birmingham's best-known nonconformists was George Dawson, pastor of the Church of the Saviour, in Edward Street, which he founded after his resignation from Mount Zion Baptist Church, Graham Street, in 1847. Famous as the home of the 'Civic Gospel', under Dawson and his successors it was conducted as a 'Free Christian' chapel, whose theology was Unitarian. In 1851, at the height of Dawson's popularity, there were sittings for 1,400, and an estimated average congregation of 1,300, but the main Sunday congregation had fallen, by 1892, to 483. The chapel was to close at the end of 1895.

However, a more significant Free Church in the city in the nineteenth century was Carrs Lane Congregational Church, a thriving city-centre chapel from which many other churches in the Birmingham area were successfully planted. Its pastors had a national as well as local prominence. John Angell James, minister of Carrs Lane from 1805 to 1859, played a key role in the movement which resulted in the foundation of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1832, whom he served as Chairman in 1838, and also of the Evangelical Alliance, founded in 1846. James's co-pastor and then successor R. W. Dale, minister from 1854 to 1895, had an even higher profile. In 1869 he was appointed chairman of the Congregational Union of

England and Wales: he also edited *The Congregationalist* from 1871 to 1878, and served as moderator of the first International Congregational Council, held in London in 1891.

Also worthy of note were Charles Vince, who succeeded George Dawson at Mount Zion Baptist Church, and the lay activist John Skirrow Wright, elder at the People's Chapel (Baptist). A *Birmingham Daily Mail* report recalled an 1872 school board meeting with Charles Vince, George Dawson and John Skirrow Wright side-by-side. Vince died in 1874, Dawson in 1876 and John Skirrow Wright in 1880. It describes how: 'The three men who sat side-by-side on that summer day in 1872 are those only in Birmingham whose loss has occasioned great demonstrations of public grief since the death of John Angell James in 1859.' However, all these prominent figures in local and national life had died by the end of the nineteenth century, leaving the way open for new leaders for a new century.

Birmingham had played a significant role in the debates surrounding the faith element in proposals to introduce universal primary education. In 1867 an Education Aid Society was established in Birmingham. The leading Anglican (and future archbishop) Dr William Temple spoke at the inaugural meeting and leading local nonconformists, Joseph Chamberlain and R.W. Dale, were prominent members. Their focus was on raising awareness and fundraising.<sup>77</sup> Many prominent members went on to be part of the National Education League founded in Birmingham in 1869 under the leadership of Joseph Chamberlain. This, however, was the outworking of a split in

---

<sup>77</sup> A.W.W. Dale, *The Life of RW Dale of Birmingham* (London: 1902), pp. 269-71



opinion as the Education League advocated a national system of rate-aided non-denominational or 'unsectarian' schools.<sup>78</sup> In response, the local Anglicans formed a 'Birmingham Education Union' in 1869, which advocated an extended denominational system.<sup>79</sup> This was not, however, a simple Anglican/Tory vs nonconformist/Liberal debate. Some leading nonconformists, such as R.W. Dale, minister of Carrs Lane church, were not happy with the approach of the National Education League, which they saw as too secular: they advocated a non-denominational Christian basis to education instead.<sup>80</sup> This view was also maintained by the evangelical Quakers, George and Elizabeth Cadbury, who in the early twentieth century donated Bournville Infant and Junior Schools to the Birmingham School Board on the understanding that they would provide education on a non-denominational Christian basis.

However, despite the strength of their political influence, the Quakers and Unitarians were numerically small minorities, and the Unitarians were excluded from many significant organisations (such as the Evangelical Free Church Council) for reasons of theology. Birmingham Quakers during this period, due to the Cadbury influence, were still largely evangelical and therefore still part of mainstream nonconformity, despite the more theologically liberal drift of their movement nationally.

#### **1.4.2 The Civic or Municipal Gospel**

The Baptist minister turned Free Christian (i.e. Unitarian) Dawson has largely been credited with the concept of the 'Civic Gospel' which actively supported and

---

<sup>78</sup> G.I.T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain* (Oxford: 1987), pp. 31-2

<sup>79</sup> Machin, *Politics*, p. 32

<sup>80</sup> Dale, *R.W. Dale*, p. 271 & Machin, *Politics*, p. 32

encouraged municipal reform in Birmingham. What was significant here was not an attempt to put Christian ethics into action in wider society, examples of which can be found through much of church history, but rather an organised attempt to use the powers of a local authority to implement the social implications of Christianity, particularly in respect to providing for the poorer in society. Key policies had included taking civic control of public utilities – in Birmingham gas and water came under civic control in 1875. Vince, Dale, Skirrow Wright, Crosskey (Minister of the Church of the Messiah, Unitarian) and Jenkin Brown (Minister, Wycliffe Baptist Church) were also enthusiastic advocates of the doctrine, and Dale and the Baptists were able to reframe it in a format more acceptable to the evangelicals. The Quaker and Adult School pioneer, Alderman William White, was also an enthusiastic supporter of Chamberlain's reforms.

It should be stressed, however, that this ideal, although always associated with Birmingham, had previously been seen in Glasgow, where following lobbying by (politically) Liberal and United Presbyterian town councillors, municipal control of the water supply was achieved in 1855 and of the gas supply in 1869, following on from their previous success in restricting alcohol licences from 1850.<sup>81</sup> As control of the water supply had been debated in Glasgow as early as 1819,<sup>82</sup> it is interesting to speculate whether this had come to Dawson's attention during his time as a student at Glasgow University. Four members of Dawson's congregation, Samuel Timmins, G.J. Johnson, William Harris and J.H. Chamberlain were involved in the 1860s in the production of a radical satirical local paper *The Town Crier* which actively promoted

---

<sup>81</sup> W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver, eds., *Glasgow Vol 2: 1830-1912* (Manchester: 1996), pp. 456-8 & T.M. Devine & Gordon Jackson, eds., *Glasgow Vol 1: Beginnings to 1830* (Manchester: 1995), p. 248

<sup>82</sup> Fraser & Maver, eds., *Glasgow Vol 2*, p. 454

the ideals of the Civic Gospel.<sup>83</sup> In the twenty years of its existence (1847-67), Dawson's Church of the Saviour had provided Birmingham with twelve local councillors, six of whom became mayors.

The Unitarian 'Old Meeting' had also been a source of Liberal councillors.<sup>84</sup> Through the influence of key families such as the Chamberlains, Kenricks and Martineaus, the Unitarians although numerically weak had a particularly strong civic influence. In the period 1851 to 1908, sixteen Quakers had sat on the local council, of whom seven had been elected Mayor.<sup>85</sup> Amongst the Quakers, the Cadburys, Sturges, Lloyds and Brights had been particularly active in civic life. The Baptist People's Chapel in Hockley had provided one Liberal MP, Skirrow Wright (although he died before he took up office) and at least three local councillors in the late nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup>

The strength of the 'Nonconformist conscience' was demonstrated in the fact that from 1832 to 1886 Birmingham had been represented entirely by Liberal MPs. However, the split in Liberalism over Home Rule, and the defection to Liberal Unionism of six of Birmingham's seven MPs, including prominent nonconformists John Bright, William Kenrick and Joseph Chamberlain, meant that since 1886 Birmingham had been entirely represented by Conservatives and Liberal Unionists instead.

The Labour Party had begun to make inroads on the City Council, with the election of

---

<sup>83</sup> E.P. Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth-Century Urban Government* (London: 1973), pp. 77-79

<sup>84</sup> Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons*, pp. 93-97

<sup>85</sup> *Handbook of the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends* (Birmingham: 1908), p. 153

<sup>86</sup> A.S. Langley, *Birmingham Baptists Past and Present* (London: 1939), p. 110

their first councillor in 1897.<sup>87</sup> By 1911 they had six members including the ILP activist and Primitive Methodist local preacher John Kneeshaw, representing Chamberlain's Rotton Park Ward, plus George Cadbury Jr., who was elected as an independent Liberal, but joined the Labour Party. By 1915 there were still many prominent nonconformist families represented amongst the City Councillors and Aldermen, including two Cadburys, two Chamberlains, two Martineaus, two Kenricks and a Lloyd, as well as the Quaker, Harrison Barrow, and James Homer from Cannon Street Baptist Church (at that time meeting in hired premises in Handsworth Council House).<sup>88</sup> Harrison Barrow was appointed to succeed the Unitarian Ernest Martineau as Lord Mayor of the city in 1914, but on the outbreak of war, did not take up the role, due to the incompatibility with his Quaker faith of what he would be asked to do in wartime. Another prominent Unitarian, Neville Chamberlain, went on to serve as Birmingham's Lord Mayor (1915-17), and after the war another prominent Quaker, William Adlington Cadbury (1919-21) occupied the same office. The policy of municipal control founded on the civic or municipal gospel was still in evidence in Birmingham in the early twentieth century, as the Corporation took control of tramways (1904), bus services (1913) and trolleybuses (1922), and established a Corporation Saving Bank (1916) which developed into a Municipal Bank (1919).

### **1.5 Numerical Strength: The Religious Censuses of 1851 & 1892**

An immediate problem faced by any historian of faith communities is how to effectively measure their size and influence. Different types of faith community leave different types of records. Records of rites of passage such as baptisms, weddings,

---

<sup>87</sup> *Cornish's Birmingham Yearbook 1915-16* (Birmingham: 1915-16), pp. 18-22 & 71-74

<sup>88</sup> Christopher Phillips, *Birmingham Votes, 1911-2000* (Plymouth: 2000)

funerals and confirmations can be helpful indicators, but comparison between denominations can be difficult: for example, it is not helpful to compare Anglican and Baptist baptismal numbers, when the former baptises children and the latter practises believers' baptism. Neither is an Anglican electoral roll really the equivalent of Free Church Membership as it is theoretically open to anyone who lives in the parish to sign up, whilst evangelical free church membership requires both a personal profession of faith and a commitment to the local church.

Religious belief is almost impossible to quantify, but for nineteenth-century Birmingham there are available the results of both the *Census of Religious Worship* of 1851 and the *Birmingham News* Religious Census of 1892 which give two valuable snapshots of religious observance and help to establish pre-war trends in church attendance. Whilst the 1851 census, held on Mothering Sunday 30th March 1851, is rather too early to be relevant to this thesis, there is value in comparing it with the 1892 Census to detect trends that may be ongoing.

McLeod has noted local factors such as many in the West Midlands blaming Mothering Sunday for low attendances.<sup>89</sup> However, he went on to argue that the figures for major towns, including the West Midlands, were largely confirmed by broad similarities with what he calls the 'miniature religious census' of 1881, when local newspapers organised enquiries in about 80 English and Scottish towns and cities.<sup>90</sup> However, in Birmingham, the *Birmingham News* census was not conducted until 1892. In Birmingham there were some noticeable differences between the two

---

<sup>89</sup> Hugh McLeod, 'Class, Community and Region: The Religious Geography of Nineteenth Century England' in Michael Hill, ed., *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 6 (London: 1973), n60-1

<sup>90</sup> McLeod, 'Class, Community and Region', p. 43

censuses: particularly significant was the fact that the 1892 census showed more people attending Nonconformist places of worship than Anglican, a reversal of the situation in 1851.<sup>91</sup>

McLeod's study of the 1851 census revealed the West Midlands having a lower percentage of the population attending worship, as compared with the East Midlands which reported one of the highest. Birmingham and Coventry had attendances 30% lower than the surrounding countryside, but the Black Country returns varied from town to town. He also compared the attendances across nineteen English towns and cities in 1851 with the results of the various local censuses in the 1880s and 1890s – Birmingham was 18<sup>th</sup> out of nineteen in 1851, and 19<sup>th</sup> in the later censuses (although the Birmingham census was later than the others). In contrast, Wolverhampton remained in ninth place on both occasions.

The 1851 census returns for the Birmingham area have been studied in detail by Robson, who helpfully compared the published census report with the original returns. He identified that the Birmingham census figures may be abnormally low in 1851 due to the decline of over 1,100 in Wesleyan Methodist membership since 1847 as a consequence of local dissension, presumably related to the Wesleyan Reform agitation.<sup>92</sup> Where the reformers were now attending, if anywhere, and if such gatherings were counted, is not clear. Aitken revealed other errors, such as the Birmingham Bull Street Quaker Meeting being counted twice and a rural Roman

---

<sup>91</sup> John Aitken, "“Never Before”, Yet Never Again: Birmingham in the 1851 religious census", *Birmingham Historian*, 22 (2002), p. 28

<sup>92</sup> Geoff Robson, *Dark Satanic Mills?: Religion and Irreligion in Birmingham and the Black Country* (Carlisle: 2002), p. 235

Catholic Church that ended up amongst the Birmingham returns.<sup>93</sup>

The 1892 census was organised by the *Birmingham News*, with the costs being met by the evangelical Quaker philanthropist, George Cadbury.<sup>94</sup> It was held on 30 November 1892, this time deliberately avoiding church festivals. It appears to have been professionally organised, with the numbers not being counted by clergy or church secretaries but by over 500 assistants recruited for the task.<sup>95</sup> Non-denominational services, informal Sunday afternoon meetings and even an open-air service at Aston Hall were all counted. Although precise comparison is not possible as the boundaries were not identical, the 1892 survey appears to show a success story for the churches in that in a period in which the city's population had more than doubled, there was an increase of about 6% of the population attending worship compared to 1851. Once estimates had been made for the number of 'twicers', it appears that about one-third of the population were attending at least one act of Sunday worship, and more than half of school-age children were attending Sunday School.

McLeod revealed that Anglican and nonconformist attendances were roughly equal in the poorer areas, nonconformists dominated in the working-class and socially mixed suburbs, and the Anglicans in the wealthiest districts, but he did not specify how he had classified the districts of the city.<sup>96</sup> However, there were some interesting denominational variations compared with 1851. The biggest surprise was for the Anglicans, who no longer attracted the majority of those attending. If the total

---

<sup>93</sup> John Aitken, 'Never Before, Yet Never Again', p.24

<sup>94</sup> Roy Peacock, 'The 1892 Birmingham Religious Census', in Alan Bryman, ed., *Religion in the Birmingham Area: Essays in the Sociology of Religion* (Birmingham: 1975), p. 12

<sup>95</sup> Peacock, 'The 1892 Birmingham Religious Census', p. 13

<sup>96</sup> Hugh McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London: 1974), p. 287 n.4

attendances for Birmingham, Aston, and Kings Norton in 1851 are compared with those for the enlarged Birmingham with Aston Manor in 1892, the Anglicans accommodation for worshippers had doubled, but their attendance ‘market share’ was down from 49.7% in 1851 to 38.6%. Roman Catholic attendance had increased, presumably as a consequence of Irish immigration, but had only reached 5%. Among the Old Dissent churches, Presbyterian, Baptist and Congregationalist attendances had more than doubled, thus maintaining their percentage of attenders. The Quakers had more than tripled their attendance – largely a reflection of the success of the Adult School movement promoted by the Sturges and Cadburys across the city, but even that increase gave them only 3% of attendances. All three Methodist Connexions had managed to maintain their position too. Amongst the more theologically liberal Unitarians there had been a decrease to 1.7%. Other non-Trinitarian groups established in Birmingham included Mormons, Swedenborgians, Spiritualists and both factions of Christadelphians; nevertheless, overall the non-Trinitarian worshippers had reduced from 5.5% to 3%. The largest percentage rise in attendances came in newer Trinitarian movements such as the Churches of Christ, the Christian Brethren, and the Salvation Army, and the growth in the number of non-denominational missions, such as the Birmingham City Mission, the Boatmen’s Mission, the Railway Mission, and the Medical Mission. Added together they represented over 12% of attendances compared to 3% in 1851. This means that the attendances of the churches of Old and New Dissent had grown at the same speed as the population and thus maintained their share of attendances – the only major changes were the drop in Anglican attendance and increase in attendance at non-denominational missions and churches from the newer Trinitarian movements of around 10%.



There are some puzzling aspects: Why had the predominantly evangelical Anglicans failed to keep up with the rate of population growth, as the evangelical free churches had done? Some have blamed it on the poor leadership of the octogenarian Bishop of Worcester, or on the absence of clear local leadership: the Bishop was in Worcester, the Archdeacons in Coventry – the highest local office was the rural dean of Birmingham, which was combined with a parish role as vicar or rector.<sup>97</sup> There appeared to have been a fair amount of mission effort: a Birmingham Church Extension Society had been founded in 1865, and the number of Anglican churches and missions doubled since 1851. Division within the Church of England may have been a factor, but Anglo-Catholicism had made few inroads into Birmingham Anglicanism, with only about six high church incumbents in place. Pew rents may have had an impact on attendance, as only seven of the 57 Anglican churches had completely free sittings.<sup>98</sup>

Another possibility is that it was more difficult for a centrally organised denomination to respond quickly to population growth than a congregationally organised one such as Baptists or Congregationalists, but then the more centrally organised Roman Catholics and Wesleyan Methodists appear to have been more successful.

---

<sup>97</sup> Peacock, 'The 1892 Religious Census', p.12

<sup>98</sup> Peacock, 'The 1892 Religious Census', pp. 22 & 24

## **1.6 Birmingham Free Church Co-operation**

### **1.6.1 Evangelical Free Church Councils**

The 1890s saw a noticeable increase in inter-church co-operation, particularly through the Evangelical Free Church Councils. The Free Church Council Movement grew out of an invitation to the Congregationalist, Guinness Rogers, to write an article for the *Methodist Times* in 1890 advocating a Free Church Congress. The proposal was well received by representatives of Old and New Dissent alike and the First Free Church Congress was held in Manchester in November 1892. One of the key speakers at the Congress was the Wolverhampton Congregationalist Dr Charles Berry.

On the occasion of the visit of the Evangelical Free Church Council Conference to Birmingham in 1906, the origins of the national movement were described as follows: 'In consequence of the Home Rule split in 1885 Free Churchmen were compelled to find some other basis for united action remote from the debatable ground of politics. But it was not until seven years later that any definite step was taken to reorganize the forces of the Churches.'<sup>99</sup> The article went on to explain that in Birmingham, following the 1892 religious census, George Cadbury invited all evangelical free churches to co-operate in house-to-house visitation, an act which led to the formation of a Birmingham and District Evangelical Free Church Council (EFCC) in November 1893.<sup>100</sup> This had come about following a February 1893 conference of free churchmen in Birmingham: George Cadbury served as President, and other key local participants included R.W. Dale of Carrs Lane Chapel and Rev. F. Luke Wiseman of the Wesleyan Central Hall. At the meeting Cadbury had proposed a house-to-house

---

<sup>99</sup> *The Free Church Chronicle*, Vol. VIII, No.87, March 1906, p. 75

<sup>100</sup> *The Free Church Chronicle*, Vol. VIII, No.87, March 1906, p. 75 and *BCA Birmingham & District EFC Annual Report* (February 1912-13)

visitation scheme which was unanimously agreed. However, when Wiseman proposed a Birmingham Free Church Council, Dale opposed the move, fearing that social and political concerns would outweigh spiritual ones. Cadbury's and Wiseman's view proved victorious. Cadbury went on to become the first president.

By March 1895, the Birmingham Free Church Council was strong enough to host the 3rd Free Church Congress. Dr Charles Berry of Wolverhampton presided. At the Congress, Rev. Thomas Law was invited to become resident in Birmingham as the organising secretary, with J. Rutherford of the Birmingham Sunday School Union as his assistant. George Cadbury was appointed one of the treasurers. George and Richard Cadbury made available 'a considerable sum of money annually' for the benefit of the movement. Later in that year the name of the movement became the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches. The following year Law and the central offices relocated to London, again with the Cadburys' financial assistance. On 7th May 1896 a West Midlands Federation of EFCCs was founded at a meeting at the Temperance Hall in Birmingham, bringing together 21 Free Church councils across Warwickshire, Worcestershire and South Staffordshire. George Cadbury remained a driving force as Treasurer of both the National and West Midlands EFCCs.

The Birmingham & District Council by 1901 had a total of 140 churches affiliated, representing Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Quakers, all the Methodist connexions, the Salvation Army and a number of non-denominational missions. The Unitarians and other non-Trinitarian groups were excluded for theological reasons.

## 1.6.2 United Missions

A major area of interdenominational co-operation amongst most of the Protestant churches in nineteenth-century Birmingham was their support for short-term non-denominational missions. These included Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey's Mission in Bingley Hall in 1875 for a fortnight which claimed 4,400 converts.<sup>101</sup>

R. T. Booth's 'Gospel Temperance' mission of 1882 combined evangelism and temperance, with its organisers claiming 50,184 new pledges for the period May-June 1882.<sup>102</sup> In 1888 they conducted a further mission in Summer Hill from which many conversions, restorations and 1,000 temperance pledges were claimed, and a new successful Adult Bible class launched.<sup>103</sup> They remained active in the city for some years with Cadbury family patronage, conducting eleven tent missions in Birmingham in 1900.<sup>104</sup> The Torrey/Alexander Mission of 1904, in the Bingley Hall, claimed thousands of converts.<sup>105</sup> This mission also had Cadbury support – Helen Cadbury went on to marry Alexander after meeting him whilst she counselled new converts at the mission.<sup>106</sup>

## 1.7 Other Significant Factors

Two particular reasons why the Birmingham church attendance figures had not floundered were national movements which were particularly strong in Birmingham:

---

<sup>101</sup> 'Religious History: Protestant Nonconformity', *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham* (1964), pp. 411-34

<sup>102</sup> 'Religious History: Protestant Nonconformity', *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham* (1964), pp. 411-34

<sup>103</sup> "Summer Hill" *Magazine*, Vol 1 (Mar 1897)

<sup>104</sup> *Midland Temperance Witness* No.3 (27/4/1901)

<sup>105</sup> 'Religious History: Protestant Nonconformity', *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham* (1964), pp. 411-34

<sup>106</sup> Helen Cadbury, *Charles M. Alexander, a Romance of Song and Soul-Winning* (London: c.1920)

the Adult School Movement and the Brotherhood and Sisterhood Movement.<sup>107</sup>

The significance of both movements numerically can be lost in the statistics where they tend to be treated as additional early morning or afternoon services. However, both the fact that afternoon service attendance had more than doubled between 1851 and 1892, and the large attendances at many of the meetings shows the effectiveness of the Brotherhood and Sisterhood/P.S.A. movement in the period.

As Birmingham grew in size and significance it began to host national church events. In 1839, Birmingham hosted the Congregational Union's Autumn Meetings, which was the first time they had been held outside London. Birmingham hosted them again in 1861 and 1897. Birmingham also hosted the Baptist Assembly for the first time in 1876, the Free Church Congress in 1895 and 1906, and the National Brotherhood Conference in 1913.

Birmingham was also significant for publishing: the pastor of Frederick Street Strict Baptist chapel, J. T. Dennett, was from 1884-1891 editor of the *Gospel Standard*.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, the Churches of Christ *Ecclesiastical Observer* (later the *Bible Advocate*) was edited by David King in Birmingham from 1876. The Churches of Christ opened their Book Room in Birmingham in 1903, which developed into their publishing house, the Berean Press.

Of greater significance, perhaps, was the founding in the city of theological and

---

<sup>107</sup> See Chapter 5 for more information on these movements

<sup>108</sup> B. A. Ramsbottom, *The History of the Gospel Standard Magazine* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Harpenden: 2010), p. 4

missionary training colleges: Spring Hill Congregational College was opened in 1830, and remained in Birmingham until 1885, when it relocated to Oxford as Mansfield College. Handsworth Wesleyan Theological College, in Friary Road, was opened in 1880. In 1903 George Cadbury donated one of his homes, 'Woodbrooke', to become a Quaker Settlement and training college in Selly Oak. Selly Oak soon became a national centre for missionary training with the opening of Westholme (1905), later Kingsmead, which trained staff for the Friends' Foreign Mission; Westhill (1907), which trained Sunday School teachers; Fircroft (1909) which trained Adult School leaders; and Carey Hall (1912), which trained Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian women missionaries.

### **1.8 The Anglicans in Birmingham**

The Anglicans in Birmingham were also rising to the challenge of population growth. In 1891, J.J.S. Perowne, the new Bishop of Worcester, challenged his listeners: 'Let every one of them resolve that they would wipe off the reproach that in no city in England had so little been done for the welfare of the souls for which Christ died as in this great city of Birmingham with its teeming thousands and hundreds of thousands.' One particularly positive example was E.A. Knox who was appointed to Aston in 1891: in a short time he had appointed seven curates (previously there were three), each with their own mission. By the early twentieth century Aston Church and its missions were to feature a wide range of evangelistic auxiliaries, including Early Morning Adult Schools, Band of Hope, Boys' Brigade, Church Lads' Brigade, Boy Scouts and the Girls' Friendly Society.

## 1.9 Labour Churches and Allied Movements

The Labour Church Movement which had been founded in Manchester by the Unitarian minister, John Trevor, and sought to combine elements of Christianity and Socialism, reached Birmingham in the 1890s. The Birmingham Labour Church was founded in September 1892.<sup>109</sup> In 1903 it was joined by another in Bordesley.<sup>110</sup> The hosting of the National Conference of Labour Churches in Birmingham in 1906 appeared to act as a catalyst to further growth, so that by the end of the year there were also Labour churches in Selly Oak and Aston, plus another in Stirchley by 1911.<sup>111</sup> These were associated with the Independent Labour Party. Plans by the Social Democratic Federation to establish Labour churches in 1912 in Kings Heath and Northfield do not appear to have succeeded.<sup>112</sup> Earlier scholarship has suggested that nationally ‘only a few of the churches survived the first world war’.<sup>113</sup> This was clearly not the case in Birmingham, however, as not only did Birmingham and Stirchley Labour churches survive the conflict, but new ones were opened in Erdington and East Birmingham. Barnsby’s analysis of reports and adverts in the Birmingham Labour publication *Town Crier* from 1919 onwards revealed that the number of Labour churches in Birmingham grew from these four in 1919, to eight in 1921, 10 in 1922, 13 in 1924 and 16 in 1926.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup> Headed paper in BCA ZZ 72a 538061 Birmingham Labour Church, Minute Book No.5, 11/1903-11/1906.

<sup>110</sup> BCA ZZ72a, 538061, Birmingham Labour Church Minute Book No.4, 8/1898-10/1903, meeting, 4/1/03

<sup>111</sup> BCA Lp19.9 245850 Stirchley Labour Church, syllabus of lectures for the season October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1911 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1912

<sup>112</sup> BCA Birm Per K1 LF08.2 243570 *The Torch* Vol I No.1 (7/1912), p. 7

<sup>113</sup> Machin, *Politics*, p. 282 citing H. Pelling, *Origins of the Labour Party 1880-1900* (Oxford: 1966) pp. 132-142 & D.F. Summers, *The Labour Church and allied movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries* PhD Thesis, (Edinburgh: 1958), pp. 311-20.

<sup>114</sup> Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country*, pp. 353-56

The only movement which appears not to have survived the war was Birmingham's Brotherhood Church, which met at the junction of Aberdeen Street and Lansdowne Street. This was the local branch of a Tolstoyan movement led by the London-based Irish Congregationalist Minister J. Bruce Wallace. It was operating by 1911 until at least July 1914<sup>115</sup> and possibly until 1917,<sup>116</sup> but was not listed in local directories from 1918, nor was it listed in the Birmingham Labour paper *Town Crier* which was launched in 1919.<sup>117</sup> There is also evidence of short-lived Socialist Sunday Schools being established in Birmingham. A Sunday School at the Birmingham Labour Church was reported in July 1894.<sup>118</sup> A separate Lyceum Sunday School associated with the Birmingham Labour Church was founded on 4th October 1903 – it operated at least until at least 1905.<sup>119</sup> A Socialist Sunday School in Bordesley was in existence from 1907 until at least 1909.<sup>120</sup> There was also a Sunday School at the Birmingham Brotherhood Church, from 1911 until at least 1914.<sup>121</sup> However, by 1916 there were no schools affiliated to the National British Socialist Sunday School Unions anywhere in West Midlands.<sup>122</sup> The only post-war example appears to be a Socialist Sunday School organised by Kings Norton ILP (which also ran the Kings Norton and Stirchley Labour Church) meeting in the Co-op club rooms in Stirchley in October

---

<sup>115</sup> BCA microfilm *Forward* (12/1912-7/1914)

<sup>116</sup> The West Birmingham Brotherhood Church is listed in *Cornish's Birmingham Year Book* from 1913 to 1917

<sup>117</sup> BCA Store L76.22, cab 15 *The Town Crier* (3/10/1919+). It listed and reported on a range of other local labour organisations including Labour Churches, ILP, LNU and NCF branches, Co-operatives and a Socialist Sunday School

<sup>118</sup> The People's Museum, Manchester: GB 394 SSS, J. Simmons, *Potted History of the Socialist Sunday Schools* extracted from *Labour Leader*, entry dated 14/7/1894. Note: This is not the Birmingham Methodist Labour councillor Jim Simmons

<sup>119</sup> BCA ZZ72a, Birmingham Labour Church Minute Books, entries for 10/7/03, 21/1/04, 21/4/04, 19/1/05 & 18/4/05

<sup>120</sup> BCA *Labour Mail* (7/1907) & The People's Museum, Manchester, GB 394 SSS *Young Socialist* (6/1909 & 9/1909)

<sup>121</sup> BCA *Forward* (12/1912-7/1914)

<sup>122</sup> The People's Museum, Manchester, GB 394 SSS directory in *Young Socialist* (11/1916 & 12/1916)



1919.<sup>123</sup>

### **1.10 Birmingham's Nineteenth-Century Free Churches as Pioneers in Ministry**

There were two areas of church life in which the pre-war free churches around Birmingham and the West Midlands played a pioneering role, namely in the appointment of black and female ministers. Baptist churches in the West Midlands appointed Britain's first two black Baptist ministers: The Rev. George Cousens (1805-1881), from Jamaica, was converted to Christianity in 1823 among Primitive Methodists in London where he was a student. In 1837 he was called to the pastorate of Cradley Heath Baptist Church, and went on to serve Baptist churches in Brierley Hill, Bewdley, Kington, Usk, Netherton and Cradley Heath (again) until his death in 1881.<sup>124</sup>

The Rev. Peter Stanford (1860-1909) was born into slavery in Hampton, Virginia. His father was sold before he was born, and his mother taken away, so he entered a home for black orphan children. By the age of twelve he was homeless in New York City where he was converted through a Moody and Sankey mission. He then went to college, was ordained pastor of the Mount Zion Baptist Church, Hartford, in 1878. In 1880 he went to Canada, where he pastored the Horton Street Baptist Church in London, Ontario, and later was editor of *The Christian Defender*. He travelled from Canada to England, settling in Birmingham in 1887. Following marriage to a local woman in 1888, he became minister at Hope Street Baptist Chapel, Highgate in 1889. He went on to take over a church in Priestley Road, Sparkbrook, which he re-named

---

<sup>123</sup> BCA *The Town Crier* No.2 (10/10/1919)

<sup>124</sup> *Baptist Historical Society Newsletter* (11/2006) & *BUGB Magazine* (September October 2006)

Wilberforce Memorial Church. He was later sent by the Birmingham churches to investigate reports of lynching and other mistreatment of American ‘negroes’ (to use the terminology of the time), before returning permanently to America in 1895.<sup>125</sup>

In his broader study of black Baptists in Britain, Killingray confirms that Cousens and Stanford are the earliest known black ministers to have served British Baptist churches.<sup>126</sup>

The other area in which the Birmingham free churches were pioneering was in the appointment of women ministers. In 1911 the Waverley Road Free Christian (i.e. Unitarian) Church had called Gertrude von Petzold as their minister. She was the first woman to serve as a Unitarian minister in England, having previously pastored a church in Leicester. Being of Prussian origin, despite applying for naturalisation, she and her housekeeper were deported as ‘enemy aliens’ in 1915.

However, possibly of more significance was Latimer Street Mission Church – a Baptist Mission of nineteenth-century origin in Birmingham. Langley reports that when Charles Joseph arrived in Birmingham in 1872 looking for a Baptist church of a ‘homely’ character, his Quaker employer recommended Latimer Street and its ‘lady pastor’.<sup>127</sup> Betteridge identifies her as a Mrs Pritchard who served the church until she died in around 1885, after which the church closed.<sup>128</sup> The building appears in street directories from 1873 as a Baptist church, then from 1884 the building was used by

---

<sup>125</sup> Paul Walker, ‘Stanford, Peter Thomas (1860–1909)’, *Oxford DNB*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2013 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/104527>, accessed 21/1/14]

<sup>126</sup> David Killingray, ‘Black Baptists in Britain, 1640-1950’, *Baptist Quarterly*, 40:2 (4/2005), pp. 77-9

<sup>127</sup> Langley, *Birmingham Baptists*, p. 160

<sup>128</sup> Betteridge, *Deep Roots*, p. 309

the Wesleyans.<sup>129</sup> If these secondary sources are accurate this could make her the earliest woman minister not just in Birmingham but in Britain, as she would pre-date all the others who are celebrated as pioneer women ministers in Britain. The role of women in leadership in Birmingham's free churches is explored in more detail in Chapter Three below.

It is perhaps not surprising that these pioneer appointments were made amongst the churches whose ecclesiology requires that the calling of ministers is the responsibility of the local church, rather than amongst for example Anglicans, Roman Catholics or Wesleyans, where appointments were made centrally.

This discovery also suggests that more investigation is required into local church appointments of women to pastoral leadership in nineteenth-century British Baptist and Congregational churches.

### **1.11 Birmingham's Free Churches in 1914**

Birmingham reflected the growth and diversity of Protestant Dissent in the country by 1914. Old Dissent was strongly represented by the Baptists with 6,013 members in 29 churches and four missions and the Congregationalists with 6,880 members in 35 churches and two missions.<sup>130</sup> There were also fourteen Quaker meetings, seven English Presbyterian churches with 677 members and seven Unitarian places of worship.

---

<sup>129</sup> 'Religious History: Places of worship', *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham* (1964), pp. 434-82

<sup>130</sup> *Baptist Handbook* (London: 1914) and *Congregational Year Book* (London: 1914)

New Dissent had more preaching places but fewer members: 7,958 Wesleyans with 49 preaching places; 1,866 Primitive Methodists with 29 preaching places; 1,885 United Methodists with fifteen preaching places, and 240 Welsh Calvinistic Methodists with two preaching places. The newer movements were represented by seven Churches of Christ with 1,156 members and ten Salvation Army Corps.<sup>131</sup> The Brethren were also in evidence with fifteen ‘Christian Meeting Rooms’ in the city by 1910.<sup>132</sup> There were also a number of independent non-denominational missions. Pentecostalism was also commencing in Birmingham: in both 1914 and 1915, donations to the Pentecostal Missionary Union and to the *Confidence* magazine were reported from a Saltley Assembly.<sup>133</sup> It is not clear whether this was the Pentecostal ‘Crown Mission’ which opened in Birmingham in September 1913,<sup>134</sup> and consequently one or possibly two Apostolic/Pentecostal assemblies existed in the city by 1914. There was also a Seventh-Day Adventist Church meeting from 1901 onwards.

The strength and influence of Birmingham nonconformity was by 1914 even demonstrated in the city’s statuary. Royalty predominated in Victoria Square, but Chamberlain Square was dominated by statues of local nonconformists: There was a memorial fountain and spire commemorating Joseph Chamberlain (1880),<sup>135</sup> statues

---

<sup>131</sup> *Cornish’s Birmingham Yearbook 1914* (Birmingham: 1914), pp. 195-205 and *Churches of Christ Yearbook* (1914)

<sup>132</sup> *Birmingham Red Book and Reference Almanack* (Birmingham: 1910)

<sup>133</sup> *Confidence*, VII No.8 (Aug 1914), 158 & VIII 6 (June 1915), p. 102

<sup>134</sup> Keith Malcomson, *Pentecostal Pioneers Remembered* (Longwood, Fla. USA, 2008), p. 312

<sup>135</sup> The architect J.H. Chamberlain, although unrelated to Joseph Chamberlain, was also a Unitarian, see: G.C. Boase; Michael W. Brooks (revised). ‘Chamberlain, John Henry (1831–1883)’. *Oxford DNB* -online edition (Oxford University Press: 2004)

of fellow Unitarians, George Dawson<sup>136</sup> and Joseph Priestley (1874), and a statue of John Skirrow Wright (1883), founder member of the Baptist 'People's Chapel' in Hockley. There was also a statue of Joseph Sturge (1862) at Five Ways, and of his fellow Quaker, John Bright, and the Congregationalist R.W. Dale in the Art Gallery and a bust of Dawson in the Reference Library.<sup>137</sup> It is, however, possibly significant that they all appear to have been erected before the demise of Birmingham (political) Liberalism in 1886.

Of the larger nonconformist groups, only the Baptists no longer occupied a city centre chapel. Their former Cannon Street Chapel had been demolished and their former Graham Street premises were up for sale, some members transferring to a new church established in Hamstead Road, Handsworth, whilst the continuing Cannon Street Church met temporarily in the Handsworth Council House.<sup>138</sup> A charitable trust established from the proceeds of the Cannon Street sale was used to help fund many new chapels across the city. Many Baptist chapels built in the latter part of the nineteenth century received financial support from the Baptist harness maker, William Middlemore. A more unusual Baptist church was the People's Chapel, Hockley, which had been founded in 1848 by 40 former members of Arthur O'Neill's Christian Chartist Church in Newhall Street. At the 'People's Chapel', apart from the usual congregational church government, they also insisted on no paid ministry, no pew rents and did not take up offerings. It proved to be a strong base for Skirrow Wright

---

<sup>136</sup> Dawson used the term 'Free Christian' for the Church he founded, but his theology was effectively Unitarian

<sup>137</sup> *Birmingham Illustrated, Cornish's Stranger's Guide through Birmingham* (Birmingham: 1913), pp. 48-53

<sup>138</sup> Langley, *Birmingham Baptists*, pp. 40-41

and political Liberalism,<sup>139</sup> as well as the Adult School movement and the Boys' Life Brigade.

The Unitarians and Quakers remained numerically weak but politically significant. Unique to Birmingham was the belt of Quaker Friends' Institutes across the south of the city, largely financed by the wealth of the Cadbury family. The First Day Adult School movement which the Sturges and Cadburys had helped to establish across the city from 1845 onwards<sup>140</sup> now had 127 meetings and was therefore attracting far more attenders than the Friends' own Meetings for Worship.<sup>141</sup> The Adult School movement was numerically very significant: the city had more Adult Schools than Anglican Churches. To these can be added the 29 Friends' Children's Schools in the Birmingham area affiliated to the Friends' Sunday School Union, reaching 4,263 children at the beginning of 1914.<sup>142</sup>

After the Unitarians, the strongest of the non-Trinitarian groups were the Christadelphians with five Ecclesia. Christian Science, Swedenborgianism, Spiritualism and International Bible Students (later known as Jehovah's Witnesses) were also in evidence. The Christadelphians' British headquarters was also based in Birmingham.

---

<sup>139</sup> Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons*, pp. 99-103 & Langley, *Birmingham Baptists*, pp. 107-11

<sup>140</sup> *Handbook of the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends* (Birmingham: 1908), p. 100

<sup>141</sup> *Cornish's Birmingham Yearbook 1914* (Birmingham: 1914), pp. 205-07

<sup>142</sup> *The Annual Report of the Friends' Sunday School Union, Birmingham for the year 1913*. (Birmingham: 1914)

## 1.12. Youth and Children's Movements

The nineteenth century had also seen a phenomenal growth in non-denominational Christian children's and youth organisations. Amongst those which were well established in Birmingham were Christian Endeavour and the major children's temperance association, the Band of Hope. The Boys' Brigade (BB) had reached Birmingham in 1889 with the formation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Birmingham BB Company at the Camp Hill Presbyterian Chapel. In the same year the Aston Lads' Brigade<sup>143</sup> was founded by Aston Parish Church, which was to join the Boys' Brigade in 1891. By 1902 there were eight companies with a total membership of 541. The 1<sup>st</sup> Birmingham Boys' Life Brigade (BLB) Company opened at the Friends' Institute, Moseley Road in 1901. By 1907 there were seven BLB companies in Birmingham. In 1908 Scouting commenced in Birmingham, after Baden-Powell was invited to address a meeting at the YMCA Birmingham Headquarters at Dale End in January 1908.<sup>144</sup>

Vane's 'British Boy Scouts' were also to be found in Birmingham. Their anti-militarist stance attracted Quaker support, including that of the Cadburys. Foster claimed that the Cadburys were recruited to Scouting by Vane, and then followed him to the British Scouts in 1909.<sup>145</sup> From about 1910 the Boys' Life Brigade and the British Boy Scouts were co-operating as 'National Peace Scouts'. George Cadbury was listed as a member of the council of the National Peace Scouts in 1910.<sup>146</sup> Vane's bankruptcy in 1912 resulted in the demise of the National Peace Scouts, so in 1913,

---

<sup>143</sup> An independent local brigade – not to be confused with the Church Lads' Brigade

<sup>144</sup> One of a series of lectures around the country organised by the YMCA. See J.O. Springall, 'The Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism in relation to British Youth Movements, 1908-1930', *International Review of Social History*, 16 (1971), p. 134

<sup>145</sup> M. Foster, *Militarism and the Scout Movement* (Scout History Association: 1997), online: <http://www.netpages.free-online.co.uk/sha/military.htm>

<sup>146</sup> *The Peace Year Book, 1910* (Westminster: 1910), p. 41

Barrow Cadbury, Chairman of the Birmingham National Peace Scouts, agreed a corporate amalgamation with the Boys' Life Brigade, those who favoured this option becoming 'Boys' Life Brigade Scouts'.<sup>147</sup> Barrow Cadbury had led the 1<sup>st</sup> Birmingham BLB Company (Friends' Institute, Moseley Road) across to the 'Peace Scouts' in c.1912.<sup>148</sup> These BLB Scouts mostly went on to become Boys' Life Brigade companies in the 1920s.

There were also other types of Brigade movements in existence: the Church Lads' Brigade (Anglican) which was founded in 1891, held its first Midlands camp in 1896. By the turn of the century other national boys' movements included the Jewish Lads' Brigade founded 1895, the Catholic Boys' Brigade founded 1896, the New Church Boys' Brigade (Swedenborgian) founded 1896,<sup>149</sup> and the Boys' Own Brigade (Unitarian) founded 1899.<sup>150</sup> It appears likely that all these movements were also represented in Birmingham.

Birmingham evangelical free church support for uniformed boys' organisations and what this may reveal about their attitudes towards militarism is examined in more detail in Chapter Five.

---

<sup>147</sup> See: British Boy Scouts website: <http://www.netpages.free-online.co.uk/bbs/bbs.htm>

<sup>148</sup> Paul Arkinsall & Rob Bolton, *Forward!, The Birmingham Battalion of the Boys' Brigade, 1902-2002* (Walsall: 2002), pp. 2 & 21

<sup>149</sup> R. Bolton, *Boys of the Brigade, Vol.1*, (Market Drayton: 1991), pp. 52-53

<sup>150</sup> Bolton, *Boys of the Brigade, Vol.1*, pp. 48-49



### **1.13 Conclusion**

This chapter has set the scene for the chapters which follow by considering the strength and significance of Protestant nonconformity in the city of Birmingham in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It has identified the key Birmingham free church leaders who had prominent local and national profiles and considered Birmingham's role in the national debate over education, the significance of 'Free Christians' and Unitarians such as George Dawson and the Chamberlains in the development of the 'Civic Gospel' or 'Municipal Gospel', and the involvement of more evangelical free church leaders such as R.W. Dale and Skirrow Wright in making their ideas more widely acceptable. It has also examined the growth of inter-church co-operation, particularly through the Cadbury-inspired and funded Evangelical Free Church Councils. Attention has been drawn to the Birmingham free churches' pioneering role in the appointment of black and female pastors in the late nineteenth century.

Numerically, the Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists had remained the strongest nonconformist communities in Birmingham throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, through the influence of the Chamberlains, alongside other key Unitarian families such as the Kenricks, Martineaus, Nettlefolds and Rylands and Quaker families such as the Sturges, Cadburys and Lloyds, the Unitarians and Quakers although never numerically strong had made a major contribution to Birmingham's civic life.

However, the split in Liberalism, with the Chamberlain-supported creation of Liberal Unionism (and ultimate drift to Conservatism) alongside the rise of Labour, had

irrevocably broken the nonconformist – Liberal partnership upon which the Chamberlains and their allies had previously relied for support. It would also appear that by their actions (in dividing Liberalism) the Chamberlains and their allies had inadvertently inspired the creation of the Evangelical Free Church Council movement which was to effectively unite the mainstream Trinitarian free churches (but exclude the Unitarians) in future generations.

## **Chapter 2: The Free Churches and War**

This chapter examines the impact of the First World War on the Birmingham evangelical free churches, with particular reference to their attitudes to war and militarism. This includes consideration of the evidence in local church sources of their attitudes to war prior to the First World War, how they responded to the outbreak of war and its impact on local church life and seeking evidence of local evangelical free church opposition to the war. Preference is given to local church sources: where these are not available, national church sources are used.

### **2.1. Christian Theological Approaches to the Issue of War**

Christian responses to war have traditionally taken one of three approaches, those of pacifism, the ‘just war’ theory or a crusade.<sup>1</sup> The pacifist view was largely based on Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount: exhortations such as ‘Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you’ or ‘Put your sword back in its sheath, for those who live by the sword die by the sword’. It is also important to consider that the only widely available English translation of the Bible at that time was the Authorised Version (AV) which rendered the relevant commandment as ‘Thou shalt not kill’ not ‘You shall not commit murder’ as it was rendered in later translations. This stance is epitomised by the traditional peace churches such as the Quakers or Mennonites, although strong pacifist streams can also be found in other free church traditions including the Brethren, the Churches of Christ, Apostolics/Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists and as a minority view across all the denominations, particularly as represented by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, founded in 1914 in response to the

---

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Oliver R. Barclay, ed., *Pacifism and War: When Christians Disagree* (Leicester: 1984) or Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Case Studies in Biblical Interpretation* (Scottsdale, Penn., USA: 1983)

outbreak of war. A further division can be made between those who refused personal participation in war and those who actively campaigned against it. Pacifism can also be found in non-Trinitarian sects such as Christadelphians and Jehovah's Witnesses. The 'just war' theory, that in certain circumstances Christians may participate in a war they consider to fit their 'just war' criteria – based on texts such as Jesus cleansing of the temple, in phrases such as 'I came not to send peace but a sword' or 'Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's' – appears to have been the predominant view, although a difficulty always lay in its definition, and in who should ultimately decide whether a particular conflict was just or not.

Whilst the 'crusade' or 'holy war' theory based on certain experiences of the people of Israel in the Old Testament is generally associated with centuries much earlier than the twentieth century, efforts will be made to see whether any echoes of this attitude remain.

Another attitude developing in this period is a Millennialist view – namely that the second coming of Christ was imminent and the Christian's urgent task was therefore evangelism. War was something that the world could engage in if it saw fit, but was not appropriate for Christians. This view appeared to find popularity amongst the Apostolics/Pentecostals, the Brethren, Seventh-Day Adventists and possibly the Churches of Christ. It can also be found in non-Trinitarian groups outside of mainstream Christianity such as Christadelphians and International Bible Students (Jehovah's Witnesses).

In his 2007 publication *Spreading Fires*, Allan Anderson concluded that eschatology was the primary reason for the opposition of early Apostolics/Pentecostals to the First World War. He argued that ‘for most of them the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 was further evidence that the end had come and that the world, of which they were certainly no part, was involved in a bloody conflagration that would lead to the final battle of Armageddon preceding the return of Christ’.<sup>2</sup> He gives the example of the PMU Secretary, Thomas Mundell, who described the war as ‘essentially of this world’ and added ‘I hold that no Christian ought on any account take part in actually destroying and killing his fellow men’.<sup>3</sup>

## **2.2. The Outbreak of War: the Free Churches’ National Responses**

When war broke out the prominent Baptist ministers John Clifford and J.H. Rushbrooke were attending a European Churches Ecumenical Peace Conference in Constance/Konstanz. Clifford on his return had initially encouraged neutrality, but soon became an enthusiastic supporter of the war, along with most of the national leaders of the British free churches. By 7 August 1914 the *Baptist Times* was urging: ‘In view of the accomplished facts all discussion of the policy which has led up to them is now more than useless. Rightly or wrongly, we are committed to war, and there can be no drawing back.’<sup>4</sup> When the Baptist Union Council met in September it endorsed this view with a long Manifesto including the observation: ‘We believe the

---

<sup>2</sup> Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (London: 2007) p. 223

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, p. 227

<sup>4</sup> *Baptist Times*, 7/8/14, cited in Clements, ‘Baptists and the Outbreak of the First World War’, p. 74

call of God has come to Britain to spare neither blood nor treasure in the struggle to shatter a great anti-Christian attempt to destroy the fabric of Christian civilisation.’<sup>5</sup> Once war had broken out attitudes in most denominations appeared to change rapidly in support of the conflict. Sermons were preached at later Baptist and Congregational Assemblies in enthusiastic support of the war. The Quakers maintained their testimony against war, whilst recognising that many of their number had actually enlisted voluntarily.

### **2.3. Birmingham Dissenters’ Pre-war Attitudes to War and Militarism**

To put the wartime responses into context, it is helpful first to analyse responses to issues of war and militarism amongst the Birmingham free churches in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, preceding the conflict. This will include a particular focus on the most recent conflict prior to 1914 in which British soldiers had been involved, the Boer Wars.

The earliest identified example of anti-war sentiment amongst Birmingham Baptists was the example of Edward Edmonds, pastor at the Particular Baptist, Bond Street Chapel (1785-1823) who, when his son rescued and brought home a Napoleonic War soldier, allowed him to stay the night and to escape the military the next day in his son’s clothes.<sup>6</sup> The 1837 national petition organised by Pilkington, ‘showing the unlawfulness to Christians of all wars’, was signed by the pastor of the Cannon Street Particular Baptist Church, Thomas Swan.<sup>7</sup> The first Birmingham Baptist to hold a significant post in the peace movement was William Stokes who, after pastorates at

---

<sup>5</sup> *Baptist Times*, 25/9/14, cited in Clements, ‘Baptists and the Outbreak of the First World War’, p. 75

<sup>6</sup> Langley, *Birmingham Baptists*, p. 83

<sup>7</sup> Betteridge, *Deep Roots*, p 226

West Bromwich (1838-43) and Newhall Street, Birmingham (1843-46), took up employment with the Peace Society where he played a key role in organising a series of six International Peace Conferences (1848-1853).<sup>8</sup>

Also of major significance was Arthur O'Neill. A former soldier who became an active Chartist, he became pastor of the Christian Chartist Church in Livery Street in Birmingham in 1840. In 1846 when O'Neill came to Baptist convictions (without giving up his Chartism), he and most of his church were baptised and re-formed into a Baptist church. They united with Zion Chapel, Newhall Street in 1847, with O'Neill as pastor – a role in which he served until his death in 1896. As a committed pacifist, O'Neill also served as the Midlands representative for the Peace Society from 1846 to 1896, a period which included active opposition to the Crimean War. He is reported to have given 120-150 peace talks a year in the 1880s.<sup>9</sup> In January 1848 there was a division in the Zion Church, Newhall Street over O'Neill's leadership style, which led to the formation of a breakaway 'People's Chapel' in Hockley.<sup>10</sup> This new Baptist church shared much of O'Neill's political radicalism as 'their first address announced Evening Lectures on politics, economics and the principles of good government'.<sup>11</sup> They were also active from the beginning on the peace issue: the church was founded in February 1848 in the Boatmen's Chapel, before moving into a new purpose-built chapel in Great King Street in August 1848; the following month the prominent Liberal party activist and People's Chapel founder, John Skirrow Wright, joined

---

<sup>8</sup> Betteridge, *Deep Roots*, p. 226

<sup>9</sup> Betteridge, *Deep Roots*, p. 227

<sup>10</sup> People's Chapel archives: letters of resignation from Zion church, Newhall Street of John Skirrow Wright, W. Massey & W. Ensor, all dated 10/2/1848.

<sup>11</sup> BCA LP18.22 PEO *The People's Chapel, Great King Street, Birmingham, Past-Present-Future* [1960s]

Stokes at the 1848 Brussels Great Peace Congress.<sup>12</sup> Skirrow Wright was also among those who welcomed the exiled Hungarian revolutionary leader, Lajos Kossuth, to Birmingham in 1851.<sup>13</sup>

There is also evidence of interest in the peace issue at the Cannon Street Baptist Church, where an undated nineteenth-century catalogue of the Cannon Street Church's Boys' Library included two copies of the Peace Society publication, '*All War, Anti-Christian*'.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile at Wycliffe Baptist Chapel, Bristol Road, their Literary Society debated 'Should Military Service be compulsory?' in December 1901.<sup>15</sup>

It should be noted in contrast, however, that William Middlemore (d. 15 January 1887),<sup>16</sup> a prominent Birmingham Baptist who had served as a town councillor and J.P., and contributed financially towards the building of Wycliffe and other Birmingham chapels, had built his financial success on the manufacture of harnesses and saddles, including those for the military, presumably including supplies for the Crimean War which Stokes and his colleagues were campaigning against.

At Asbury Memorial Chapel (Wesleyan) in Handsworth, the Asbury Adult Bible Class's Mutual Improvement Society held a debate in February 1897 on the theme 'Is patriotism opposed to the Spirit of the New Testament?'. Their *Asbury Magazine*

---

<sup>12</sup> Skirrow Wright obituary, *Birmingham Post* 16/4/1885 & *Report of the speeches and general proceedings of the Great Peace Congress* (Brussels: 1848) p. 1

<sup>13</sup> Skirrow Wright obituary, *Birmingham Post* 16/4/1885

<sup>14</sup> BCA LF18.2 *The Baptist Churches in Birmingham and surrounding districts* – scrapbook, p. 99

<sup>15</sup> BCA L18.2 242251 *Wycliffe Baptist Church Manual* 12/1901

<sup>16</sup> See Langley, *Birmingham Baptists*, pp. 235-6 & Betteridge, *Deep Roots*, pp. 240-1



reported at the conclusion of the debate an eighteen to one vote in favour of patriotism not being opposed to the spirit of the New Testament.<sup>17</sup> In January 1898, the same magazine printed a condemnation of the Greco-Turkish War of 1897: ‘We have had a war between two European Powers – the first since the Russo-Turkish War in 1877 – which ought to have been prevented, and which occasioned much suffering and loss of life. And in our own country we have had the equivalent of a civil war, a great strike. Without in any way taking sides, we can and do deplore the obstinacy and wrong headedness which led up to it, and hope that it will be settled before 1898 opens.’<sup>18</sup> From the date it appears they were comparing and equally condemning the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) workers strike (known as the 48 hours dispute, as it was based on the demand for a reduction of working hours from 54 to 48 per week) which took place in Britain from July 1897 to January 1898. The attitude to involvement in political and social issues that this view demonstrates seems to be well summarised in a quotation in a subsequent *Asbury Magazine* of a speech on ‘responsibility in Adult School work’ by the Quaker, Councillor Lloyd, at the 1898 Autumnal Meeting of the Midland Adult School Union: ‘Party politics should be rigorously excluded, but National questions such as peace and war, gambling, drunkenness and social evils should be dealt with from a high moral and Christian stand-point.’<sup>19</sup>

There is little evidence of Birmingham free church attitudes towards the Boer War in the surviving local sources examined – most church records made no reference to it. An exception however was the *Summer Hill Magazine* which reported in 1900 that

---

<sup>17</sup> BCA MC 42 (Box 9) *The Asbury Magazine*, vol 2 (Feb 1897 & Mar 1897).

<sup>18</sup> BCA MC 42 (Box 9) *The Asbury Magazine*, vol 3 (Jan 1898)

<sup>19</sup> BCA MC 42 (Box 9) *The Asbury Magazine*, vol 3 (Nov 1898)

thirteen members of the Men's Adult Bible Class at Summer Hill Wesleyan Methodist Church, Ladywood were fighting in South Africa, one of whom was killed in the conflict.<sup>20</sup> They also reported the Bible Class taking up a collection for the *Birmingham Mail's* 'Reservist fund' and the use of a 'litany for our soldiers' including the line 'We pray Thee in Thy pity shield, our soldiers on the battlefield'.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile in 1900 at a lecture at the Handsworth Council House on South Africa for the Asbury Wesleyan Church's hockey club, slides of Roberts, Kitchener, Sir George White and Baden-Powell were greeted with cheers.<sup>22</sup> A few members of Asbury's Afternoon Bible Class also participated in the conflict: the *Handsworth Herald* reported in 1903 that 'very handsome Bibles were presented to three members of the class, who had rendered faithful service in the South African War'. They reported over 600 people in attendance, when the President (Mr E. Oakley) 'gave expression to the great appreciation felt by every member of the class for the noble service which the men had rendered for King and country'.<sup>23</sup> This was the same Bible Class that had previously condemned the Greco-Turkish war. In contrast, at the end of the conflict when a Peace Service was held at the Somerset Road Wesleyan Church, the Rev. T.H. Barratt, revealed some sympathy with both sides in the conflict: 'Whilst we rejoiced in peace with honour, let us not forget the honour due to the Boer. Chivalry had been displayed by friend and foe alike...rejoice with humble hearts in the victory God had given us.'<sup>24</sup> At the same chapel in March 1906, the Wesley Guild had debated the motion 'That compulsory military service is necessary for the sake of the Empire'.

---

<sup>20</sup> BCA MC60/B/39 *Summer Hill Magazine*, vol 4 (May & July 1900)

<sup>21</sup> BCA MC60/B/39 *Summer Hill Magazine*, vol 4 (January, April & May 1900)

<sup>22</sup> *Handsworth Herald* (19/5/00) in BCA LF18 286530 Newspaper cuttings relating to Handsworth Methodists collected by George H. Osborne (1895-1906)

<sup>23</sup> *Handsworth Herald* (10/1/03) in BCA LF18 286530 Newspaper cuttings

<sup>24</sup> *Handsworth Herald* (14/6/02) in BCA LF18 286530 Newspaper cuttings

Speakers for the resolution included Rev. Dr Lofthouse and two lieutenants and opponents included a Rev. G. Allen. The result of eight for, eleven against, with the remainder neutral was impacted by poor attendance due to 'rough weather'.<sup>25</sup> This was one of a series of debates on social issues: later in the same month they debated 'It is the duty of the state to provide work for the unemployed', with 30 members participating in the vote.<sup>26</sup> The church also had some direct links with the military, as in July 1906, members of the Volunteer Cycle Corps, under Lieut. Whitehouse attended a service at the chapel, when Rev. Dr Lofthouse preached on 'soldierly discipline'.<sup>27</sup> Both Whitehouse and Lofthouse were amongst those reported as speaking in favour of compulsory military service at the earlier Wesley Guild debate.

At the Central Wesleyan Mission, a special service for intercession and memorial in connection with the War in South Africa was held on 13 February 1900, their superintendent Rev. F.L. Wiseman presiding. The service included an offertory for the Soldiers' Widows & Orphans Fund and the hymns at the service included 'God bless our native Land' (a less nationalistic alternative to the national anthem) and 'O God of love, O King of peace', but there was no national anthem.<sup>28</sup> Wiseman's more conciliatory approach to the conflict appears to demonstrate the existence of a range of views within Wesleyan Methodism at this time. See below under 'Birmingham Methodist opposition to the war' for the significance of the involvement of Wiseman.

There is some evidence for concern about the issues of war and militarism amongst

---

<sup>25</sup> *Handsworth Herald* (3/3/06) in BCA LF18 286530 Newspaper cuttings

<sup>26</sup> *Handsworth Herald* (31/3/06) in BCA LF18 286530 Newspaper cuttings

<sup>27</sup> *Handsworth Herald* (7/7/06) in BCA LF18 286530 Newspaper cuttings

<sup>28</sup> BCA MC 26/99 *Wesleyan Methodist Central Mission: Special service for Intercession and memorial in connection with the War in South Africa*, 13/2/1900

Birmingham's Congregationalists in the period between the Boer War and the First World War. The few examples that survive suggest an interest in international reconciliation and peace-making. In 1906 the Executive Committee of the Birmingham Congregational Board responded positively to an invitation from the Peace Society to their forthcoming national Peace Conference in Birmingham, appointing a Mr Nixon as a delegate.<sup>29</sup> In 1908, the Executive Committee at Ladypool Road (Congregational) Mission Hall, considered a request by their young men's group to use air guns on the premises and concluded: 'This Executive Committee unanimously agree that Air-Gun practice is undesirable and cannot be allowed on these premises.'<sup>30</sup> However, whether their opposition was to militarism or possible damage to the premises is not recorded. At a deacons' meeting of Aston Park Congregational Church in 1909: 'A circular letter was read from the Committee who had arranged for interchange visits between the Christian Churches of Germany and the United Kingdom which were held in London in 1908 and Berlin 1909, when cordial resolutions expressing mutual friendship were passed. A request was made that a resolution should be passed by the church expressing the hope that the peace and goodwill existing between the nations may be maintained and strengthened. This was very cordially agreed to.'<sup>31</sup> Issues of war and peace were also being considered at the Young Men's Bible Class at Westminster Road Congregational Church, Handsworth: 'Before the war one of the strongest offshoots of the Class was the debating society; but War put an end to discussion on the merits or demerits of conscription (and other subjects) by enforcing it.'<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> BCA CB2/3 Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Birmingham Congregational Board, 8/6/06

<sup>30</sup> BCA CC30/1 Ladypool Road Mission Hall, Executive Committee 30/5/08

<sup>31</sup> BCA CC31 Aston Park Congregational Church, Deacons Meeting 25/11/09.

<sup>32</sup> BCA CC11/18/8 *Westminster Chimes*, no.8, (November 1919), p. 2

However, Birmingham's nonconformists were seeking to resist growing militarism in other spheres. In their 2011 article, Mangan and Galligan demonstrated that prior to the First World War the nonconformist-controlled Birmingham School Board had 'resisted military control of drill in the face of increased national anxiety over the growing economic and military power of Germany and the perceived threat of war'.<sup>33</sup>

The active involvement of Stokes, O'Neill and Skirrow Wright in the peace movement of the nineteenth century demonstrates the existence of a commitment to peace-making (if not always necessarily pacifism) amongst Birmingham's Baptists. The evidence from Birmingham Congregationalist sources, although more scanty, suggests an interest amongst some of their churches in peace issues in the period between the Boer War and the First World War. From the Wesleyan sources came evidence of enthusiastic support for the involvement of members of two of their churches in the Boer War, although from other local Wesleyan sources came an emphasis more on reconciliation at the end of the conflict. Perhaps more significant was their co-operation to resist militarism in local schools.

## **2.4 Birmingham Free Church Responses to the First World War**

### **2.4.1. Birmingham Old Dissenter Responses to the War**

In the available sources, there is a balancing of consideration of the rights and wrongs of the conflict, along with keeping the churches' spiritual work going and pastoral

---

<sup>33</sup> J.A Mangan & Frank Galligan, 'Militarism, Drill and Elementary Education: Birmingham nonconformist responses to conformist responses to the Teutonic threat prior to the Great War', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28:3-4 (2011), p. 595

care of those affected. An example is the Presidential Address given by Rev. H. Singleton of Smethwick Baptist Church at the June 1915 Assembly of the West Midland Baptist Association. In his address entitled 'The immediate past', he comments: 'We have witnessed for months now the most terrible outrages', and goes on to list reported alleged German atrocities but then goes on to state: 'I found my horror passing into hate' and 'I found myself living in almost pre-Christian times, almost revelling in texts that before I had never even read in public. I used to wish they were not in the Bible, but how glad I became to find them there.' He expressed concern as to the 'peril to his soul' and concluded: 'Oh dearly as I love my country, and earnestly and constantly as I have prayed for victory, I would rather see our armies defeated than live to see the spirit that was creeping into me dominate in our people.'<sup>34</sup>

Singleton's heart-searching about the dangers of nationalism make an interesting contrast to the address given by Mr Wearing of the Hamstead Road Baptist Church, Handsworth to the Association assembly the following May. Wearing contrasts the positive reports from chaplains about the men at the front line with those from 'some of our own pastors'. He expresses concern at the very poor turnout amongst free church representatives at regular prayer and intercession meetings in the city organised by the Free Church Council and the Anglicans. He then devotes the rest of his address to what can be learned from the innovative forms of worship being used in the city by the Brotherhoods/PSAs, YMCA and the Sunday Picture Song Services<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> *West Midland Baptist Association Year Book for 1915* (Birmingham: 1915), pp. 10-17

<sup>35</sup> Meetings organised in local cinemas by the Birmingham Temperance Society.

and their relevance to reaching the men when they return.<sup>36</sup> His focus was on maintaining evangelism and church growth rather than any theological issues raised by the war. A different approach again can be found at the final annual address to the Shropshire Baptist Association<sup>37</sup> held in March 1916 where the President Rev. I. Brook sought to attribute the conflict to the rise of liberal theology, especially in Germany: 'Under the name of higher criticism, the word of God has been mutilated almost beyond recognition.' He further speculated: 'Can you wonder that Germany is threatened with serious calamity? It is the frown of heaven. It is the operation of the eternal and inevitable law that the nations that forget God shall perish.' His criticism extended to the British churches too: 'German theology and higher criticism have been taught in our colleges, preached in our pulpits, and published in our religious press. Our most promising young men have been sent to Germany to finish their education.'<sup>38</sup> For Brook the entire conflict was rooted in the spread of a new liberal theology with a less Biblical basis, so he stressed the need for 'pure evangelism'. The pastor of Moseley Baptist Church, R.C. Lemin, while attempting to address the issue of 'Has Christianity failed?' came to similar conclusions: 'While this war does not mean the failure of Christianity in Europe, it does mean that Christianity has failed where the spirit of militarism is dominant.' He listed the German thinkers Bernhardt, Bismarck and Nietzsche and argued: 'If it is true then Christianity has failed – *in Germany*...It has failed not because it is not of God, but because this people,

---

<sup>36</sup> *West Midland Baptist Association Year Book for 1916* (Birmingham: 1916), pp. 8-17

<sup>37</sup> At their 1916 annual meeting the Shropshire Baptist Association was dissolved, most of the churches transferring to the West Midland Baptist Association.

<sup>38</sup> *West Midland Baptist Association Year Book for 1916* (Birmingham: 1916) pp. 18-20

exercising their awful power of choice with which God has endowed men and nations, has seen fit to choose the Barabbas of Militarism rather than the Prince of Peace.’<sup>39</sup>

No city-wide sources survive for the Birmingham Congregationalists for the period of the First World War, but through sermons published throughout the conflict in the church magazine, it is possible to follow in detail the views of Sidney M. Berry, the minister of Carrs Lane, their largest church in the city. His first reference to the war came in September 1914: ‘For myself I believe that this war is a climax – perhaps a necessary climax of the thoughts and ambitions which have ruled men’s minds for the last few generations. After their evil and destructive nature has been proved – as it is being proved daily – may we not hope for a new beginning under a different standard? So far as our duty as a nation is concerned I for one have not the slightest doubt.’ He referred to ‘Solemn obligations’ then stated: ‘And the obvious duty of every Englishman at the present hour is to support that decision up to the extreme limit of sacrifice. For us this is not a war of aggression but of defence against aggression; not for territory but for the sanctity of international obligations...it is a war in defence of civilisation against military barbarism. We can only hope that the manhood of the nation will respond to the appeal which has been made to it.’ The following month Berry referred to some people’s view of the war that: ‘It would have no meaning for the moral and religious life of the people. We should simply have to class it among those terrible outbreaks of hatred and hostility which religion must unsparingly condemn in the name of the Prince of Peace.’ However, he then argued: ‘But this war is different. It is a war of ideas and ideals...As I see it, this is a fight in the name of civilisation against its greatest foe.’ He too blamed the conflict on the

---

<sup>39</sup> BCA L18.2 *Moseley Baptist Church Magazine*, no. 20 (Jan 1915), pp. 1-2



teachings of German writers, particularly Nietzsche, Treitschke and Bernhardi. He particularly condemned Nietzsche's attacks on Jesus' moral teachings, claiming he replaced Christ's ideal of love with the ideal of force. He quoted Nietzsche: 'Valour and war have done greater things than love of our neighbour', and Bernhardi: 'Christian morality is based on the law of love, but this law can claim no significance for the relations of one country to another, since its application to politics would lead to a conflict of duties'. He went on to argue: 'First and foremost it is the duty of every man who not only loves his country but values humanity and civilisation to make the last sacrifice if needs be in warring against this spirit. Secondly that though we cannot take the name of God lightly on our lips, this is a struggle for national honour and international righteousness...My brethren, the world will not be cleansed till justice is vindicated and righteousness carried by arms to honour.' However, although justifying the war, he is concerned about the spiritual condition of Britain too: 'Would that the men who are offering themselves in such splendid numbers for the service of their country, would pledge their loyalty to Christ before they go. For believe me, we as a nation are not immune from the ideas of which I have been speaking tonight. Our past is not without its guilt. Our present is not without its perils. There are such things as righteous wars, and I believe, as far as this one is concerned, we could not avoid it if we were true to our national honour.' He concluded: 'I believe this is indeed a war against war.'<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, although he maintains constant support for the war throughout, his is not a blind patriotism, as it is possible to detect a growing unease at the effects of increased

---

<sup>40</sup> BCA B18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal & Missionary Chronicle* (Oct. 1914).

nationalism and patriotism, and the possibility of Britain copying the errors of Germany, such as seeking to ‘crush a nation’ or annex territory.

Debate over the theological issues raised by the war appears to have been encouraged at the Carrs Lane Church, Young Men’s Sunday Morning Bible Class, throughout the conflict, where subjects discussed included ‘On praying for success in war’, ‘The Doctrine of Non-resistance’, ‘The Christ in Khaki fallacy’, ‘Patriotism and Christianity’, ‘Christianity and Foreign Policy’, ‘Should Christianity be aggressive?’, ‘What did Christ teach about the authority of conscience?’ and ‘Should forgiveness be absolute or conditional?’<sup>41</sup>

A different theological concern was revealed when in January 1918 it was reported that Carrs Lane Church had written to the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation ‘rejoicing at the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Turks’.<sup>42</sup> The news of the capture of Jerusalem was also considered worthy of recording in the minutes at Erdington Congregational Church,<sup>43</sup> and Wycliffe Baptist Church invited the Chief Rabbi to address them on ‘the future of Palestine and the Jews’.<sup>44</sup> This interest is likely to have been driven by a desire to understand if the world events were in some way related to the fulfilment of Biblical prophecies.

Meanwhile amongst the Presbyterians, the President of the Birmingham Presbytery

---

<sup>41</sup> BCA CC1/83 Carrs Lane Church, Young Men’s Sunday Morning Bible Class Programmes 1914-16, in Minute Book.

<sup>42</sup> BCA B18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal & Missionary Chronicle* (Jan 1918), p. 4

<sup>43</sup> BCA CC5/21 Erdington Congregational Church, Deacons' Meeting 20/2/17 & CC5/17 Annual Church Meeting 12/12/17

<sup>44</sup> BCA L18.2 244481 *Wycliffe Magazine* (March 1918), p. 2

appeared to view the conflict as a mission opportunity. At their Annual Meeting, in October 1917, the Rev. John Bell (Camp Hill Church) spoke on 'What Christianity has gained by the War' arguing that 'Christianity [was] being portrayed to the nation as never before, particularly with regard to the reality of the atonement'.<sup>45</sup>

The only identified example of a strongly pro-war attitude was found in the magazine of Wycliffe Baptist Church. In October 1914, its editor asserted: 'We have not the shadow of doubt that in this terrible conflict we are on the side of God, and Victory will, with our Allies, crown our arms.' In December 1914, a contributor identified as C.A.P. wrote of the church members who had joined up: 'They have enrolled themselves with the brave army of Christian patriots who will destroy, once and for all time, the Juggernaut of militarism which is a menace to the peace, progress, freedom and unity of the world and the Brotherhood of men. Between 75 & 80 per cent of the men eligible for service, at Wycliffe, have now enlisted...Nonconformist young men, descendants of the Ironsides.'<sup>46</sup> This attempt to identify their members in the military with Cromwell's 'Ironsides' was re-iterated in June 1915 by their minister, F. A. Rees: 'The Spirit of Jesus must be the pattern for our living. Cromwell and his soldiers fought for freedom and the principles of liberty. The war for the abolition of slavery was not against men, but against a system. We are too anxious that our dealings with our enemies are governed by the Spirit of Christ.'<sup>47</sup> This strong emphasis of a 'just war' theory was largely absent in other local free church sources consulted – it may have been influenced by Rees's experience of travelling back through the war zone, as he had been on holiday in Switzerland and Italy when the

---

<sup>45</sup> BCA PB1/15 Birmingham Presbytery, Office Bearers' Association Minute Book, 10/1917

<sup>46</sup> BCA L18.2 244481 *Wycliffe Magazine* (December 1914), p. 7

<sup>47</sup> BCA L18.2 244481 *Wycliffe Magazine* (June 1915), p. 3-4

war broke out.<sup>48</sup>

#### **2.4.2. Birmingham Wesleyan Methodist Responses to the War**

Support for the war was expressed at the Wesleyan Synod for the Birmingham District held in May 1915 when ‘a resolution dealing with the circumstances of the war was passed... assuring the government of our support in any and every legitimate method which might be found necessary for combating the German armies, and expressing our horror of the lawless procedure of the Germans in the conduct of war’. A further resolution at the same Synod made reference to ‘pride in our brave men who have enlisted’.<sup>49</sup> This support for the war was echoed more widely when the Wesleyan Methodist Conference was held in Birmingham later in that same year. The Conference Address included the following: ‘We are fully convinced that it was morally impossible for a nation with our obligations and traditions to remain neutral while Belgium was being ravaged, France and Russia imperilled, and the gains of Christianity and civilisation jeopardised by a despotic ambition... Nearly one hundred thousand of our young men have responded to the call of the King and the need of the country.’<sup>50</sup> Thus with the caveat that methods must be ‘legitimate’, enthusiastic support for participation in the conflict is expressed, with a claim that ‘Christianity and civilisation’ are threatened – this may have been a deliberate corruption of the great Victorian missionary, explorer and anti-slavery campaigner David Livingstone’s emphases on ‘Christianity, commerce and civilisation’, somehow trying to draw a parallel between Livingstone’s commitments to opening up Africa to the message of

---

<sup>48</sup> BCA L18.2 244481 *Wycliffe Magazine* (August 1914), p. 3

<sup>49</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road circuit) 6/1915

<sup>50</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road circuit) 9/1915

the gospel and the abolition of slavery, and participation in the First World War. The unequivocal support for participation in the conflict continued in the Wesleyan Methodist Conference Address the following year, given by the President J. G. Tasker from Handsworth College, Birmingham, and including the following: 'Throughout the conference our thoughts have been with our heroic Methodist soldiers and sailors, our magnificent band of chaplains, and all our people, who in clubs and hospitals and factories, are rendering service in the one great cause.'<sup>51</sup>

Even amongst the generally more politically radical Primitive Methodists there was some evidence of enthusiastic support for the war. In a sermon entitled 'The Call of War', delivered at Sparkhill Primitive Methodist Chapel on 13 September 1914, the Rev. Joseph Pierce claimed Germany's aim was to make itself 'the most efficient man-killing machine in the world, a nation which has dethroned the living God – the God of Love – and enthroned a false God, a monster of blood and iron, to which they are fatally sacrificing everything'.<sup>52</sup>

#### **2.4.2.1. Case study: Saltley Brotherhood (Wesleyan)**

The Minutes of the Brotherhood at Saltley Wesleyan Methodist Church in the same circuit provide an example of the broad range of responses to the conflict within one church. In August 1914 they agreed to invite 'Mr Jas W. Wilks MA, late of Belgrade, Servia' to speak, three members of the Brotherhood were sought to serve on the District Workers' Committee in connection with National Relief Work and 25% of

---

<sup>51</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road circuit) 9/1916

<sup>52</sup> Cited in M.D. Blanch, *Nation, Empire & the Birmingham Working Class, 1899-1914*, PhD thesis, University of Birmingham (1975), p. 349

their income was put aside to be forwarded monthly through the Birmingham Brotherhood Federation to the Prince of Wales Fund.<sup>53</sup> Early in 1915 they went on to send the proceeds of 'Pound Sunday' through the Brotherhood Federation to northern France and Belgium, for the relief of those who were homeless and agreed that the Birmingham Volunteer Corps and Wolseley Home Defence Corps be asked to attend a Brotherhood meeting.<sup>54</sup> They replaced their regular donation to the Prince of Wales Fund with collection of eggs and cash for wounded soldiers and sailors as requested by the Brotherhood Federation and sent the excess offering from the visit of the East Birmingham Volunteer Corps church parade to the Serbian Relief Fund.<sup>55</sup> In September 1915 they agreed to invite the pro-war MP, Mr Steel-Maitland, the Mayor of Birmingham or Alderman Neville Chamberlain to their Brotherhood Anniversary, and the East Birmingham Volunteer Training Corps to attend, yet at the same meeting it was agreed to invite the anti-war Professor H.G. Wood of the Quaker Woodbrooke settlement as a Council of International Relations speaker.<sup>56</sup> Further collections were made for the British Red Cross and the Birmingham YMCA Hut in France and intercessory services were held.<sup>57</sup> Thus through the conflict the same Brotherhood were supporting their members involved in conflict through letters, prayers and a roll of honour, supporting emergency relief for the civilian victims of war in Serbia, France, Belgium and at home, and practical and spiritual care for those in the military through the Red Cross and the YMCA, as well as welcoming pro-war and anti-war

---

<sup>53</sup> BCA MC2/14 Saltley Wesleyan Methodist Church, Brotherhood minutes 26/8/1914

<sup>54</sup> BCA MC2/14 Saltley Wesleyan Methodist Church, Brotherhood minutes 2/2/1915 & 17/3/15

<sup>55</sup> BCA MC2/14 Saltley Wesleyan Methodist Church, Brotherhood minutes 21/4/1915, 19/5/15 & 16/6/1915

<sup>56</sup> BCA MC2/14 Saltley Wesleyan Methodist Church, Brotherhood minutes 26/8/1914

<sup>57</sup> BCA MC2/14 Saltley Wesleyan Methodist Church, Brotherhood minutes 28/9/1915, 14/12/15 & 18/7/16

visiting speakers to their meetings.

## **2.5. Birmingham Free Church Members and Military Service**

Total figures for combatants associated with the Birmingham free churches are not easy to identify. In most cases rolls of honour and memorials appear to include not only church members, but also their relatives, and those who belonged to or attended ancillary organisations such as an Adult School, Brotherhood/Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Association, Sunday School, Boys' Brigade/Boys' Life Brigade Company or Scout Troop.

The Birmingham Congregational Board were reporting in October 1914 that 1,000 or 1,100 men had joined up.<sup>58</sup> Warwickshire Congregational Union surveyed their churches and revealed that by March 1915, long before the introduction of conscription, 1,353 men associated with the churches of their Birmingham District were in the military.<sup>59</sup> However, the figures they provided for individual churches within the Birmingham District added up to only 1,306. When churches outside of the city are excluded the total is reduced to 1,244,<sup>60</sup> compared with a total membership at that time of 6,928.<sup>61</sup> The figures across the city churches varied greatly. Lozells with a membership of 303 had only nine in the military, and Acocks Green (membership 187) only six. Yet the Digbeth Institute which had a membership of 260 had 436

---

<sup>58</sup> BCA B18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal & Missionary Chronicle*, Nov. 1914, p. 2 and BCA CC9/5 Lozells Congregational Church Minute Book - Report of Annual Meeting of the Birmingham Congregational Board, held at Digbeth, 23/11/14

<sup>59</sup> BCA L18.1 *55th Annual Report of the Warwickshire Congregational Union*, presented at Annual Meeting at Edgbaston, 18/3/1915, p. 14

<sup>60</sup> See Appendix X

<sup>61</sup> See Appendix IV

signed up. The latter figure therefore clearly included many from their Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Association and other related adult auxiliaries. It may also have reflected the poverty in the district and the proximity of the recruiting office, also located in Digbeth. The figures are not complete, however, as five Birmingham Congregational churches, including one of the largest, Westminster Road (Handsworth), failed to send in a return.

No other city-wide denominational statistics of those who joined up have survived. However, for the Birmingham Presbyterians, local church statistics provide a useful insight. By June 1915, the Broad Street Church's Roll of Honour included seventeen names – ten men who had joined the military (including two in the RAMC), and seven women who were working as nurses. Comparison with the communicants roll reveals only four of the men on the Roll of Honour were communicant members. Over the period 1914 to 1920 a total of seven men were listed in the communicants roll as 'On His Majesty's Service', the highest number in one year being four, in 1916 and again in 1919. Of the seven men 'on active service', only two were on the list reported to the Church Sessions, raising the question as to whether the other eight men listed on the Roll of Honour were communicant members of the church. It therefore seems likely that although fifteen men associated with the church were in the military (including the RAMC), only nine were actually church members.<sup>62</sup>

By February 1915, seven men had gone from Erdington Presbyterian Church 'to serve their country', of whom four were in full communion and three were former Sunday

---

<sup>62</sup> BCA PC2/5 Broad Street Church Sessions Minutes, 15/6/1915 & PC2/15 Communion Roll



School scholars.<sup>63</sup> At the largest Presbyterian church at Camp Hill many more were signing up: ten had enlisted by the end of 1914 and 28 by the end of 1915, allowing their minister to claim: ‘All our men of military age, I think without exception, have responded to their country’s call. Some have been exempted.’ The communicants roll confirms this trend with twenty communicants listed as OHMS in 1917, 24 in 1918 and fourteen in 1919. As some names recurred, there were 27 in all, three of whom were only admitted into membership in 1918, suggesting that some of those in the minister’s statistics were not church members.<sup>64</sup> A memorial tablet was erected at the church bearing the names of the three who did not return.<sup>65</sup>

The Moseley Church records also include statistics for the numbers signing up. In August 1914, the moderator reported that ‘five of the young men members of the church were...to join the Army on the following day’ but added that one of them had applied for baptism and membership, which suggests he was also including attenders in the figure. By June 1915, they had seventeen in the military, and 21 by December 1915. A July 1917 list had 28 ‘now serving’ (including their minister who was a chaplain, and one woman), one discharged through ill health and three who had ‘made the supreme sacrifice’. The Roll of Honour erected in the Moseley chapel commemorates 38 men who participated in the conflict, including eight who died in action; however, not all those listed as participants were combatants as it includes the minister, John Reid, who served as a chaplain, and James Cunnison who served with the Friends War Victims Relief Committee and the YMCA. The communicants roll

---

<sup>63</sup> BCA PC4 Erdington Presbyterian Church, Interim Session Minutes 11/2/1915

<sup>64</sup> *BCA Manual of the Presbyterian Church of England, Camp Hill Birmingham*, 1914 & 1915 in PC1/32 Management Committee minutes 24/7/1894-1/2/1918 & PC1/37 Communicants Roll Book.

<sup>65</sup> On the closure of the church, the tablet was relocated to St. Columba’s Church, Moseley.

showed six killed, including Cunnison, who was not listed amongst the dead on the Roll of Honour, and the church's communion table is in memory of an 'Archibald Ure Buchanan, killed in action, September 1915' who also does not appear on the Roll of Honour, suggesting that whilst the number of members killed was six, the total number of fatalities associated with the church was actually ten, including one non-combatant.<sup>66</sup>

Amongst other city-wide statistics available are those collected by the Birmingham Sunday School Union (BSSU) early in 1915 relating to those associated with Free Church Sunday Schools who had joined up.<sup>67</sup> They reported that 229 teachers and 850 scholars had enlisted.<sup>68</sup> Of this total of 1,079, 1,008 were detailed in the BSSU journal: 379 were Baptists (365 from churches within Birmingham), 330 Congregationalists (303 from churches within Birmingham), 169 Wesleyan Methodists, 72 United Methodists, 33 Primitive Methodists (22 from churches within Birmingham), seventeen Presbyterians and eight from non-denominational missions. The one Quaker Sunday School affiliated to the BSSU did not put in a return. To put this in context, of the 166 schools in membership of the BSSU in June 1915, 49 were Baptist, 47 Congregationalist, 28 Wesleyan Methodist, fourteen United Methodist, thirteen Primitive Methodist, six Presbyterian, one Quaker and eight non-denominational.<sup>69</sup> This means that 63% of the affiliated Sunday Schools were from

---

<sup>66</sup> BCA PC6/6 Sessions Minutes 6/8/14, PC6/7 Sessions Minutes 22/12/18, PC 6/17 Roll of Communicants, L18.5 330589 *Monthly magazine of the Presbyterian Church of England, Chantry Road, Moseley*, June 1915, December 1915 & July 1917 & Fred Price, *Moseley Presbyterian Church - Candid History, 1893-1972* (Moseley: 1991), p. 15, Roll of Honour & plaque in St. Columba's United Reformed Church, Moseley.

<sup>67</sup> *Monthly record of the work of the Birmingham Sunday School Union* (Dec 1914-May 1915)

<sup>68</sup> *Monthly record of the work of the Birmingham Sunday School Union* (June 1915)

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

‘Old Dissent’ and they had produced 72% of those identified as having joined up at that time. The largest numbers enlisting were 44 at Coventry Road (Small Heath) Baptist Church, 38 each at Wycliffe Baptist (Bristol Road), and Aston Park Congregational, 34 at Soho Hill Congregational and 32 at Lichfield Road Wesleyan Church. Again returns were not complete: amongst the significant omissions were two large Baptist churches, Christ Church (Aston) and Oxford Road (Moseley). However, some other large churches had very low returns, e.g. three from Spring Hill Baptist, three from Central Hall Wesleyan, four from the Primitive Methodist Conference Hall and one from Edgbaston Congregational.

The figures for the Primitive Methodists are noticeably lower than the other Methodists; thirteen Wesleyan Methodist churches and five Primitive Methodist churches had provided a return, compared to seven United Methodist churches, yet there were more than twice as many United Methodists as Primitive Methodists reported in the military and the United and Primitive Methodist recruits added together are less than half of the Wesleyan figure. This would appear to indicate much higher levels of voluntary recruitment amongst the Wesleyans than the other Methodists.<sup>70</sup> It should, however, be noted that some were volunteering for non-combatant roles, such as nineteen-year-old Charles H. Horton (son of the Asbury Wesleyan local preacher, Joseph Horton) who volunteered for the RAMC, serving as a stretcher bearer from 1915 to 1919.<sup>71</sup>

Examination of local church records revealed the extent of the impact of the conflict

---

<sup>70</sup> See Appendix XIII for details

<sup>71</sup> Charles H. Horton & Dale Le Vack, ed., *Stretcher Bearer!: Fighting for Life in the Trenches* (Oxford: 2013)

on church life. The Moseley Road Wesleyan Methodist Circuit consisted of the churches at Moseley Road, Kings Heath, Sparkhill (Warwick Road), Knutsford Street (including Mary Street Mission), Shirley and Hazelwell. Early in the conflict they reported large numbers of men associated with the churches volunteering: by October 1914, over 160 had volunteered from Moseley Road and Knutsford Street alone and appeals were being made for workers to replace ‘those who have volunteered for active service’.<sup>72</sup> By March 1915, the circuit magazine commented on the Circuit ‘Roll of Honour’ that ‘it is a long list, and a list to be proud of’: there were now 162 names from Moseley Road (including three fatalities), twelve from Kings Heath, 48 from Sparkhill, 46 from Knutsford Street & Mary Street (including one fatality) and eighteen from Hazelwell.<sup>73</sup> At a special Connexional Thanksgiving and Intercession service in October 1915 the names of ‘234 in some way connected with Moseley Road or Knutsford Street’ who had joined up were read, followed by the list of ten who had died so far in the conflict; by the same date there had been three fatalities from Sparkhill.<sup>74</sup> By December 1915 the ‘Roll of Honour’ for Moseley Road and Knutsford Street had reached 243.<sup>75</sup> The numbers of fatalities reported rose sharply through 1916 and 1917, and those joining up continued to rise: 76 at Sparkhill by June 1916, and even the small Hazelwell Church had 33 by December 1916 and 51 by December 1917.<sup>76</sup> The source of these figures, *The Wesleyan Church Magazine (Moseley Road Circuit)* ceased publication in December 1917 so no further statistics are recorded.

---

<sup>72</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road circuit) 10/1914

<sup>73</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road circuit) 3/1915

<sup>74</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road circuit) 11/1915

<sup>75</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road circuit) 12/1915

<sup>76</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road circuit) 6/1916, 12/1916 & 12/1917

The Belmont Row Wesleyan Church Circuit consisted of the churches of Belmont Row, Coventry Road, Acocks Green, Saltley, Stechford, Castle Bromwich, Coleshill, Solihull, Hay Mills and Ward End. By March 1918, 48 of their 264 Sunday School officers and teachers and 116 of their Sunday School scholars were 'on active service'.<sup>77</sup> Assuming that at least half of the officers and teachers were female, many too old, and most of the scholars too young to be called up, these reflect a significant impact on the Sunday School. By October 1916 three fully accredited local preachers and three others who were 'on trial' are listed as 'OHMS' on the circuit plan.<sup>78</sup> Closer examination of the list of officers at each chapel in the circuit reveals that almost every aspect of church life is affected by the conflict, as amongst those listed as OHMS by October 1917, there were five Sunday School secretaries, a Band of Hope conductor and secretary, a Brotherhood & Sisterhood secretary, four Boys' Brigade lieutenants, two organists and four chapel stewards.<sup>79</sup> From the Coventry Road Chapel alone 21 men were killed in the conflict.<sup>80</sup>

Meanwhile as early as December 1914, the Birmingham (Islington) Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting sent greetings to 180 men of their churches who had joined the colours, 100 of whom had been associated with the Islington Society, Sunday School, Boys' Brigade or Adult Bible Class. This figure included 67 former teachers and scholars who had joined up. Recruitment in this circuit may have been higher than elsewhere because Colonel John Barnsley, who was long associated with the chapel,

---

<sup>77</sup> BCA MB4/45 Circuit Sunday school council minutes 1912-1944, Annual Circuit SS Council Meeting, 16/3/18.

<sup>78</sup> BCA MB4/75/1-19 Plans & Directories (Belmont Row Circuit) 1916-1921

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> BCA MC29/24/1-2 Photograph & transcript of War Memorial removed from Coventry Road Methodist Church in 1961.

including serving as a local preacher and leading the Adult Bible Class, had been responsible for recruiting the first three Pals' Battalions in the city. Three of Barnsley's sons were also in the military as officers (including one in the RAMC) - his other son D. Gordon Barnsley had previously resigned a military commission to captain the Boys' Brigade at the Islington Chapel.<sup>81</sup> The May 1917 Islington Old Teachers' and Scholars' Annual Report included 23 obituaries of war casualties, although as only two of them – one teacher and one scholar – were from the current Sunday school, the remainder were presumably 'old scholars'.<sup>82</sup> By the following year twelve more fatalities had been reported, including one of the Barnsleys.<sup>83</sup>

At the Lozells Street Wesleyan Mission in Aston over 200 of the 831 members of their Sunday Afternoon Bible Class had joined the military by 1915.<sup>84</sup> In what was possibly the highest death toll for an individual Birmingham free church, 64 members of the Lozells Street Mission died in the conflict.<sup>85</sup> At Asbury Wesleyan Chapel (Handsworth) it was reported that 'many of the young people of the church' joined the military – eight of them died in the conflict. Their minister Rev. John Morton also died during the war, but not due to the conflict – he died in a road accident on his way

---

<sup>81</sup> BCA MC 88/33 *Islington (St. Martin's Street), Wesleyan Sunday School, Birmingham, Old Scholars' and Teachers' Association Magazine*, No.1, May 1913 & MC 88/35 *Islington (St. Martin's Street), Wesleyan Sunday School, Birmingham, Old Scholars' and Teachers' Association Magazine*, No.3 (May 1915)

<sup>82</sup> BCA MC 88/36 *Islington (St. Martin's Street), Wesleyan Sunday School, Birmingham, Old Scholars' and Teachers' Association Magazine*, No.5 (May 1917)

<sup>83</sup> BCA MC 88/37 *Islington (St. Martin's Street), Wesleyan Sunday School, Birmingham, Old Scholars' and Teachers' Association Magazine*, No.6 (May 1918)

<sup>84</sup> BCA MC51/16 Lozells Street Wesleyan Mission, Aston Manor, Birmingham, Wesleyan Methodist conference, 1894-1915

<sup>85</sup> BCA MC51/93 Circular re: Lozells Street Mission, Lozells Street Hall, Aston: Victory Thank-offering Fund (March 1920)

to the Asbury Adult Bible Class.<sup>86</sup> At the Ladywood United Methodist Church, it was reported that ‘the tragic and distressing war of 1914-1918 made severe demands upon the members and workers of Ladywood Church for service at home and on Flanders’ Fields’.<sup>87</sup> Six members of the Ladywood United Methodist Church died in the conflict.

The scale of involvement from individual churches is shown in a report in the *Birmingham News* in 1926 of the unveiling of a panel ‘erected in Aston Villa Wesleyan Church, Lozells, to those living men of the church who served in the war. [The] Memorial of stained wood, contains names of about 150 men, attached to Aston Villa Church or the now defunct Wesley Church, Constitution Hill’.<sup>88</sup>

The minutes of meetings of the Aston Brotherhood (Lichfield Road Wesleyan), provide further evidence of the impact of the conflict on an individual congregation. Founded in 1908, they had a membership of 205 by 1913. Their January 1915 Annual Report revealed that 24 members ‘have already stepped out to the call of duty. They go to fight our battles, they surrender their comfort that we might keep ours.’<sup>89</sup> By August 1915 this had risen to 32 members and in October 1915 plans were made for a

---

<sup>86</sup> BCA MC42/10 *Asbury Memorial Church, “100 years of witness” 1873-1973* & BCA Birm Inst D/46 510992, Asbury Memorial Wesleyan Methodist Church, Handsworth: Order of service on the occasion of the unveiling of a Memorial Reredos in memory of those associated with the above church who fell in The Great War, Sat 9/7/1921

<sup>87</sup> BCA Lp18.3 664293 Achilles Taylor: *These Fifty Years: 1874-1924 Jubilee Celebration, United Methodist Church, Ladywood, together with some account of its beginnings, 1857-1873* (Birmingham: 1924)

<sup>88</sup> Cutting from *Birmingham News* 19/6/1926 in BCA MB5/14 Wesley Circuit, Circuit Schedule Book

<sup>89</sup> BCA MC47/16 Lichfield Road Wesleyan Methodist Church, Aston Brotherhood Minutes 16/1/15

Khaki Sunday with friends and relatives of those who had enlisted being invited.<sup>90</sup> In December 1916 they agreed to use their benevolent fund to help wounded soldier members of the Brotherhood, and the following month it was reported that there were 48 names on the Roll of Honour at the end of year – five of whom ‘had paid the supreme sacrifice’, three more were wounded and one a Prisoner of War.<sup>91</sup> Two years later it was reported that 35 names were still on the Roll of Honour in June 1918 and three more had been killed in action that year.<sup>92</sup> Therefore by the end of the conflict, at least a quarter of the Aston Brotherhood had been directly involved in the war as combatants, with at least eight being killed.

Another surviving source of statistics for those in the military is found in the Yearbooks of the Midland Adult School Union.<sup>93</sup> The Yearbooks for 1915 and 1916 detailed the number ‘absent on active service’ from each Adult School. The 1915 Yearbook details 889 Birmingham adult scholars on active service, including 42 in the RAMC, one in the Friends’ Ambulance Unit and one in the Lady Paget Ambulance Unit in Serbia. Those listed included three fatalities and one missing. Largest numbers were from two Quaker Adult Schools – Hospital Street (57) and Nelson Street (41). Comparison with the statistics in the 1916 Yearbook reveals the impact of the introduction of conscription in January 1916. The 1916 Yearbook details 1,522 Birmingham adult scholars on active service, plus 41 fatalities. However, a comparison of the two sets of statistics revealed that five schools which

---

<sup>90</sup> BCA MC47/16 Lichfield Road Wesleyan Methodist Church, Aston Brotherhood Minutes 23/8/15 & 4/10/15

<sup>91</sup> BCA MC47/16 Lichfield Road Wesleyan Methodist Church, Aston Brotherhood Minutes 10/12/16 & 21/1/17

<sup>92</sup> BCA MC47/16 Lichfield Road Wesleyan Methodist Church, Aston Brotherhood Minutes 26/1/19

<sup>93</sup> BCA L48.76 222103 *MASU Yearbook*, 1916 & 1917



provided statistics in 1915 failed to do so in 1916. When these Schools' 1915 returns are added to the 1916 figures, the total reaches 1,588 adult scholars on active service plus 42 fatalities. Eight Birmingham Adult Schools now had 50 or more scholars in the military, including Lozells (72), Hospital Street (68), Erdington (60) and Stirchley Afternoon School (60). The absence of an updated return for six schools including one of the largest, Moseley Road, suggests that the actual figure was even higher. The 1918 Yearbook does not include statistics for those in the military, so further analysis is not possible.

### **2.5.1. Birmingham Free Churches and Conscription**

There is evidence of a diversity of views towards the issue of conscription in the Birmingham free churches. As early as 1914 the threat of conscription had been recognised. At the Annual Meeting of the Birmingham Congregational Board, Thomas Towers (the minister of Moseley Road Congregational Church) spoke on the War and the Churches, observing: 'The church must present to the conscience of young men, the tremendous call of the country's need. There is a danger of conscription and it must [be] avoided or it would divide the country at once.'<sup>94</sup> He was supportive of the war effort but concerned about the implications of conscription.

Two years later at the final annual meeting of the Shropshire Baptist Association held in March 1916, the President, Rev. I. Brook, although also supportive of the war, expressed stronger concerns: 'Let the church rise to the occasion, and be equal to the task. Let her denounce the evils that the war brings in its train: the evils that arise out

---

<sup>94</sup> BCA CC9/5 Lozells Congregational Church Meeting Minute Book, Report of Annual Meeting of the Birmingham Congregational Board, held at Digbeth, 23/11/14

of compulsory military service, and the treatment of the conscientious objector; and the evils that threaten the moral and spiritual well-being of a soldier's life.'<sup>95</sup>

At Sutton Coldfield Congregational Church in 1914 there was criticism of those who did not volunteer to join the forces. An article in their October church magazine commented: 'Some have refused the call, but the majority of those who could have nobly accepted it.' It then went on to list approvingly not only those who enlisted, but those who attempted to do so but were turned down.<sup>96</sup> The criticism continues two months later with the observation that 'there are still others to whom the call should come'.<sup>97</sup> There was an equal enthusiasm for volunteering in the magazine of Smethwick (Regent Street) and Bearwood Baptist churches: 'It is with pride that we publish our 'Roll of Honour' – the names of the young men from the congregation who are offering their best, indeed their all, to their country in this, her hour of peril. There are others who deserve a place on the "Roll", some just under age who longed to go, others with some slight physical defect, who were rejected, and two whom I urged to withhold themselves as they were necessary to the 'keeping together' of their homes.'<sup>98</sup> In 1915-16 the Church Secretary of Hamstead Road Baptist Church,

---

<sup>95</sup> BCA B18.21 *West Midland Baptist Association Year Book 1916* (Birmingham, 1916), pp. 21-22. At the meeting, the Shropshire Baptist Association was dissolved, most churches joining the West Midland Baptist Association, so his address was published in the West Midland Baptist Association Year Book.

<sup>96</sup> BCA CC36 *The Sutton Coldfield & Wylde Green Congregational Magazine*, No.46, Oct. 1914

<sup>97</sup> BCA CC36 *The Sutton Coldfield & Wylde Green Congregational Magazine*, No.48, Dec. 1914

<sup>98</sup> *The Home Messenger* (Regent Street and Bearwood Baptist Churches) Vol 8, No.11, Nov. 1914, cited in Ronald C. Kemp, *A Century of Christian Witness, Bearwood Baptist Church, 1898-1998* (Bearwood: 1998), p. 13

Handsworth was actively supporting Lord Derby's recruitment scheme.<sup>99</sup>

In 1916 there was hostility at Carrs Lane Church to any who even questioned conscription. Their church magazine editorial referred to 'internal difficulties of the government over the issue of recruiting', leading to conscription, but then added: 'A positive duty is incumbent upon all to lend no help to the forces of divisive criticism, but to do all we can to instil the spirit of confidence in our leaders.'<sup>100</sup> The Guild report in the same edition boasted: 'We are proud to have no conscripts in the ranks.'<sup>101</sup> Meanwhile in the magazine of Sutton Coldfield and Wylde Green Congregational churches there was an assumption that all those who were called up would respond positively: 'Now that all the men of military age are being called up, several of our married men will be joining the colours. In many cases this will involve undoubted hardships. But I guess I know that every man to whom the call comes will face the consequences with courage and faithfulness, leaving his dear ones in the keeping of God.'<sup>102</sup>

In June 1918, when Hensley Henson, the Anglican Bishop of Hereford, became the first Anglican bishop to preach at Carrs Lane Congregational Chapel, he used the opportunity to condemn conscientious objectors: 'There were some people who, refusing the burden of citizenship on the plea of conscience, exempted themselves

---

<sup>99</sup> BCA BC19/4/1/1/1 Hamstead Road Baptist Church Meeting 15/12/15 & Annual Congregational Meeting 23/2/16

<sup>100</sup> BCA B18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal & Missionary Chronicle*, (May 1916), p. 1

<sup>101</sup> BCA B18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal & Missionary Chronicle*, (May 1916), p. 3

<sup>102</sup> BCA CC36 *The Sutton Coldfield & Wylde Green Congregational Magazine*, 66 (June 1916)

from their proper share in the sacrifices and efforts of the war. These men might be sincere, but they were also self-absorbed and unintelligent.’<sup>103</sup>

However, these more strident observations appear to be a minority view, not widely reflected in the minute books and other church magazines which have survived from the period.

In December 1915 in the magazine of the Moseley Road and Knutsford Street Wesleyan Circuit, in a show of hostility to those who had not volunteered, whilst commenting on the numbers on their Roll of Honour, it was observed: ‘It will, of course, cease with the end of Lord Derby’s scheme, should conscription be necessary. We give the place of honour to those who have freely responded to the call of the Country.’<sup>104</sup> However by May 1916, a less strident view was being expressed in the same magazine: ‘Compulsion for military service has long been talked of. Nobody who understands England pretends to like it, and those who like it most are those who are exempt.’<sup>105</sup>

Even auxiliary organisations at churches where pro-war attitudes were more evident also showed an interest in other areas of service such as non-aligned ambulance work. Accordingly, in May 1915, a Guild meeting at Carrs Lane Chapel was ‘an open evening and took the form of a service in honour of our brave lads at the Front’, and yet the following week, ‘Mr Gasking gave an account of his brother’s work with the

---

<sup>103</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 1/7/1918

<sup>104</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road circuit) 12/1915

<sup>105</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road circuit) 5/1916

St. John Ambulance unit in Serbia'.<sup>106</sup>

## **2.6. Birmingham Free Churches and Military Use of Church Premises**

Another issue many churches had to face concerned requests for the use of premises, either for direct military purposes such as recruitment, or to provide leisure facilities for locally based troops. By March 1917 Digbeth Institute had opened their Billiard Room for the daytime use of wounded soldiers and sailors and established an overnight Hostel for soldiers and sailors in their Gymnasium.<sup>107</sup> However, in the following year when the HM Board of Works applied for the temporary tenancy of the whole of the Institute to be used by the Director of National Service for recruitment purposes, the application was unanimously rejected by both the Management Committee and the Trustees.<sup>108</sup> A soldiers' rest room had also been provided at Kings Heath Baptist Chapel by the end of 1916.<sup>109</sup> Also in 1917, the schoolroom at Erdington Baptist Chapel was opened on a weeknight for the use of local soldiers, but the resource was poorly used and soon closed.<sup>110</sup> Moseley Baptist Church made rooms available for the men of the 3<sup>rd</sup> City Battalion while in barracks at Spring Hill College from 23 November 1914 to 16 April 1915.<sup>111</sup> Sutton Coldfield Congregational Church Schoolrooms were made available to soldiers stationed locally, the purpose being explained as follows: 'Both our schools will be placed at the disposal of the Birmingham YMCA and will be used as reading, writing,

---

<sup>106</sup> BCA B18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal & Missionary Chronicle* (6/1915), p. 3

<sup>107</sup> BCA CC2/2 Digbeth Institute, Management Committee Meetings, 27/2/17 & 27/3/17

<sup>108</sup> BCA CC2/2 Digbeth Institute, Management Committee Meetings, 2/7/18 & 29/8/18

<sup>109</sup> BCA L18.2 *Kings Heath Baptist Church Manual* for 1916, containing reports as adopted at the Annual Congregational Meeting, 29/1/17, p. 25

<sup>110</sup> BCA BC18/4/1/1/1 Erdington Baptist Church, Annual Meeting of Church & Congregation: 23/1/18

<sup>111</sup> BCA BC13/3/1/1/5 Moseley Baptist Church, Deacons Meeting 12/5/15 & L18.2 *Moseley Baptist Church Magazine*, No.19 (12/1914)

conversation and concert rooms for the troops. This should give us a great opportunity of getting among them and influencing them for good.’<sup>112</sup> Wylde Green Congregational Church also made their lecture room available for the same purpose.<sup>113</sup> However, by early 1915, the Wylde Green Church had decided that the level of usage was having a detrimental effect on regular church activities so the buildings were claimed back.<sup>114</sup> Even some Quakers permitted their premises to be used in this way: at Northfield Friends’ Institute, the tea-rooms were re-opened as a billiard room for wounded soldiers from the nearby Hollymoor Hospital.<sup>115</sup>

The only overtly military uses of church buildings recorded were Yardley Congregational Church making their Iron Room available to ‘Lord Derby’s Committee’ (for recruitment) for four weeks in November 1915,<sup>116</sup> Cannon Street Baptist Church renting their disused former Graham Street Chapel to the Ministry of Munitions for storage,<sup>117</sup> and Moseley Presbyterian Church allowing spare land to be used to store motor lorry bodies for the War Office.<sup>118</sup>

The Cannon Street Church faced a larger difficulty over their rental of Handsworth Council House for Sunday worship. In August 1914 when the Council House was requisitioned by the War Office for recruitment purposes, they lost the use of the

---

<sup>112</sup> BCA CC36 *The Sutton Coldfield & Wylde Green Congregational Magazine* 46 (10/1914)

<sup>113</sup> BCA CC36 *The Sutton Coldfield & Wylde Green Congregational Magazine* 47 (11/1914)

<sup>114</sup> BCA CC38 Wylde Green Congregational Church, Deacons Meeting 2/3/15 & Church Meeting 4/3/15

<sup>115</sup> E.A. Marshman, *A History of the Northfield Adult Education Centre, 1892-2005* (n/p: n/d)

<sup>116</sup> BCA CC13/2 Yardley Congregational Church, Church Meeting 2/11/15

<sup>117</sup> BCA BC2/34 Cannon Street Baptist Church, Deacons Meeting 16/12/15

<sup>118</sup> BCA PC6/10 Moseley Presbyterian Church, Management Committee 2/10/1914

building for 5 weeks.<sup>119</sup> Later on in the conflict they somehow managed to share the premises, reporting ‘the strange conditions prevailing of the church worshipping in a part of the Assembly Halls and on the other side the recruiting of men for the army going on simultaneously’.<sup>120</sup>

It therefore appears that whilst some churches were happy for their premises to be used to provide social facilities for locally based soldiers, or to evangelise them, they drew the line at any usage that would seriously interfere with the ongoing mission of their churches.

## **2.7. Military Parades in Birmingham Churches**

A few Birmingham churches invited the local military to parade in their churches. As chaplain, Moseley Baptist Church's minister, Mr Lemin, hosted two parade services in 1915 and one in 1916. The visitors were variously described as the Moseley Volunteer Rifle Corps and the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Warwickshire Rifle Volunteers, but appear to be the same body.<sup>121</sup> The other examples in the archival record were Birmingham Home Defence Rifle Corps No.1 (Small Heath Section) parading at Small Heath Congregational Chapel in 1915,<sup>122</sup> Rotton Park Corps of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Warwickshire Volunteer Regiment parading at Edgbaston Congregational Chapel in 1916,<sup>123</sup> Warwickshire Volunteer Regiment (4<sup>th</sup> Battalion) at Carrs Lane

---

<sup>119</sup> BCA BC2/34 Cannon Street Baptist Church, Deacons Meetings, 26/8/14 & 1/10/14

<sup>120</sup> BCA BC2/8 Cannon Street Baptist Church Book, entry for 191.

<sup>121</sup> BCA BC13/4/1/4 Moseley Baptist Church, Church Meeting, 14/4/15 & BC13/3/1/1/5 Deacons Meetings 13/9/15, 10/4/16 & 12/6/1.

<sup>122</sup> BCA CC10/8 Small Heath Congregational Church, Church Meetings 30/12/14 & 3/2/15

<sup>123</sup> BCA CC3/2 Edgbaston Congregational Church, Deacons Meeting 2/9/15 & W.A. James, *The Story of Francis Road, 1856-1956* (Edgbaston: 1956), p. 19

Chapel in 1916<sup>124</sup> and Aston Home Defence Corps at Westminster Road Congregational Chapel in 1915.<sup>125</sup> Moseley Road Baptist Church invited the Small Heath Home Defence Corps to parade but they declined,<sup>126</sup> and Moseley Road Congregational Church invited the Balsall Heath Rifle Corps.<sup>127</sup> Lozells Congregational Church invited the Aston Manor Volunteer Home Defence Force in 1915,<sup>128</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> Volunteer Battalion of the Royal Warwick Regiment visited them in 1918,<sup>129</sup> whilst Erdington Congregational Church planned a 'khaki service' in 1918<sup>130</sup> – the minutes do not record whether it took place. Moseley Presbyterian Church set aside an aisle in the chapel for nonconformist troops stationed at Spring Hill.<sup>131</sup> In the nine churches where sources reveal that military parades took place or were planned, no opposition is recorded in the minutes. Thus it appears that whilst parading of military units on church premises was considered appropriate by a few churches, it does not appear to have been widespread or frequent.

## **2.8 Conscientious Objection to the First World War**

Conscription became law in Britain on 27 January 1916, with effect from the 10<sup>th</sup> February. Precise numbers of conscientious objectors (COs) during the First World War are difficult to quantify. In 1916 the War Office established a Non-Combatant Corps (NCC) – an army unit with military uniforms which would not bear arms.

---

<sup>124</sup> BCA CC1/100 Carrs Lane Church, Deacons Meeting 29/11/16 & CC1/110 Church Meeting 30/11/1916

<sup>125</sup> BCA CC11/10 Westminster Road Congregational Church, Deacons Meetings 31/5/15 & 2/6/15

<sup>126</sup> BCA BC3/8 Moseley Road Baptist Church, Deacons Meetings 3/3/16 & 31/3/16

<sup>127</sup> BCA CC12/7 Moseley Road Congregational Church, Deacons Meeting 2/6/15

<sup>128</sup> BCA CC9/16 Lozells Congregational Church, Deacons Meetings 6/7/15 & 20/7/15

<sup>129</sup> BCA CC9/17 Lozells Congregational Church, Deacons Meeting 27/11/18

<sup>130</sup> BCA CC5/21 Erdington Congregational Church, Deacons Meeting 8/5/18

<sup>131</sup> BCA PC6/10 Moseley Presbyterian Church, Management Committee 2/10/14



Some 3,300 of the 16,100 objectors who went before the Local Tribunals accepted this form of non-combatant service. Of the 12,800 objectors who declined to join the NCC, 6,300 accepted other forms of alternative service. The remainder refused any kind of war work, although 3,750 accepted modified prison sentences offered under the Home Office scheme. Some 1,300 absolutists who refused any co-operation with the war remained in prison throughout the conflict. Boulton established that 3,964 conscientious objectors were willing to undertake non-military work at the direction of the Pelham Committee.<sup>132</sup>

Braithwaite estimated a lower total of about 15,900.<sup>133</sup> Her figure is made up of c.3,300 in the Non-Combatant Corps, 100 in the RAMC, 6,250 exempted for performing 'work of national importance' (including the Friends' Ambulance Unit) and 6,261 refused CO status and forced into the military.

Ceadel offers a higher figure of 16,500 applications for conscientious objection, of whom only 350 received absolute exemption. He identifies that of the 5,994 who were imprisoned for resisting the tribunal system, 1,234 had on grounds of conscience refused to apply for exemption in the first place.<sup>134</sup> Rae comes to the same figure, and reveals that this includes 1,400 Christadelphians directly exempted from combatant service by order of the Army Council.<sup>135</sup> However, none of these statistics take account of those who volunteered for service in the RAMC or took up employment in

---

<sup>132</sup> David Boulton, *Objection Overruled* (Letchworth: 1967), pp. 131-33

<sup>133</sup> Constance Braithwaite, *Conscientious Objection to Compulsions under the Law* (York: 1995), pp. 141, 153 & 156

<sup>134</sup> Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945, the Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: 1980) pp. 39 & 41 & Ceadel, *Semi-detached Idealists*, pp. 219-20

<sup>135</sup> John Rae, *Conscience and Politics: the British Government and the Conscientious Objector to Military Service, 1916-1919* (London: 1970), p. 115

a 'reserved' occupation to avoid being called up into a unit where they would be required to bear arms.

Some paid a heavy price for their resistance: ten objectors died in prison, and 73 died subsequently, as a result of treatment received in prison or whilst in the hands of the military. A further 31 were considered to have 'lost their reason' as a consequence of their experience. There was also a report of a man in York committing suicide rather than attend his appeal tribunal.<sup>136</sup>

### **2.8.1 Religious Affiliation of Objectors**

There are no complete statistics as to the political or religious affiliation of the objectors. However, two groups of statistics have survived which provide valuable insights. A Quaker survey of 820 imprisoned 'absolutists' in May 1917<sup>137</sup> revealed that of the 329 whose political allegiance was reported, the largest group was to the Independent Labour Party (ILP) with 195. Religious affiliation was more divided: out of 252 whose faith was reported, from the free churches 106 were Quakers, 21 Congregationalists, fourteen Wesleyans, ten Baptists, seven Primitive Methodists, three Churches of Christ, three Presbyterians, two Plymouth Brethren and two Salvationists. These contrast to the fourteen Anglicans and five Roman Catholics identified. Amongst the non-Trinitarian groups were listed fourteen Unitarians and five International Bible Students. There were also fourteen absolutists whose faith was listed as miscellaneous. These contrast noticeably with Rae's report of a survey

---

<sup>136</sup> Will Ellsworth-Jones, *We will not Fight: the Untold Story of World War One's Conscientious Objectors* (London: 2008), pp. 75 & 230

<sup>137</sup> *The Absolutists' objection to conscription: a statement and an appeal to the conscience of the nation* (London: 1917), pp. 27-30

of the 3,947 men (although his statistics add up to 4,034) who were willing to compromise and do work of a non-military nature under the direction of the Pelham Committee. Of the 2,743 who gave a religious objection, the largest groups were the 1,716 Christadelphians, 145 Plymouth Brethren, 140 Quakers and 112 Methodists (this figure is less helpful as it groups together all types of Methodism).<sup>138</sup> In summary, they can be categorised as follows: Old Dissenters (Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Quakers): 285; New Dissenters (Methodists): 112; New Trinitarian Movements (Brethren, Churches of Christ, Apostolics/Pentecostals and Salvation Army): 163; and non-Trinitarian (Christadelphians, International Bible Students,<sup>139</sup> Swedenborgians, Spiritualists, Theosophists, Theists and Unitarians): 1,809. The remainder of the faith-based objectors were 52 Anglican (including one Church Army), nine Roman Catholic, nine other faiths (Jews and Buddhists), 240 denomination not stated and 64 others. There were also 199 moral and 42 political objectors in the scheme.<sup>140</sup> The Society of Friends' own statistics reveal that only 750 Quakers were conscientious objectors – 45.4% of their male members of military recruitment age – compared with 33.6% who enlisted in the military.<sup>141</sup>

The implication of these limited statistics is that absolutists were more likely to be political than religious objectors, and that whilst amongst the religious absolutists, the largest number were Quakers, amongst those willing to do non-military service by far the largest group were the Christadelphians, although Quakers, Methodists and

---

<sup>138</sup> Rae, *Conscience & Politics*, p. 243

<sup>139</sup> The movement which became known as Jehovah's Witnesses.

<sup>140</sup> Rae, *Conscience & Politics*, p. 243

<sup>141</sup> Rae, *Conscience & Politics*, pp. 73 & 77

Congregationalists figured significantly in both groups of objectors. It is also worthy of note that the new movements, although smaller in number, had produced high numbers of objectors. When these figures are combined with those from some of the non-Trinitarian sects such as Christadelphians and International Bible Students, this suggests that a higher number of conscientious objectors based their objection on a literal Biblical pacifism than on a solely ethical or political objection to the war. However, the limited number of absolutists included in the Quaker survey, and the absence of faith-based statistics for members of the Non-Combatant Corps makes clear conclusions difficult. It is also worth noting that there were many objectors who had both political and religious objections to participation in the conflict, and would have found it difficult to separate one from the other.

### **2.8.2. Birmingham Free Church Opposition to the War**

Two of the leading opponents of the war in Birmingham were Primitive Methodist local preachers as well as ILP activists. Councillor J.W. Kneeshaw's biography as a prospective parliamentary candidate included reference to his role before he came to Birmingham as a Primitive Methodist local preacher and that 'before he was 20 he passed into the chair of one of the largest Temperance Friendly Societies'.<sup>142</sup>

Kneeshaw was first elected to Birmingham City Council in 1911 for the Rotton Park ward which he represented until 1919. He also contested the Ladywood division in the 1918 general election, losing to Neville Chamberlain. He came to the West Midlands from Hull in 1906 to work as an ILP Organiser in the South Staffordshire area.<sup>143</sup> By

---

<sup>142</sup> Biography of Kneeshaw as prospective Labour parliamentary candidate in *Birmingham Evening Dispatch*, 20/1/1914 and *BCA MF Forward* Vol 1 No.5 (10/1912)

<sup>143</sup> Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country*, p. 120

November 1913, he was the Organising Secretary of the Birmingham ILP and a member of the ILP's National Administrative Council.<sup>144</sup> He appears to have been a popular speaker at a variety of local free church groups: his pre-war engagements included speaking against conscription at the Stirchley Labour Church (meeting in the Stirchley Friends' Institute),<sup>145</sup> preaching at the (Tolstoyan) Birmingham Brotherhood Church,<sup>146</sup> the Wolverhampton Labour Church,<sup>147</sup> and speaking on 'Christian Brotherhood and the problem of poverty' at the Sparkbrook (Baptist) Men's Meeting, at which he quoted approvingly the Brotherhood Movement national president and Wesleyan Methodist, Arthur Henderson MP.<sup>148</sup> He also spoke at protest meetings on 'the question of armaments' at Farm Street Adult School and Little Bromwich Adult School early in 1914. The Farm Street meeting passed the following resolutions '(1) Protesting against the increase in the Navy estimates, (2) calling on the government to convene a conference of the powers on armaments, and (3) extending fraternal greetings to Germany', and the Little Bromwich meeting unanimously agreed the armaments estimates were too high.<sup>149</sup> Even with the outbreak of war, he remained a popular speaker, addressing Bournville Adult School on the aims of the Union of Democratic Control (UDC), and sharing his reflections on the war with Kings Heath Adult School in 1915.<sup>150</sup> By March 1917, Kneeshaw was also on the national council

---

<sup>144</sup> BCA Stirchley Labour Church, syllabus of lectures for the session October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1913 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1914

<sup>145</sup> *ibid*

<sup>146</sup> BCA MF *Forward* Vol 1, No.11 (5/1913)

<sup>147</sup> *The Wolverhampton Worker* (12/1913)

<sup>148</sup> BCA L18.2 242337 *The Messenger of the Sparkbrook Men's Meeting* No.16 (Oct 1913)

<sup>149</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One and All, Midland supplement* (March 1914 & June 1914)

<sup>150</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One and All, Midland supplement* (April 1915)

of the anti-conscription National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL).<sup>151</sup> Throughout the conflict he was also speaking out against the war at Labour and Trade Union meetings: for example, in November 1915 when he spoke at a public meeting for Handsworth ILP on ‘patriotic plunderers’ and obtained unanimous support for an anti-conscription motion.<sup>152</sup> In October 1915 he was prosecuted under the Defence of the Realm Act for possession of anti-war leaflets and pamphlets.<sup>153</sup> After the war, he was also actively involved in the Labour Church movement, speaking at the Birmingham Central, Rotton Park and Stirchley Labour churches in 1919.<sup>154</sup>

A second key Birmingham anti-war activist was another Primitive Methodist local preacher in the same neighbourhood, Jim Simmons. He was appearing on the preaching plans of the Primitive Methodist’s Birmingham 1<sup>st</sup> Circuit as an exhorter by 1912.<sup>155</sup> Although initially a combatant in the war (he was already in the military when war broke out), he preached and wrote against the war, even whilst still in the army. After losing the lower part of his leg he was invalided out, and toured the country on his wooden leg speaking and preaching against the war.<sup>156</sup> He went on to succeed Kneeshaw as the Birmingham ILP organiser until he resigned to become *The Herald*’s organiser for the Midlands in 1919.<sup>157</sup> *The Herald* was a Cadbury-sponsored anti-war newspaper. Around the same time, Simmons was reported as a speaker at the

---

<sup>151</sup> Until 1917 known as the National Council against Conscription, *NCCL leaflet* (Mar 1917) in Worcestershire County Records Office, b898.2/1204/8/v Society of Friends Committee for aiding conscientious objectors to war service, minute book.

<sup>152</sup> Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country*, p. 225

<sup>153</sup> Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country*, p. 229

<sup>154</sup> BCA Store L76.22, cab 15 *Town Crier* No.3 (17/10/1919), No.5 (31/10/1919) & No.9 (28/11/1919)

<sup>155</sup> BCA MA2/26 *Primitive Methodist Quarterly Guide to the Birmingham Circuits* (7-9/1912)

<sup>156</sup> This is detailed in his autobiography: BCA Jim Simmons, *Soapbox Evangelist* (Chichester: 1976)

<sup>157</sup> BCA Store L76.22, cab 15 *Town Crier* No.7 (14/11/1919)

Rotton Park and Erdington Labour churches.<sup>158</sup> His opposition to the war did not diminish his later political influence: he went on to serve as a Labour councillor for Rotton Park ward (1921-24) then Duddeston and Nechells ward (1925-32). After an unsuccessful attempt in 1924, he was elected as Labour MP for Erdington (1929-31 and 1945-59), and also edited the local labour paper, the *Town Crier* (1940-45).

A third significant Labour activist and opponent of the war was the United Methodist local preacher Tom Hackett. He too was elected as a Labour councillor for Rotton Park (1913-20) alongside Kneeshaw, and was an unsuccessful Labour and Co-operative parliamentary candidate for the Kings Norton division in 1918. His biography on nomination as prospective parliamentary candidate revealed he was also Chairman of the Education Committee of the Ten Acres & Stirchley Co-operative Society (TASCOS) and of the Midland Education Association. He was also described as a steward of Stirchley Primitive Methodist Church, a very active Adult School worker, and a Trade Unionist of long standing.<sup>159</sup> Unless he had recently changed his allegiance, the Primitive Methodist reference was in error, as he was listed on the United Methodist Preaching Plan for the Edgbaston Circuit (which included Stirchley) in 1910 and 1912.<sup>160</sup> In 1913 on Hackett's election as a councillor, *Forward*, the local ILP journal described him as 'greatly attached to the Adult School movement, both as a scholar and a teacher, having been for many years leader of a large Bible class for men.'<sup>161</sup> His name regularly appeared as a speaker at various Adult Schools across

---

<sup>158</sup> BCA Store L76.22, cab 15 *Town Crier* No.1 (3/10/1919) & No.4 (24/10/1919)

<sup>159</sup> BCA B62.53 *The Wheatsheaf, a monthly co-operative record & magazine, Birmingham Industrial Co-operative Society supplement* (9/1918)

<sup>160</sup> BCA MA3/1 *United Methodist Directory of the Birmingham Churches*, 30/1-24/2/1910 & 5/5-28/7/1912

<sup>161</sup> BCA MF *Forward*, Vol 2, No.14, (8/1913)

Birmingham during the First World War.<sup>162</sup> In 1917 he took over the superintendency of the Bristol Street (Class 14) Adult School.<sup>163</sup> He also appeared as a speaker at the Stirchley Labour Church in 1912 and 1914<sup>164</sup> and led the Harvest Festival of the (Tolstoyan) Birmingham Brotherhood Church in 1913.<sup>165</sup> However, he was also in demand in the more mainstream churches: in February 1914, he spoke on ‘Christian Brotherhood and a living wage’ to the Sparkbrook Men’s Meeting (Baptist) who described him as ‘the latest acquisition to the ranks of the Labour members’ and as ‘a deeply religious man, much of his energy finds an outlet in Christian work’.<sup>166</sup> A 1918 report of his views as a parliamentary candidate described him as ‘a peace by negotiation but not a peace at any price man ... earliest opportunity should be taken to investigate all peace proposals put forward’. He was also described as being opposed to ‘the knock-out blow’.<sup>167</sup> Hackett maintained long-term involvement in his local Co-operative Society (TASCOS), serving as chairman of the Education Committee (1907-23) then President of the Society (1923-29 and 1930-46).<sup>168</sup>

Barnsby claimed that the *Rotton Park Forward*, the ILP publication for Kneeshaw and Hackett’s ward, published two editions in 1916 denouncing the war, which he

---

<sup>162</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One and All, Midland supplement* (1916-1919)

<sup>163</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One and All, Midland supplement* (Nov 1917)

<sup>164</sup> BCA Lp19.9 245850 Stirchley Labour Church, syllabus of lectures for the season October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1911 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1912 & Lp19.9 257994 Stirchley Labour Church, syllabus of lectures for the session October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1913 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1914

<sup>165</sup> BCA MF *Forward*, Vol 2, no.15 (9/1913)

<sup>166</sup> BCA L18.2 242337 *The Messenger of the Sparkbrook Men’s Meeting*, no.20 (Feb 1914)

<sup>167</sup> BCA B62.53 *The Wheatsheaf, a monthly co-operative record & magazine, Birmingham Industrial Co-operative Society supplement* (11/1918)

<sup>168</sup> Harry M. Vickrage, *Seventy-Five Years of Co-operative Endeavour, a History of the Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-operative Society Limited* (Birmingham: 1950), pp. 103-05



reports were ‘suppressed by the authorities’.<sup>169</sup> In his Birmingham local electoral analysis, Phillips argued that Hackett may have been one of a number of Labour candidates defeated in 1920 because of the pacifist views he had expressed during the war.<sup>170</sup> This may also have been a factor in Simmons failure to be elected in the same ward in 1919, even though he had previously served as a combatant and been invalided out of the army.

A clear indication of these men’s attitudes to the conflict can be seen in the influence they also had on the attitudes towards the war of the local Labour movement. In November 1916, Kneeshaw proposed a resolution to the Birmingham Labour Representation Committee, advocating the views of the UDC: ‘It sought that at a future Peace Conference (a) no territory should be transferred without the consent of the inhabitants (b) no treaty should be entered into by Britain without the consent of Parliament (c) that future foreign policy should not be based on the balance of power but on the Concert of Europe with the setting up of an international Council.’ It was passed by twenty votes to fourteen.<sup>171</sup> In January 1916, Kneeshaw proposed an anti-conscription motion at the Birmingham Trades Council, which stated: ‘That this Council representing 70,000 working men reaffirms its unalterable opposition to Conscription. The agitation for conscription was never directed at securing national advantage, but for the purpose of undermining the Trade Union movement and undermining British democracy. We regard the proposed division of the nation’s manhood into married and unmarried and [*the intention to*] impose conscription on

---

<sup>169</sup> Cited in M.D. Blanch, *Nation, Empire & the Birmingham Working Class, 1899-1914*, PhD thesis, University of Birmingham (1975) p. 350 & Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country*, p. 227

<sup>170</sup> Christopher Phillips, *Birmingham Votes, 1911-2000* (Plymouth: 2000)

<sup>171</sup> Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country*, p. 191

the latter as a trick to divide the opposition to conscription. We repudiate such a trick and pledge ourselves to resist the introduction of this pernicious Prussian principle to the utmost extent of our powers.’ The motion was passed by the Trades Council.<sup>172</sup> A similar motion was also approved by the Trades Council in July 1916 by 70 votes to 55.<sup>173</sup> Meanwhile his wife secured the support of the Birmingham’s Women’s Labour League to a motion opposing conscription.<sup>174</sup>

At a Conference held in the Birmingham Wesleyan Central Hall in July 1918, attended by 120 Labour, Trade Union and Co-operative representatives, a motion proposed by Hackett and supported by ‘ex-Private Simmons’ was passed unanimously; it condemned the Allied secret treaties and concluded: ‘This conference, realising that their continued existence constitutes an insuperable barrier to a satisfactory peace, demands their immediate repudiation by the Government so far as this country is concerned.’ When the matter was discussed by the Executive Committee (EC) of the Birmingham Labour Party in June 1918, a motion, this time written by Kneeshaw, was passed which argued they had been deceived into supporting the local recruitment campaign and concluded: ‘In the opinion of the party these treaties flagrantly violate every reason put forward by British statesmen in justification of this war and embody precisely those obnoxious and immoral principles of Junker-imperialism which they had led the people to believe we were in the war to destroy.’ The same EC meeting also received a letter from E.D. Morel of the UDC asking for ‘a choice of dates when their commissioner, Cllr Kneeshaw, could address the party on the programme of the UDC, with a view to adoption and

---

<sup>172</sup> Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country*, p. 192

<sup>173</sup> Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country*, p. 192

<sup>174</sup> Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country*, p. 219

affiliation of the party'. As Kneeshaw was present at the meeting, this suggestion was immediately acted upon. The same meeting also condemned the destruction of the printing press of a Mr Street of Streatham in South London, which had been used to print *The Tribunal*, the publication of the No-Conscription Fellowship. Both Kneeshaw's motion on the secret treaties and the one on the printing press were unanimously supported by a full party members' meeting the following week.<sup>175</sup> Barnsby identifies Kneeshaw's 'outstanding contribution'<sup>176</sup> to the anti-war movement in Birmingham: it is clear that all three were actively campaigning on the peace issue within the Labour movement as well as the churches. They were still active after the conflict too: both Councillor Tom Hackett and 'ex-private Simmons' were key speakers at a series of anti-conscription public meetings organised across the city by the ILP in April 1919.<sup>177</sup>

Kneeshaw also had significant roles nationally in two major campaign groups: the National Campaign against Conscription (which became the National Council for Civil Liberties in 1917) and the Union of Democratic Control, as well as in the Independent Labour Party.

Although it is not directly evident from the church's own records, there appears to have been some sympathy for opponents of the war at the Birmingham Wesleyan Central Hall. Of the wartime subscribers to the Birmingham branch of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the only one identifiable as a minister was the Rev. F.L. Wiseman,

---

<sup>175</sup> BCA A329.94249 LAB 963091, Birmingham Central Labour Party minutes, 6/6/1918-10/10/1919

<sup>176</sup> Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country*, p. 243

<sup>177</sup> Birmingham ILP Federation Anti-conscription leaflet, cited in Sian Roberts, *Birmingham, Remembering 1914-1918* (Stroud: 2014), p. 118

long-term superintendent of the Central Mission/Central Hall, and a former President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference.<sup>178</sup> The Central Hall was made available as a venue for a major Labour, Trade Union and Co-operative conference on the secret treaties in July 1918, as well as for a Peace Conference of anti-war delegates to the Churches of Christ annual meeting which was held in Birmingham in August 1918.<sup>179</sup>

### **2.8.3 Conscientious Objection and Other Opposition to the War in Birmingham**

Opposition to the war in Birmingham was revealed both on a personal basis in the form of conscientious objection, and collectively in the activities of pacifist and political groups in opposing the war.

The Birmingham Local Tribunal received 90,721 applications for exemption – of these, 34,760 were rejected and required to join the military, whilst 7,749 received exemption certificates.<sup>180</sup> Lethbridge reports that there were 426 Conscientious Objector applications in Birmingham, of which 342 obtained some level of exemption and 84 were rejected (allowing for appeals).<sup>181</sup> The destruction of the records of the Military Tribunals in the 1930s makes detailed local statistics for Conscientious Objection difficult to accurately quantify by religious or political affiliation.<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>178</sup> BCA MS 640 Birmingham Fellowship of Reconciliation Account Book, Jan-June 1917.

<sup>179</sup> A.E. Smith, 'The Conferences', in *For His Name's Sake. Being a Record of the Witness given by Members of Churches of Christ in Great Britain against Militarism during the European War, 1914-1918* (Heanor: 1921)

<sup>180</sup> Asa Briggs, *History of Birmingham, Vol II, Borough and City, 1865-1938* (London: 1952), p. 223

<sup>181</sup> J.P. Lethbridge, *Birmingham in the First World War* (Birmingham: 1993), p. 12

<sup>182</sup> The only relevant records which survive are those for the South Warwickshire Appeals Committee (held at Warwickshire CRO) which do not cover Birmingham or the West Midlands, and the Central Appeals Tribunal (held at the PRO Kew), a third tier to which appeals could be made on cases of principle if permission was granted by the County Appeals Committee.

Within the city there were active local branches of both the Christian-based Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR) and the more secular No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF). By June 1917 in the Birmingham area, eight branches of the FoR and eight branches of the NCF were between them providing financial support to nineteen families of imprisoned objectors.<sup>183</sup> The later scale of opposition to the war from Christian pacifists in the city is shown in an undated *Roll of Honour* which lists the fate of 86 local members and supporters of the FoR: 34 were in prison, 35 working on the land or in CO work camps, fourteen serving in the FAU or similar organisations and the remaining three they had lost contact with.<sup>184</sup> As they are FoR members it can be assumed they are all Christians, but there are no indications in the surviving records of their denominational affiliation. Using entries in *The Friend* and *The Tribunal*, the local historian Barnsby<sup>185</sup> identified 51 Birmingham men who were imprisoned or sent to work camps, another twelve still known to be in the hands of the civil or military authorities in May 1918, and a further 28 who had appeared before local tribunals. Of the 91 he identifies, he claimed the majority were Quaker members or attenders, most of whom were not listed on the Birmingham FoR *Roll of Honour*. When duplicate entries are removed, the two lists together provide 142 names (of whom about half were claimed as Quaker members or attenders), less than half of Lethbridge's figure for successful Birmingham applications. The FoR appears to have largely attracted members from the longer-established denominations; it therefore appears that neither their Roll of Honour nor Barnsby's list included those objectors who belonged to new movements such as the Churches of Christ, the Brethren and the

---

<sup>183</sup> BCA, MS 640 Birmingham Fellowship of Reconciliation Account Book (Jan-June 1917)

<sup>184</sup> BCA, Lp75.9 'Our Roll of Honour' Birmingham Fellowship of Reconciliation Branch (Birmingham: n/d)

<sup>185</sup> Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country*, pp. 267-70

Pentecostals, or non-Trinitarian objectors such as Christadelphians and International Bible Students.<sup>186</sup>

These factors considered together suggest that the total number of Birmingham Conscientious Objectors with a faith-based objection was much higher than the FoR *Roll of Honour* and Barnsby's list have recorded. Notable omissions from the list include the Pentecostal Carter brothers,<sup>187</sup> James Cunnison of Moseley Presbyterian Church (a Woodbrooke College lecturer who served in France with the Friends War Victims Relief Committee and the YMCA) and two Birmingham free church Conscientious Objectors who gave their lives for their faith: Ernest Woodward, the Baptist Adult School leader, who died as a consequence of his treatment whilst imprisoned, and H. Shackelford (formerly of Carrs Lane early morning class) who died whilst serving as a stretcher bearer for a New Zealand regiment. It is also worth noting that some objections would have been on grounds of both faith and politics. To these figures can be added many of those who volunteered for some kind of non-military service prior to the introduction of conscription. Examples of such alternative service can be found in the statistics of the workforce of the Cadburys' Bournville factory. Whilst 2,148 Bournville Works employees joined the military, 25 joined the British Red Cross or St. John Ambulance, 41 the Friends' Ambulance Unit, four the Non-Combatant Corps, 118 the RAMC, one the New Zealand Medical Corps, twelve the Veterinary Corps and 81 the Labour Corps.<sup>188</sup> Therefore 282 staff – more than 10% of those employees directly involved in the conflict – were in some form of non-combatant or alternative service. There was also established a Bournville Works

---

<sup>186</sup> The movement which later became known as 'Jehovah's Witnesses.'

<sup>187</sup> See above.

<sup>188</sup> J.P. Lethbridge, *More about Birmingham in the First World War* (Birmingham: 1994) pp. 39-41

Division of the St. John Ambulance Brigade (with 56 members) which conveyed the wounded between ambulance trains and hospitals and provided refreshments to ambulance trains at Birmingham Snow Hill Station and orderlies to local hospitals.<sup>189</sup> It is difficult to quantify how much influence the anti-war Quaker Cadbury family would have had on these figures – as they appear to have been the only major employer in the city to include non-combatants on their Roll of Honour, comparisons with other employers are difficult.

Also active in Birmingham was a branch of the UDC which was campaigning for a negotiated settlement to the war. The Chairman of the Birmingham Branch was the Quaker, Harrison Barrow. It was also supported by the evangelical Quaker, George Cadbury, and the Primitive Methodist local preachers and leading ILP anti-war activists, Jim Simmons and J.W. Kneeshaw. The Birmingham Labour churches and ILP branches also welcomed free church anti-war activists such as Simmons, Kneeshaw and Harrison Barrow as speakers at their meetings.<sup>190</sup>

#### **2.8.4. Birmingham's Military Tribunals - Conscientious Objectors**

Birmingham's Military Tribunals were widely reported in the local newspapers. However, all of them had an editorial policy of not naming the individuals concerned, which makes comparison between different newspapers, or meaningful numerical analysis very difficult. Nevertheless, a detailed examination of the Birmingham local press reports from March 1916, when most of the initial applications from Conscientious Objectors were considered, is informative. It becomes evident that the

---

<sup>189</sup> Lethbridge, *More about Birmingham in the First World War*, p. 42

<sup>190</sup> Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country*, pp. 246-49

majority of reported objections to military service were from applicants with a faith-based objection. Most widely reported are applications from Christadelphians, but others included Baptists, Brethren, Christian Science, Churches of Christ, International Bible Students, Methodists, Pentecostals, Quakers, Spiritualists, the Church of England and a Jew. A few came from more obscure sects such as 'Community of God's Son' and the 'Israelites of the House of David'. There were also many who applied on the grounds that war was against the teachings of Christ or incompatible with their Christian faith, without specifying a particular denominational affiliation. Additionally, there were those who objected on the basis of a political or ethical stance – mostly socialists, a few vegetarians (and therefore against the taking of all life), one who argued that as an Irishman he was not involved in the conflict, and two brothers who had a German father. Some applications cited both religious and political objections. Some objectors, such as Quakers or Brethren, also had a Biblical objection to swearing oaths, and therefore refused the military oath.

The majority of reported applicants on grounds of conscience sought absolute exemption, rather than just exemption from combatant service. However, in the newspaper reports consulted, the vast majority were refused. There were only two reported examples of successful Birmingham applications: one was an engraver, a member of a Pentecostal Mission, represented by a member of the same Mission, and in the other case a mother successfully argued for her son whom she had trained from infancy against taking human life.<sup>191</sup> The majority of other applicants were either granted non-combatant service or had their applications refused. Those who expressed

---

<sup>191</sup> Both reports appeared in the *Birmingham Gazette*, 9/3/1916, but not in the *Birmingham Daily Mail* or the *Birmingham Daily Post*.



a willingness to work with organisations such as the Friends' Ambulance Unit or the Red Cross were mostly given a temporary exemption to give them time to apply. Some other trends emerged: where applicants were doing munitions work, their applications were usually refused, on the basis that if they were willing to make weapons of war, they should also be willing to use them. Applications from members of denominations without an obvious anti-war tradition, such as the Church of England, also appeared more likely to be refused. Applicants from members of free churches or non-Trinitarian sects with a pacifist tradition were also rejected, if the Tribunal believed they could detect an inconsistency in the applicant's case. So, for example, they rejected a student from the Woodbrooke settlement who was a member of the Society of Friends, who was previously secretary of a political organisation and admitted he may have indirectly assisted recruiting in that role,<sup>192</sup> and an associate of the Society of Friends and a Christadelphian who were both doing munitions work.<sup>193</sup> This was not applied consistently, however, as some Christadelphians who were doing munitions work were granted non-combatant status.<sup>194</sup> Applicants with a political rather than faith-based opposition fared worst, with most being completely rejected. Even those citing political and faith objections appeared likely to be rejected, such as one who was a Christian and a socialist,<sup>195</sup> and a nineteen-year-old Unitarian whose application was refused on the basis that it appeared to be more political than religious.<sup>196</sup> The difference in treatment between faith-based and political objectors was noticed at the time, with a Priscilla Albright of Edgbaston observing in a letter to the local press: 'The only matter for Tribunals to decide is whether the conscience is

---

<sup>192</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 25/3/1916

<sup>193</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 10/3/1916 & 11/3/1916

<sup>194</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 9/3/1916 & 16/3/1916

<sup>195</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 9/3/1916

<sup>196</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 9/3/1916

genuine. It is an impossible task, but are they doing their best? In Birmingham, for the most honest conscientious objector to call himself a socialist has meant (in every case I have heard) the rejection of his claim for exemption.<sup>197</sup> Her letter was published in the *Birmingham Gazette*, which had taken a stand against conscription, rather than the *Birmingham Daily Mail* which had claimed ‘each case is considered on its merits and impartially adjudicated on’.<sup>198</sup>

Those who appealed to the Warwickshire County Appeals Tribunal fared no better: at the first sitting of the Birmingham Division, which heard appeals against the decisions of the Birmingham, Solihull, Tamworth and Sutton Coldfield Tribunals, about twenty appeals were heard. All of the appeals on conscientious grounds were dismissed, and the applicants were refused the right to appeal to the Central Tribunal.<sup>199</sup>

The Birmingham newspapers also carried reports of tribunals in neighbouring authorities. The type of applicants and the nature of the decisions appeared to be broadly similar to those of the Birmingham Military Tribunal. A sampling of these reports from March 1916 revealed applicants with a similar range of denominational backgrounds to Birmingham, the only notable addition being a group from the strongly anti-war Warley Institute appearing before the Oldbury Tribunal.<sup>200</sup> No reports of absolute exemptions granted by other tribunals in the West Midlands were identified. However, some neighbouring Tribunals spelt out more clearly the policy Birmingham was clearly pursuing regarding applicants who were involved in

---

<sup>197</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 21/3/1916

<sup>198</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 21/3/1916

<sup>199</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 21/3/1916

<sup>200</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 4/3/1916

munitions work, such as the Redditch Tribunal where the ‘Clerk suggested that the applicants were not loyal to the tenets of the Christadelphian faith in making instruments for the destruction of human life’, and ‘one of the tribunal members remarked the position was illogical’,<sup>201</sup> whilst at the Dudley Tribunal, those who had joined the Christadelphians since the outbreak of war were refused, but some others, who were doing war work, were granted non-combatant service.<sup>202</sup> The only successful appeal of relevance was at the Mid-Staffordshire Appeal Tribunal (Lichfield), where it was agreed in the case of a student at the Lichfield (Anglican) Theological College, who had been refused exemption by the Birmingham Tribunal as he was not being ordained at Trinity, that he could be granted exemption until Christmas, so that he could be ordained at Advent, and thereafter exempted as a clergyman.<sup>203</sup> This decision, however, appeared to be based more on an interpretation of the regulations on the treatment of theological students, rather than the acceptance of a conscientious objection.

In conclusion, there is evidence of local applications for absolute exemption from military service from a range of faith traditions, not only the anticipated Quakers, but also many from other free churches, longer-established denominations such as Baptists and Methodists as well as newer denominations with a pacifist tradition, such as the Brethren, the Churches of Christ and the Pentecostals, or non-Trinitarian sects such as the Christadelphians and the International Bible Students. Whilst there were also some political objectors, the majority of those reported appear to hold a faith-based objection, based on a high view of the Bible, their objection to military service

---

<sup>201</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 7/3/1916

<sup>202</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 17/3/1916

<sup>203</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 22/3/1916

being rooted in their understanding and interpretation of the New Testament's teaching. For some this also included the refusal to swear oaths, based on Jesus' teaching. However, very few applicants were successful at the Tribunals, either having their applications refused, or being granted a lesser level of exemption than that which they had been willing to accept. Those from anti-war traditions with which the Tribunals were familiar, such as Quakers, appear to have been more successful than those from newer denominations such as the Brethren – the chairman of the Sedgley Tribunal asked one applicant what he meant by 'the Brethren'.<sup>204</sup>

The available Birmingham data appear to broadly confirm the national statistics above, that a higher number of Conscientious Objectors based their objection on a literal Biblical pacifism than claiming a solely ethical or political objection to the war. Although, there are also Birmingham examples of opponents of the war such as Simmons and Kneeshaw who, as both ILP members and Primitive Methodist local preachers, had political and religious objections to the conflict, and would have found it difficult to separate one from the other.

## **2.9. New Christian Movements: Pacifist Traditions**

A common feature of the three main 'Restorationist' New Christian Movements – the Brethren, the Churches of Christ and Apostolic/Pentecostal churches – was the commitment to pacifism in the early years of their movements. The opposition of the early (i.e. nineteenth-century) Plymouth Brethren to any participation in warfare has

---

<sup>204</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 4/3/1916

been well documented by Brock's 1984 article.<sup>205</sup> Whilst no similar detailed study exists of the early British Churches of Christ attitudes to war, the movement's earliest historian Watters acknowledged that it was largely pacifist,<sup>206</sup> whilst Thompson chronicles their opposition to the Boer War and to participation in warfare generally.<sup>207</sup>

Only the Churches of Christ have left a significant local archive, so they will be used as a case study of the response of a Birmingham 'new movement' to the First World War. The response of Apostolic/Pentecostal Christians to the war nationally and locally will then be considered in more detail, and contrasted with the response of the Salvation Army.

### **2.9.1. Case Study: Birmingham Churches of Christ Attitudes to War before 1914**

Of the five Birmingham Churches of Christ in existence during the Boer War, the only surviving records are minute books from the Anderton Street and Stratford Road (Sparkhill) churches. The Anderton Street minute books (which have survived up to 1915) made no reference to either the Boer War or the First World War. Therefore the only reference to attitudes to war during the Boer War was when Sparkhill Oversight Committee received a circular from the Peace Society in 1901 and responded: 'Resolved that the Secretary fill up the post card attached to the Circular with an intimation that although we cannot observe Sunday December 22nd as Peace Sunday yet our entire sympathy is with the society in its endeavour to promote Peace amongst

---

<sup>205</sup> Peter Brock, 'The Peace Testimony of the early Plymouth Brethren', *Church History*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (3/1984), pp. 30-45

<sup>206</sup> A.C. Watters, *History of the British Churches of Christ* (Birmingham: 1948) p. 108

<sup>207</sup> David M. Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall* (Birmingham: 1980) pp. 121-122

the nations of the World.’<sup>208</sup>

However, for the First World War minutes survived from the Birmingham Evangelistic Co-operation (BEC) and five of the seven churches. The exceptions being Geach Street/Summer Lane<sup>209</sup> whose records were destroyed by a Second World War bomb,<sup>210</sup> and Great Francis Street who have not retained any records from the period.<sup>211</sup> The Bournville Church (now URC) have retained their own records, while the remainder are held in the Churches of Christ archive which at the time of this research was housed in the University of Birmingham’s special collections, but has since been relocated to Westminster College, Cambridge and then dispersed to county archives.

Churches of Christ practised congregational church government, but co-operated regionally, solely for evangelistic purposes, through local committees known as evangelistic co-operations. These local evangelistic co-operations corresponded with a national General Evangelist Committee (GEC). In Birmingham, six of the churches worked together through the Birmingham Evangelistic Co-operation (BEC), with Leamington also appearing on their preaching plan. The Great Francis Street Church was out of fellowship with the others for an unspecified reason: it sent visitors to the BEC meetings from 1917, and finally joined in 1920.<sup>212</sup>

---

<sup>208</sup> UoB, CoC Archives, Sparkhill Oversight Committee, 2/12/01

<sup>209</sup> Geach Street Church was renamed Summer Lane in 1917 – the building is on the junction of the two roads, UoB, CoC Archives, BEC Quarterly Meeting, 18/9/17

<sup>210</sup> Personal e-mail from Summer Lane CoC, evangelist, 2/2009.

<sup>211</sup> Personal conversation with Great Francis Street CoC elder, 2012.

<sup>212</sup> UoB, CoC Archives: Half-Yearly Conference of Churches in the Birmingham Co-operation held at Moseley Road on 9/04/17 & BEC Quarterly Meeting 7/9/20

The BEC minutes reveal that the impact of the war was largely on decision-making, with a decision on the appointment of a full-time district evangelist postponed initially for 6 months on 2 March 1915 (eventually R.K. Francis was appointed from 1 October 1916)<sup>213</sup> and plans for a public meeting on their views on church unity postponed until ‘after the termination of the war’.<sup>214</sup> Even a request to begin a new work at Small Heath brought a negative response: ‘That the BEC while sympathising fully with the desire to establish a Church in Small Heath, does not consider the present time, with its dearth of speakers and workers, opportune for the purpose, and urges that such action be deferred until the return of our young men.’<sup>215</sup>

In 1917 the issue of military service arose at the BEC when ‘... a letter was read from Bro. J. Marsden re: Brethren exempted from military service on the grounds of the needs of their respective churches’. After some debate they agreed that ‘the secretary be requested to pass on to the officers of the churches affected, the substance of Bro. Marsden’s letter and to suggest to them that they should consult Brother Marsden and take prompt action’.<sup>216</sup> As the Churches of Christ did not employ ministers, but rather travelling evangelists, they were reliant on active lay leadership to maintain the churches, so this could have been a major problem. This issue would also have been a significant issue for the Brethren, who shared their opposition to local paid ministry. At the next BEC meeting: ‘The Secretary reported that he had written to Bro. Marsden and churches affected re: exemption of the brethren from military service

---

<sup>213</sup> UoB, CoC Archives: BEC Meetings 2/3/1915 & 1/10/16.

<sup>214</sup> UoB, CoC Archives: BEC Sub-Committee on Christian Unity, 2/2/1917

<sup>215</sup> UoB, CoC Archives: BEC Meeting 3/9/1918

<sup>216</sup> UoB, CoC Archives: Special Meeting of the BEC held at Moseley Road Chapel, 13/3/17.

and had received a reply to the effect that exemption had been granted in all cases.<sup>217</sup>

Consequently, the issue does not resurface again.

As the war came to an end, the churches appeared keen to celebrate the peace: ‘The BEC recommend to the Birmingham churches in Conference assembled that a united meeting of the members of the city Churches be convened as early as possible after the declaration of peace, to render united thanks to God for His goodness and to solemnly re-consecrate our powers to His service in the days of opportunity lying ahead.’<sup>218</sup> However, the meeting was never organised as it was later reported: ‘We regret our inability to carry out the conference recommendation re: a united peace meeting and recommend to the churches that they hold individual meetings at their own discretion.’<sup>219</sup>

Despite the presence of some of its members in the military, the Erdington Church Meeting in 1918 was unequivocal in its opposition to the continuation of the war:

Resolved that we call upon the General Evangelist Committee, and other responsible Committees of the Churches of Christ to take definite action, calling upon the Government to repudiate the secret treaties; the Paris resolutions; and any other cause likely to perpetuate the present fearful condition of things, and demanding that the Government should at once seek to enter into negotiations with the enemy on the basis of open diplomacy, as an alternative to the method of force, which has so utterly failed, in spite of the fearful sacrifice of human life that has been made, and that we as a Church of

---

<sup>217</sup> UoB, CoC Archives, BEC Quarterly Meeting, 5/6/1917.

<sup>218</sup> UoB, CoC Archives, BEC Quarterly Meeting, 22/10/18.

<sup>219</sup> UoB, CoC Archives, BEC Quarterly Meeting, 6/2/19.



Christ, and as individual Christians, pledge ourselves to do all in our power to bring this war to an end by the Christian method of negotiation and reconciliation, in contrast with the worldly method of brute force.<sup>220</sup>

There is no record in the church minutes of any response received from the GEC.

The Erdington Church was not alone in their concerns. There was debate on issues around the war at the Sparkhill (Stratford Road) Church. At an Oversight Meeting in 1916: 'Bro. Goodyear brought forward the question of keeping in touch (by means of letter and occasional parcels) with the young brethren who were serving as soldiers and a discussion arose as to what should be our action with regard to any of our young men who may have conscientious objection to military service. Bro. Perry proposed and Bro. Gould seconded that the Church Secretary be empowered to fill in the papers of any brother who conscientiously objected to military service. The resolution was carried by 9 to 7 [all were present except Bro. Hicken who was out preaching]... It was further resolved that a notice be given from the platform next Lord's Day morning to that effect, carried 9 to 1.' A Committee was also established to maintain contact with those who were in the armed forces. A few months later Bro. Hicken, who had been absent during the previous discussion, 'proposed that the following Resolution should be sent for inclusion in the Annual Meeting schedule; after being approved by the church business meeting to be held on the following Wednesday': 'While we recognise and are grateful for the sacrifice and devotion of our Brethren who have joined his majesty's forces, at the same time we desire to place on record our deep sympathy for our brethren who are conscientious objectors. We also make the strongest possible protest against the brutal treatment to which some have been

---

<sup>220</sup> UoB, CoC Archives, Erdington CoC, Quarterly Church Business Meeting, 28/4/18.

subjected by the military authorities and would suggest that the Conference in its collective capacity do all that possibly can be done either by resolution or otherwise to protest against this unbearable wrong, and to secure the protection which the law provides.’ The resolution was adopted.<sup>221</sup> However, at the next meeting: ‘Some discussion having taken place as to the attitude likely to be taken by various Brethren at the Annual Meeting, regarding the war and military service, it was resolved to read the resolution of July 16, to the Church Meeting about to be held, and to explain that they would not be asked to adopt it, as we deemed that course to be in the best interests of the annual meeting.’ This they did at the next church meeting, where they made it clear that this motion still reflected their views, but they had withdrawn it as they were concerned that it could prove divisive at the forthcoming annual conference.<sup>222</sup> Unity was one of the key principles of their movement, so the idea that they could be promoting a divisive motion would have been a serious concern.

Other Churches of Christ were discussing issues raised by the war. Moseley Road Sunday School organised a social in November 1914 for its senior scholars on the theme of patriotism, whilst in 1916 Anderton Street Church agreed that: ‘The time is ripe and urgent, for a class to be formed, for the discussion of live questions, religious and social, that will enable brethren to present to the world a scriptural and practical solution to grave problems.’<sup>223</sup> This idea was replicated at the Bournville Church where ‘The advisability of forming a special class for speakers and workers for the discussion of live questions, religious and social’ was also considered and approved in

---

<sup>221</sup> UoB, CoC Archives, Stratford Road CoC Oversight Committee 2/7/16

<sup>222</sup> UoB, CoC Archives, Stratford Road CoC Oversight Committee 19/7/16 & Church Meeting 19/7/16

<sup>223</sup> UoB, CoC Archives, Anderton Street CoC Church Meeting, 21/5/16 & Moseley Road CoC Sunday School Executive Committee 30/11/14

1916.<sup>224</sup> Also at the Bournville Church: ‘A discussion arose upon the question of holding a special service for Relatives and Friends of Soldiers and Sailors, and after consideration, it was resolved that the matter be left with the Oversight Committee.’<sup>225</sup> There was no reference to the proposal in Bournville’s Oversight Committee minutes, suggesting that this potentially divisive proposal was quietly forgotten.

The issue of the war resurfaced at Sparkhill in 1918: ‘A resolution in reference to the War which had been passed by the church at Tunbridge Wells and sent to the G[eneral] E[vangelist] Ctte was received from the church at Tunbridge Wells, with a request that the church at Sparkhill would pass the same or a similar resolution. In view of the differences of opinion known to exist among Brethren it was resolved to pass on to next business.’<sup>226</sup> The minutes of the Oversight Committee at the Bournville Church the following week reveal the nature of the request from the Tunbridge Wells Church: ‘A letter was read from the church at Tunbridge Wells asking for the passing of a resolution to the government, urging them to “end the war by negotiation”. Resolved that the matter remain in abeyance.’<sup>227</sup> Unlike the Sparkhill Church, Bournville did not take the matter to the full church meeting for decision. This was the second time that the Bournville Oversight Committee had taken such an action. In 1916: ‘A circular was read from Bro. A.E. Smith in regard to an Early Peace Movement, and it was resolved the matter remain in abeyance.’<sup>228</sup> The letter is significant in that it comes from a local leader of a nationwide campaign against the

---

<sup>224</sup> Bournville Church of Christ, Special Oversight Meeting 21/5/16

<sup>225</sup> Bournville Church of Christ, Annual Business Meeting, 25/10/15

<sup>226</sup> UoB, CoC Archives, Stratford Road CoC Church Meeting 24/4/18

<sup>227</sup> Bournville Church of Christ, Oversight Committee 29/4/18

<sup>228</sup> Bournville Church of Christ, Oversight Committee 29/6/16

war amongst members of the Churches of Christ.

### **2.9.2. Early British Pentecostals and Warfare**

Anderson has argued that most early Pentecostals were pacifists, partly due to a rejection of social and political involvement, but also in the case of the First World War, because they saw it as fulfilment of prophecies preceding the second coming of Christ.<sup>229</sup> One of the most significant early anti-war Pentecostals was Arthur Sydney Booth-Clibborn, a former Quaker who had become a Salvation Army officer (and married William and Catherine Booth's daughter Kate) - both he and Kate moved on to become Pentecostals. He had served the Salvation Army as a missionary in South Africa. His 1907 anti-war book *Blood against Blood* was based on his witnessing of the Boer War. In the preface he argued: 'The English and the Dutch are the races which first issued the Bible in the language of the people. On the eve of the twentieth century these two races became engaged in mortal conflict in South Africa. They fought in the presence of the heathen to whom they should have been missionaries.'<sup>230</sup> A new edition of the book was published in September 1914 in both Britain and America on the outbreak of the First World War, and was particularly popular amongst Apostolic and Pentecostal Christians. In it Booth-Clibborn argued against Christians participating in warfare – both for missional as well as scriptural reasons. His book was specifically written for Christians: in it he reasoned that Christians should not be fighting each other, as brothers in Christ, nor should they be killing those who were not Christians, as by killing them they would be depriving them of the opportunity to respond to the message of the gospel. It received positive reviews in

---

<sup>229</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction*, p. 263

<sup>230</sup> Arthur Sydney Booth-Clibborn, *Blood against Blood* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., New York: n/d) preface to the 1st edition, p. 3

the American Pentecostal publications *The Bridegroom's Messenger*,<sup>231</sup> *Word and Witness*<sup>232</sup> and the *Weekly Evangel*.<sup>233</sup> The *Weekly Evangel* also published anti-war articles by the Booth-Clibborn's son, Samuel and promoted his anti-war book *Should a Christian Fight?*<sup>234</sup> In the English Pentecostal journal *Confidence*, the Anglican editor, Boddy, included regular items in support of Christians involvement in the war, so it was not surprising that when asked to promote *Blood against Blood* he wrote: 'My honoured brother in the Lord, A. S. Booth-Clibborn, would like me to recommend his book against War, entitled *Blood against Blood*. Most of us hate War, but many of us could not stand by calmly and see a murderer killing children without doing all he could to prevent, to punish, to incapacitate.'<sup>235</sup> It seems appropriate therefore that Malcomson viewed Arthur Booth-Clibborn as the most significant anti-war influence amongst early British Pentecostals: 'More than any other individual he led the way in calling believers to conscientious objection when conscription was introduced in 1916. Men like Howard Carter, his brother John, and Donald Gee as well as others were affected by Arthur's stand. His book was banned and withdrawn in Britain.'<sup>236</sup> Cho has ably demonstrated<sup>237</sup> that differing attitudes to war were significant in the break between the early Anglican leaders of Pentecostalism, Boddy and Polhill, and the younger generation – such as the Carter brothers (see below) and Donald Gee – who went on to form the new British Pentecostal denominations. Cho argued that the war was a significant turning point for British Pentecostalism: 'While

---

<sup>231</sup> *The Bridegroom's Messenger*, VII, No.170 (1/5/1915)

<sup>232</sup> *Word and Witness*, XII no.8 (July 1915), p. 8 & XII no.9 (Sept 1915), p. 2

<sup>233</sup> *The Weekly Evangel*, 134 (8/4/1916), p. 16; 136 (22/4/1916) p. 16 & 192 (2/6/1917) p. 11

<sup>234</sup> *The Weekly Evangel*, 187 (28/4/1917), p. 5-7; 190 (19/5/1917) pp. 4-5 & 208 (29/9/17) p. 16

<sup>235</sup> *Confidence*, VIII no.1 (Jan 1915), p. 6

<sup>236</sup> Keith Malcomson, *Pentecostal Pioneers Remembered* (Longwood, Fla., USA: 2008), p. 147

<sup>237</sup> Kyu-Hyung Cho, *The move to independence from Anglican leadership: an examination of the relationship between Alexander Alfred Boddy and the early leaders of the British Pentecostal Denominations (1907-1930)*, PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham (2009), pp. 130-46

Boddy, as a patriotic Anglican, strongly supported British involvement in the war, the young Pentecostals had to suffer as conscientious objectors.’<sup>238</sup>

One concern that the Pentecostals shared with the longer-established evangelical free churches was to counter the teaching that a soldier dying on the battlefield automatically went to heaven and that this could be seen as a re-enactment of the sacrifice of Christ – they saw this as denying the need for repentance and faith, and therefore a serious heresy. Boddy, in an attempt to counter this, obtained copies of a tract by a Brethren preacher, Dr Heyman Wreford, entitled *The Sin against the soldier and the saviour* which Boddy personally distributed amongst soldiers in France and published in full in *Confidence*, in an attempt to encourage others to follow his example.<sup>239</sup>

### **2.9.3. Birmingham Apostolics/Pentecostals and the First World War**

The Apostolic/Pentecostal movement was growing numerically in Birmingham at the outset of the conflict. Evidence of the response of Birmingham Pentecostals to the First World War is scanty. The origin of the conscientious objector described as a former Anglican, now from a Pentecostal Mission, who appeared before the Birmingham Local Tribunal in March 1916 is not clear. Details in the press reports are unspecific as his application was heard in private session.<sup>240</sup> It seems likely, however, to refer to one of the Carter brothers - local Pentecostal Conscientious Objectors who both went on to hold roles of national significance in the major British

---

<sup>238</sup> Cho, PhD Thesis, p. 130

<sup>239</sup> *Confidence*, VIII no.8 (Aug 1915), p. 149

<sup>240</sup> *Birmingham Daily Press* (9/3/1916), *Birmingham Daily Mail* (8/3/1916)

Pentecostal denomination, the Assemblies of God. Alfred Howard Carter (known as Howard) was born January 1891 in Birmingham and his brother, John Carter, was born in Aston, in 1893, into an Anglican home. They visited a local Church of Christ where both were converted and baptised. Sumrall claimed Howard was aged twenty when this took place, which would date it to 1911.<sup>241</sup> They were also taken to non-denominational meetings where they were taught about the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit and to a Pentecostal meeting in Smethwick where ‘the believers had broken away from a Methodist class meeting because of the terrible worldliness which had come in’.<sup>242</sup> They accompanied the leaders of the Smethwick mission to Boddy’s 1912 convention. However, ‘after trying to bring this great blessing back to the Church of Christ they were quickly struck off the membership’.<sup>243</sup> So they joined the ‘Crown Mission’ which was opened in Birmingham in September 1913. When Peters, who had founded the Crown Mission, left for South America, he left the Carters leading it, Howard as pastor, with John as assistant. They were joined in leadership by T.J. Jones (formerly of the Plymouth Brethren). This enabled a new work to be commenced in an old billiard hall, Duddeston Hall, Nechells, led by the Carters, with Jones taking over the Crown Mission. With the coming of conscription in 1916, the Carters met different fates. John was granted absolute exemption at the Birmingham tribunal chaired by the mayor, Neville Chamberlain, but Howard appeared before a differently constituted tribunal in March and April 1916. When offered a non-combatant role, he explained to the Tribunal that he would not help a soldier who was wounded return to active service. His absolutist stand resulted in imprisonment in March 1917 in Wormwood Scrubs and later Dartmoor. He spent

---

<sup>241</sup> Lester Sumrall, *Pioneers of Faith* (South Bend, Indiana, USA: 1995), p. 53

<sup>242</sup> Malcomson, *Pentecostal Pioneers*, p. 312

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

time in prison studying the Gifts of the Spirit, leaving John in charge of the work in Duddeston, before returning to pastor the church in 1918.

It was presumably John who was the 'Bro. Carter (Birmingham)' attending Boddy's London Whitsuntide Convention in 1916.<sup>244</sup> However, when John's absolute exemption was later revoked, he accepted agricultural work and was sent to a farm in Blackburn, where he attended Brethren meetings and led a Men's Bible Class. Both relocated to Lee in south London soon after the war to plant a new church and were founding members of the Assemblies of God of Great Britain and Ireland at the meeting held in Aston in 1924. Howard went on to serve as Vice-Chairman (1929-34) and then Chairman (1934-45) of the movement, whilst John was General Secretary (1936-63). They were both also influential in training the movement's future leaders: Howard was principal of the PMU (later Assemblies of God) Bible College from 1921 until 1948. John served on the teaching staff of the Bible College (1955-63) and then when it moved to Kenley, as College Principal (1965-70 & 1973), with Howard as resident tutor (1967-69). When the college relocated to Mattersey, Howard became resident tutor until his death in 1981.<sup>245</sup> John's successor as Chairman of the Assemblies of God (1945-48) and Principal of their Bible College (1951-64) was another Assemblies of God founder member, committed pacifist and former First World War Conscientious Objector, Donald Gee.<sup>246</sup>

Thus these Birmingham Pentecostal pioneers and pacifists went on to play key roles nationally for some decades in the Assemblies of God.

---

<sup>244</sup> *Confidence*, IX no.7 (July 1916), p. 112

<sup>245</sup> Biographical information from Malcomson, *Pentecostal Pioneers*, pp. 311-32

<sup>246</sup> Malcomson, *Pentecostal Pioneers*, p. 341-2, Sumrall, *Pioneers of Faith*, p. 80



The Sutton Coldfield Tribunal granted non-combatant status in March 1916 to a conscientious objector who was a Christian worker at the Zion Mission in Erdington.<sup>247</sup> The Zion Mission Hall in South Road, Erdington was registered for public worship from 1906 to 1939, before being re-registered as an Elim Pentecostal Church.<sup>248</sup> Boddy reported receiving subscriptions to *Confidence* from Erdington in 1923.<sup>249</sup> It therefore seems likely that he was another early pacifist Birmingham Pentecostal leader.

#### **2.9.4. The Salvation Army and the First World War**

With its militaristic language and uniform, the Salvation Army could easily be mistaken for a militaristic organisation. However, its militaristic appearance and organisation has largely been a mission tool rather than a theological statement. The first major conflict the Salvation Army was required to respond to was the Boer War. With active Salvationists amongst both the British and the Boers, William Booth was reported to be horrified by the conflict. His secretary reported his observation on the battles at Ladysmith – ‘says it is going to be an awful business, and grieves over the possible shooting of Salvationists by each other’.<sup>250</sup> See section 2.9.2 above for the impact of the war on the Salvation Army’s Arthur Booth-Clibborn who was stationed in South Africa at the time.

---

<sup>247</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail* (8/3/1916), *Birmingham Daily Post* (9/3/1916)

<sup>248</sup> ‘Religious History: Places of worship’, *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham* (1964), pp. 434-82. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=22981&strquery=nonconformity>, accessed: 09 September 2009.

<sup>249</sup> *Confidence*, 135 (Oct-Dec 1923), p. 102

<sup>250</sup> Begbie, *The Life of William Booth*, vol. 2 (1920), p. 218

The Birmingham archives contained no material from the Salvation Army from the period of the First World War, nor were there any references to Salvationists in the local press reports of conscientious objector tribunals. National archive material has therefore been used.

By the outbreak of the First World War, the Salvation Army was well established in Germany (150 Salvation Army Corps), France and Belgium as well as Britain. At the outbreak of the conflict in August 1914, a number of Salvationists who had attended their international congress in London two months earlier were still in Europe. Their European Commissioner, Whatmore, had been turned back when attempting to travel from Sweden to Finland, and a group of Indian Salvationists who had been campaigning across Europe were arrested in Berlin and forced to leave the country. The new General, Bramwell Booth's condemnation of the First World War was made clear from the outset. In August he wrote: 'We are deeply concerned about the war...the working classes, which constitute the greater part of the population of both countries...have many things in common which make for true friendship.' His concern for the poor and dispossessed in both countries led to a class-based analysis of the situation. On the attitudes of the British and German working classes to each other he added: 'Many think of them as companions in the conflict for better conditions of life and for the better and kinder treatment of the poor. Some think of them as fellow Christians.'<sup>251</sup> The following month he explored this theme further: 'I do not look upon this war as being so much a war of peoples as of certain classes...The war itself has been made by the military classes, especially in Germany

---

<sup>251</sup> *The War Cry*, 29/8/1914, cited in Coutts, *The Better Fight, the History of the Salvation Army, Vol VI* (London: 1973), p. 21

and Russia. They, and the people who live by manufacturing weapons, and the newspapers in their pay, have for years been promoting and fostering the horrid doctrines which we now see worked out in all their ghastly wickedness on the battlefields of Belgium and France.<sup>252</sup> By November Bramwell Booth was stressing the need for Salvationists not to be caught up in the war fever: ‘In the name of the God of love, we must refuse the awful demands which are being made by the god of war to yield to the rage and hate and lust of revenge which are only too awfully manifest around us...above all, we must go on loving our enemies.’<sup>253</sup> The emphasis on the international nature of the movement was maintained in the International edition of the *War Cry*, which reported in November 1914 the appointment of a Salvationist as an Australian army chaplain, care for Belgian soldiers by Salvationists in London, accounts of Salvationists in the German military, and a report of the bombing of Rheims from a local SA officer.<sup>254</sup> The majority of the male German Salvation Army officers had been conscripted at the outbreak of the conflict – although a few had been appointed to chaplaincy roles.<sup>255</sup> More direct spiritual provision was made through Red Shield services – led by Brigadier Mary Murray who had previously organised care for soldiers during the Boer War. These were established in 40 centres in Belgium and France as well as across Britain. They also financed, supplied and staffed ambulances for use in France. It was a requirement that those staffing them would not be partisan: ‘They are...filled with the ambition to be of service to all with whom they may come in contact. And the wounded – of whatever nationality – who may come into their hands will find they are true friends

---

<sup>252</sup> *The War Cry*, 19/9/1914, cited in Coutts, *The Better Fight*, p. 21

<sup>253</sup> *The War Cry*, 7/11/1914, cited in Coutts, *The Better Fight*, p. 21

<sup>254</sup> *The War Cry*, 14/11/1914 cited in Coutts, *The Better Fight*, p. 24

<sup>255</sup> Coutts, *The Better Fight*, p. 22

and brothers.’<sup>256</sup> Whilst the majority of their war work was directly organised by the Salvationists themselves, 25 Salvation Army officers – five from Australia, six from New Zealand, five from Canada and belatedly five from Britain and four from the US, served as military chaplains in Belgium and/or France.<sup>257</sup> The *War Cry* went on to report the mounting Salvationist casualties of the conflict, both Allied and German. A memorial service in London in December 1915 remembered the 350 Salvationist casualties up to that date alone.<sup>258</sup> Perhaps the clearest indication of the impact of the conflict on this international movement was General Bramwell Booth’s contrasting of the impact of the war with their main aim, the Salvation war: ‘Thank God our war goes on, in spite of our losses – for no matter who wins this cruel conflict, we shall lose – in spite of our losses we fight on.’<sup>259</sup>

The Army Council had extended the exemption already available to most other ministers to full-time Salvation Army officers early in 1916.<sup>260</sup> However, this exemption was not generally available to all members of the Salvation Army: in June 1916 the Central Tribunal refused an appeal by a Salvationist on the grounds that ‘membership of the Salvation Army did not necessarily imply he had conscientious objections’.<sup>261</sup> The same tribunal had refused an appeal by an International Bible Student,<sup>262</sup> but then went on to grant him personal non-combatant service, which they had declined the Salvationist.

---

<sup>256</sup> *The War Cry*, 5/12/1914, cited in Coutts, *The Better Fight*, p. 27

<sup>257</sup> Coutts, *The Better Fight*, pp. 7 & 28

<sup>258</sup> Coutts, *The Better Fight*, p. 38

<sup>259</sup> Coutts, *The Better Fight*, p. 39

<sup>260</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 14/3/1916

<sup>261</sup> *The Tribunal Manual* (Chester: 1917)

<sup>262</sup> The movement later known as ‘Jehovah’s Witnesses’

## 2.10 Birmingham's Free Churches, Post-war Attitudes

As the war came to a close, there is evidence for widespread support for the League of Nations amongst Birmingham free churches, and a desire that the conflict be learned from rather than celebrated.

One of the earliest examples for a desire for reconciliation came in the Thanksgiving Service held in 1918 by the Adult School at the Floodgate Street Medical Mission, where the German national anthem was also sung.<sup>263</sup> At around the same time, other Adult Schools were reporting visiting speakers on the theme of the League of Nations.<sup>264</sup>

In the December of 1918 there was a talk at the Carrs Lane Congregational Church's Young Men's Morning Bible Class on 'The League of Nations', by H.W. Gosling. The nature of the peace settlements also featured in two later classes: 'How far are we justified in punishing a vanquished foe?' by F.D. Davidson in April 1919 and a 'Discussion on the Peace Terms' in May 1919.<sup>265</sup> There was a similar interest at the Digbeth Institute (Congregational) where at their anniversary services in January 1919 the Rev. Dr Fort Newton from London's City Temple 'emphasised the necessity of a League of Nations growing out of the Peace Conference'.<sup>266</sup> By October 1919 rooms had been let at the Digbeth Institute to both the League of Nations Union and the

---

<sup>263</sup> *One and All, Midland Supplement* (Dec. 1918)

<sup>264</sup> e.g. South Yardley (*One & All, Midland supp.*, Dec. 1918), Springfield Road & Union Row (both *One & All, Midland Supp.*, Feb. 1919), Crusaders & Little Bromwich (both *One & All, Midlands supp.*, Apr. 1919)

<sup>265</sup> BCA CC1/83 Carrs Lane Church, Young Men's Sunday Morning Bible Class Programmes in Minute Book, 1918-19.

<sup>266</sup> BCA B18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal & Missionary Chronicle* (Feb. 1919)

British Empire Federation.<sup>267</sup> The rooms for the League of Nations Union were let free of charge.<sup>268</sup> In January 1920 the Digbeth Institute deacons agreed to invite Neville Chamberlain to address their Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Association on the League of Nations.<sup>269</sup>

In July 1919, Cannon Street Baptist Church (Handsworth) was seeking a future without war as it expressed support for the following motion to the West Midland Baptist Association Annual Meeting: ‘This meeting of the WM Association records its satisfaction that the idea of the League of Nations is incorporated in the Peace Treaty; expresses the hope that everything possible will be done to make the League effective; and calls upon the churches to do all in their power to keep the idea of permanent world peace in the minds of people.’<sup>270</sup>

Also in July 1919, *Westminster Chimes*, the newsletter sent to those in the military associated with the Young Men’s Bible Class at Westminster Road Congregational Chapel, Handsworth, offered the following opinion: ‘To those of you who have fought and sacrificed much for the bringing about of a righteous and lasting peace, it must be a source of satisfaction to know that the terms include the establishment of a League of Nations, which, if all the nations concerned will honestly interpret it in the spirit in which it is conceived, will ensure that future generations will not have to pass through experiences such as those of the past four years.’<sup>271</sup> At the unveiling of their war memorial in 1920, the minister of Ebenezer Congregational Church, Harold C.

---

<sup>267</sup> BCA CC2/6 Digbeth Institute, Deacons Meeting 15/10/19

<sup>268</sup> BCA CC2/6 Digbeth Institute, Deacons Meeting 12/11/19

<sup>269</sup> BCA CC2/6 Digbeth Institute, Deacons Meeting 20/1/1920

<sup>270</sup> BCA BC2/26 Cannon Street Baptist Church, Church Meeting 14/7/1919

<sup>271</sup> BCA CC11/18/7 *Westminster Chimes*, no.7, (July 1919), p. 1

Spenser, said of those who died: 'They gave their lives to make an end to war. The League of Nations has gradually come to the front as the great outcome of the war.' He drew contrasts with Bernhardt's *Germany and the Next War* and claimed: 'The League is coming forward to do what he said could not be done, to make the law of love that Christ has given to the world apply between nations as well as between individuals, and our men died to accomplish that.'<sup>272</sup>

In May 1920, the annual Baptist Assembly was held in Birmingham. The following motion was successfully moved by the great social reformer, Rev. John Clifford, and seconded from the chair: 'That this assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland expresses its firm faith in the League of Nations as the right instrument for settling peaceably and justly the problems of international politics: welcomes with joy the appointment by the council of International commissioners on International Law, on Health and Disease, and on the Economic Condition of Europe; and urges his Majesty's government to use all their influence to see that the League is really used for all the purposes laid down in the Covenant and is adequately provided with the necessary resources for the work it is called upon to undertake.'<sup>273</sup>

In the 1920s Birmingham churches began to set up their own branches of the League of Nations Union. One was reported at Moseley Baptist Church by 1923<sup>274</sup> and another at Carrs Lane Congregational Church in 1924.<sup>275</sup> Wylde Green

---

<sup>272</sup> BCA L08.2 Birm Per E/4 *Ebenezer Congregational Church Magazine*, (Dec 1920), p. 2-4

<sup>273</sup> BCA D/15 *Programme of the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, Birmingham*, 3-7/5/1920

<sup>274</sup> BCA L.18.2 *Moseley Baptist Church, Manual for 1923*, Report and Accounts

<sup>275</sup> BCA CC1/98 Carrs Lane Church Book, entry for 1924.

Congregational Church had also expressed support for the League by 1922.<sup>276</sup>

Sparkbrook (Stratford Road) Baptist Church claimed to be one of the earliest churches to have taken out corporate membership of the League of Nations Union. Their church meeting also went on to pass resolutions recording satisfaction at the settlement of the Irish peace and urging that Germany should be admitted to the League of Nations.<sup>277</sup>

In 1921, Lozells Congregational Church declined an application for financial support from the International Arbitration League,<sup>278</sup> but as at the same meeting they also declined one from the Army Scripture Readers it would appear that their motives were financial rather than political or theological.<sup>279</sup> In the same year, after hearing a speaker from the Society of Friends, Small Heath Congregational Church passed a resolution in favour of disarmament.<sup>280</sup>

Birmingham's Presbyterian churches shared the other denominations' post-war enthusiasm for the League of Nations. In 1923 the Camp Hill Presbyterian Church were being prompted by their minister to consider affiliation to the League of Nations Union.<sup>281</sup> In 1924 the Moseley Presbyterian Church Sessions reported: 'A remit from the General Assembly concerning the World Alliance and the League of Nations Union was considered, and it was agreed to join the World Alliance and appoint two

---

<sup>276</sup> BCA CC38 Wyld Green Congregational Church, Church Meeting Minutes 4/5/22

<sup>277</sup> BCA L18.2 WIL Edward H.B. Williams, *Building for the Future: The Story of the Baptists in Sparkbrook, Stratford Road Baptist Church, Birmingham 1879-1979* (1979), p. 22

<sup>278</sup> A campaign to settle international disputes by arbitration rather than war, founded in 1870 as the Workmen's Peace Association.

<sup>279</sup> BCA CC 9/17 Lozells Congregational Church, Deacons Meeting 19/7/1921

<sup>280</sup> BCA CC10/8 Small Heath Congregational, Church Meeting 2/11/21

<sup>281</sup> BCA PC1/28 Camp Hill Presbyterian Sessions Minutes 2/9/1923



members of our church as representatives upon the local League of Nations Committee.<sup>282</sup> This is a reference to the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, founded at a Peace Conference in Constance, Germany as the First World War was breaking out. The following year the church magazine advertised a forthcoming League of Nations Union week, seeking to enrol 3,000 new members of the League of Nations Union and for Armistice Day, a great meeting in the Central Hall, and reported afterwards that around 2,000 new members had been recruited to the League of Nations Union in Birmingham during the campaign and ‘it is gratifying to know that no less than 17 joined from our own congregation’.<sup>283</sup>

Sympathy for the peace movement was occasionally evident even amongst churches that had members in the military. The Brotherhood (PSA) at Saltley Wesleyan Methodist Church in March 1918 received a letter from the League to Abolish War, requesting they ‘observe Sunday May 12<sup>th</sup> as “Hague Sunday”, by referring to the great object for which the Hague Conference was established’. This was agreed by their committee.<sup>284</sup> They also went on to form a branch of the League of Nations Union in 1926.<sup>285</sup>

Broader evidence for interest in the League of Nations amongst churches in the West Midlands appears in April 1918 at the Annual Meeting of the West Midlands Federation of Evangelical Free Church Councils (EFCCs) held at the Friends Meeting

---

<sup>282</sup> BCA PC6/7 Moseley Presbyterian Church, Sessions Minutes 18/9/1924

<sup>283</sup> BCA L18.5 330589 *Monthly magazine of the Presbyterian Church of England, Chantry Road, Moseley*, (Nov 1925 & Dec 1925)

<sup>284</sup> BCA MC2/14 Saltley Methodist Church, Brotherhood meeting minutes, 23/3/1918

<sup>285</sup> BCA MC2/14 Saltley Methodist Church, Brotherhood meeting minutes, 8/12/1926

House, Bull Street. The minutes report that their president, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Rev. J. Davison Brown ‘introduced the “proposed League of Nations” in an able speech’.<sup>286</sup> In January 1919 they ‘... resolved that this meeting of the West Midlands Federation cordially supports the principle of the League of Nations’ and sent their views to the Prime Minister. At the same meeting they agreed that during a forthcoming visit of their national president, the United Methodist Minister Rev. G. Hooper, to their area, at the public meeting in Walsall, the Rev. A Hooper of Dudley would speak on ‘The League of Nations’ and the president Rev. G. Hooper on ‘After War Opportunities.’<sup>287</sup> Meanwhile Davison Brown appears to have been taking his support for the League of Nations further than some of his colleagues: a meeting of the West Midlands Federation of EFCCs Executive in 1919, on hearing a report of their Sheffield annual meeting, ‘resolved that the secretary be instructed to send a letter to the Rev. J. Davison Brown, pointing out that the published reports of his address at Sheffield, as far as they refer to the large Army and Navy, are out of harmony with the views of the executive’.<sup>288</sup>

Perhaps the most poignant observation came from Wycliffe Baptist Church which had taken a strong pro-war attitude and lost thirteen members in the conflict. At the installation of electric light in memory of ‘our boys who made the supreme sacrifice in the Great War’ in 1922, a C. W. Effsey observed: ‘Perhaps we do well to remember also that there is a danger of war memorials becoming the only fascination for the

---

<sup>286</sup> BCA ZZ 65B West Midlands Federation of Evangelical Free Church Councils, Annual Meeting 25/4/18

<sup>287</sup> BCA ZZ 65B West Midlands Federation of Evangelical Free Church Councils, Executive Committee 16/1/19

<sup>288</sup> BCA ZZ 65B West Midlands Federation of Evangelical Free Church Councils, Executive Committee 9/4/19

rising generation of boys. They may be led to think that the only way to leave a name behind is to become a soldier and die for their country. We are too ready to emphasise the glamour of the military quality, let us try rather to deepen in their minds the horrors and poverty, the distress and the suffering which issue from wars.’<sup>289</sup>

Nevertheless, there appears to be evidence for widespread support of the League of Nations in Birmingham’s free churches across the denominations, regardless of the level of support they had previously shown for involvement in the conflict, suggesting that this was an issue that those who had taken varied stances on the war were able to unite around after the conflict.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

Most of the surviving local archive evidence demonstrated qualified support amongst members of Birmingham evangelical free churches for the First World War. Whilst no references were found to the term ‘just war’, and therefore no debate as to whether this particular conflict fulfilled ‘just war’ criteria, it was clear that those who were supporting the conflict were holding to the ‘just war’ theory and seeking to apply it. Opponents of the war appeared to do so from a pacifist position (and sometimes also for political reasons) – there were no examples of arguing the war was unjust. There was evidence of many men signing up voluntarily for the military. No churches were passing motions opposing participation; indeed a few were openly critical of those who refused to participate. However, it is also clear that the level of enthusiasm varied, and concerns were expressed about conscription, the impact of nationalism and patriotism and, to a lesser extent, militarism. Evidence has been provided for the

---

<sup>289</sup> BCA L18.2 244481 *Wycliffe Magazine*, (September 1922), p. 3

presence of pacifist viewpoints, by the presence of conscientious objectors in the churches. A small number of churches had permitted military parades in their chapels, but this did not appear to be regular or widespread. Some churches had permitted their property to be used for military purposes, e.g. recruitment, or to provide social facilities for troops as an outreach activity. They had, however, drawn the line at any usage which had a negative impact on regular church activities.

Whilst no churches came out in public opposition to the war, three Birmingham Methodist local preachers (two Primitive Methodists and one United Methodist) were the leading nonconformist opponents of the war outside of Quakerism, and they played key roles in opposing the war through the Labour, Trade Union and Co-operative movements as well as through the churches. The Wesleyan Central Hall was hired for some anti-war meetings, their minister being a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

As soon as the conflict was over, widespread support for the League of Nations Union appears to unite those who were enthusiastic supporters of the war and those who were more reluctant participants or even opponents in a common cause for peace. The appointment in the inter-war period of former conscientious objectors as ministers by churches which had been heavily involved in the conflict, including the loss of members, is also symptomatic of this unity: Carrs Lane Church which had many members actively involved in the conflict appointed as minister Leyton Richards who through his role in the Fellowship of Reconciliation had been the most prominent Congregationalist opponent of the conflict in the country.

The three Restorationist movements – Brethren, Churches of Christ and Apostolics/Pentecostals – had a shared historical commitment to pacifism prior to the conflict. Amongst Birmingham free church evangelicals, the strongest commitment to pacifism came from members of these new evangelistic movements with their emphasis on Biblicism. Yet in a case study it has been demonstrated that the Churches of Christ, previously committed to a position of Biblical pacifism, found themselves divided over the First World War. One factor was their congregational church government, whereby every church is independent and governed by its members. Although the traditional anti-war position remained strong, there were also those amongst them who felt able to participate in the war as combatants. Some churches avoided discussion on the issues due to a desire to avoid division. Writing in 1926 William Robinson, the principal of their Overdale Theological College in Birmingham, had offered the following explanation of the position they took: ‘They have vigorously opposed war in all its forms, though again, as in the case of total abstinence, they have refused to make pacifism a condition of Church membership.’<sup>290</sup> This may also explain why their annual conference passed a motion in 1920 claiming to have never sanctioned a war. Casey offers an alternative explanation, seeing this as the beginnings of the theological division between those holding to the traditional views of the Churches of Christ, and those advocating more liberal modernising views. Amongst the trends that were concerning the traditionalists were pro-war views, greater ecumenism, open communion, instrumental worship and accepting financial support from those outside the churches. He sees the wartime peace conferences as precursors of the ‘Old Light’ or ‘Old Paths’ movement whose first Conference was held in 1924, but had been a pressure group within the churches before then,

---

<sup>290</sup> William Robinson, *What Churches of Christ Stand For* (Birmingham: 1926), p. 98

represented by the journals *The Interpreter* (1908-16) and *The Apostolic Messenger* (1916-20).<sup>291</sup> The authors of *For His Name's Sake* had praised the latter journal as more supportive to the anti-war cause than the Co-operation's official journal, *The Bible Advocate*. Twenty-three non-instrumental or 'old-light' churches broke away from the Association of Churches of Christ over the period 1913-1948.<sup>292</sup> Although Casey makes a strong case for the continued anti-war stance of the non-instrumental 'Old-Paths' churches through to the present day, his analysis is less helpful for Birmingham where the only church which left the association was Summer Lane in 1947,<sup>293</sup> yet the evidence of anti-war sentiment in the churches continued. Casey's theory that opposition to war was largely confined to the 'Old-Paths' churches is also challenged by the publication by the movement of *Christianity is Pacifism* in 1935, written by the highly influential principal of Overdale College (the movement's Selly Oak-based training college), William Robinson,<sup>294</sup> and the unanimous passing of a clear pacifist motion at their 1938 Annual Conference. In the USA a similar division had taken place by 1906 between the more liberal, pro-war, instrumental Disciples of Christ and the more conservative, pacifist and non-instrumental Churches of Christ. Casey argued that divergent views on involvement in the American Civil War were a significant factor leading towards the split which occurred.<sup>295</sup>

However, in Britain, most significant was the Churches of Christ's lack of

---

<sup>291</sup> Michael W. Casey, 'The overlooked pacifist tradition in the old paths Churches of Christ, Part I: The Great War and the Old Paths Division', *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 6:6 (2000), p. 447

<sup>292</sup> Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, p. 127

<sup>293</sup> Website of Summer Lane Church of Christ, Birmingham, <http://www.summerlanecoc.com>

<sup>294</sup> W.R. Robinson, *Christianity is Pacifism* (London: 1935)

<sup>295</sup> Casey, 'The overlooked pacifist tradition', p. 453

engagement in the conflict. Nationally at least 600 had joined the military by 1916,<sup>296</sup> whilst 351 opposed conscription<sup>297</sup> and Thompson estimates that about 300 took a clear pacifist position.<sup>298</sup> The discrepancy of 51 could indicate that a few opposed the war from a ‘just war’ perspective rather than a pacifist one. It is also necessary to note that the figure of 351 came from Luck who was actively involved in the churches’ anti-war movement, whilst the figure of approximately 300 is a much later unsourced estimate. However, compared to a national adult membership of over 15,000, these figures appear to be too small to be of great significance. From the evidence of the surviving Birmingham church records only 67 men in some way associated with the Churches of Christ, whose combined membership was 1,156, were listed as having joined up – this figure included some Sunday School scholars who were not church members. Therefore, whilst the numbers joining up were higher than the numbers of objectors, most significant was the low level of engagement in the conflict at all. No comparative statistics are available for the other new Christian movements in Birmingham, but there is evidence of the presence of Brethren and Pentecostal Conscientious Objectors, including some who went on to serve in significant national roles in British Pentecostal denominations.

The Members of these ‘new movements’ did, however, share the concern of the longer-established evangelical free churches to counter any war-time teachings which appeared to replace the absolute centrality in Christian theology of Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross – which achieved forgiveness of sins once and for all and was

---

<sup>296</sup> Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, p. 124

<sup>297</sup> Jack Luck, ‘Facts and Figures’, in *For His Name's Sake. Being a Record of the Witness given by Members of Churches of Christ in Great Britain against Militarism during the European War, 1914-1918* (Heanor: 1921), p. 121-3

<sup>298</sup> Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, p. 124

the only route to personal salvation – with suggestions that death in warfare was an acceptable alternative. To this end, they used tracts such as the Brethren’s Dr Heyman Wreford’s *The Sin against the Soldier and the Saviour* to counter teachings which suggested that ‘to die in such a war as this is a passport to heaven’ or ‘death in such a cause is but a modern re-enacting of the death of Christ himself’.<sup>299</sup>

---

<sup>299</sup> Dr Heyman Wreford, *The Sin against the Soldier and the Saviour* (Exeter: n/d)



### **Chapter 3. The Impact of the Great War on Birmingham Free Church life on the Home Front**

This chapter will seek to examine the impact of the First World War on local church life for the free churches of Birmingham. It will consider the impact of Zeppelin raids on the churches, and the consequential blackout requirements. It will also examine the impact on regular church activities of the loss of many key lay leaders to participation in the conflict. It will consider any impact of the war on the availability of ministers. A key focus will be the effect on the role of women in local church leadership and pastoral care. Finally, it will consider the impact of the conflict on the churches' attitudes to local ecumenism and their mission in the city.

#### **3.1. Birmingham Free Church Membership and the War**

By 1914 there were 30 Birmingham Baptist churches affiliated to the West Midland Baptist Association, meeting in 45 locations, with a membership of 6,013<sup>1</sup> – these figures do not include Strict (Particular) Baptist churches. With the closure of the Graham Street Chapel in 1913 and the church's relocation to Handsworth, the Baptists no longer had a city centre presence, but there were a number of chapels in the inner ring including the Church of the Redeemer on Hagley Road, the People's Chapel on Great King Street and Wycliffe Chapel, Bristol Road. The strongest churches numerically were Christ Church, Aston with 557 members and Spring Hill with 420. During the year 1914 a new Baptist church was formed at Hall Green and the congregation at Little Sutton became independent of their 'parent' church Highgate Park Baptist, bringing the number of churches up to 32 by 1915.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Baptist Handbook*, 1914 (Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland)

<sup>2</sup> *The Baptist Handbook*, 1915 (Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland)

There were 24 Birmingham Congregational churches in membership of the Warwickshire Congregational Union and two Birmingham churches (Union Row, Handsworth and Winson Green) affiliated to the Staffordshire Congregational Union. Between them they met in 39 locations and had a membership of 6,880. The Congregationalists had two city centre chapels: Carrs Lane and Ebenezer (Steelhouse Lane), and others in the inner ring such as the Digbeth Institute. Numerically the strongest churches were Carrs Lane with 1,173 members (including Cattell Road and Dartmouth Street), Soho Hill 550, Moseley Road 548 (including Clifton Road, Edward Road and Ladypool Road) and Westminster Road, Handsworth 487 (including Franchise Street and Hutton Road).<sup>3</sup>

Although some churches suffered a dip in membership during the war years, the overall membership trend remains upward for Birmingham's Baptists, increasing from the 6,013 reported in 1914, to 6,289 in 1917 and 6,311 in 1920.<sup>4</sup> In contrast Congregationalist membership in the city fluctuated: it rose from 6,880 in 1914 to 6,928 in 1915, declined to 6,780 in 1916, before slowly rising again to 6,858 by 1920.<sup>5</sup> Powell claimed that an influx of Welsh workers to Birmingham factories during the First World War caused the membership of the Wheeler Street Welsh Congregational Church to increase from 115 members in 1912 to 149 in 1916.<sup>6</sup> However, these statistics, presumably based on the church's returns to the Union of Welsh Independents, are not reflected in their returns to the Congregational Union of

---

<sup>3</sup> *The Congregational Yearbook*, 1914 (Congregational Union of England & Wales).

<sup>4</sup> Figures extracted from *The Baptist Handbook*, 1914-1920

<sup>5</sup> Figures extracted from *Congregational Yearbooks* 1914-1920

<sup>6</sup> W. Eifion Powell, The Welsh Nonconformist Diaspora, in Alan P.F. Sell, ed., *Protestant Nonconformists and the West Midlands of England* (Keele: 1996), pp. 125-6

England & Wales, where their membership does not exceed 130 during the period of the war.

Meanwhile, by 1910 six churches or preaching stations affiliated to the Presbyterian Church of England had been established at Broad Street, Camp Hill, Erdington, Handsworth (St. George's), Moseley (St. Columba's) and Nechells. In 1912 regular services were commenced in Selly Oak. This was recognised as a preaching station in 1920, becoming Weoley Hill Village Church in 1922. Birmingham's Presbyterian Church of England membership continued to rise slowly during the war years, from 682 in 1914 to 720 in 1918.<sup>7</sup>

Methodism had also continued to show membership growth in Birmingham into the early twentieth century. By 1914 there were 49 Wesleyan Methodist, 29 Primitive Methodist and fifteen United Methodist places of worship in Birmingham, organised into seven, five and six circuits respectively. Membership figures had reached 7,958, 1,866 and 1,885 respectively, and therefore although the Wesleyans maintained the largest membership of the free churches, they were well behind the combined membership of the Baptists and Congregationalists in Birmingham, which exceeded 12,000.<sup>8</sup> The Wesleyan Methodist and United Methodist membership in Birmingham declined slightly through the First World War to 7,583 and 1,726 respectively in 1919, whereas the Primitive Methodist membership rose over the same period to 1,980. To put this into context, the United Methodists had already been in decline

---

<sup>7</sup> Figures extracted from *Official Handbook of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1914-15 & 1919-20*

<sup>8</sup> Membership statistics are extracted from the 1914 yearbooks and directories of the respective denominations.

prior to the conflict, having reduced from 1,915 to 1,885 members from 1913 to 1914, whilst the Wesleyan membership peaked at 8,074 in 1915 and the Primitive Methodist membership, apart from a dip in 1916, had continued on its pre-war upward trajectory. However, none of these trends were large enough to be particularly significant: the overall Methodist membership declined by only 351 over the period 1913 to 1919.<sup>9</sup>

By 1913 there were seven Churches of Christ in Birmingham with a combined membership of 1,183. Unlike most of Birmingham's other evangelical free churches, their membership very slowly declined annually over the period 1914 to 1919, from 1,183 to 1,068 in 1919. Moseley Road was the largest church with over 300 members. Their only church to show a consistent increase in membership over this period of the war was Bournville, whose new purpose-built Beaumont Road Meeting House was completed and opened in the early days of the conflict in October 1914.<sup>10</sup>

No local statistics were available for membership of Apostolic/Pentecostal churches, Brethren assemblies or Salvation Army corps in Birmingham.

From the available statistics, it therefore appears clear that the war did not have a noticeable impact on the overall membership numbers of the Birmingham free churches, as aside from some temporary dips, denominational memberships largely continued along trajectories they were already following prior to the conflict.

---

<sup>9</sup> All statistics extracted from the Annual Conference minutes of the respective Methodist Connexions.

<sup>10</sup> *Churches of Christ Yearbooks*, 1914 to 1919.

### 3.2. Churches and Zeppelin raids

Wartime restrictions affected the practical operation of local church life. On the evening of 31 January/1 February 1916 a Zeppelin raid had hit the Black Country.<sup>11</sup> It resulted in 59 fatalities (one of whom, Louisa York, was recorded on the war memorial at Salem Chapel, Great Bridge) and severe damage to the Congregational Chapel at Wednesbury Road, Walsall. This resulted in an appeal to the Birmingham Congregational churches for help towards the rebuilding of the chapel. Erdington,<sup>12</sup> Lozells,<sup>13</sup> Moseley Road,<sup>14</sup> Sutton Coldfield<sup>15</sup> and Westminster Road (Handsworth)<sup>16</sup> Congregational churches sent financial support, Carrs Lane Church<sup>17</sup> passed a motion of sympathy but declined the appeal and the Union Row Church (Handsworth)<sup>18</sup> also sent their sympathy.

A further Zeppelin raid in 1917 resulted in bombs being dropped in Longbridge, where the factory was being used for munitions production. A further attempted Zeppelin raid in April 1918 was attacked by anti-aircraft fire, resulting in the bombs being dropped in the open countryside.<sup>19</sup>

Another impact of the raids was many churches considering, and some taking out, insurance against Zeppelin damage.

---

<sup>11</sup> Chris Smith, *The Great Tipton Zeppelin Raid* (Black Country Chronicles, Dudley: 2016)

<sup>12</sup> BCA CC5/17 Erdington Congregational Church Meeting (31/5/1916)

<sup>13</sup> BCA CC9/16 Lozells Congregational Church Deacons' meeting (2/5/1916)

<sup>14</sup> BCA CC12/5 Moseley Road Congregational Church Meeting (29/3/1916)

<sup>15</sup> BCA CC36 Sutton Coldfield Congregational Church Meeting (29/6/1916)

<sup>16</sup> BCA CC11/4 Westminster Road Congregational Church Meeting (2/2/1916 & 3/5/2016)

<sup>17</sup> BCA CC1 Carrs Lane Church Meeting (3/2/1916) & Deacons' Meeting (2/1/17).

<sup>18</sup> BCA CC7/5 Union Row Congregational Annual Church Meeting (2/2/1916)

<sup>19</sup> Eric Hopkins, *Birmingham: The Making of the Second City, 1850-1939* (Stroud: 2001), pp. 136-37

The lighting restrictions brought in after the Zeppelin raids resulted in many churches having to find effective methods of blackout for evening services, to relocate the evening services into church halls or schoolrooms, or to start services earlier.

Restrictions on fuel supplies such as coal also caused difficulties for some churches in providing heating for their buildings.

### **3.3 Ministry in the local Church**

Although ministers were exempted from conscription, many of them were invited to go the front for short periods on behalf of the YMCA. Birmingham churches were mostly supportive of such requests for leave of absence – the only two local examples of refusal identified in the surviving archive record, at Small Heath Congregational Church and Stratford Road (Sparkbrook) Baptist Church, resulted in the resignation of the ministers concerned to become military chaplains. Having been away on secondment as a military chaplain since 1915, the minister of Moseley Presbyterian Church (Mr Reid) also resigned the pastorate at the end of 1917. Through the United Navy and Army Board, Baptists, Congregationalists, Primitive Methodists and United Methodists co-operated to appoint local ministers in a chaplaincy role as ‘officiating clergyman’ to locally-based military forces or soldiers in local hospitals in addition to their pastorates. By 1916, three Baptist ministers, two Congregationalist ministers, one Primitive Methodist and two United Methodists were serving in this way in the Birmingham area.<sup>20</sup> At the end of the conflict six Baptist ministers and three Congregationalist ministers were still performing this role in Birmingham.<sup>21</sup> Mr Reid of Moseley Presbyterian Church had also served as an officiating clergyman prior to

---

<sup>20</sup> *Baptist Handbook*, 1916, list of officiating clergymen.

<sup>21</sup> *The Congregational Yearbook*, 1919, p. 403

his resignation from the pastorate to become a chaplain, after which two other local Presbyterian ministers (Messrs. Aytoun and Crerar) were appointed as officiating clergymen.<sup>22</sup>

Some ministerial students volunteered to join the military and in 1916 it was recorded: 'The [Presbyterian] Synod rejoiced to learn of the number of students who are devoting themselves to the service of their Country.'

The war also had an impact on training for the ministry, as the number of students in residence in training colleges was sharply reduced by the war. The Birmingham churches benefited from this when the last six remaining students from Westminster College, Cambridge (a Presbyterian ministerial college) re-located to Woodbrooke College, Selly Oak with their tutor Rev. John Oman in 1917. Oman served as Moderator at Moseley Presbyterian Church and assisted with the new Chetwynd Hall church plant at Weoley Hill, whilst the students assisted with pulpit supply.<sup>23</sup>

By July 1916 it was reported that 'owing to military requirements, the four training colleges for Wesleyan Methodists have been closed'.<sup>24</sup> One of the Wesleyan Colleges to be closed was in Handsworth, Birmingham. The number of students in residence at the college was sharply reduced by the war. They were divided in their response to the conflict: eight joined combatant units, eleven joined the RAMC and three were commissioned as Army Chaplains. Six of those who initially joined combatant units

---

<sup>22</sup> *The Official Handbook of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1914-15 & 1916-17*, list of officiating clergymen.

<sup>23</sup> UoB DA48 Box 3 *Chetwynd Hall Presbyterian Church of England Minute Book: Congregational Meeting Book, 1922-1969*, with minutes of Committee Meetings, 2/1918-11/1922

<sup>24</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road circuit) 7/1916

were recalled by the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1916 to serve as military chaplains.<sup>25</sup> One of those who enlisted and later transferred to the chaplaincy, Robert Rider, reflected on the dilemma a combatant role posed for his faith: 'When I enlisted, I earnestly sought a way of establishing righteousness and peace. To me a sword or a bayonet seemed very unworthy instruments in such a noble enterprise. I would have used anything else that could have been found to do this, but I searched in vain. It's not that I am a coward but I don't like the business and I don't think we are hitting the right man when we strike. Nor does Fritz when he gets one of us...I'm here because I have been persuaded that this is to be the last of wars.'<sup>26</sup>

The fact that exemption from conscription was granted only to ministerial students accepted before the conflict started meant that by around 1917 the supply of new ministers from theological colleges had ceased: there was no increase in pastoral vacancies amongst Baptists, Congregationalists or Presbyterians in Birmingham during the war.<sup>27</sup> However, those churches which relied heavily on lay preachers or local preachers were more adversely affected, as they would not have been excluded from conscription. Thus with the supply of new ministers removed, and many of those already in the ministry being employed as military chaplains or volunteering for short periods of service in the YMCA huts in France and Belgium, by August 1916 the local Wesleyans reported that 'by reason of the war, more than 7 out of every 10 pulpits must be filled by local preachers'.<sup>28</sup> With many local preachers (or in other

---

<sup>25</sup> Robert J. Rider, *Reflections on the Battlefield: From Infantryman to Chaplain 1914-1919*, edited by Alan C. Robinson & P.E.H. Hair (Liverpool: 2001), p. 6

<sup>26</sup> Robert J. Rider, *Reflections on the Battlefield*, p. 52

<sup>27</sup> Based on an analysis of the ministers listed in the denominational handbooks/yearbooks during the conflict.

<sup>28</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road circuit) 8/1916



denominations, lay preachers) also in the military by that time, this must have put great pressure on those left behind.

### **3.4 The First World War and Women's Ministry in Birmingham**

The story of women's ministry in Britain is usually considered from the perspective of the struggles that women faced to achieve ordination and/or recognition as ministers. For this reason the story of women's ministry tends to focus on the various denominational pioneers:

The best known of these were the Universalist Caroline Augusta White Soule, who served St. Paul's Universalist Church, Glasgow in 1880; the Unitarian Gertrude von Petzold who was inducted to the pastorate at Narborough Road Free Christian (Unitarian) Chapel in Leicester in September 1904; Olive Winchester, ordained into the Pentecostal Church of Scotland<sup>29</sup> at Parkhead, Glasgow, 1912; the Congregationalist Constance Coltman, who was ordained on 17 September 1917 to serve King's Weigh House Church's Darby Street Mission, where she was inducted in December 1917; and the Baptist Edith Gates who was appointed pastor of Little Tew and Cleverley in Oxfordshire in 1918. However, all of these were preceded by the Salvation Army, where women had already been established as officers on an equal footing with men: by 1880, women were leading 46 of the Army's 118 Corps.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> The Pentecostal Church of Scotland later became part of the Church of the Nazarene.

<sup>30</sup> *The War Cry* (7/8/1880) p. 4, cited by Pamela J. Walker, 'A chaste and fervid eloquence, Catherine Booth and the ministry of women in the Salvation Army' in Beverly Mayne Kienzle & Pamela J. Walker, eds., *Women Preachers and Prophets through two Millennia of Christianity* (California, USA: 1998), p. 301

Focusing on Birmingham, the story of modern women's ministry can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, as women became gradually more involved in positions of leadership and service in churches and chapels. An early opportunity for women's ministry was amongst the Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians as itinerant preachers. In Birmingham a female preacher by the name of M. Newton was stationed in the Primitive Methodist Birmingham East Circuit in 1841 but relocated to Prees in Shropshire the following year.<sup>31</sup>

### **3.4.1 Birmingham Deaconesses and Bible Women**

A key role performed by women during this period was as Bible Women, Deaconesses or 'Women of the people' – these could be paid or unpaid roles, and were largely a pastoral function, mostly performing home visits. Some worked for long-established churches alongside a male minister, others worked in a mission or church plant situation, where some had sole charge.

The earliest example identified to date in Birmingham is the commencement of a 'Bible Woman's Mission', by Graham Street Baptist Church with the appointment of Miss C.L. Edge in 1865. She served at Graham Street and from 1879 at their mission in Ellen Street. She remained in post until 1899. She was joined by a Bible Woman at

---

<sup>31</sup> E. Dorothy Graham, *Chosen by God: A List of the Female Travelling Preachers of Early Primitive Methodism* (Evesham: 2010), p. 39.

Edward Road Baptist Chapel, Balsall Heath in 1876.<sup>32</sup>

The People's Chapel (Baptist) in Hockley had been founded in 1848 on the principle that no-one would be paid for ministry. However, from the 1870s to 1930s they employed a succession of five Bible Women, then six Deaconesses (trained at the Baptist Women's Training College).<sup>33</sup> Later Baptist examples included Sister Ada who led the work at Hope Street Mission (Highgate) from 1901<sup>34</sup> and Sister Lucy Chard at Spring Hill Baptist from the 1900s until 1916.<sup>35</sup>

The earliest recorded example in Birmingham of Deaconesses serving among Congregationalists was at Carrs Lane Chapel in 1899. By 1914, fourteen of the Birmingham and District Congregational churches were being served by a total of 137 women, who were variously described as Deaconesses, Lady Visitors or District Visitors. Some churches divided their area into districts appointing a visitor to serve each, the largest numbers being at Soho Hill (28), Olton (24) and Handsworth (20).<sup>36</sup> The work that some of them were carrying out was revealed in an appeal in 1914 for a voluntary sisterhood to 'work in some of the poor districts in town'.<sup>37</sup> This was not unique to the Congregationalists – Stratford Road Baptist Church had also appointed eighteen women to visit their church members by 1915.<sup>38</sup> Amongst the Wesleyans, a

---

<sup>32</sup> Arthur S. Langley, *Birmingham Baptists Past and Present* (London: 1939), pp.105-6, 109 & Alan Betteridge, *Deep Roots, Living Branches: A History of Baptists in the English Western Midlands* (Leicester: 2010), p. 308

<sup>33</sup> Langley, *Birmingham Baptists*, p. 109

<sup>34</sup> Langley, *Birmingham Baptists*, p. 147

<sup>35</sup> *Spring Hill Baptist Church, Birmingham: Jubilee Celebrations, 1887-1937, Souvenir Publication*, pp. 13-14

<sup>36</sup> *The Birmingham Congregational Handbook*, (1914).

<sup>37</sup> BCA CC36 *The Sutton Coldfield & Wylde Green Congregational Magazine*, no. 41 (May 1914)

<sup>38</sup> *Stratford Road Baptist Church Manual* (1915), p. 32

Sister Ruth Harrison was in place at Summer Hill, Birmingham, from 1897.<sup>39</sup>

A more specialist ecumenical work was done from 1907, when the Birmingham Evangelical Free Church Council appointed a deaconess, Miss M. Taylor, for ‘redemptive work among prostitutes and women criminals and near-criminals’.<sup>40</sup>

Some churches even began to appoint women as lay pastors or lay evangelists. By 1900, five women were listed in the Congregational Union’s Year Book as carrying out this function, including one in Birmingham, a Laura Moffatt at Carrs Lane Church.

### **3.4.2 Birmingham Women as Overseas Missionaries**

Another area where women were freely able to serve the churches in the nineteenth century was as overseas missionaries. Whilst many missionary couples had served with a variety of societies since the beginnings of the modern Missionary Movement, the formation of Zenana Missions in 1867 (what was to become the Baptist Zenana Mission) opened the way for single women to serve. The women were initially recruited from India, and the first to be sent from Britain was a Miss Fryer from Bristol in 1871. Taking the example of the London Missionary Society (LMS), the first woman to be sent by a Birmingham church was Mrs J.B. Coles, who went from Carrs Lane to South India in 1843. The first single female missionary sent by a Birmingham church to serve with the LMS was a Miss E.M. Geller, who went from

---

<sup>39</sup> BCA MC60/37 “*Summer Hill*” Magazine, vol. 1, no.7 (July 1897)

<sup>40</sup> BCA L10.21 169951 *The Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of Birmingham & District Official Year Book and report*, 1906, p. 10; & ‘Religious History: Protestant Nonconformity’, *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham* (1964), pp. 411-3.

Lozells to South India in 1876. From then on, both married and single women missionaries were sent out until the outbreak of the First World War. During the conflict, all LMS missionaries sent from West Midlands churches were single women.<sup>41</sup> Single women also served with non-denominational missionary societies, such as Miss Rose Basnett from Westminster Road Congregational Church, Handsworth who went to China with the China Inland Mission in 1891.<sup>42</sup>

### **3.4.3. Birmingham Women Deacons**

Of particular significance was the election of women as deacons in Baptist and Congregational churches, thus giving them direct involvement in the running and spiritual oversight of a local church. As a consequence of the shortage of men in the congregations during the First World War many Birmingham Baptist and Congregational churches began to consider the issue of whether women should be permitted to serve as deacons. Eligibility for election to the diaconate meant opportunities for more active involvement by women in the leadership and direction of the church. The earliest examples in the surviving archives are from 1915 where the issue arose in three churches: Ladypool Road Congregational Mission sought permission for women to serve on their management committee, but this was declined by their parent church at Moseley Road; Yardley Congregational Church changed its rules at the December 1915 annual meeting to allow women to be elected to the diaconate; and the matter was also discussed at Hamstead Road Baptist Church, but the decision to admit women to their diaconate was not made until 1921. However, the pioneers were Sutton Coldfield Congregational Church where two seats on the

---

<sup>41</sup> Dr Williams's Library 5106 Wa. 37: LMS Triple Jubilee: *The LMS & the West Midlands* (1945)

<sup>42</sup> *Westminster Road Congregational Church, Church Manual* (1912), p. 8

diaconate were set aside for women in March 1916, and a Miss B. Parkes and a Mrs Vallance were elected the following month.

Meanwhile by 1916 at Kings Heath Baptist Church, although the church rules only permitted the election of male church members as deacons, they also had a management committee open to any in the congregation, whether male or female, to which women had been elected by 1922.

There are interesting anomalies to be found too. Carrs Lane Congregational Church pioneered deaconesses and women lay pastors at the turn of the century, but when the church discussed the issue of women deacons in 1916 they decided against. Yet when the Digbeth Institute became independent of Carrs Lane in 1917, two women were elected to their new diaconate. It would appear that the women deacons, like deaconesses, were generally more readily accepted in missions and institutes than in some of the larger sending churches.

Unlike secular roles taken up by women, which were largely returned to the men who came back when the conflict ended, more churches continued to appoint women – indeed none of those whose records survive reversed the decision. By 1927, at least seven Baptist and Congregational churches had elected women deacons,<sup>43</sup> and two churches had elected women to their management committee,<sup>44</sup> whilst others had changed their church rules to open the way for women to serve in the future.

---

<sup>43</sup> Sutton Coldfield Congregational (1916), Digbeth Institute (1917), Wylde Green Congregational (1917), Bordesley Green Baptist (1920), Erdington Baptist (1920), Hamstead Road Baptist (1921), Sparkbrook Baptist (1927)

<sup>44</sup> Kings Heath Baptist (1922) & Northfield Baptist.

However, the earliest example of a woman in a position of leadership in a Birmingham church was in the newly-formed Birmingham Church of Christ in the 1850s. At the movement's annual meeting in 1857 it was reported that the Birmingham Church had 10 members, who were served by one president (i.e. worship leader), one deacon and one deaconess.<sup>45</sup> The early Churches of Christ did not employ local ministers: they relied on a three-fold ministry of travelling paid evangelists, and locally appointed elders and deacons. It is therefore likely that she was a female deacon rather than the equivalent of a Baptist, Congregationalist or Methodist deaconess. Despite having thus pioneered women deacons in the 1850s, there is no surviving further evidence of women serving the Churches of Christ in Birmingham on church committees or diaconates until well after the First World War, when two deaconesses (i.e. women deacons) were elected at the Erdington Church in 1929, two at Sparkhill (Stratford Road) Church in 1931 and the first woman was elected to the Bournville Church's oversight committee in 1935.<sup>46</sup>

#### **3.4.4 A Birmingham Woman Evangelist**

Another woman's ministry which flourished during the First World War was that of the evangelist Miss Catherine Fox. She was based at the Quaker Woodbrooke Settlement in Selly Oak, and conducted missions for local churches during the war. She conducted a week-long mission at Edward Road Baptist Chapel, Balsall Heath in

---

<sup>45</sup> *The British Millennial Harbinger & Family Magazine* (1857), p. 458

<sup>46</sup> Churches of Christ Archive (accessed at University of Birmingham, since re-located to Westminster College, Cambridge), Erdington Church Meeting 14/4/1929 & Sparkhill Church Meeting, 22/2/31; Bournville URC archives: Bournville Church of Christ Oversight Committee minutes 7/2/35.

1915 and 1916,<sup>47</sup> where her efforts were well received, the church magazine reporting: ‘Miss Fox came to us with clear, strong and beautiful messages from God’s Word.’<sup>48</sup> She had previously conducted a mission at Spring Hill Baptist Chapel in 1914.<sup>49</sup>

### **3.4.5 Women Ministers in Birmingham**

There would have been women serving as Salvation Army officers in Birmingham – some as part of a couple leading a Corps together, and others will have led Corps on their own. They commenced work in Birmingham at a former Carrs Lane Town Mission Hall in Bordesley Street in about 1880, expanding to nine Corps (including the Citadel) by 1892.<sup>50</sup>

In 1911 the Waverley Road Free (Unitarian) Church in Small Heath, Birmingham had called Gertrude von Petzold as their minister. She was the first woman to serve as a Unitarian minister in Britain, having previously pastored a church in Leicester since 1904. Being of Prussian origin, despite having previously applied for naturalisation, she and her housekeeper were deported as ‘enemy aliens’ in 1915. The church initially gave her a year’s leave of absence, after which she resigned to make way for a new minister.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Langley, *Birmingham Baptists*, p. 98

<sup>48</sup> BCA Birm Per L08.2 E/4 260722 *Edward Road Baptist Magazine*, no. 100 (April 1915), p. 7

<sup>49</sup> BCA L18.2 281949 *The Spring Hill Monthly Messenger*, XVI Nos. 10 & 11 (10/1914 & 11/1914)

<sup>50</sup> ‘Religious History: Places of worship’, *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham* (1964), pp. 434-82

<sup>51</sup> See: Keith Gilley, ‘Gertrude von Petzold – the pioneer woman minister’, *Unitarian Historical Society, Transactions*, 21:1/4 (1995/1998), pp. 157-72



Amongst the Congregationalists, the first woman to serve as a minister in Birmingham was Dorothy Wilson, who was ordained as assistant minister at Carrs Lane Church in December 1927.

Amongst the early British Pentecostals women ministers and evangelists were common. Whilst there does not appear to be any evidence of early settled women's ministry amongst Birmingham's Pentecostals, there is evidence of women ministering. In September 1916, Pentecostal meetings held in Duddeston Gospel Hall were described as 'attended with much blessing [when] Mrs. Crisp, in the power of the Holy Ghost, delivered the Word, and numbers testify to a great spiritual uplift received through her ministry'.<sup>52</sup> Mrs Crisp ran the Pentecostal Missionary Union's training home for women, in London and was in regular demand as a preacher around the country.<sup>53</sup>

However, perhaps most worthy of further investigation is the Latimer Street Mission Church – a Baptist Mission of unknown origin in Birmingham in the nineteenth century. The story is told that when Charles Joseph arrived in Birmingham in 1872 looking for a Baptist church of a 'homely' character, his Quaker employer recommended Latimer Street and its lady pastor.<sup>54</sup> Betteridge identifies her as a Mrs Pritchard who served the church until she died in around 1885, after which the church closed.<sup>55</sup> The building appears in street directories from 1873 as a Baptist church, then

---

<sup>52</sup> *Confidence*, IX, No 9 (September 1916), p. 152

<sup>53</sup> Diana demise of Women's ministry in the origins and early years of Pentecostalism in Britain', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 12.2 (2004), p. 230

<sup>54</sup> Langley, *Birmingham Baptists*, p. 160

<sup>55</sup> Betteridge, *Deep Roots*, p. 309

from 1884 it was used by the Wesleyans.<sup>56</sup> If these secondary sources are accurate, it could possibly mean that Mrs Pritchard was not only the first woman minister in Birmingham, but the first in Britain.

#### **3.4.6 Women's Ministry in Birmingham: Conclusion**

This brief survey of the ministerial and pastoral work by women amongst the free churches of Birmingham demonstrates the gradual progress of women's ministry through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Initially progress had seemed slow with an itinerant Primitive Methodist preacher in 1841, a woman deacon at the Church of Christ in 1857, and the early presence of regular women's ministry with Mrs Pritchard at Latimer Street Baptist Mission from the 1870s and the coming of the Salvation Army to Birmingham in around 1880. However, the greatest advance came with the appointment of deaconesses and Bible women who had multiplied from one deaconess in 1865 to the 137 deaconesses, lay visitors, women of the people etc., who in 1914, were serving Birmingham's Congregational churches. When deaconesses amongst the Baptists and various Methodist Connexions are added to this number, it raises the question as to whether far more women were carrying out some kind of pastoral work in Birmingham's free churches in 1914 than are currently serving there as ministers or deacons.

It is also worth noting the impact of the First World War on women's ministry: it resulted in the removal of Gertrude von Petzold, Birmingham's only serving woman minister outside the Salvation Army, but also provided the opportunity for women to

---

<sup>56</sup> 'Religious History: Places of worship', *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham* (1964), pp. 434-82

serve as deacons amongst the city's Baptist and Congregational churches – an opportunity which expanded in the inter-war period.

### **3.5. Impact of the War on Birmingham Ecumenism**

There were many examples of greater ecumenism locally in Birmingham during the conflict. Joint prayer meetings were regularly organised, often involving Anglicans as well as the free churches. For the first time an Anglican Bishop preached at Carrs Lane Church, Presbyterian theological students re-located to the Quaker Woodbrooke settlement and a Woodbrooke-based Quaker evangelist conducted missions for local Baptists. All of this may have paved the way for further co-operation in the longer term. However, with the establishment of the (Cadbury-funded) local EFCCs at the turn of the century, much of this kind of co-operation, at least between the free churches, was already happening at a local level prior to the conflict.

### **3.6. Impact of the War on the Churches' Mission**

The war does not appear to have had a major impact on the mission of Birmingham's free churches. New churches were formed, and buildings opened during the conflict, although some building work was postponed due to shortages of materials. Some decisions were delayed – such as the appointment of a district evangelist for the Birmingham Churches of Christ – while other decisions were postponed 'until the boys come home'. Some saw the temporary stationing of troops in their area as an opportunity for mission, and therefore opened their buildings to the troops for social and spiritual activities. Whilst some churches erected plaques to their fallen, others (e.g. St. Columba's Presbyterian Church in Moseley) built new outreach facilities

such as halls or institutes in their memory, some of which were specifically to provide for the needs of the returned soldiers. There are reports of church auxiliary organisations such as Adult Schools, Brotherhoods/PSAs, Brigade companies and Scout troops struggling to keep going during the war, due to lack of suitable leaders, but most appear to have been re-established – and new ones started – once the conflict was over and the men had returned.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter examined the impact of the First World War on church life for the free churches of Birmingham. It demonstrated that the conflict did not have a significant effect on free church membership statistics in the city. It has also considered the impact of Zeppelin raids on the churches, and the consequential blackout requirements and concerns regarding Zeppelin insurance. It has examined the impact on regular church activities of the loss of many key lay leaders to participation in the conflict, resulting in some churches having to temporarily curtail some activities, such as Brigade companies or Brotherhoods/PSAs due to a shortage of suitable leaders. It has demonstrated that the restriction on training of new ministers does not appear to have led to an increase in pastoral vacancies. However, many ministers devoted some of their time to short-term visits to the front through the YMCA, or devoted time to pastoral care of soldiers stationed nearby, or of those hospitalised in and around the city. Much of the chapter addressed an area where more significant change took place, namely that of the ministry of women in the city. It has been demonstrated that the role of women in free church ministry in the city – which had been slowly developing through the nineteenth century, mostly through the work of deaconesses, lady workers and other forms of female pastoral ministry – expanded during the conflict. The

absence of many of the men opened up opportunities for women in Baptist and Congregational churches to serve as deacons and thus have a more direct role in the running of the churches. Whereas some secular opportunities for women increased during the conflict and then declined again, opportunities in church life increased rather than decreased after the conflict, as more churches changed their rules to allow women members to serve. Finally, the chapter has considered the impact of the conflict on the churches' attitudes to ecumenism, where the pre-war trend towards greater co-operation appears to have been accelerated a little through co-operation in prayer and service during the war. In terms of the churches' mission in the city, there were some delays, such as in making appointments and decisions, and in chapel building due to issues around the availability of materials.

Overall, the conflict does not appear to have had major long-term impacts on the life and ministry of local Birmingham churches, other than in the area of the expansion of women's ministry, and a possible acceleration of local ecumenism, as the other key issue – leadership shortages caused by the war – was easily resolved once the 'boys' returned home.

## **Chapter 4: Faith of the Combatants –**

### **Birmingham Free Church Members' Letters Home from the Front**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

Valuable insights into the experiences and beliefs of individual Birmingham church members and attenders who joined the military during the First World War can be found in their letters home. Many extracts from their letters survive in local and regional church magazines from the period. This chapter considers what can be learned about the Birmingham free church combatants' faith from contemporary local church magazines from the period 1914-1919 which have survived in Birmingham archives. To ensure as broad a range of experiences and beliefs as possible, all identified local and regional free church magazines were consulted. These were from Baptist, Congregational, Presbyterian, Unitarian (for comparison) and Wesleyan Methodist churches, along with those published by local non-denominational auxiliaries such as the Birmingham Sunday School Union and the Midland Adult School Union.<sup>1</sup> Of these, only the following contained extracts from letters from their members or attenders serving in the military: *Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle*, 1914-19 (monthly magazine of Carrs Lane Congregational Church, including Digbeth Institute and its other missions); the magazines of the Sparkbrook Baptist Church Men's Meeting (i.e. Brotherhood), published monthly, then quarterly, 1914-19; the *Wesleyan Church Magazine, Moseley Road Circuit* 1914-17 (monthly, covering six Wesleyan Methodist churches and one mission in south Birmingham); the *Midlands supplement* to the Adult School journal, *One & All*, 1914-19 (monthly, containing reports from Adult Schools associated with churches of various protestant

---

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix to this chapter for full list of magazines consulted.

denominations across the West Midlands); *Westminster Chimes*, 1917-20 (occasional publication for members of the Young Men's Bible Class at Westminster Road Congregational Church, Handsworth who were in the military); and *Wycliffe Magazine*, 1914-19 (monthly, Wycliffe Baptist Church). However, the extracts in the *Wycliffe Magazine* did not shed any light on the impact of the writers' experiences on their faith, so they are not cited below. It may be no coincidence that the *Wycliffe Magazine*, which did not include extracts from letters which reflected on their combatants experience of the conflict, was also the publication which had taken the most pro-war stance of all the local sources surveyed.<sup>2</sup>

Through the letter extracts published, the writers described their experiences of the conflict, gave thanks for presents and cards they had received and described the places and people they had encountered, including detailed descriptions of the Holy Land. However, this chapter will concentrate on what the letters reveal about the faith of the writers and how they related their faith to the conflict. These will then be contrasted with the conclusions of the 1919 report on combatants' faith edited by Cairns entitled, *The Army and Religion*.<sup>3</sup>

#### **4.2. Prayer and the Presence of God**

A key theme which arises from the letters is gratefulness for prayer and an awareness of God's presence. Arthur Millward of Sparkhill, grandson of the Wesleyan Methodist local preacher Titus Millward, wrote: 'Don't worry about me, because I know everyone is praying for me, and for us all. I can always feel it, so I know we shall be

---

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 2 for the views of the minister and magazine editor expressed in the *Wycliffe Magazine*.

<sup>3</sup> D.S. Cairns, ed., *The Army and Religion: An Enquiry into its Bearing upon the Religious Life of the Nation* (London: 1919)

alright.<sup>4</sup> Another Wesleyan, Frank Booth, member of Hazelwell Church (Machine Gun section, 2<sup>nd</sup> Oxf & Bucks LI, BEF, France) wrote: ‘Mother, it was God, who was watching over us. One shell came over and plonked between my outstretched legs, but it was God’s will I should not be hurt, for the shell never went off, neither did another which came close to it.’<sup>5</sup> Later in the conflict, a Hazelwell Wesleyan correspondent in France (possibly Booth again) wrote: ‘I am constantly witnessing the care and the gentle touch of the Great Master when danger comes near.’<sup>6</sup> Another Wesleyan wrote from hospital: ‘It is a great help, when in trouble or danger, to know that friends at home are praying for our welfare and safety.’<sup>7</sup>

This view was echoed by Private Jack Walford (Greet Adult School, Quaker): ‘When I woke up this morning I thought of the good old Early Morning School that I had been a member of for so many years, and I hope for a great many more when I come back. It has been the means of helping me on more than once in the few troubles that I have had, and it is very nice to know that you have such a house of God at the back of you’.<sup>8</sup> A.J. Donnelly (Westminster Road Congregational, RAMC), recorded similar sentiments: ‘I think of you meeting together Sunday by Sunday and spending a pleasant hour in the ever present company of God. I thank you for all your kind letters, thoughts, and gifts I have received from time to time, and they mean such a lot to a chap away from home; and I pray that God will ever watch over all the members, whether at home or in other parts of the world.’<sup>9</sup> Another Wesleyan, A.E. Berry in

---

<sup>4</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 1, no.11 (11/1914)

<sup>5</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 2, no.12 (12/1915)

<sup>6</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 4, no.2 (2/1917)

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

<sup>8</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (1/1918)

<sup>9</sup> BCA CC11/18/4 *Westminster Chimes*, no.4 (11/1918)



France, expressed similar views, but added a note of caution as to whether it was worth the sacrifice: ‘The thought that we are remembered, thought of and prayed for makes us very grateful, and the only thought in my mind is whether the sacrifice I am making is worth it.’<sup>10</sup>

The assurance of God’s presence comes out clearly in the letters of another Wesleyan, Leonard Cooper: ‘I have always had my God with me, and by his perfect protection I am enabled after nearly eighteenth months out here to send you a few lines.’<sup>11</sup>

The prayer concerns of some other soldiers were simpler: the Carrs Lane Congregationalist Private Hill’s priority was simply getting home in one piece: ‘Many a time I have given up hope of seeing England again, but every time my prayer has been answered, and thank God I am still well.’<sup>12</sup>

Lance Corporal H.J. Farnell (Westminster Road Congregational), in letters from France, and later from the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General Hospital, Edgbaston (i.e. the Great Hall of the University of Birmingham), assured his fellow believers of his prayers for them: ‘I prayed – as I have all through – that our eternal Father will be with you one and all, and that His wings of protection might be always hovering around to protect you...The way to glory is always through the path of duty.’<sup>13</sup>

### **4.3. Conversion and Revival of Faith**

The Wesleyan Methodist, Moseley Road circuit magazine contained many letters

---

<sup>10</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 4, no.5 (5/1917)

<sup>11</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 4, no.7 (7/1917)

<sup>12</sup> BCA LB18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle* (4/1915)

<sup>13</sup> BCA CC11/18/3 *Westminster Chimes*, no.3 (8/1918)

from the front reporting church members' involvement in impromptu acts of worship, as they reported in 1915: 'In their letters from the front our Christian soldiers constantly speak of the meetings which they hold among themselves...as in past wars, Christian soldiers are quick to seize the opportunity of doing something for Christ, who has done so much for them'.<sup>14</sup> This was not simply religious observance but rather significant spiritual encounters, such as a report of a sergeant in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in France: 'Jesus had not failed him, He knelt and found Christ during terrible fire from the Germans...Then having found Christ himself, he used to gather other Christian men together in any place available for quiet and fellowship... anywhere they could get an opportunity for prayer and Bible reading...As the sergeant told me this his face shone with the light divine.'<sup>15</sup> This was supported by a powerful testimony in a letter from Private Fred Sanders (Knutsford Street School, Wesleyan) who reported: 'I have never felt the love of God so much as I have this last four months. I pray night and morning for the safety of my comrades and the villagers...each time they have attacked us we have repulsed them, so God has answered our prayer...I have seen a great difference come over the men in my regiment, for there were men who never thought about God, who have now turned over a new leaf, and have started to offer up their prayers to God. I think that all of us will be glad when this cruel war is ended...I hope God will spare my life, so that we may meet in that little School again'.<sup>16</sup> Similar observations were coming from the Adult Schools. At Christ Church (Summerfield), Section A, Adult School, the death of Harry Fitchew was reported, including reference to his last letters which 'tell of his full realisation of the "power of prayer" and of God's loving mercy even in the din of

---

<sup>14</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 2, no.5 (5/1915)

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 1, no.12 (12/1914)

battle; also telling of his love for the E[arly] M[orning] School, and his longing to be in his old place there, if God willed it so'.<sup>17</sup> A member of the Digbeth Institute (associated with Carrs Lane Congregational) reported interest in Bible reading: 'There are six of us in our tent, and we all had a Testament given to us, and we all make a practice of reading them once a day, so you can tell we have got some fine fellows. I think when lying in camp of the many happy hours I have spent at the Institute and they cheer me up.'<sup>18</sup>

Members of the Sparkbrook Baptist Men's Brotherhood were reporting similar experiences. Armourer Sergeant L.J. Bright (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) wrote: 'I never felt the need of religion more than I did tonight. We had a service, conducted by our chaplain, and at the close the Welsh troops sang 'Land of my Fathers'. Their singing was magnificent. I have, indeed, experienced the need of a Supreme Power to turn to for strength and for comfort.'<sup>19</sup> A comrade of his in the Holy Land was reported as follows: 'He says he never realised so fully the love of God as when he was near the place where His Son Jesus Christ hung upon the Cross for the redemption of mankind. Everything became real to him, and he felt that indeed he was on Holy ground.'<sup>20</sup>

However, the *One and All* supplement also revealed concern as to the spiritual state of some of the soldiers. When Private Arthur Cowley (RAMC) visited the South Yardley Adult School: 'He spoke of the spiritual condition of the men there, and his

---

<sup>17</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (10/1916)

<sup>18</sup> BCA LB18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle* (6/1915)

<sup>19</sup> BCA L18.2 242337 *The Messenger of the Sparkbrook Men's Meeting*, no.12 (12/1915)

<sup>20</sup> BCA L18.2 242337 *The Sparkbrook Men's Meeting Quarterly Messenger*, no.3 (7/1918)

experience had been that it was nonsense to say, as had been said, that the war had had an influence for good from a spiritual point of view in the lives of the young men of the nation now in the Army, but rather the reverse.’<sup>21</sup>

#### **4.4. Trusting in God**

Many correspondents wrote of the impact of the conflict on their trust in God: Private Jack Owen (commonly known as John 3:16), from Floodgate Street (Medical Mission) Adult School wrote from a hospital bed in Warrington: ‘Romans viii, 28 is still true’, and Floodgate Street’s *One and All* correspondent added ‘...we know he believes it’.<sup>22</sup> The choices of scripture passages are significant. His John 3:16 nickname refers to one of the key phrases of Jesus which outlined the basis and uniqueness of the Christian message and is still widely used for evangelistic purposes: ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, may not perish, but have everlasting life.’ This suggests that Owen had himself had a conversion experience and was keen to share it with others. The verse he quoted from Paul’s letter to the Romans includes the phrase ‘We know that all things work together for good to them that love God’ and suggests that he is maintaining a belief in God’s providence, even whilst injured and lying in a hospital bed.

Another Adult School scholar, Thomas Freeth (Merridale Street School, Wolverhampton), in a letter from ‘somewhere in France’ described how his faith had helped him to win the Military Medal: ‘I had half a mile of flat country to cross in full

---

<sup>21</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (9/1917)

<sup>22</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (6/1917)

view of the enemy, and through a barrage of fire, but I asked God in silent prayer to watch over me and go with me, as He had done for the past two years. He answered my prayer, and not only kept me safe, but gave me the courage which won me this distinction I am now wearing on my tunic. All my praise is to Him above....How often I hope and pray to be among you once more no one but myself can ever know.’<sup>23</sup> In a similar vein T.W. Price (Nelson Street Adult School, Wesleyan) reporting the recent death of Sergeant F. Allbutt of the Rifle Brigade, MM, quoted from his recent letter: ‘I can tell you and everybody else that if you put your trust in God it goes a long way out here, I don’t mean in the way that most people look at it – keeping you safe – but in every way, giving you courage, pluck and strength to endure what is inhuman.’<sup>24</sup>

Private J. Weaver from Carrs Lane Congregational wrote of the value of remembering familiar hymns: ‘I don’t know if you still hear from any more of our chaps from the Guild, but I do hope that God will protect them and bring them safe home again. While under a big bombardment last week an old favourite hymn came into my mind – and a good one too, and that was, ‘Ask the saviour to help you’ so you see how things come to one’s mind when under such circumstances.’<sup>25</sup>

Brother<sup>26</sup> Haime from Sparkbrook Baptist Men’s Meeting wrote of the significance of his experience of God’s presence at the front: ‘God has been very good to me in great danger. What I should do without a Saviour I could not say, for it is only by the mercy of God that I am spared thus far. Indeed, we need your prayers during such trials. May

---

<sup>23</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (7/1917)

<sup>24</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, National Edition* (1/1917)

<sup>25</sup> BCA LB18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle* (10/1915)

<sup>26</sup> Most of the entries in the magazines of the Sparkbrook Men’s Meeting used the title ‘brother’ rather than military ranks.

the fiery furnace that I am now passing through be all for His honour and glory.’<sup>27</sup> His colleague, Brother F. Chatterley, added: ‘Tell them I am trusting in the one that is greater than man. God bless you all.’ Brother Norman Haime from Sparkbrook Baptist Men’s Meeting later wrote: ‘I am well, but only by God’s great mercy I am able to write this letter. This last week has proved what God can and will do for those who try to serve Him. I believe your prayers have been heard and answered. I trust that thousands who have called upon God in great trouble will not forget to praise Him when they return safely home.’<sup>28</sup>

#### **4.5. Involvement in Worship**

Many correspondents reported on their involvement in organised worship, including in ecumenical settings. The Wesleyan Private A.G. Millward reported: ‘You will be glad to know that I went to a Church of England service this morning.’<sup>29</sup> His fellow Wesleyan, Tasker Evans, reported: ‘You may be interested to know I took communion a Sunday or so ago, with a Wesleyan minister.’<sup>30</sup>

More revealing was a letter from Private Courtenay Smith, RAMC Dardanelles (Wesleyan): ‘I was glad that a chaplain gave us a pleasant service on the hillside, and I intend attending a sacrament service tomorrow. We have only a Roman Catholic Chaplain (or Padre), who says the last service over the dead. Circumstances make one impervious to this kind of thing in time.’<sup>31</sup> For a nonconformist he demonstrates a

---

<sup>27</sup> BCA L18.2 242337 *The Messenger of the Sparkbrook Men’s Meeting*, no.8 (8/1916)

<sup>28</sup> BCA L18.2 242337 *The Sparkbrook Men’s Meeting Quarterly Messenger*, no. 1 (1/1917)

<sup>29</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 2, no.7 (7/1915)

<sup>30</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 2, no.8 (8/1915)

<sup>31</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 2, no.10 (10/1915)

surprising toleration of Roman Catholic practices such as prayer for the dead. Most appreciated were acts of worship which reminded them of what they were used to back home. Percy Howard (Westminster Road Congregational) wrote from France: ‘We had a good service out here on Sunday last in a Friends Hut close to the camp, and it put me in mind of the old Sunday Afternoon Class. I suppose it was because we used the fellowship books and had some of the good old hymns.’<sup>32</sup> This is presumably a reference to a service being held in a hut run by either the Friends’ Ambulance Unit or the Friends War Victims Relief Committee, using the *Fellowship Hymn Book* which was jointly published by the National Adult School Union and the Brotherhood & Sisterhood (PSA) Movement which would have been familiar to him from his own Brotherhood (PSA) in Birmingham. The arrival of popular preachers from home was also appreciated: Bernard Clark (Carrs Lane Congregational) reported ‘We had Gipsy Smith at our YMCA a few weeks ago, and he drew crowded houses,’<sup>33</sup> Albert Smith (Sparkbrook Baptist Men’s Meeting) also reported on the effectiveness of one of the evangelist Gipsy Smith’s meetings: ‘He never saw such a marvellous change come over men as when they listened to the preacher, and when they went back – some to their tents, and others to the trenches – it was the one topic of conversation. We are quite certain they will never forget the beautiful way in which he wooed them to the Lord Jesus Christ.’<sup>34</sup> Clark had previously written from France expressing appreciation of a visit from his own minister, Sidney Berry, and of the general work of the YMCA: ‘I sincerely hope Mr Berry will come out again. I would willingly walk ten miles to shake hands with him...I have had some awful experiences, and have many times thought of him, and wondered if we should ever meet in any of the

---

<sup>32</sup> BCA CC11/18/5 *Westminster Chimes*, no.5 (2/1919)

<sup>33</sup> BCA LB18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle* (12/1917)

<sup>34</sup> BCA L18.2 242337 *The Sparkbrook Men’s Meeting Quarterly Messenger*, no. 2 (4/1917)

various YMCAs which in certain of the desolate and miserable spots have been veritable oases in deserts.<sup>35</sup> Albert Smith of Sparkbrook Baptist Men's Meeting had also expressed appreciation of the work of the YMCA: 'Am now at the base and am able to get to the YMCA service every Sunday. We get some fine speakers and we greatly enjoy the Meetings.'<sup>36</sup>

Some reported their own role in preaching, such as W.C. Freeman from Sparkbrook Baptist Men's Meeting: 'Am keeping well, and doing Brotherhood work out here. It is good to speak to comrades, and have addressed some large gatherings. The Salvation Army have also asked me to help them. Am thankful God is using me.'<sup>37</sup>

The unusual locations of acts of worship were also remarked upon: Private W.E. Parrott, a Wesleyan in France, reported the holding of services 'in a large dugout behind our reserve trench'.<sup>38</sup> Services were not only being reported from the Western front. A.H. Gilbert, HMS Vernon (Sparkhill Wesleyan Methodist) reported: 'Sunday morning service under the guns as a spiritual tonic, every man makes an effort to be there, except those on look-out.'<sup>39</sup> Frank H. Harper (Westminster Road Congregational), RAMC wrote from Mesopotamia: 'Short time ago whilst travelling from Samaria to Baghdad, there happened to be a Baptist Minister among the Boys, so we had a sort of impromptu service, and right good it was I assure you; taken on the Free Church principle it was a huge success.'<sup>40</sup> Similarly, an H.E. from Digbeth Institute (Congregational) reported from India: 'Just finished Church parade; if it

---

<sup>35</sup> BCA LB18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle* (1/1917)

<sup>36</sup> BCA L18.2 242337 *The Sparkbrook Men's Meeting Quarterly Messenger*, no. 4 (10/1917)

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 2, no.10 (10/1915)

<sup>39</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 2, no.12 (12/1915)

<sup>40</sup> BCA CC11/18/4 *Westminster Chimes*, no.4 (11/1918)



wasn't for going to church when we're able it would be a miserable life. I know when I was at home I was not extra keen on going to church; I don't know whether I shall be when I get home, but I tell you I look forward to it out here and I've attended church services held in queer places...When I was in 'blighty' I often wondered how the money that was collected for these mission societies was spent, now I can see every penny is needed and thousands of pounds more.'<sup>41</sup> He therefore introduced the additional angle of having seen and experienced first-hand the need for greater support for overseas Christian missions.

#### **4.6. Encounters with the 'Enemy'**

Whilst most participants only met Germans in combat, a few had other personal encounters which enabled them to reflect on how their faith affected their attitudes towards the 'enemy'. Most significant was a letter from the Wesleyan, Fred Sanders, from the front reporting his personal experience of involvement in the 1914 Christmas truce: 'We were talking to them as if they were our friends. I expect that it will take you all your time to believe it, but it is the honest truth',<sup>42</sup> whilst his fellow Wesleyan J. Cave, a stretcher bearer, wrote of serving alongside German prisoners-of-war: 'Friend and foe become the same, and I know of more than one German prisoner that has lost his life while helping to carry in our wounded.'<sup>43</sup> The *Midland Supplement to One and All* reported an even more significant wartime encounter when an adult scholar from Kettering had met and fraternised with a young German who had previously stayed with another Adult School man in Kettering during one of their pre-

---

<sup>41</sup> BCA LB18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle* (11/1918)

<sup>42</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 2, no.1 (1/1915)

<sup>43</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 4, no.5 (5/1917)

war Anglo-German exchange visits.<sup>44</sup> There is little evidence of jingoism or hatred of the Germans in any of the surviving letter extracts. An un-named Clark Street Adult Scholar and soldier was keen to see an early peace settlement without punitive sanctions against the Germans: ‘We all hope for an early peace, and I believe myself that we shall have it. We shall have a satisfactory conclusion, but we shall not crush Germany as a nation. It is the administration of the enemy we must strike at and which we shall cripple. The free Germany which we hope for after this war will be our friend and not our foe...As soon as it is possible to come to terms, there is nothing that will justify and recompense any nation for carrying on this terrible carnage. The lessons of this war have already been learnt. The League of Nations upon which a world’s peace is based must include the remodelled Germany...Let the people have a word in the ending of this war.’<sup>45</sup>

The only example of hostility came from a Wesleyan named Cooper: ‘The Spirit is always there when roused and my faith will never waiver in our ability to smash the despicable Hun. Patience and sacrifice will be needed and given, and our principles must win. We need always to pray for God’s help, for without it we shall not win so well...The ultimate victory is ours if we care to watch and pray, for we have the strength, and the right is our cause. May God bless our aims and bring the victory soon.’<sup>46</sup> Cooper’s letter extract is unusual in being the only one to focus on ‘smashing’ the enemy and he also seeks to invoke God onto the side of allies. The only other view hinting that divine providence may be on their side came in a report from an Anglican Adult School, Christ Church (Summerfield), Section A: ‘The letters from

---

<sup>44</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (4/1915)

<sup>45</sup> BCA LB48.66 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (9/1917)

<sup>46</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol 4, no.7 (7/1917)

members at the front are bright and cheery, all with a sure confidence of our ultimate victory.’<sup>47</sup>

#### **4.7. The Reality and Horror of Warfare, and Prayers for Peace**

The horrific reality of modern warfare did, however, come through in many of the letters. From Carrs Lane (Congregational), Corporal J. Danks (2<sup>nd</sup> Coy, 2<sup>nd</sup> Batt, Coldstream Guards, 4<sup>th</sup> Guards Brigade BEF) reported: ‘I was overcome with joy to think that all my dear friends are praying earnestly for my safe deliverance from the horrors of this terrible campaign. I can assure you all that the sights I have witnessed will live for ever upon my mind.’ On leaving Mons and seeing refugees he observed: ‘Many a tear was shed by my brave comrades, and many a prayer was said for these unfortunates.’ Whilst of the battle of Aisne he commented: ‘Many of us offered up a silent prayer’ and ‘I waited patiently for death hour after hour, but thank God, my prayer was answered and it never came’.<sup>48</sup> In a later edition of the *Carrs Lane Journal*, it was reported that Corporal Danks ‘hopes the publication of a letter of his in the journal recently would bring home to many the awfulness of this bloody campaign’.<sup>49</sup> Corporal W.R. Ward, a member of Carrs Lane’s Young Men’s Morning Class, also reported on the horror of warfare: ‘It is really appalling, and it is only the sight of these things, of the men who have died in the cause, of the ruined homes, of the total devastation which everywhere meets the eye, that can give anything like an adequate idea of what war means. May God bring about a speedy end.’<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (2/1917)

<sup>48</sup> BCA LB18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle* (1/1915)

<sup>49</sup> BCA LB18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle* (4/1915)

<sup>50</sup> BCA LB18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle* (9/1916)

Ward's call for prayer was widely reflected by other correspondents: Corporal Frank Booth (Wesleyan) wrote from 'somewhere in France': 'If I do not write to you, I am with you all in thought and prayer...May it be God's will that this terrible war shall soon cease, and a fitting and lasting peace be established upon earth...How blessed and comforting it is to know that through all the times of trial and dark despair, there is always One who is ever near and ever ready to help those who look to him and accept him as their saviour... That God may ever bless you and all my fellow-members, and grant us all a speedy re-union in His service, is the prayer of, yours very sincerely, Frank Booth.'<sup>51</sup> A letter from the Adult scholar, Arthur T. Wallis, who was serving with the FAU 'somewhere in Palestine' described his travels in the Holy Land then added: '... but we are all looking forward to the only thing worth having – a just peace and home. May it soon come.'<sup>52</sup> Others were concerned that there was not enough prayer: Corporal J.W. Weir (Adult School, Floodgate Street Medical Mission) wrote 'I think it is past a shame that the people at home do not demand a National Day of Prayer. I think it would be a great help to end this terrible crisis.'<sup>53</sup> Some who were at the front focused on praying for others rather than themselves. Private Harold J. Farnell (Westminster Road Congregational) Div 19, wrote from 'somewhere in France': 'I pray continually for all the members of our Class who are out doing their bit, that they may be kept safe...I pray that our eternal father will watch over you and protect you.'<sup>54</sup> Brother J. Maskell, of Sparkbrook Baptist Men's Meeting wrote from hospital: 'My thoughts are with the boys in the firing line, going through hardship and suffering. I pray for them every night, for I know what they are going

---

<sup>51</sup> BCA L18.3 256085 *Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, vol. 4, no.7 (7/1917)

<sup>52</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (12/1918)

<sup>53</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (12/1917)

<sup>54</sup> BCA CC11/18/1 *Westminster Chimes*, no.1 (Christmas 1917)

through,<sup>55</sup> while his fellow member J. Herbert testified: ‘God has answered your prayers and He has raised me to health and strength after my long illness.’<sup>56</sup>

#### **4.8. Opposition to the War**

Whilst most of the letter extracts published came from the front, *One and All* also published letters from those who stayed at home, including some from those whose faith required them to refuse to participate in the conflict. The June 1916 *Midland Supplement* included a letter from Charles Williams, of Guildford Street Adult School (Baptist), Handsworth which reported: ‘As I intimated in our school report, we have lost our school secretary, Mr Ernest Woodward (for the present at any rate). He was arrested on Thursday, May 18<sup>th</sup> for the terrible crime of possessing a “conscience”’. He explained that Woodward had been granted non-combatant service and refused an appeal: ‘In consequence our brother was arrested as a deserter, fined 40s, and handed over to the military authorities. He is now at Warwick awaiting court-martial for refusing to strip for medical examination.’ They also published in full a letter from Woodward which included:

My dear Will and fellow members, by the time you receive this letter I shall have been arrested as a deserter. The testing time has come, and I go forth to bear witness to my faith, believing in the teaching of Jesus Christ that peace – the peace we all long for – will only come through love, mercy, truth, righteousness, and reason – not through killing our fellow men, who are made in God’s image. We sometimes think where is Christianity? It is now nearly two thousand years since Christ

---

<sup>55</sup> BCA L18.2 242337 *The Sparkbrook Men’s Meeting Quarterly Messenger*, no. 1 (1/1917)

<sup>56</sup> BCA L18.2 242337 *The Sparkbrook Men’s Meeting Quarterly Messenger*, no. 2 (4/1917)

was crucified for us – the Germans – for all men – yea, for His enemies; and yet in the name of Christ we are told to go forth and slay. I have asked myself the question, how can militarism be destroyed? By applying its principles or by facing the facts. And in accordance with the teaching of Christ, “Be not overcome with evil but overcome evil with good”....If Christ’s teachings cannot be applied now I contend they are no good, and let’s get rid of them. I am shocked when I think of Europe, with its most Christian and civilised nations of the world, that ought to set a pattern to the rest, streaming with human blood. Do not think I am exonerating Germany from blame, but ‘Why do you note the splinter in your brother’s eye and fail to see the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, “Let me take the splinter from your eye?” when there lies a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite!’<sup>57</sup>

This letter was all the more significant, as Woodward was the only Birmingham Conscientious Objector known to have died as a consequence of treatment by the authorities during the conflict, and whose name appears on the First World War Conscientious Objectors memorial plaque in London.<sup>58</sup>

Another significant letter was published in March 1919 in the *Midland Supplement to One and All* signed by Joseph E. Southall (Quaker), Joseph Sturge (Quaker) and J. Morgan Whiteman (Unitarian) on behalf of the Birmingham Branch of the Peace Society. It was addressed to the members of the Adult Schools and stated: ‘We fear that our fellow citizens are not aware that at the end of January there were 1,369 men

---

<sup>57</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (6/1916)

<sup>58</sup> John W. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience, a History, 1916-1919* (London: 1922), p. 825 & memorial plaque, Peace Pledge Union website, <http://www.ppu.org.uk/cosnew/cotx13b.html>

still being kept in prison for conscience sake, and that 54 have died and 37 become mentally affected as the result of the sufferings they have undergone.’ It went on to urge individual Adult Schools to send resolutions to the Home Secretary or to their local MP calling for the COs’ release.<sup>59</sup>

However, diverse views are evident, as in May 1917 an article was published in the national edition of *One and All* on Disarmament by the Rugby Quaker Frederick Merttens, in which he warned that if it continued much longer, ‘this war, instead of being a war to kill war, will turn out to be the forerunner of many other armed conflicts’, and he went on to prophetically argue: ‘The risk is great that the victor, by imposing humiliating and selfish terms, will create a desire for revenge and fresh distrust and fear, and thus establish once more the idol of brute force as the security for peace in the future.’<sup>60</sup> This was then debated over the next few editions through the letters column, with Merttens and Alfred S. Chovil (also from the Midland Adult School Union) amongst those exchanging views,<sup>61</sup> and a letter from members of Nelson Street, Birmingham (Wesleyan) Adult School criticising Merttens’ article.<sup>62</sup>

#### **4.9 Selectivity and Bias**

There are potential issues of selectivity and bias in the surviving letters. The letters will have made it past military censors, and then most of the available material is made up of short extracts from letters, presumably as selected by the magazine editors, exceptions being Woodward’s letter about his arrest and the letter from the

---

<sup>59</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (3/1919)

<sup>60</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, National Edition* (5/1917)

<sup>61</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, National Edition* (6/1917-9/1917)

<sup>62</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, National Edition* (10/1917)

Birmingham Peace Society, which were published in full in *One and All*. The letter writers came from a range of denominational traditions, not only Baptists, Congregationalists and Wesleyan Methodists as identified by their magazines, but also through the inclusion of extracts published in *One and All*, a wide range of others varying from Quakers to the independent Floodgate Street Medical Mission. What is notable, however, is the common themes that appear in them, regardless of the denominational affiliation of the writer or the point during the conflict at which they were written. Nor are there discernible differences in attitudes between those serving in combatant or non-combatant roles – one extract is from a member of the FAU, and other letters are from those serving in the RAMC. In an attempt to reduce potential bias by selectivity, all the identified surviving local and regional free church magazines from the period 1914-19 were consulted. The inclusion in the published extracts of comments reflecting the horror and brutality of war, querying whether the conflict was worth the cost, advocating an early peace, and reporting positively of personal encounters with Germans, suggests that the writers (and editors) were not only reporting the more popular opinions that they thought their readers wanted to read. Whilst it is potentially hazardous to seek to build a case on what was not published, it is appropriate to speculate whether it was coincidence that the more pro-war *Wycliffe Magazine* did not publish any such extracts. The other benefit of the letters as sources is that they are contemporary to the conflict, not memoirs or reflections which were written up at a later date.

#### **4.10. Conclusion**

The letters contained little evidence of a belief that God was on their side in the conflict, or signs of antagonism towards ‘the enemy’, but rather reflect genuine



attempts on the part of the writers to apply their faith in challenging circumstances. Cairns in his report had also claimed to find unorthodox beliefs such as a general assumption that all 'good fellows' who die for their country will go to heaven and had concluded: 'The idea of salvation by death in battle for one's country has been widely prevalent, and is one of those points in which the religion of the trenches has rather a Moslem than a Christian colour.'<sup>63</sup> This particular 'salvation by works' view was not advocated in any of the letter extracts or editorials in any of the local or regional church magazines consulted. A likely explanation of the different interpretations is that Cairns' report appeared to focus largely on those who had little faith before they joined the conflict, whereas this study focused largely on those who held to the Christian faith prior to the conflict.

In his report, Cairns had played down reports of interest in Spiritualism amongst the soldiers<sup>64</sup> – and in this he is supported by the evidence of the Birmingham local free church magazines, as there was no sign of any interest in the subject in any of the local or regional magazines examined, either from correspondents or magazine editorials. Another area where the letter extracts cited in this chapter support Cairns' conclusions was in the interest amongst some of the men at the front in overseas missions.<sup>65</sup>

The nature of the observations and faith experience of these men is consistent with the

---

<sup>63</sup> Cairns, ed., *The Army and Religion*, p. 19

<sup>64</sup> Cairns, ed., *The Army and Religion*, pp. 19-20

<sup>65</sup> Cairns, ed., *The Army and Religion*, pp. 178-186

revivals at the front reported by Allison in his study of Baptist chaplains at the front.<sup>66</sup> The letter extracts are uniformly in stark contrast to the vague deism coloured with elements of Christian ideals and some superstition described in the post-war *Army and Religion* report edited by Cairns. In that report, Cairns had concluded: ‘With most there is not so much a revival of religious faith, as a revival of a new interest and a sense of need.’<sup>67</sup> In contrast, these letters demonstrate the existence of genuine Christian belief amongst at least some members of the military and provide evidence of others finding faith whilst at the front. As with the theological difference identified above, the likely explanation of the different interpretations is that Cairns’ report appeared to focus largely on those who had little faith before they joined the conflict, whereas this study focused on those who were already practising Christians prior to the conflict.

General reports found in the local and regional church magazines suggest that the published extracts from the men expressing how their faith had helped them were representative of the wider correspondence the magazine editors had received. For example, from Digbeth Institute (Congregational) it was reported: ‘We continue to receive some wonderfully cheery letters from our men at the front and in training camps. The testimony they bear to the influence of the Institute is very encouraging.’<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Floodgate Street Adult School (Medical Mission) reported: ‘Letters are being received almost daily from scholars with the colours, testifying of the help their fellowship with Adult School scholars in pre-war days is being to them

---

<sup>66</sup> Neil E. Allison, ‘Baptist Chaplains’ Revivalism at the Front (1914-18)’, *Baptist Quarterly*, 42 (Oct 2007), pp. 303-13

<sup>67</sup> Cairns, ed., *The Army and Religion*, p. 17

<sup>68</sup> BCA LB18.1 *Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle* (6/1915)

now.<sup>69</sup> This confirms Cairns' observation: 'Bible Class leaders have influenced many profoundly.'<sup>70</sup>

These extracts from their letters home provide clear evidence of the relevance of the Christian faith to the daily lives of many Birmingham church, Adult School and Brotherhood/PSA members and attenders in the military during the First World War, and of faith being deepened and renewed, revealing an area worthy of further investigation in other similar local and regional church magazines across the country or even comparative studies with Christians in other nations involved in the conflict.

---

<sup>69</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (7/1917)

<sup>70</sup> Cairns, ed., *The Army and Religion*, p. 115

**Appendix: Local Church Journals consulted:**

(number of editions in brackets)

**Baptists:**

*Moseley Baptist Church Monthly Magazine*, nos.16-22, 9/1914-3/1915 (7)

*Wycliffe Magazine*, Vols 3-8, 9/1914-12/1919 (64)

*Edward Road Baptist Church Magazine*, no.100, 4/1915 (1)

*The Messenger of the Sparkbrook Men's Meeting*, 9/1914-12/1915, Jun, Aug & Nov 1916 (19)

*The Sparkbrook Men's Meeting Quarterly Messenger*, 1/1917-10/1919 (8)

*The Spring Hill Monthly Messenger*, 9-12/1914, 1-12/1919 (16)

**Congregationalists:**

*Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle*, 8/1914-12/1919 (64)

*Westminster Chimes*, 12/1917-4/1920 – Westminster Road Young Men's Class quarterly news bulletin sent to those members in military service. (9)

*Sutton Coldfield & Wylde Green Congregational Magazine*, nos. 45-86, 9/1914-2/1918 (42)

**Presbyterian Church of England:**

*Magazine of the Presbyterian Church of England, Chantry Road, Moseley*, monthly, then quarterly, Nos.176-211, 12/1914-12/1919 (35)

**Wesleyan Methodists:**

*Wesleyan Church Magazine*, Moseley Road circuit, 9/1914-12/1917 (40)

*Islington Wesleyan Sunday School Old Scholars & Teachers Association Magazine*, annually, 5/1915, 5/1917, 5/1918 (3)

**Unitarians: (for comparison)**

*Calendar* 9/1914-12/1919 monthly magazine of Church of the Messiah, Broad Street (64)

**Midland Adult School Union:**

*One & All, Midland Supplement*, monthly, 9/1914-6/1919 (58)

The 1917 volume also included national editions of *One and All* (12)

**Birmingham & Midland Brotherhood Movement:**

*Birmingham & Midland Brotherhood Record*, No.1 (10/1916) including *The Brotherhood Journal* Conference Number Vol XX, no.10 (10/1916) (1+1)

**Birmingham Sunday School Union:**

*Monthly Journal of the Birmingham Sunday School Union*, 8/1914-6/1919 & 10/1919 (60)

**Friends' Ambulance Unit:**

*The Swallow* (monthly journal issued by members of the Friends' Ambulance Unit, Uffculme Hospital, Birmingham, 2/1918) (1)

**Midland Temperance Movement:**

*Midland Temperance Witness*, no.164, 21/9/1914 (1)

## **Chapter 5: Lay Auxiliary Movements**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter considers the origins and impact of a range of protestant non-denominational lay movements in Birmingham, focusing particularly on the Adult School, Brotherhood & Sisterhood (PSA) Movement and the Brigade and Scouting movements. It examines the origins, growth and increasing influence of these movements, nationally and locally, before then examining their attitudes to issues around war, militarism and internationalism, prior to the First World War. It then considers the impact of the First World War on them and how they responded to it. It relies primarily on local sources from the Birmingham Library archives and other local archives which are compared where appropriate with national and secondary sources.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, evangelical free churches (and Anglican churches) established a wide range of auxiliary movements which served as forms of evangelistic outreach, as well as seeking to meet the spiritual and practical needs of those they were aiming to reach. Of particular significance were the Adult Schools, Brotherhood/Sisterhood (PSA) Movement, the Brigade movements and the more secular Scouting movement.

### **5.2. The Early Adult Schools**

The Adult Schools were significant Christian adult auxiliaries in Birmingham and the West Midlands in the early twentieth century, attracting large numbers of members and attenders. As this movement was of particular significance in Birmingham and the West Midlands, and the origins are relatively little known, some space will be

devoted to its history and purpose.

There had been early Adult School experiments in Wigan, Kempston and Epworth in 1700-02,<sup>1</sup> and very successful Welsh Circulating Schools in vernacular Welsh which commenced in Llanddowror in 1731,<sup>2</sup> the latter movement claiming to have taught 150,212 people to read the Bible in Welsh by 1760,<sup>3</sup> but these movements had proved relatively short-lived.

In 1789, teachers from the Old and New Meeting Presbyterian/Unitarian Sunday Schools established a Birmingham Sunday Society to teach young people writing, arithmetic and other 'useful knowledge'. The work was suspended by the 1791 anti-Priestley riots, but reconstituted as the Brotherly Society in 1796, and was reported as still flourishing in 1817.<sup>4</sup>

However, the second phase of the modern Adult School movement can be traced initially to Nottingham where in 1798 a 'Sunday School for Bible Reading and instruction in the secular arts of writing and arithmetic' was established in a Nottingham Methodist New Connexion Chapel by William Singleton, with the assistance of a Quaker, Samuel Fox.<sup>5</sup> A school was established in Edgbaston, and another at Christ Church, Birmingham from c.1827.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> T. Kelly, *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Liverpool: 1992), p. 64

<sup>2</sup> T. Pole, *A History of the Origin and Progress of Adult Schools* (Bristol: 1816), p. 4

<sup>3</sup> G. Currie Martin, *The Adult School Movement* (London: 1924), p. 21

<sup>4</sup> Kelly, *A History*, pp. 78-79

<sup>5</sup> J. W. Rowntree & H. B. Binns, *A History of the Adult School Movement* (London: 1903), p. 10 & Currie Martin, *The Adult School Movement*, pp. 12-13

<sup>6</sup> Kelly, *A History*, pp. 152-54

The most significant event in the dramatic late nineteenth-century growth of the movement was the Birmingham Quaker Joseph Sturge's encounter with Adult Schools whilst on an election campaign in Nottingham in the 1840s. This resulted in October 1845 in the establishment of an Adult Sunday School for Boys aged 14+ on Sunday evenings in the British School, Severn Street, Birmingham, led by Sturge. In April 1846 the school moved to early morning, older men began attending, and a pattern was thus established which was soon to spread nationwide. In 1847 the Friends' First Day School Association was founded in Birmingham. It was primarily intended to bring together Quaker children's Sunday Schools, but soon became more dominated by the Adult Schools. The Birmingham work developed quickly: in 1848 a women's school commenced at Ann Street, in 1851 a library and night school were commenced, and 1852 Severn Street School divided into adult and junior sections. In 1859 the movement reached the Black Country when an Adult School was opened in West Bromwich at Ebenezer Congregational Chapel, by a deacon, John Blackham. The year 1871 saw the creation of an interdenominational committee to extend Adult School work in Birmingham, and 1884 the founding of the Midland Adult Sunday School Association (later re-named the Midland Adult School Union). West Midlands representatives played a key part in the founding of the National Council of Adult School Associations in Leicester in 1899. In 1909 their national conference was held in Birmingham, at the Moseley Road Institute, one of a number of Cadbury-funded Friends Institutes built across the south of the city, primarily for Adult School use. National membership peaked at nearly 113,789 in 1910, but was still high at 96,813 when they were renamed the National Adult School Union (NASU) in early 1914. However, during the period of the war the membership decline speeded up: numbers



had fallen to 50,000 members by 1920-21.<sup>7</sup>

By 1910 there were 266 Adult Schools in the West Midlands with a combined membership of 25,242. By the end of 1913 the number of schools had risen to 294, but membership had declined to 18,628. A year later, once the war had broken out, they were down to 276 schools with 17,314 members.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, at the outbreak of the First World War, there were still more Adult Schools operating in Birmingham than churches of any one denomination, even the Anglicans.

### **5.3. The Brotherhood & Sisterhood (PSA) Movement**

A movement which grew out of the Adult School movement but was soon to eclipse it numerically was made up of societies variously known as Brotherhoods, Sisterhoods, Pleasant Sunday Afternoon (PSA) Associations or Afternoon Bible Classes (ABC). The first PSA or Brotherhood was founded by the West Bromwich Congregationalist deacon and Adult School pioneer, John Blackham, at his Ebenezer Chapel in 1875. Its origin was a visit John Blackham made to Birmingham in January 1875 to hear the American evangelist, Dwight L. Moody. So large was the crowd that Blackham was turned away from the meeting. He then enquired after an alternative Christian gathering and, was directed to the nearby Steelhouse Lane Congregational Chapel<sup>9</sup> where in Blackham's own words:

I came across a room where about 30 fine young fellows were assembled  
listening to their teacher, a magnificent man, with a marvellous store of

---

<sup>7</sup> Arnold Hall, *The Adult School Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Nottingham: 1985), pp. 19 & 213

<sup>8</sup> BCA L48.76 222103 *Midland Adult School Union Yearbooks, 1909-1918*

<sup>9</sup> J.W. Tuffley, *Grain from Galilee: The Romance of the Brotherhood Movement* (London: 1935), p. 6

information. His address was so long and so good that my head and back ached with the prolonged attention...I wondered how it was that Moody could get an audience 4,000, while this splendid Bible class leader could only draw about thirty, and as I thought upon this the first light broke in, and I saw clearly why we had failed, and how we might succeed. I learnt also how not to do it. I realised that if the men were to be won, we must give them a service neither too long nor too learned, we must avoid dullness, prolixity, gloom, and constraint.<sup>10</sup>

Blackham's concern was the loss of young men from his church when they became too old for Sunday School. His solution to retain and reclaim them was to call the Ebenezer Church to pray, then he went into the streets of West Bromwich to find young male, former Sunday School scholars who did not currently attend any service of worship, and invite them to a 'a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon class' that 'will be short and bright' and 'only last three-quarters of an hour'.<sup>11</sup> Within a few weeks 120 men were attending the class. Within a few months other Black Country churches had established Pleasant Sunday Afternoon (PSA) classes, and ten years later there were more than a dozen classes in West Bromwich and a total of 35,000 men regularly meeting for Sunday afternoon Gospel services within eight miles of West Bromwich.<sup>12</sup>

The first Sisterhood followed in 1893. By 1905 the movement was strong enough to establish a National Council. 'The Birmingham & Midland Union of PSA, ABC,

---

<sup>10</sup> William Ward, *Brotherhood & Democracy* (London: c.1911), p. 127

<sup>11</sup> *P.S.A. Leader*, (June 1898), p. 98 cited by D. Killingray, 'The Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Movement, Revival in the West Midlands, 1875-90?' in *Revival and Resurgence in Church History* (Studies in Church History 44, 2008), p. 262

<sup>12</sup> *P.S.A. Reporter & Record*, no.1 (March 1892), p. 5 cited in Killingray, 'The PSA Movement', p. 262

Brotherhood & Kindred Societies' was founded in 1908, the word 'Sisterhood' being added to the title the following year.<sup>13</sup>

#### **5.4. The Purpose and Methods of the Adult Schools & Brotherhoods/PSAs**

The ultimate aim of both movements was non-denominational evangelism. Most of their support came from the evangelical free churches in the West Midlands, particularly from Quakers, Baptists, Congregationalists and the various Methodist Connexions. Although there were also Anglican Adult Schools and PSAs and limited evidence of Salvation Army bands participating in rallies, there were no local Adult Schools or Brotherhoods/Sisterhoods based in Brethren, Churches of Christ, Apostolic/Pentecostal or Salvationist premises. The Adult Schools began as a largely Quaker initiative to teach basic literacy to enable people to read and study the Bible from a non-denominational perspective, and thus find faith in Christ. They developed into Bible study groups, following a pre-published lesson plan by which other subsidiary subjects were also studied in 'the first half-hour'. Most took place early on Sunday morning, although there were also midweek evening schools. The Brotherhoods/PSAs were informal services with lively hymns and talks, usually held on a Sunday afternoon. Both organisations were protestant and evangelistic, although the Adult School movement generally spoke of 'extension' rather than 'evangelism'. In 1903, the Birmingham Quaker, William Littleboy, described Adult School extension work as follows: 'Go, I beg of you, as soon as these lines meet your eyes, and ask the Captain of your Salvation to find a humble place for you in the ranks of

---

<sup>13</sup> BCA Birm Inst F/2, *Birmingham & Midland Union of PSA, ABC, Brotherhood (Sisterhood) & Kindred Societies, Reports* for 1908-1910.

that great army by which He is going to win the world.’<sup>14</sup> The following year Birmingham’s Adult Schools supported the Torrey-Alexander Mission: ‘Eight thousand of our members gladdened the hearts of Messrs. Torrey and Alexander on Feb. 7th, and enjoyed a magnificent address and service.’<sup>15</sup> The evangelistic nature of the Adult Schools is demonstrated in J.H. Jowett’s tribute to Edward Smith, the Midland Adult School Union (MASU) President, 1900-16: ‘I was privileged to have letters from him regularly, and they were packed with records of the latest conquests of redeeming grace...They were all about Jesus, and the men whom Jesus had saved and transformed. Nothing else mattered. Salvation was his one and only passion.’<sup>16</sup> A similar image is painted in Smith’s description of an open-air Adult School in the Birmingham Bullring where Ike Smith of the Beehive Adult School ‘pictured the folly of gambling, swearing, and of all the wasteful games of devildom; then contrasted it all with the reality of the Saviour’s presence, the joy of the victorious life, and the being upheld with the mighty hand of his Father God’.<sup>17</sup>

Both movements were particularly seeking to reach the ‘unchurched’ or the lapsed. Both sang hymns – they jointly issued a *Fellowship Hymn Book* for the purpose in 1909.<sup>18</sup> Whilst many Adult Schools were Quaker-led and held on Quaker premises, they strived to be non-denominational, whereas the Brotherhoods/PSAs, whilst interdenominational, were mostly attached to specific churches, missions or meeting houses. The two movements were initially closely co-operating – in the Midlands

---

<sup>14</sup> BCA, LB48.76 *One and All, Birmingham & District Supplement* (Jan 1903)

<sup>15</sup> BCA, LB48.76 *One and All, Birmingham & District Supplement* (Mar 1904)

<sup>16</sup> J.H. Jowett’s foreword to Edward Smith, *Glowing Facts and Personalities, chiefly associated with the Birmingham Adult School movement and the late Alderman William White, First President of the Midland Adult School Union* (London: 1916), pp. xiii-xiv

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *Glowing Facts and Personalities*, p. 115

<sup>18</sup> A. Hall, *The Adult School Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Nottingham: 1985), p. 15

from 1891 to 1895 the MASU published *One and All* as the ‘Organ of Adult Schools and PSA Classes’ in the Midlands.<sup>19</sup> Even when the movements separated – many churches, chapels and meeting houses hosted both: for example, Moseley Road Friends Institute in Birmingham had both Adult Schools and an ABC – each with membership in the hundreds. John Blackham, founder of the PSA Movement remained an active member of the MASU until his death. Whilst Adult Schools have tended to feature more in histories of education, sharing faith was initially the primary purpose: they were originally adult Sunday Schools and as with the children’s Sunday Schools, and their contemporaries in the various Brigade Movements, their primary purpose was to reach people for Christ. In 1917 the MASU General Purposes Committee appeared to be determined to ensure that study of the Bible remained the central focus of the movement: following discussion of the National Adult School Union lesson scheme proposals, a motion was passed which argued that it was ‘desirable to reaffirm the principles that the Bible Lesson is the Central feature of the Adult School Movement and is opposed to the substitution of any other text book for the Bible. It considers that the lesson should be a study of the scriptures directed to discover and apply the purpose and will of God as revealed therein and particularly through the revelation of Jesus Christ, and to apply this teaching to our daily life.’ They went on to express support for growth in ‘general education’ as long as ‘the Bible Lesson is maintained as the chief feature of the principal weekly meeting of the school’.<sup>20</sup> In 1919 the MASU General Council took up the theme: ‘The meeting reaffirmed the study (as distinct from diffuse religious addresses) of the Bible to be the desirable feature of the Adult School Meeting. Educational and Social topics may

---

<sup>19</sup> BCA L48.76 *One & All, the Organ of Adult Schools & PSA Classes*, 1891-94

<sup>20</sup> BCA, MS272/1/6 MASU General Purposes Committee Minutes, 8/11/17

with advantage be included in the school work but should not be allowed to displace the Bible study as the central interest of the School.<sup>21</sup> It is likely that this was a response to more liberal theological tendencies which were spreading in Quakerism (and therefore in the Adult School movement) at this time, which the more evangelical Birmingham Quakers such as the Cadburys and William White with their other free church colleagues would have been keen to resist.

At their 1913 Annual Conference held in Birmingham, the aims of the Brotherhood Movement were summarised as follows: to lead men and women into the Kingdom of God, to unite men in Brotherhood of mutual help, to win the masses of the people to Jesus Christ, to encourage the study of social science, to enforce the obligations of Christian citizenship and to promote the unity of social service.<sup>22</sup> At the same conference Councillor Pickering, Chairman of the Social Service Committee, entered into the debate of the relative positions of evangelism and social action: ‘Some people seemed to think that “to bring a man to the saving knowledge of Christ” was all that was necessary. They kicked at what they termed “politics” in the Brotherhood Movement. He believed in a full gospel, and if that took him into politics he did not care. He was going ahead. We must take Brotherhood into the Municipal Council Chambers.’<sup>23</sup> These aims and the debate around them reflect the widespread social concerns which stood alongside evangelism in both movements.

---

<sup>21</sup> BCA, MS272/1/6 MASU General Council Minutes, 13/2/1919

<sup>22</sup> BCA, L38.3 *The Brotherhood Journal*, Conference Supplement, issued with XVII, no.10, 10/1913: Report of the 14<sup>th</sup> National Brotherhood Conference held in Birmingham, 20-24/9/1913, p. 17

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

Although numbers declined through the First World War, in 1916 MASU reported that their Spring Conference held at Moseley Road Friends' Institute 'was one of the most largely attended in the history of the Union' with the President of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and future archbishop Rev. William Temple, speaking on 'Education and Christian Civilisation'.<sup>24</sup>

In the Adult Schools, the 'First Half Hour' was initially used for teaching reading, but with universal education this became less necessary and attention turned to other subjects. By 1911 some of the items mentioned as occupying the 'First Half Hour' included 'talks on Home Nursing, Ambulance Work, Physiology, Prison Reform, The History of Birmingham, Health Lectures, Nature Study and Drilling'.<sup>25</sup> By 1916 the war had impacted their programmes as it was reported 'the war has also created a demand for subjects which have hitherto not been included on the Lecture list' such as the History of European Nations, International Relations, and Social Questions arising out of the war.<sup>26</sup>

Both movements relied on lay leadership, and in their desire to cater for the whole person both developed a plethora of auxiliaries, including Sick Clubs/Benevolent Funds, Libraries, Book Clubs, Institute/Social Clubs, Gymnasiums, football and cricket teams, choirs, brass bands, mutual improvement societies and debating societies.

---

<sup>24</sup> BCA, MS272/I/6 MASU 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, as presented to the Council, 16/3/1916

<sup>25</sup> BCA, MS272/I/22 Midland Adult School Union Women's Schools Committee Minute Book: report (c. 11/1911) of Conference at Severn Street School for women delegates to the MASU Council.

<sup>26</sup> BCA, MS272/I/6 Education Committee contribution to the MASU 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, 16/3/1916

As the movements grew, some Adult Schools and Brotherhoods moved into their own buildings. Particularly significant were the series of Friends' Institutes on key routes into the south of Birmingham, financed by the Cadbury family, primarily for Adult School work. The following explanation was offered for the Stirchley Institute: 'There was no place of recreation for these people, save the public house, and the needs of Stirchley weighed much upon the minds of the two [Cadbury] brothers. They therefore decided to build a roomy Institute on the main street of the village, as a social and educational centre.'<sup>27</sup> It opened in 1892, and was on a large scale: 'The front towards Hazelwell Street is a meeting house for the Society of Friends; the building facing Bournville Lane connects with the above and is an Institute and coffee-house...The Friends Meeting House will seat about 500 persons, and the room below will accommodate about 200 or 300 children. The coffee-house is bright and cheerful, and will no doubt be attractive to tourists from Birmingham by cycle, road or rail, and especially the former, and the rooms in connection with it are for evening classes, social meetings, etc for the inhabitants of the district. The total cost has been, we believe, three or four thousand pounds.'<sup>28</sup> The Cadburys were strongly committed to the Temperance Movement, so part of the aim was to provide alcohol-free refreshment houses as alternatives to pubs on the key routes into the city. Most of the Institutes also went on to house Brotherhoods/PSAs, evening non-denominational services, and children's and youth auxiliaries such as the Band of Hope, and the Boys' and Girls' Life Brigades. There was overlap with other movements too, such as the Stirchley Friends' Institute which provided a home for a Labour Church (visiting

---

<sup>27</sup> R Scott, *Edward Cadbury* (1955) cited in DM Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, vol. II (London, 1999), pp. 630-31

<sup>28</sup> *Birmingham Post*, quoting *The Friend* (1892), p. 412, cited in Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses*, vol. II, p. 631



speakers included national figures such as Fenner Brockway and Keir Hardie) and provided office accommodation for the local branch of the Workers' Union.<sup>29</sup>

Whilst both movements claimed to be non-political (by which they meant they had no party-political allegiance), they regularly debated political and social issues. The long-standing relationship between political Liberalism and Nonconformity brought active Liberals into the movement. In the early twentieth century Labour and Trade Union leaders also became actively involved at a national level in the PSA/Brotherhood Movement. Labour MPs Arthur Henderson and Will Crooks, and the Liberal MP Theodore C. Taylor were all present at the founding of the National Association of Brotherhoods, PSAs etc., in London in 1906.<sup>30</sup> Keir Hardie MP was a main speaker for a Brotherhood Crusade in Lille in 1910.<sup>31</sup> Arthur Henderson MP was elected National President in 1914. Meanwhile amongst the Adult Schools, the National Adult School Union's *One and All* journal reported seven out of the nine 'adult school men' who stood for Parliament in 1910 were successful.<sup>32</sup>

In 1915 Arnold Rowntree revealed a particularly significant impact of the Adult School movement in Birmingham: 'Going over [to] Bournville the other day, Mr George Cadbury told him that Bournville would never have existed but for the fact that for some 30 or 40 years he had been a teacher in the Adult School movement, and there, in intercourse with working men as friends, came to understand it was

---

<sup>29</sup> BCA, Lp19.9 Stirchley Labour Church, syllabus of lectures for the season October 1st, 1913 to March 31st, 1914, and BCA L76.22 *Town Crier*, no.2 (10/10/1919).

<sup>30</sup> Tuffley, *Grain from Galilee*, pp. 29-31

<sup>31</sup> *PSA Brotherhood Journal* (June 1910) reported in *One and All*, vol. XX (July 1910), p. 188 & Tuffley, *Grain from Galilee*, p. 60

<sup>32</sup> *One and All*, *National edition*, vol. XX (March 1910), p. 61

impossible to raise a satisfactory race of people living in slums and the dark places of the world.’<sup>33</sup>

Nationally, Adult School membership peaked at 113,789 in 1910, but had dropped to 50,000 by the 1920s. It was still, however, a major provider of basic education in Britain: by comparison, the WEA membership in 1914 was only 11,430. Despite a continued rise in popularity of the WEA, it was not to eclipse the Adult Schools numerically until the 1940s.<sup>34</sup> The Brotherhood/PSA Movement membership far outgrew the Adult Schools. Nationally the membership peaked in 1913 at over 300,000 members. By 1919 it was down to 100,000, but unlike the Adult Schools, rose again after the war, reaching 125,000 in 1924.<sup>35</sup> The Birmingham and Midlands Brotherhood Federation was second only to London in size, having 144 affiliated societies with 25,059 members in 1913-14.<sup>36</sup>

### **5.5. Adult Schools, Brotherhoods/PSAs and Internationalism**

Promoting internationalism was on the agenda of both organisations. In the early part of the twentieth century, the West Midlands Adult Schools were actively involved in international exchanges in Europe. In 1909, a group of 22 members of the Birmingham schools paid a visit to Holland.<sup>37</sup> One hundred Adult School

---

<sup>33</sup> Arnold Rowntree MP speaking at the Co-op Hall, Walsall, 4/7/1915 reported in *One and All, Midland Supplement* (August 1915)

<sup>34</sup> Kelly, *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain*, pp. 256-7 & 357

<sup>35</sup> Tom Sykes, ‘The Brotherhood Movement’ in *Modern Evangelistic Movements* (Handbooks of Modern Evangelism, London/Glasgow/New York, 1924), p. 72

<sup>36</sup> British Library, PP2501aq, *The Brotherhood Year Book* (1913-14), p. 90

<sup>37</sup> G. Currie Martin, *The Adult School Movement* (London: 1924), p. 323

representatives from across the country visited Düsseldorf and Frankfurt in 1910.<sup>38</sup> According to the MASU 1911 Annual Report: ‘The visit of the German Party in July, when 109 Germans were our guests from Saturday night until Tuesday morning...the visit was but the second stage in a crusade to carry our principles of Brotherhood beyond our island, and to try to realise a world-wide Fellowship. The policy of mutual understanding which shall induce nations to abandon the struggle for Supremacy in Armaments with its corollary of burdensome taxation is worth great efforts and sacrifice.’<sup>39</sup> One of the German visitors commented: ‘These hospitalities may cost something, but they are a thousand times cheaper than war.’<sup>40</sup> Their 1912 report refers to another German visit: ‘Large parties arrived in London and were divided into small groups: Birmingham received a visit from 9 of the visitors from Düsseldorf 14-16 August, and 10 visitors, 16-20 August’.<sup>41</sup> In the same year Adult School groups visited Germany and Denmark – the latter trip led by Tom Bryan, warden of Fircroft, the Adult School college in Selly Oak.<sup>42</sup> They continued to promote international understanding right up to the outbreak of the conflict: in May 1914 a third group visited Hamburg and Berlin, the latter group addressing a 6,000-strong public meeting, with some of the group attending a reception in the Reichstag.<sup>43</sup> The Brotherhood Movement was also developing strong European links. Their first continental crusade was to Paris in 1908. This was followed in 1909 by a crusade to Belgium where ‘M. Vandeveld, leader of the Labour party in the Belgian Parliament... and other leaders of the Belgian democracy, were with us on the

---

<sup>38</sup> Currie Martin, *The Adult School Movement*, pp. 323-25

<sup>39</sup> BCA, MS272/V/6 *MASU 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*, as presented to the Annual Meeting, 21/3/1912

<sup>40</sup> Currie Martin, *The Adult School Movement*, p. 325

<sup>41</sup> BCA, MS272/V/6 *MASU 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*, as presented to the Annual Meeting, 23/1/1913

<sup>42</sup> Currie Martin, *The Adult School Movement*, pp. 327-28

<sup>43</sup> Currie Martin, *The Adult School Movement*, pp. 328-29

platform'. The 1910 crusade to Lille included Keir Hardie MP, who 'told the French workers how it was reading the gospels that brought him into the field as the champion of labour, and how they needed the moral force and the noble idealism which came from devotion to the Worker of Nazareth'. It was also claimed that this was the first occasion that the 'progressive Christians of France' had shared a platform with 'the leaders of the French democracy' (including three Labour deputies). There was a further crusade to France in 1911.<sup>44</sup> 1913 had seen a more extensive tour of France and Belgium.<sup>45</sup> Birmingham's William Ward played an active role in all of the crusades.<sup>46</sup> These contacts had resulted in the establishment of a national Brotherhood organisation in France, associated with the Union de Chrétiennes Sociaux, and Brotherhoods in Belgium, Germany and Switzerland.<sup>47</sup>

## **5.6. The Brotherhood Movement and War and Peace**

At their 1911 National Conference, Rev. R. Moffat Gautrey (Nottingham) in his presidential address described the movement as 'a citizen army' and warned: 'We need to guard against the sophistry that patriotism consists solely in the taking up of arms.' He went on to condemn what he described as 'the delirium of war', stating: 'The free and enlightened democracies of the world are beginning to realise that war is a relic of barbarism, and should have no place in the civilisation of the twentieth

---

<sup>44</sup> Harry Jeffs, 'International Brotherhood, Story of the World Campaign', in BCA L10.06 246444 Fred A. Rees, ed., *Souvenir Handbook, National Brotherhood Conference, Birmingham, September 1913* National Brotherhood Council (Brotherhoods, P.S.A.s, Sisterhoods and kindred societies) 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Birmingham, September 20<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>, 1913, pp. 92-96

<sup>45</sup> British Library PP 2501aq, *The Brotherhood Year Book 1913-1914* (London), p. 147

<sup>46</sup> Jeffs, 'International Brotherhood', pp. 92-96

<sup>47</sup> William Ward, 'The Story of the Brotherhood Movement', in Rees., ed., *Souvenir Handbook*, p. 81 & R. Moffat Gautrey, 'The Brotherhood Movement as a worldwide missionary force', in BCA L38.3 254404 *The Brotherhood Journal*, Conference Supplement, issued with XVII, no.10, 10/1913: Report of the 14<sup>th</sup> National Brotherhood Conference held in Birmingham, 20-24/9/1913, pp. 13-15

century... Militarism forms no part of our programme of advance. Our purpose is to extinguish, not to kindle, the baleful fires of racial hate.<sup>48</sup>

When the Brotherhood Movement's Annual Meeting was held in Birmingham in 1913, contrasts were made between the city's reputation for making guns and the movement's commitment to international peace. In his welcome to the delegates, the mayor of Birmingham observed: 'Birmingham men are famous the world over for the manufacture of implements of war. But the way they received the Brotherhood and carried out the gigantic arrangements for celebrating our national event show that the principles underlying the forces that are making for the world's peace are to them living realities and something worth working for.'<sup>49</sup> In his response their president-elect Arthur Henderson MP commented: 'European countries, it was true, were arming against each other, but they were also drawing nearer to each other, and the Brotherhood movement would make peace through the world possible.'<sup>50</sup> In his presidential address to the Conference, the leading Congregationalist Rev. C. Silvester Horne MP moved the emphasis on to campaigning against arms expenditure: 'If the society to which we belong is inflamed by prejudice against some sister society to the extent that a large and larger proportion of our brother's earning should be taken from him and spent upon armaments of strife to defend him against a people with whom he has no quarrel, that is our religious business, to co-operate with him in sweeping away these prejudices and reducing this wasteful expenditure.'<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> British Library PP 2501aq, *The Brotherhood Year Book 1911-1912* (London), pp. 27 & 34-35

<sup>49</sup> Lieut-Col E. Martineau (Mayor of Birmingham) in Rees, ed., *Souvenir Handbook*, p. 2

<sup>50</sup> Arthur Henderson MP in Rees, ed., *Souvenir Handbook*, p. 6

<sup>51</sup> BCA L38.3 254378 *The Brotherhood Movement, a New Protestantism*. Presidential Address delivered to the National Brotherhood Conference, Birmingham, 22/9/1913 by the Rev C. Silvester Horne, MA, MP, National President, 1913-14 (London), p. 10

The following year Arthur Henderson took up the theme of peace in his presidential address: ‘The theory that an armed peace is the hope of the world in international relationships has broken down. No longer can it be claimed that inflated armaments make a nation secure against the menacing intentions of unscrupulous militarists who rest their case on the omnipotence of brute force.’ He added: ‘We must be rebels, waging fearless war against wrong, whether it is moral, social or economic, because it conflicts with, and assists in destroying, the Divine value of life.’<sup>52</sup>

The outbreak of the war thwarted a planned national Brotherhood ‘To every man in England’ evangelistic campaign. On hearing war had been declared, their campaigns committee concluded: ‘Just as we were on the point of perfecting our organisation and our men were at a white heat of enthusiasm for carrying the Brotherhood Message to every man in England, we have found ourselves suddenly plunged into the horrors and barbarities of a fratricidal war.’<sup>53</sup> The Brotherhood movement were actively involved in relief work during the conflict. This included relief supplies sent in response to appeals from Lille, money raised and sent to aid Serbian children, 100 Serbian children sent to Britain and a feeding programme established in Serbia. They estimated that throughout the war the movement sent £75,000 in goods and cash to continental relief.<sup>54</sup>

At the end of the war, the founding of the League of Nations was greeted with

---

<sup>52</sup> J.W. Tuffley, *Grain from Galilee: The Romance of the Brotherhood Movement* (London: 1935), pp. 77-79

<sup>53</sup> Tuffley, *Grain from Galilee*, pp. 81 & 85

<sup>54</sup> Tuffley, *Grain from Galilee*, pp. 88-92

enthusiasm. In February 1919, the Brotherhood movement organised a gigantic rally in support of the League at the Albert Hall which Asquith attended. In his report to their 1919 annual conference in Birmingham, their national organiser Tom Sykes commented: ‘In the international realm, the ideal of the League of Nations is the Brotherhood spirit. There will be peace on earth when there is goodwill among men. Political, social, cultural, and racial distinctions should be controlled by the spirit of fraternity. War is morally wrong and ought to be impossible. We must make it impossible by destroying everything which causes it.’<sup>55</sup> Later in the year the 1<sup>st</sup> World Brotherhood Congress in London founded a World Brotherhood Federation. The veteran peace campaigner and Baptist minister, John Clifford, was elected president. In his presidential address he explained that one aim of the movement was: ‘To get rid of the remaining tyrannies of aristocratic feudalism, to recover lost liberties and to introduce freedom where it does not exist; to reconstruct the governments of the world; to make democracy a reality in spirit and in form.’<sup>56</sup>

### **5.7. The Adult School Movement and War and Peace**

The Adult School movement had maintained a long commitment to the peace issue. In August 1894, a *One and All* editorial quoted approvingly from Leo Tolstoy on war: ‘A Christian nation which engages in war ought, in order to be logical, not only to take down the cross from its church-steeple, turn the churches to some other use, give the clergy other duties, having first prohibited the preaching of the Gospel, but also ought to abandon all the requirements of morality which flow from the Christian law.’ The editorial went on to argue: ‘A nation of true patriots could never lightly

---

<sup>55</sup> Cited in Tuffley, *Grain from Galilee*, pp. 107-108

<sup>56</sup> Cited in Tuffley, *Grain from Galilee*, pp. 97-99

enter into war.’<sup>57</sup>

In December 1906 the Moseley Road Friends’ Institute hosted a congregational meeting of over 200 people which heard Miss Ellen Robinson (of the Peace Society, Liverpool) speak on ‘European Federation, a Christian ideal’. She argued: ‘We shall never get right until we understand that it is quite as wrong for nations to lie and kill, and bully and boast, as it is for the individual...Whatever we think about war, we shall all acknowledge that it is absolutely contrary to the action and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we take the Holy Spirit’s teaching and the example of Christ we find that it is all going in an absolutely opposite direction...How can this murder and mangling, which are utterly abhorrent to us as individuals, be right in the sight of God or consistent with any Christian ideal whatever. It is because we recognise that these things are immoral, in so great a contradistinction to the teachings of Christ that we declare that war is absolutely unlawful, and not to be engaged in by any nation calling itself a Christian nation.’<sup>58</sup> In December 1907 *One and All* contained a full-page advert from the Birmingham Peace Committee promoting Peace Sunday, which stated: ‘Let us be on our guard against the capture of our Schools in the present day attempt to refurbish the barbarism of war...Let us never allow the money which is raised to give us national education, to be used to teach children that it is their duty to shoot other people.’<sup>59</sup>

Two years later, the visit of a party of Germans to the Midlands caused reflection on

---

<sup>57</sup> BCA L48.76 119419, *One & All, the Organ of the Adult School Movement*, vol 4 (1894), pp. 120-1

<sup>58</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Birmingham & District Supplement* (Dec 1905): *Moseley Road Supplement*

<sup>59</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Birmingham & District Supplement* (12/1907), p. 208



the contrast between their unity in Christ and the attitudes of their governments:

‘They broke bread with us; surely we have eaten of the sacrament of friendship at the table of the Lord. And now?...Storm clouds lower, the political horizon o’ercast. Englishmen and Germans have found another bone of contention and the self-same talk of force is in the air. What are we going to do? – we who have looked into German eyes and found friendship – we who have at least recognised that Germans are men and fathers even as we are, and that if we, then they, are made in the same image of God...If we are sane we shall recognise that force is not only not a remedy, it is an illogical arbitrator that fails to settle the point in dispute and creates more problems than it tackles. If we are men of honour we shall remember...the pledges on our platforms – the pledges that we will never be parties to the fostering of war.’<sup>60</sup>

Even as late as 1914, peace was still on the agenda of Birmingham Adult Schools: Union Row (Congregational, Handsworth) reported an address from their pastor Granville Sharpe, on ‘The Present Day Unrest’, referring to ‘Military unrest through rivalry of nations to acquire armaments and territory by fair means or foul’.<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, the Hay Mills School had passed the following: ‘This meeting of the Hay Mills Men’s Adult School views with deep concern the enormously increasing burden of armaments under which this country, in common with other civilised countries, is now suffering, and respectfully urges His Majesty’s Government to take such action as will lead to the serious consideration of this question at the next Hague Conference, when it is suggested that Great Britain should table a definite plan for the arrest of the

---

<sup>60</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (8/1911)

<sup>61</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (1/1914)

appalling expenditure involved.<sup>62</sup> A meeting of the Class 15 Federation quarterly meeting (of mostly Quaker-led Birmingham-based schools) had also discussed arms expenditure: 'Various speakers suggested that armaments did not tend to promote a spirit of international Brotherhood, and that it should be part of the work of Adult Schools to carry on an agitation in favour of a reduction in this expenditure internationally...One voice, and only one, was raised against the Resolution, and this on the grounds that we should be better employed in spreading tidings of the Prince of Peace (he who made peace by the shedding of his own blood), than of the principles of peace.'<sup>63</sup> February 1914 saw a protest meeting at Farm Street School on 'the Question of armaments': speakers were Labour Councillors Kneeshaw (Primitive Methodist) and Harrison Barrow (Quaker) and Rev. S.W. Hughes (Baptist). It was reported that: 'Resolutions (1) Protesting against the increase in the Navy estimates, (2) calling on the government to convene a conference of the powers on armaments, and (3) extending fraternal greetings to Germany, were passed.'<sup>64</sup> The Bordesley Green School also had a speaker on 'armaments' who 'showed their futility and wastefulness'. At that meeting 'a resolution was passed by the meeting, to be sent to those in authority, asking them to do all in their power to stop this rapid increase in war materials'.<sup>65</sup> The Little Bromwich School also held a meeting in their school, featuring Councillors Barrow and Kneeshaw, to protest against the increase in the armaments estimates. There was unanimous agreement among the 120 present that estimates were too high.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (2/1914)

<sup>63</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (2/1914)

<sup>64</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (3/1914)

<sup>65</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (4/1914)

<sup>66</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (6/1914)

With the outbreak of war, an editorial in the *Midlands Supplement to One and All* addressed the issues of ‘Adult Schools and the War’: ‘I hear...the ineffective prayers to the God of love, going up from countless congregations for the success of an invincible hatred expressing itself in the crime of Cain, organised and multiplied a thousandfold...It is for us as workers for international concord and harmony to rebuild by slow and painful processes the great institutions that are crumbling before our eyes, the institutions that have sought to make the people one people...The true Christian knows no nationality.’ In the same edition an article on ‘Hymns for the war’ by H.A.L. (presumably the editor, H. Lacon) enquired: ‘How can I pray for victory?...Is God the God only of England, France and Russia?’<sup>67</sup> Responses of individual schools, however, were more diverse. Christ Church, Summerfield School (Anglican) expressed sorrow: ‘Although our members will dauntlessly face their obligation to the State it will be with aching hearts they act in contradiction to the fundamental principles of Adult School teaching and the great command of Christ – “Love one another”.’ On the other hand, the Floodgate Street (Medical Mission) Adult School reported between 20 and 30 called up for service and observed: ‘Whilst we regret the loss to the School of these scholars, we are proud to know we have so many who are serving two Kings.’ Meanwhile Acock’s Green School (Temperance Institute) addressed the situation at home: ‘The message from the Adult School Union appealing for the preservation of a peaceable spirit, courteous treatment of foreigners amongst us, and readiness for organised effort for peace, found a ready echo in all our hearts.’ Greet Men’s ABC (Quaker) optimistically looked towards the end of the conflict: ‘If ever there was a need for a world-wide Brotherhood it is now...when this war is over, it requires every worker in the movement to enlist for active service in

---

<sup>67</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (9/1914)

teaching the doctrine of peace and brotherhood, both nationally and internationally, and so working, till war with any nation, shall be an utter impossibility.’

A general observation in the *One and All* journal under the title ‘For King and Country’ sought to reconcile the different positions: ‘Almost every school report we have received refers to members who have responded to the call for military service. We are sure that all our readers, whatever their views on the ethics of war, will earnestly and sincerely offer these comrades of ours God-speed, and pray that they may discharge their duties in the true spirit that should animate those who fight not against their brothers but against the evil spirit which has necessitated this fight.’<sup>68</sup> At the same time the Jenkins Street School (Primitive Methodist) reflected on the recent international exchanges: ‘One cannot help thinking how a few months ago we were waiting one Sunday morning to welcome some German brothers into our midst and now the same men have gone away to fight each other. Let us ask God to put an end to this war and may all the nations of the earth be drawn closer together.’<sup>69</sup> *One and All* also reproduced recent correspondence from the *British Weekly* in which H. Jeffs (secretary of the Brotherhood International Committee) had pointed out there had been no Brotherhood tours of Germany, and claimed that he knew of no Brotherhood ‘pro-Germans’; in reply, Edward Smith of the NASU had pointed out that ‘Though there exists no organic union of the Adult Schools and Brotherhood movements, the objects of the two associations are claimed to be identical, though differing in methods and hours of meeting.’ He went on to draw attention to NASU’s ‘most excellent work during the last five years by the promotion of these annual Anglo-

---

<sup>68</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (10/1914)

<sup>69</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (10/1914)

German visits [that had] sown the seeds of love and amity in both nations'.<sup>70</sup>

In the West Midlands by March 1915 it was reported there were 1,362 Adult School men in the forces, an average of seven per school. Nevertheless, at their Summer 1915 Town Hall meetings 'notwithstanding [the] absence of between 900 and 1000 of our members, either at the front or preparing to take part in the war, the hall was filled'.<sup>71</sup>

The pros and cons of conscription were widely debated in the schools, with reports of speakers on conscription, conscientious objection and the UDC who were calling for a negotiated settlement. The issue of how to support the men when they returned from war was also discussed. A broader concern was raised at the Annual Meeting of the (mostly Quaker) Severn Street and Priory Schools in 1916 when a Mrs Parker spoke on when the boys come home: 'The speaker was recently at the opening of a Childs' Welfare Class, where a Vicar said: "We must look after children because some day when they are grown up we may want them to fight for us." She protested afterwards that that was not her object. She wanted healthy children for a better purpose than to form fodder for cannon.'<sup>72</sup>

Some Adult School leaders were happy to make public their opposition to the conflict: Edwin Gilbert, the Birmingham-based Organising Secretary of the National Adult School Union, joined the actively anti-war Birmingham city branch of the Independent Labour Party in 1916.<sup>73</sup> The Secretary of a Baptist Adult School in Handsworth, Ernest Woodward, 'was arrested as a deserter, fined 40s, and handed

---

<sup>70</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (12/1914)

<sup>71</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (4/1915)

<sup>72</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (3/1916)

<sup>73</sup> Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and The Black Country*, p. 248

over to the military authorities’, following rejection of his Conscientious Objector application.<sup>74</sup>

Meanwhile some blamed the war on a general godlessness. At the 1917 MASU Spring Conference: ‘One delegate pointed out that we have no right to pray for victories over our enemies, quoting in support Matthew xxiii. 23-28. Had men been living the life of Christ, the countries of Europe would have been saved the awful experience through which they were now passing.’<sup>75</sup>

### **5.8. Boys’ Uniformed Organisations and the Free Churches**

The late nineteenth century also saw the rise of various uniformed Boys’ organisations, primarily formed for the purpose of evangelism, as well as character development. This section will seek to identify whether their primary purpose remained evangelism or was it also appropriate to accuse them of militarism: were they marching for King Jesus or King George? Did a church’s choice of youth organisation give an indication to its attitudes towards war and militarism? To seek to address these questions this section focuses on the origins and development of the early Boys’ Brigade, Boys’ Life Brigade, Boy Scouts and the British Scouts/National Peace Scouts in Birmingham, comparing and contrasting with the national situation where appropriate. In view of the particular focus on the issue of militarism, the equivalent girls’ organisations, the Girls’ Life Brigade, Girl Guides and Camp Fire Girls, although active in Birmingham at that time, have not been include in the

---

<sup>74</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (6/1916)

<sup>75</sup> BCA LB48.76 436706 *One & All, Midland Supplement* (5/1917)

research.

### **5.8.1. The Boys' Brigade and the Boys' Life Brigade**

From its foundation by the Scottish Presbyterian William Smith in Glasgow in 1883, the Boys' Brigade (BB) had been subjected to accusations of militarism. Smith had been in the 1<sup>st</sup> Lanark Rifle Volunteers, and sought to apply some of what he had learned there as a means of evangelising the older more disinterested boys in his Sunday School.<sup>76</sup> The Peace Society had been critical of them, particularly their use of dummy rifles and military drill.<sup>77</sup> The Boys' Life Brigade (BLB) was founded by the Congregationalist minister, John Brown Paton, in partnership with the National Sunday School Union in 1899. The BLB and the Girls' Life Brigade (founded in 1902) shared the motto 'Saving Life' and were both affiliated to the Peace Society, whose *Peace Year Book* explained the aims of the Boys' Life Brigade as follows: 'To lead our boys to the service of Christ' and to 'promote habits of self-respect, obedience, courtesy etc....these aims it is sought to realise chiefly by means of drills of a life-saving character, the use of arms being entirely eliminated'.<sup>78</sup> The prominent Baptist minister, F.B. Meyer, welcomed the Life Brigades, observing in 1904: 'I am so glad that you are banded together for Life and not for death, to heal and help rather than to destroy.'<sup>79</sup>

### **5.8.2. Boy Scouts, British Scouts and National Peace Scouts**

---

<sup>76</sup> J. Springhall, B. Fraser & M. Hoare, *Sure and Steadfast: A History of the Boys' Brigade 1883 to 1983*, (London: 1983), pp. 28-31

<sup>77</sup> Springhall, et al., *Sure and Steadfast*, p. 98

<sup>78</sup> *The Peace Year Book, 1910* (Westminster, 1910), p. 40

<sup>79</sup> *The Rays Outspringing: The Story of the Girls' Life Brigade 1902-1952* (London: 1951) p. 44

The Boy Scout movement developed following the publication of Robert Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* in 1908. In the book, Baden-Powell frequently used the term 'peace scouts', but argued in his opening camp fire yarn: 'Every boy ought to learn how to shoot and to obey orders, else he is no more good when war breaks out than an old woman.'<sup>80</sup> Further on in the publication he argued: 'Every boy should prepare himself, by learning how to shoot and to drill, to take his share in defence of the Empire, if it should ever be attacked.' He continued: 'We ought really not to think too much of any boy...unless he can shoot, and can drill and scout' and 'Make yourself good scouts and good rifle shots in order to protect the women and children of your country if it should ever become necessary'. He advocated Scouts learning how to shoot a rifle, practising with fixed targets then 'a moving one like a man'.<sup>81</sup> There was dissension from the beginning: Sir Francis Vane, the Scouts' London Commissioner, was sacked by Baden-Powell 'over arguments about the bureaucracy and militarism of Baden-Powell's Headquarters staff'. Vane then led the breakaway British Boy Scouts (BBS) from 1909 and founded the National Peace Scouts (a coming together of the BLB and BBS) from 1910, as less militaristic, more democratic alternatives. In 1910 they proclaimed: 'No companies or troops within the organisation are armed, or permitted to take part in army manoeuvres, or in other ways be identified in military operations.'<sup>82</sup>

## **5.9. Boys' Uniformed Organisations and Relations with the Military**

---

<sup>80</sup> R. Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys* (London, 1908), pp. 9-10

<sup>81</sup> Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, pp. 314, 321, 322 & 324.

<sup>82</sup> *The Peace Year Book, 1910* (Westminster: 1910), p. 41; *Sunday School Chronicle and Christian Outlook* 17/3/1910 quoted in P. Wilkinson, 'English Youth Movements 1908-1930', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 4:2 (1969), p. 16



Difficulties arose when Haldane (the Secretary of State for War), attempted to incorporate the Brigades and Scouts into a national cadet system as feeders for his new Territorial Force. This came to a head in 1910 when the Army Council Cadet Regulations required all boys' organisations to apply to their local County Territorial Force Association for recognition, or lose all military and financial assistance previously provided by the War Office, including permission to camp on government-owned ground and provision of camp equipment at special rates.<sup>83</sup> For the anti-militarist Boys' Life Brigade and Peace Scouts, there was no question of affiliation. The Boys' Brigade were concerned about the loss of control of their movement and particularly of its Christian basis. They balloted their officers and churches: on an overwhelming 'No' vote they rejected the proposal.<sup>84</sup> Baden-Powell unilaterally rejected the cadet proposals of his mentor and employer, Haldane, over fears that it could 'undermine the Scouts' independence'.<sup>85</sup> Other faith-based brigade organisations such as the (Anglican) Church Lads' Brigade, the Jewish Lads' Brigade and the Catholic Boys' Brigade joined the scheme.<sup>86</sup> In 1917, the Boys' Brigade permitted their companies to affiliate. By January 1919 only about 311 companies nationally (31%) had done so, but unlike other boys' organisations who joined, only 63 BB companies adopted khaki uniform.

---

<sup>83</sup> Springhall et al., *Sure and Stedfast*, pp. 99-100

<sup>84</sup> Springhall, et al, *Sure and Stedfast*. p. 100

<sup>85</sup> Baden-Powell's Diary, 26/7/1910, cited in T. Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, (London: 1989), p. 448

<sup>86</sup> Robin Bolton, *Boys of the Brigade, Vol.1* (Market Drayton: 1991), pp. 3, 12, 20 & 24

## 5.10. Origins of Uniformed Boys' Organisations in Birmingham

1889 saw the foundation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Birmingham Boys' Brigade Company at a Presbyterian chapel, and also an independent Aston Lads' Brigade<sup>87</sup> which later joined with the BB. By 1902 there were eight BB companies in Birmingham with a combined membership of 541.<sup>88</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> Birmingham Boys' Life Brigade Company opened at the Moseley Road Friends' Institute in 1901. By 1907 there were seven BLB companies in Birmingham. Scouting commenced in Birmingham after Baden-Powell had addressed a meeting at the Birmingham YMCA in January 1908. It was attended by representatives of the BB and Church Lads' Brigade and led to the founding of the Birmingham and District Boy Scouts Association.<sup>89</sup> They soon demonstrated their internationalism, a 1909 report claiming: 'We did no harm to the cause of International Peace by giving a real good day to about 20 of our brother Scouts from Germany.'<sup>90</sup> They hosted an Imperial Jamboree for 18,000 boys in 1913, with many attending from overseas including

---

<sup>87</sup> Not to be confused with the Anglican 'Church Lads' Brigade' (CLB)

<sup>88</sup> Arkinsall & Bolton, *Forward!*, pp. 1 & 15-16

<sup>89</sup> P.W. Horne, 'Twenty-one years of Scouting in Birmingham' in *Boy Scouts Coming of Age Souvenir 1908-1929* (Birmingham, [1929]), pp. 44-45

<sup>90</sup> *Birmingham & District Association of Boy Scouts, Official Year Book & Diary 1910*, (Birmingham: [1909]), p. 10 – these were presumably Wandervögel

Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and Holland.<sup>91</sup> Fears about militarism could have been aroused by the inclusion of a marksmen's shooting competition.<sup>92</sup>

Prior to 1914, the Birmingham branch of the pro-conscription National Service League (NSL) had successfully infiltrated two of Birmingham's uniformed Boys' organisations: they had supporters on the governing bodies of Birmingham's Boy Scouts and Church Lads' Brigade. The President of Birmingham Scouts was a member of the NSL Executive, the vice-presidents belonged to the NSL council and the honorary secretary also belonged to the NSL.<sup>93</sup>

Vane's 'British Scouts' were also present in Birmingham. The Quaker Cadburys were recruited to Scouting by Vane, but then followed him into the British Scouts.<sup>94</sup>

George Cadbury served on the council of the National Peace Scouts.<sup>95</sup> Vane's bankruptcy in 1912 resulted in their collapse, so in 1913, Barrow Cadbury, Chairman of their Birmingham troops, agreed an amalgamation with the Boys' Life Brigade, as 'Boys' Life Brigade Scouts', a move which was unique to Birmingham.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> BCA, Per G12 LF08.2 *Daily Scout: A record of events at the Imperial Scout Exhibition 4-8/7/1913; Boy Scouts & What they do: As illustrated at the Imperial Scout Exhibition and Rally held in Birmingham, July 1913*: (London, [1913]), pp. 36, 50-1; & Percy W. Horne, *50 Years of Scouting in Birmingham & District 1907-1957* (Birmingham: c1957), p. 12

<sup>92</sup> BCA, D/5 246445 *The Boy Scouts Association: The Imperial Scout Exhibition and Rally, Birmingham, July 1913, Announcement B* (Birmingham: 1913), pp. 17-19

<sup>93</sup> M.D. Blanch, *Nation, Empire and the Birmingham Working Class*, (University of Birmingham, PhD Thesis, 1975), pp. 287, 302

<sup>94</sup> M. Foster, *Militarism and the Scout Movement* (1997), online: [<http://www.netpages.free-online.co.uk/sha/military.htm>]

<sup>95</sup> *The Peace Year Book, 1910* (Westminster: 1910), p. 41

<sup>96</sup> *The British Boy Scouts* (updated 28/9/1999), <http://www.netpages.free-online.co.uk/bbs/bbs.htm>

### 5.11 Growth and Denominational Affiliation of Birmingham Boys' Uniformed Organisations

The detailed summary of provision in *A Handbook for Workers amongst Boys*,<sup>97</sup> published in Birmingham in 1913, allows some comparison of the relative strength and denominational affiliation of boys' organisations in the city. It lists 72 Scout troops (fourteen with free church affiliation), eighteen Boys' Brigade companies (fourteen free church), eighteen Church Lads' Brigade companies, ten Boys' Life Brigade companies (all free church), one Jewish Lads' Brigade company and one Incorporated Church Scout Patrol.<sup>98</sup> The majority of the troops/companies associated with free churches were Wesleyan Methodist fourteen (nine BB, five Scouts), Baptist seven (three Scouts, two BB, two BLB) or Congregationalist seven (three BB, three BLB, one Scouts). It also highlighted the different emphases of the boys' organisations, with the Church Lads' Brigade description stating: 'The lads are taught military drill, and wherever possible they practise shooting with miniature rifles...A large proportion of the battalions are recognised as Cadet battalions under the Territorial County Associations.' In contrast, the Scouts claimed to be 'sowing the seed of good citizenship among boys of all classes, by means of peace scouting', whilst the Boys' Life Brigade entry stressed 'the organisation is non-military'.<sup>99</sup>

By 1914 there were 22 Boys' Brigade companies in the city, eight attached to Anglican churches, the remainder to free churches,<sup>100</sup> and ten Boys' Life Brigade

---

<sup>97</sup> BCA L41.23 *A Handbook for Workers among Boys in Birmingham* (Birmingham Council of Workers amongst Boys, [1913])

<sup>98</sup> These were Boy Scouts associated with the Church Lads' Brigade.

<sup>99</sup> *A Handbook for Workers among Boys in Birmingham*, pp. 9-10

<sup>100</sup> Arkinsall & Bolton, *Forward!*, pp. 1 & 15-16

Companies in the city, all associated with free churches.<sup>101</sup>

The confessional basis of the Boys' Brigade required affiliation to a Protestant Trinitarian church. In Birmingham, although they commenced at a Presbyterian chapel, by 1914 they were mostly attached to Anglican, Wesleyan or Congregational churches. The Birmingham Boys' Life Brigade began at a Friends' Institute, but the Quakers' defection to the Peace Scouts left BLB support amongst Baptists, Congregationalists, Unitarians and non-denominational missions.

The Scout movement by 1914 had 124 troops in their Birmingham district, 111 of which were in Birmingham. Scout troops did not require a church affiliation, but 40 were linked to Anglican or Roman Catholic churches, and 21 to evangelical free churches or non-denominational missions:<sup>102</sup> their lack of a credal position meant that non-Trinitarian groups such as the Unitarians and the New Church (Swedenborgians) had also established Scout troops in Birmingham.

However, it was not uncommon for individual churches to change allegiance between the different youth movements.

The Salvation Army were establishing their own alternative 'Life-Saving Scouts'. Other newer movements in the city such as the Brethren, Churches of Christ, Apostolics/Pentecostals and Seventh-Day Adventists declined involvement in any uniformed youth organisations.

---

<sup>101</sup> *Cornish's Birmingham Yearbook 1915-16* (Birmingham: 1915), p. 266

<sup>102</sup> *Birmingham & District Association of Boy Scouts, Official Year Book & Diary 1914*, (Birmingham: 1914)

## 5.12. Birmingham Boys' Brigade and Boys' Life Brigade and the War

The Birmingham Battalion of the Boys' Brigade resisted assimilation by the military. In 1910, both their President and Secretary opposed affiliation to the Cadet Scheme. When encouraged to reconsider in 1917 they concluded 'that in the opinion of this meeting no action in the matter of recognition should be taken...until the close of the war and the return of the large majority of our officers, unless in their opinion the question was of the utmost urgency'.<sup>103</sup> A few months later they agreed unanimously: 'It was suggested that no applications for recognition be made until after the Brigade Meetings in September.'<sup>104</sup> Opposition was maintained, with no Birmingham companies affiliating to the Cadets.<sup>105</sup> They did support the civil authorities' war effort as their 1914-15 Annual Report reveals: 'Our services were offered and accepted by the Citizens' Committee. Many of our boys at a moment's notice took duty at the Council House, and acted as messengers, and gave their services whenever required.' They reported that many 'old boys' and past and present officers had joined up and added 'the valuable training, both moral and military, they have received soon marked them out for rapid promotion'. However, this should be tempered with: 'It is quite possible we shall again have to answer the criticism that we are a military organisation, as shewn by the large numbers that have joined the Army and the Navy. We can only say that the Boys' Brigade is first and foremost a religious organisation; from the first it nailed its colours to the mast, and from this position it has not

---

<sup>103</sup> Birmingham Boys' Brigade Archives, (hereafter BBBA) Box 8, E/M Vol. 1: Birmingham Boys' Brigade Executive Minutes 31/3/1917

<sup>104</sup> BBBA, Box 8, E/M Vol. 1: Birmingham Boys' Brigade Executive Minutes 16/6/1917

<sup>105</sup> Arkinsall & Bolton, *Forward!*, pp. 4-5

receded.<sup>106</sup> Whilst like the Scouts they were seeking to cling on to the claim that they were a non-military organisation, for the Boys' Brigade, their primary emphasis was on their Christian basis.

The Birmingham Battalion of the Boys' Life Brigade were sounding a different note. In May 1916 their Acting Secretary, Donald Finnemore, reported: 'During the year more of our officers have left for military duties – chiefly in the RAMC – but the few remaining are keeping the work going as well as possible.'<sup>107</sup> At the Brigades' Annual Meeting in Birmingham the previous year, the General Secretary's paper on the 'Boys' Life Brigade and the Country's Call' had given 'some account of the vast amount of emergency work accomplished by the officers and boys of the Brigade'. By April 1917 Finnemore was serving in France with the Red Cross.<sup>108</sup> Some Birmingham BLB boys and officers did serve in the military, although emphasis on 'Saving Life' and their desire to see the boys won for Christ remained uppermost. The BLB's approach remained constant after the war. Writing in a post-war handbook for leaders, Finnemore stated: 'The main, indeed the one, object of the Brigade is to win the boy's devotion to Jesus Christ; all its other training is but subsidiary and complementary to this.'<sup>109</sup> On 'Our duties to Foreign Countries' he added: 'This will afford us a splendid opportunity of bringing home the importance of the League of Nations. It is a great thing to be proud of England, and it is a great thing to do our best for it, but our citizenship must not become narrow and confined and restricted... The League of Nations, formed to foster a brotherhood among all peoples and to put an

---

<sup>106</sup> *Boys' Brigade Birmingham Battalion Annual Report, 1914-15* (Birmingham, 1915), p. 4

<sup>107</sup> *Monthly Record of the work of the Birmingham Sunday School Union* (May 1916), p. 40

<sup>108</sup> *Monthly Record of the work of the Birmingham Sunday School Union* (April 1917), p. 28

<sup>109</sup> D. L. Finnemore, *Boys!: A Complete Manual for Workers among Boys* (London, [1925]), p. 45

end to war, can only be an effective force if it is backed by the individual citizen...The Boy must be reminded that he has a duty to all countries.’<sup>110</sup>

The attitude of the Boys’ Life Brigade Scouts to the war is harder to trace. Although their leader Barrow Cadbury served in the Friends’ Ambulance Unit, over a hundred men from the Moseley Road Friends’ Institute where they were based joined up, of whom at least 21 were in non-combatant roles.<sup>111</sup>

At the end of the war, the attitude of the BLB rather than the BB was coming to prominence amongst local nonconformists. In 1919 the teachers of the Church of the Redeemer (Baptist) Senior School, agreed unanimously: ‘That the suspended Boys’ Brigade be reconstructed as soon as possible on the distinct understanding that any military tendency should be strictly excluded, as part of a definite repudiation of militarism which the church today is called upon to make.’ The editor of the *Record of the Birmingham Sunday School Union* added: ‘Many Sunday Schools are no doubt contemplating similar steps in regard to defunct Boys’ Brigades, and it seems to be of the utmost importance that a general declaration should be forthcoming from the churches as a whole of their determination to have no lot or part in any undertaking which might be interpreted as expressing any sympathy with military tendencies or aims.’<sup>112</sup> The only response in the next edition was a suggestion that the Boys’ Life Brigade offered a perfect solution of the problem since: ‘No arms – real or model – are allowed, and there is no connection with the War Office or any similar body; the

---

<sup>110</sup> Finnemore, *Boys!*, p. 192

<sup>111</sup> Based on an analysis of BCA MS1722/5/7 *List of class members serving overseas, with a roll of honour of those killed*, Moseley Road Friends’ Institute.

<sup>112</sup> *Record of the Work of the Birmingham Sunday School Union* (June 1919), p. 11



work is based on the great constructive ideas of life-saving, and as a Sunday school organisation, emphasis is laid on the religious side of the Boys training.<sup>113</sup> This exchange was an interesting precursor to the merger nationally of the Boys' Brigade and Boys' Life Brigade in 1926, which was conditional on there being no further drills with dummy rifles or links with the military.

### **5.13. Birmingham Scouts and the War**

In 1914, a new Birmingham Scout journal *The Marksman* justified itself as a fundraiser for the victims of war. It also promoted Scouts' involvement, listing duties performed in Birmingham and elsewhere: 'telegraphists, despatch riders, competent clerks, messengers for public authorities, first aid, cyclists, coast guards; guarding bridges, telegraphs, railways, etc.; helping farmers, picking up messages dropped by airmen, and collecting information for Army purposes', and reprinted an article from *The Scout* arguing that Scout camps should include rifle practice.<sup>114</sup>

In 1915 the Birmingham Scouts claimed: 'The government during the present war has made wide use of scouts because it knows that their training fits them for such work as helping the coastguards, police, military and naval authorities.' While highlighting that 'several eminent military men... have said that a Scout is practically a Soldier with half his training done', it added: 'Official recognition has been given to the Scouts as a non-military public service body.'<sup>115</sup> A 1916 Birmingham Scout programme included photographs of a 'Birmingham Scouts Defence Corps' with the

---

<sup>113</sup> *Record of the Work of the Birmingham Sunday School Union* (October 1919), p. 15

<sup>114</sup> BCA p21.5 *The Marksman*, 'A monthly journal of useful information for local scouts', vol.1, no.1, September 1914 (Birmingham & Midland Scout Magazine Union), pp. 1, 2 & 14.

<sup>115</sup> BCA Birm Inst F/2 259734 *Patriotic Demonstration, Birmingham Boy Scouts Sports Day Souvenir Official Programme*, 3/7/1915, p. 7.

caption ‘Chief Scout at Grand Theatre where 600 Scouts received the “Red Feather”’ and one of a scout shooting a rifle labelled: ‘Members of the Corps receiving instruction in Marksmanship’.<sup>116</sup> Baden-Powell had set up the Scouts Defence Corps to teach military skills, including rifle shooting, in 1914, and Scouts who completed the training were awarded a ‘Red Feather’.<sup>117</sup> There is evidence that not all local scout troops were enthusiastically involved in the war effort: the Birmingham Scouts 1918 Annual report admitted: ‘Sufficient co-operation was not forthcoming’ in a metal collection as results barely covered the printing costs, and distribution of envelopes for charities was ‘far from properly carried out’.<sup>118</sup> However, a 1919 history of 10 years of Birmingham Scouting was full of pro-military messages.<sup>119</sup> It opened with Lloyd George praising the Scouts’ wartime involvement: ‘I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that the young boyhood of our country, represented by the Boy Scouts’ Association, shares the laurels for having been prepared with the old and trusted and tried British Army and Navy. For both prove their title to make the claim when the Great War broke upon us like a thief in the night.’<sup>120</sup> This was followed by Baden-Powell’s assertion: ‘What is needed... is training which brings out the individual, develops his character, and disciplines him in a sense of responsibility and of loyally playing the game for his side. This the Scout training...is found to do, although its aim is not military. If therefore, we want to provide a preliminary military

---

<sup>116</sup> *Patriotic Demonstration, Birmingham Boy Scouts*, 3/7/1915, p. 68.

<sup>117</sup> *Headquarters Gazette* (Nov 1914) cited in C.R. Walker, *The Scouts Defence Corps and 'The Red Feather'*, [http://www.scoutingmilestones.co.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=143&Itemid=219](http://www.scoutingmilestones.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=143&Itemid=219)

<sup>118</sup> Public Service Committee Report in Birmingham & District Association of Boy Scouts, *Official Year Book & Diary, 1919*, (Birmingham: 1918), pp. 23-4.

<sup>119</sup> Lord Ilkeston (ed), *At the sign of the Fleur-de-Lys, 1908-1918, being a record of ten years Scout work in the city of Birmingham*. (Birmingham: 1919)

<sup>120</sup> Ilkeston (ed), 15 The imagery is Biblical: Jesus is expected to return unexpectedly like a thief in the night, see Matthew 24: 43-44 & 1 Thessalonians 5:2

training that is of use to the country, it should take the form of a serious cadet training for boys of not less than sixteen or eighteen who have had an adequate preliminary training and grounding in character.<sup>121</sup> Thus he saw Scouting as non-military, but excellent preparation for military service! The Acting County Commissioner added: 'We know... that no better soldier can be found than he who previous to the battle field had been trained in the Scout club room.'<sup>122</sup> After this came a thank you from Lord Derby for their assistance in the recruiting campaign.<sup>123</sup> There is a noticeable difference of attitudes between government and military leaders, who view the Scouts as an appropriate resource from which to draw recruits for many tasks in wartime, and the Scout Association representatives who see themselves as a non-military organisation which provides valuable training to boys who may go on to serve the military. The debate as to their relationship with the military continued after the war: in 1920 the Birmingham Commissioner, Lord Hampton, denied recent accusations that Scouts were either a Militarist organisation or a school for 'Pacificists'.<sup>124</sup>

#### **5.14. Birmingham Boys' Uniformed Organisations, Post-war Impact**

All of the uniformed boys' organisations reported leadership shortages and temporary closure of groups in Birmingham during the war, but the three main organisations which did not affiliate to the military (Scouts, BB and BLB) managed not just to survive but to grow. The Scouts had between 40 or 50 more troops (although some

---

<sup>121</sup> R. Baden-Powell, 'Today & Tomorrow', in Ilkeston, ed., p. 22

<sup>122</sup> W. B. Bach, 'Ten Years Progress', in Ilkeston, ed., p. 29

<sup>123</sup> Lord Derby's message in Ilkeston, ed., p. 34

<sup>124</sup> *Scouting, The Official Organ of the Birmingham & District Association of Boy Scouts*, 2:20 (Dec 1920), p. 84

were temporarily suspended) at the beginning of 1919 than they had in 1914.<sup>125</sup> The Boys' Brigade had gone down from 21 companies in 1914 to fourteen in 1918 then increased to twenty companies by the time of their union with the BLB in 1926.<sup>126</sup> The Boys' Life Brigade had ten companies in 1915, down to three in 1919,<sup>127</sup> back to fourteen in 1920, then up to a record high of 21 companies at the time of union with the BB in 1926.<sup>128</sup> The former Boys' Life Brigade Scouts were amongst those joining the BLB in this period. There appears to be no evidence of any continuing British Scouts in Birmingham.

This contrasts with the Church Lads' Brigade (CLB), Catholic Boys' Brigade (CBB) and Jewish Lads' Brigade (JLB) which entered into the Government's Cadet scheme, and adopted khaki uniform; these all suffered numerically in the inter-war period. This can be attributed to the reaction against militarism, financial losses at the ending of the Cadet scheme and the transfer of some CLB and CBB Companies to the military cadets or the Boy Scouts: for example, in both Coventry and Walsall the CBB became 'Catholic Cadets'.<sup>129</sup>

A comparison of the Birmingham BB Companies at the 1926 BB/BLB merger with 1914 shows Wesleyans re-established as the largest group. A comparison of the BLB

---

<sup>125</sup> *Birmingham & District Association of Boy Scouts, Official Year Book & Diary, 1914*, (Birmingham, 1913) & *Birmingham & District Association of Boy Scouts, Official Year Book & Diary, 1919*, (Birmingham: 1918)

<sup>126</sup> Arkinsall & Bolton, *Forward!*, pp. 6 & 15-16, & *Boys' Brigade Birmingham Battalion, Annual Report, 1917-18* (Birmingham: 1918)

<sup>127</sup> *Cornish's Birmingham Yearbook 1915-16* (Birmingham: 1915-16), p. 266; BLB report in *Monthly Record of the work of the Birmingham Sunday School Union* (October 1916), pp. 86-7; Arkinsall & Bolton, *Forward!*, p. 3

<sup>128</sup> Arkinsall & Bolton, *Forward!*, p. 21

<sup>129</sup> Bolton, *Boys of the Brigade Vol. 1*, pp. 12, 20 & 24.

companies in 1926 with 1914 revealed that the dominance of Baptist companies continued, with an increase in Congregationalists, the re-appearance of the Quakers (the former 'BLB Scouts') and the disappearance of the Unitarians (who had transferred to the Scouts).<sup>130</sup> The growth from 23 to 35 BB/BLB companies attached to free churches suggests an increase in support for the brigades amongst evangelical free churches, and could be seen as an endorsement of the Boys' Brigade's withdrawal from the Cadet Scheme and the ban on drill with dummy rifles which made the BB/BLB 1926 merger possible. However, the number of Birmingham and District Scout troops attached to free churches and non-denominational missions increased from thirteen in 1914 to 34 in 1919, making a larger increase in free church support for Scouting than for the Brigades over a shorter time period.

### **5.15. Conclusion**

Looking across the auxiliary movements in the city as a whole, it becomes clear that the majority of them do not appear to have been adversely affected by the First World War. All of the organisations considered above struggled to continue to operate due to lack of leaders, and in the case of the adult organisations, suffered reductions in attendance too due to the war, with members serving as combatants, serving with other organisations such as the Friends' Ambulance Unit or the Red Cross, or imprisoned as conscientious objectors. Leaders or potential leaders would have had less time available due to increased workload brought on by the conflict, and some meeting places would have been impacted by the black-out regulations imposed following the Zeppelin raids. Thus during the conflict they all reduced the number of

---

<sup>130</sup> *Birmingham & District Association of Boy Scouts, Official Year Book & Diary, 1919* (Birmingham: 1918)

groups that were able to operate. However, as soon as the men returned, they began to re-open and – indeed as demonstrated in the statistics above – expand their operations. The only exception to this was the Adult School movement which continued the decline that had begun back in 1910.

Historians of the Adult School movement have blamed this decline on the First World War. In 1924 Currie Martin claimed: ‘The Men’s Schools were the mainstay of their work, and these were very rapidly deprived of many of their best and most effective workers, who were at once taken into the ranks of the army...long before the time of conscription, schools were being closed.’<sup>131</sup> Champness took this argument a stage further: ‘Firstly, it provided a ground for contention which disrupted many Schools. Pacifism and the problem of the conscientious objector to participation in war proved in many cases too difficult for even the broadminded Adult School fellowship. Secondly, of the mass of men who went into the armed forces, many never returned, while of those who did come back many did so with an altered outlook.’<sup>132</sup> However, these claims ignore the far more gradual decline in national church membership of all the mainstream Trinitarian English free churches (to which many of the Adult Schools were attached), and the continued increase in membership of the Brotherhood/PSA, Brigade and Scouting movements in the same immediate post-war period, all of whom would also have faced the same issues of division of opinion over the war and dealing with those who returned but, unlike the Adult Schools, did not suffer rapidly declining membership. It is also worth remembering that the Adult School membership like that of most of the free churches had actually peaked in 1910 and

---

<sup>131</sup> Currie Martin, *The Adult School Movement*, pp. 182-3

<sup>132</sup> Ernest F. Champness, *Adult Schools, A Study in Pioneering* (Wallington: 1941) cited in Arnold Hall, *The Adult School Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Nottingham: 1985), p. 162

had therefore already been in decline prior to the outbreak of the conflict.

Nevertheless, the 50% decline in membership from 1910 to 1920 is significant and worthy of exploration. Were there other factors exacerbating their decline that were not related to the war? Was their general inability to attract younger members part of the problem? Was it related to greater adult literacy, resulting in the loss of one of their original functions, or bearing in mind the identification of the movement with Quakerism, had the theological drift from evangelicalism towards liberalism in British Quakerism impacted the Adult Schools, causing some members to look to more mainstream churches or the Brotherhood Movement for Bible teaching?

In contrast, the Brotherhood Movement, which did not have these three issues to contend with had also plummeted in membership during the war, but then grown again, albeit more slowly, over the following decade. In his recent study of the inter-war decline of the Adult School movement Mark Freeman concluded: ‘... while the adult school movement can certainly be seen as a victim of secularising pressures in the inter-war period, it retained a significant presence within adult education until the Second World War, in a period when the growth of alternative leisure opportunities and voluntary organisations made it more difficult for an overtly religious educational organisation to maintain its strength and influence...The NASU was a shrinking movement, and an ageing one. However, its adult schools continued to serve a cohort of older but committed members, and on the eve of the Second World War there were more adult scholars than Quakers, and more members of NASU than of the WEA. Adult schools, therefore, still played an important part in the history of religion and

education during the interwar period.’<sup>133</sup> Whilst rightly drawing attention to the continued relevance of the movement’s educational role, Freeman claimed that secularisation of society was also a factor in its decline. To establish whether his claim is true or whether conversely the movement declined because its own increasing theological liberalism and secularisation made it little different from alternatives such as the WEA or local authority evening classes, further detailed research is needed into precisely how Adult Schools were conducted in the inter-war period, and when Bible study ceased to be their central function.

Examination of the local evidence has also demonstrated that the Boys’ Brigade and Boys’ Life Brigade, although more militaristic in appearance, maintained their ultimate aim of evangelism. The Birmingham Boy Scouts, although less militaristic in appearance, had been infiltrated by the National Service League, and had a less public more militarist agenda as a method of training for future soldiers. Whilst all the boys’ uniformed organisations taught drill, it was only the Boy Scouts who were teaching their members rifle shooting. There had also been a reaction locally against the militarist appearance of the Boys’ Brigade at the end of the war.

---

<sup>133</sup> Mark Freeman, ‘The decline of the adult school movement between the wars’, *History of Education*, 39:4 (2010), pp. 505-6



## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### 6.1. Introduction

This thesis has explored the impact of the First World War on English evangelical free churches and their response to it, focusing on the example of churches in the city of Birmingham where, by the turn of the century, 50% of churchgoers were attending Trinitarian protestant free churches. Wilkinson had argued that the pressures upon English nonconformity to conform in the First World War were great, and that they largely did. He therefore saw their ‘pacific stance in the preceding decade or so as a temporary phenomenon’.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, in the first edition of the *Congregational Quarterly* published in 1923, the editor, Rev. Albert Peel (a committed pacifist) speculated: ‘The followers of the Prince of Peace must not be caught napping “next time”. On Peace Sunday 1913 all our pulpits proclaimed the Gospel of Peace; even on Sunday August 2, 1914, they did the same. Then came division, and the 100 per cent of Christians who did not believe in war one week dwindled to a handful the next.’<sup>2</sup> The active involvement of nonconformists across the denominations in promoting peace and international co-operation before, during and after the First World War, despite the active involvement of many of their fellow nonconformists in the conflict, implies that Wilkinson’s conclusion is too general and therefore does not stand up to scrutiny. This thesis has sought to demonstrate that for many nonconformists, it was the move towards a pro-war stance during the conflict that was a temporary phenomenon. Evidence of active involvement in the Peace Movement in the nineteenth century, particularly by Birmingham Baptists, has been identified.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform?*, p. 22

<sup>2</sup> Albert Peel, editorial, *Congregational Quarterly*, 1 (1923), p. 7

In Birmingham, many church members, especially Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists, including those who had provided many combatants during the conflict, united around support for the League of Nations after the conflict, and some Birmingham Baptist and Congregational churches, many of whose members had fought in the conflict, appointed former conscientious objectors as ministers during the inter-war period. Many in the new movements such as the Churches of Christ, the Brethren and the Apostolic/Pentecostal Churches maintained the historic pacifism of their founders throughout the war. In Birmingham these trends were most evident in the inter-war period through the anti-war influence of Carrs Lane Congregational Church, during the pastorate of the former wartime national peace campaigner Rev. Leyton Richards, and through the continuing pacifism within the Churches of Christ whose training college and publishing house were both based at Overdale College in Birmingham, initially in Moseley, then Selly Oak.

There have been few detailed studies of the First World War on the ‘home front’ which have considered the impact on local faith communities. The aim of this thesis has been to seek to identify the views and experiences of local Birmingham free church members and the impact on local church activities, rather than simply considering the official views from national denominational conferences and congresses, or the content of national denominational publications.

## **6.2. Birmingham’s Free Churches and the War**

### **6.2.1 Church Membership**

Numerically there were no significant changes in Birmingham free church

membership during the conflict. Baptist and Presbyterian church membership continued to rise throughout the conflict. Congregationalist membership having dipped in 1916, regained its pre-war figure in 1920. Primitive Methodist membership having dropped in 1916, surpassed its pre-war figure in 1920. Wesleyan Methodist membership declined from 1916, and United Methodist membership from 1918 and the Churches of Christ membership declined slowly throughout the war. The decline in membership of all Birmingham denominations for whom statistics were available was from 11,709 in 1914, to 11,289 in 1919, suggesting overall that there was no major impact on church membership.<sup>3</sup> However, some of these membership fluctuations were minor – for example the membership of the Birmingham Churches of Christ remained between 1,000 and 1,200 from 1908 until it peaked at 1,208 in 1940.

### **6.2.2 Birmingham Free Church Members and the Military**

Most of the surviving local archival evidence demonstrated qualified support for the First World War amongst Birmingham's nonconformists. Most participants appeared to be adhering to a 'just war' theory, although there was no local evidence identified of discussion or debate as to whether this war was just. There was very little evidence of a crusading or 'holy war' theology; rather there was a concern to avoid it.

With the outbreak of the First World War there was evidence of large numbers of men associated with Birmingham's free churches joining the military even prior to conscription. There was evidence also of the impact on local churches of many key

---

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix II for overall summary and Appendices III-IX for detailed membership statistics.

workers being removed from local church life. As well as the loss of significant lay workers, the supply of new ministers from the colleges ceased too. Analysis of local church records revealed large numbers involved in the conflict from local churches, and the impact of their removal on local church life. The churches appear to be unanimous in support of the war, yet it is also possible to find evidence of sympathy for the victims of war and conscientious objectors too. Meanwhile amongst those participating in the conflict, there is evidence of revitalised faith and of others finding faith.

There was evidence of many church members signing up for the military. No churches were passing motions opposing participation; indeed a few were openly critical of those who refused to participate. However, it is also clear that the level of enthusiasm varied, and concerns were expressed about conscription, the impact of nationalism and patriotism and, to a lesser extent, militarism. Evidence has been provided for the presence of conscientious objectors in the churches. Three Birmingham Methodist local preachers (two Primitive Methodists and one United Methodist) were the leading Birmingham nonconformist opponents of the war (outside of Quakerism), who played key roles in opposing the war through the Labour, Trade Union and Co-operative movements as well as through the churches. The Wesleyan Central Hall was hired for some anti-war meetings, their minister being a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Local evidence in Birmingham would appear to support McLeod's assertion that 'the point is not that most Nonconformists were anti-war, but that so many of the relatively few people bold enough to adopt such a radically unpopular stance were nonconformists'.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Hugh McLeod, 'Dissent and the peculiarities of the English, c.1870-1914', in Jane Shaw & Alan

A small number of churches had permitted military parades in their chapels, but this did not appear to be regular or widespread. Some churches had permitted their property to be used for military purposes, e.g. recruitment, or to provide social facilities for troops as an outreach activity. They had, however, drawn the line at any usage which had a negative impact on regular church activities. As soon as the conflict was over, widespread support across the denominations for the League of Nations Union, including the founding of branches in local churches, appears to unite those who were enthusiastic supporters of the war, those who were more reluctant participants and even opponents in a common cause for peace. The appointment in the inter-war period of former conscientious objectors as ministers by Birmingham Baptist and Congregational churches which had been heavily involved in the conflict, including the loss of members, is also symptomatic of this unity: Carrs Lane Church which had many members actively involved in the conflict appointed as minister Leyton Richards who, through his role in the Fellowship of Reconciliation, had been the most prominent Congregationalist opponent of the conflict in the country.

Attention has been drawn to Restorationist movements such as the Brethren, Churches of Christ, Apostolics/Pentecostals and Seventh-Day Adventists who shared a historical commitment to pacifism prior to the conflict. Statistical evidence has been provided that outside of Quakerism, the strongest commitment to pacifism came from members of these new evangelistic movements with their commitment to Biblicism, as well as from other movements outside of mainstream Trinitarian Christianity, such

---

Kreider, eds., *Culture and the Nonconformist Tradition* (Cardiff: 1999), p. 133

as Christadelphians and International Bible Students.<sup>5</sup> Yet in a case study it has been demonstrated that the Churches of Christ, previously committed to a position of Biblical pacifism, found themselves divided over the First World War. One factor was their congregational church government, whereby every church is independent and governed by its members. Although the traditional anti-war position remained strong, there were also those amongst them who felt able to participate in the war as combatants. This thesis has demonstrated the presence in Birmingham of Pentecostal Conscientious Objectors, including some who went on after the war to serve in significant national roles in British Pentecostal denominations.

### **6.2.3 Theological Impact of the Conflict**

There is no clear evidence in the available local sources that the conflict had a significant negative impact on the faith of Birmingham free church members or attenders. There is no obvious evidence of loss of evangelical Christian faith – other than two or three active Christian pacifists who transferred their membership to the by then predominantly liberal Society of Friends later in life. A significant concern amongst members of Evangelical free churches was to counter any war-time teachings which appeared to replace the central role in Christian theology of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross as being once and for all for the forgiveness of sins and the only route to personal salvation, with suggestions that death in warfare was in some way an acceptable alternative. To this end, they had used tracts such as the Brethren's Dr Heyman Wreford's *The Sin against the Soldier and the Saviour* to counter teachings such as that 'to die in such a war as this is a passport to heaven' or

---

<sup>5</sup> I.e. Jehovah's Witnesses

‘death in such a cause is but a modern re-enacting of the death of Christ himself’.<sup>6</sup>

The war also raised other theological concerns for the churches. These included concerns over moral dangers faced by the troops relating to alcohol or prostitution and also concerns as to whether theological liberalism promoted by German theologians had somehow contributed to a militaristic spirit and thus to the cause of the war. Some ministers, even those who supported British involvement in the conflict, were concerned that they or their members were in danger of being drawn in by the rise of nationalism and militarism which the ‘war spirit’ encouraged.

Although Spiritualism had been established in Birmingham in the late nineteenth century (they had two meeting places by the time of the 1892 census), it was not addressed as a concern in any of the early twentieth-century local church sources consulted, suggesting that it does not appear to have been a matter of concern for the free churches of Birmingham at that time. The only local reference identified was prior to the conflict – a 1900 public debate between secularists and spiritualists, held at the Temperance Hall, which was advertised in a local Labour journal,<sup>7</sup> possibly a consequence of the involvement in Spiritualism of the Birmingham Labour councillor (and future MP) Eldred Hallas.<sup>8</sup>

A significant theological issue identified was that faced by many of the newer movements with a pacifist heritage, such as the Brethren, Apostolics/Pentecostals and

---

<sup>6</sup> Dr Heyman Wreford, *The Sin against the Soldier and the Saviour* (Exeter: n/d)

<sup>7</sup> BCA Store B72.22 *The Pioneer*, no.16 (10/1900)

<sup>8</sup> Roger Ward, ‘Hallas, Eldred (1870–1926)’, *Oxford DNB*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2013 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/105127>, accessed 12 Sept 2014]

Churches of Christ, whose members found themselves having to personally work out the implications of their faith as they faced conscription for the first time. The Birmingham Churches of Christ evangelist, R.K. Francis, put the blame for their plight firmly on lack of leadership and teaching: ‘Many of our young men went into this business not because they liked it, but because many, yea most, of them uneducated for it, had to solve the problem for themselves. Not one ray of New Testament light, on the question of Christianity and Militarism, was given them in the editorials or articles of our Magazines; and, with few striking exceptions, Church elders failed to give them any New Testament lead. Rather was it the reverse, some even handing COs over to prison instead of giving New Testament teaching on the question. Some of these lads we know yearned for New Testament teaching and guidance from their elders, but such was not forthcoming.’<sup>9</sup>

### **6.3. The Impact of the War on Women’s Ministry in Birmingham**

The conflict had resulted in the expulsion, due to her nationality, of the Prussian Unitarian Rev. Gertrude von Petzold, who at that time was Birmingham’s only serving woman minister outside the Salvation Army. However, women were by that time well established in other forms of pastoral ministry: by 1914, there were 137 deaconesses, lay visitors, women of the people etc., who were serving Birmingham’s Congregational churches. To this number could be added possibly similar numbers of Baptist and Methodist deaconesses, lay visitors etc., as well as many serving overseas as missionaries.

---

<sup>9</sup> R.K. Francis, ‘The story of the witness’, in *For His Name's Sake. Being a Record of the Witness given by Members of Churches of Christ in Great Britain against Militarism during the European War, 1914-1918* (Heanor: 1921), pp. 14-19



However, the war provided new opportunities for women to serve as deacons amongst the city's Baptist and Congregational churches, an opportunity which expanded in the inter-war period as more churches changed their rules to allow women to be elected. Unlike in the wider community, where women who had taken over traditionally male jobs had to relinquish them on the men's return from the war, no churches reversed their rules on the election of deacons.

#### **6.4 The Faith of Individual Birmingham Free Church Participants in the Conflict**

A study of Birmingham local and regional free church magazines, examining extracts from participants' letters home, revealed very little evidence of a belief that God was on their side, or signs of antagonism towards 'the enemy', but rather of genuine attempts amongst the participants to apply their faith in challenging circumstances. Notable by their absence were any indications of a 'salvation by works' theology based on dying for their country or of any interest in Spiritualism. Neither of these approaches were advocated in any of the letter extracts or editorials in any of the church magazines consulted. That the letters quoted would largely be from those who already held a personal Christian faith prior to the conflict is very likely to be a factor in this.

An area which did become evident, however, was an interest amongst some men at the front in support for overseas missions as they saw first-hand some of the

communities which could benefit.<sup>10</sup> The letter extracts demonstrated the existence of genuine Christian belief amongst at least some members of the military and provided evidence of others finding faith whilst at the front. General observations in some local church magazines indicated that the published extracts from the men expressing how their faith had helped them were representative of a wider correspondence the magazine editors had received. The extracts from letters home provided clear evidence of the relevance of the Christian faith to their daily lives of many Birmingham church, Adult School and Brotherhood/PSA members in the military during the First World War, and of faith being deepened and renewed, rather than damaged by the conflict.

### **6.5. Lay Auxiliary Movements in Birmingham**

Having surveyed a range of Protestant lay auxiliary movements across Birmingham as a whole, it has been made clear that the majority did not appear to have suffered any long-term adverse effects as a result of the First World War. All of the organisations considered in the relevant chapter of this thesis struggled to continue to operate due to lack of leaders, and in the case of the adult organisations, reductions in attendance due to members affected by the war, whether as combatants, serving with other organisations such as the Friends' Ambulance Unit or the Red Cross, or imprisoned as Conscientious Objectors. Others would have had less time available due to increased workload brought on by the conflict, and some meeting places would have been impacted by the black-out regulations imposed following the Zeppelin raids. Thus during the conflict they all reduced the number of groups or branches that were able

---

<sup>10</sup> Cairns, ed., *The Army and Religion*, pp. 178-186

to continue. However, as soon as the men returned they began to re-open and indeed, as was demonstrated in the statistics, expand their activities. The only exception to this was the Adult School movement where the steep membership decline which had begun in 1910 continued after the war.

There had been a gradual decline in national church membership of all the mainstream Trinitarian English free churches (to which many of the Adult Schools were attached), and continued increase in membership of the Brotherhood/PSA, Brigade and Scouting movements in the same immediate post-war period, all of whom would also have faced the same issues of division of opinion over the war and dealing with those who returned, but unlike the Adult Schools did not suffer rapidly declining membership. It is also important to consider that the Adult School membership like that of most of the evangelical free churches had actually peaked in 1910 and had therefore already been in decline prior to the outbreak of the conflict. It therefore seems possible that the identification of the Adult School movement with Quakerism, combined with the theological drift from evangelicalism towards liberalism in British Quakerism impacted the Adult Schools, caused some members to look instead to more mainstream churches or the Brotherhood Movement for Bible teaching. In contrast to the Adult Schools, the Brotherhood Movement, which did not have these issues to contend with had also plummeted in membership during the war, but then grew again, albeit more slowly, over the following decade. To establish whether the rise in liberalism was significant in the decline, further detailed research would need to be done as to precisely how Adult Schools were conducted in the inter-war period, clearly identifying when Bible study ceased to be their central focus.

A clear difference in ethos and emphasis has been demonstrated between the Brigade movements and the Scout movement. Whilst the Brigade movements were more militaristic in appearance, they maintained their primary purpose of evangelism, and resisted attempts at assimilation by the military authorities.

Concerns to ensure that the Brigades continued without a military emphasis after the conflict were also identified. In contrast, the Scout movement, whilst less militaristic in appearance, was the only non-military youth organisation to teach rifle shooting. They had been infiltrated locally by the National Service League, and saw themselves as a method of training for future soldiers. Another clear distinction was that the Brigades required all their companies to be affiliated to a Protestant church or mission, whilst the Scouts had a much vaguer promise of duty to God and the King, which allowed for Catholic, Unitarian, Swedenborgian and unaffiliated scout troops.

## **6.6. The War and Secularisation**

What light do the findings of this thesis shed on the secularisation debate? Wickham argued that: ‘The war had its own devastating effects on the religious life of the nation. For the few, the more serious-minded, it increased scepticism at the same time that it fostered more serious occupation with the foundations of faith. And for these, as for many, a reaction set in against “organised religion”.’<sup>11</sup> He claimed that: ‘It was in these inter-war years that the decay of the churches was most rapidly advanced.’<sup>12</sup> Mews has supported his claim, arguing that: ‘The war had not only revealed the

---

<sup>11</sup> E.R. Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial Society* (London: 1957) p. 206

<sup>12</sup> Wickham, *Church and People*, p. 210

extent to which the churches had been marginalized, but accelerated those long-term social trends which undermined religious institutions.’<sup>13</sup> He added that: ‘It was not just experience of war which undermined faith, but also experience of peace which in a country in where many had grown used to living now, for tomorrow may bring death’<sup>14</sup> and ‘Churchgoing slumped in the 1930s and left those who remained either turned in upon themselves, clinging grimly to selected Victorian beliefs and values, or waiting doggedly for a revival, usually conceived along essentially Victorian lines.’<sup>15</sup> However, in recent years these theories have been effectively challenged. Callum Brown rejected previous theories of a gradual secularisation dating back to the Reformation or the Industrial Revolution and fuelled by the consequences of two World Wars,<sup>16</sup> and instead dated the rise of secularisation precisely to 1963.<sup>17</sup> Based on a more thorough examination of church membership figures, Snape has identified that: ‘The religious configuration and development of Britain between 1914 and 1945 was characterised by variety and complexity rather than by blanket decline. Indeed national totals of Protestant church members and communicants even enjoyed a short-lived resurgence in the 1920s, a resurgence that was repeated in the 1950s.’<sup>18</sup> His view appears to be more supported by the church membership statistics: from 1900 to 1967 overall British Protestant church membership fell by 6% throughout – between 1913 & 1919 it fell by 4%. However, from 1925 to 1927 Protestant church

---

<sup>13</sup> Stuart Mews, ‘Religious life between the wars, 1920-1940’ in S. Gilley & WJ Shiels, eds., *A History of Religion in Britain* (Oxford: 1994), p. 449

<sup>14</sup> Mews, ‘Religious life between the wars’, p. 466

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> For a summary of previous scholarship see J. Garnett, M. Grimley, A. Harris, W. Whyte, & S. Williams, eds., *Redefining Christian Britain: Post-1945 Perspectives* (London: 2006), pp. 2-8, & Jeremy Morris, ‘The Strange Death of Christian Britain: another look at the secularisation debate’, *The Historical Journal*, 46:4 (2003), pp. 963–976.

<sup>17</sup> Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800-2000* (London: 2001), p. 1

<sup>18</sup> Michael Snape, *God and the British Soldier* (Abingdon: 2005), p. 21

membership increased at much the same rate as it had from 1911 to 1913.<sup>19</sup>

In response to the proposition that churchgoing started to decline generally in proportion to the population after the First World War, Gill confirmed the lack of impact of the war, arguing that ‘most denominations had been declining proportionally in urban areas long before the First World War. Anglicans and Congregationalists had typically been declining for a good half century, and mainstream Free Churches as a whole had been declining since the 1880s’.<sup>20</sup>

As well as noting the existence of a gradual downward membership trend prior to the conflict, Gill also drew attention to the fact that the *Army and Religion* report identified the war as engendering ‘vestigial beliefs in God’ amongst soldiers who had previously attended Sunday School, but not joined a church.<sup>21</sup> Whilst the authors of the report dismissed accounts of ‘revival from the trenches’<sup>22</sup> with merely a sentence, and no serious consideration of the evidence,<sup>23</sup> a few examples of men finding faith are found in the report, including a Sergeant in the ASC who reported: ‘The Cross made it possible for one to go on, as one felt it was worth while if God could suffer and die for all this sin.’<sup>24</sup> Similarly, a (presumably YMCA) Hut Worker testified to: ‘The power and attraction of the Name of Jesus to arrest and hold and win its way in

---

<sup>19</sup> R. Currie, A. Gilbert & L. Horsley, *Churches and Church-Goers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford: 1977), p. 113

<sup>20</sup> Robin Gill, *The Myth of the Empty Church* (London: 1993), p. 187

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> See Neil E. Allison, ‘Baptists Chaplains’ Revivalism at the Front (1914-18)’, *Baptist Quarterly*, 42 (10/2007), pp. 303-313 for contemporary examples.

<sup>23</sup> D. Cairns, ed., *The Army and Religion, an enquiry and its bearing upon the religious life of the nation* (London: 1919), p. 7

<sup>24</sup> Cairns (ed), *The Army & Religion*, pp. 45-6

the very noisiest crowd have been demonstrated over and over again.<sup>25</sup> These observations echo some of the experiences of faith referred to by Birmingham free church members' letters home, as documented in this thesis. Furthermore, an increase in personal faith is testified to elsewhere in the *Army and Religion* report which revealed that the national 'War Roll' pledge of dedication was signed by nearly 350,000 men during the course of the war.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, Gill's view that it is '... difficult to show that this war had any appreciable effect on churchgoing rates'<sup>27</sup> is supported by the lack of any dramatic changes in Birmingham evangelical free church membership numbers either during or immediately after the conflict.

## **6.7. Areas for Further Research**

This thesis has identified areas for further research, such as the significance of Adult Schools and especially the Brotherhood/PSA movement in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century church growth. Also worthy of further investigation would be the reasons for the faster decline in the Adult School movement after the First World War, compared to other auxiliary movements and church membership in the same period.

There would also be value in further comparative detailed local studies of free church communities in time of war, looking at other English cities with significant

---

<sup>25</sup> Cairns (ed), *The Army & Religion*, p. 57

<sup>26</sup> Cairns (ed), *The Army & Religion*, p. 404

<sup>27</sup> Gill, *Myth of the Empty Church*, p. 11

nonconformist communities, such as London, Norwich or York. This could include further consideration of the impact of faith in sustaining soldiers who were practising Christians and the impact of the war on the role of women in the free churches (especially Baptists and Congregationalists). Further research could also consider the pacifist traditions amongst the emerging Restorationist movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the Churches of Christ, Christian Brethren, Apostolics/Pentecostals and the Seventh-Day Adventists and the reasons for the later decline of their pacifist traditions.

The value of local and regional church magazines as a source has also been usefully demonstrated. There would also be potential for local comparative studies on the impact of the First and Second World Wars on the evangelical free churches and indeed other denominations in other urban or rural settings.

## **6.8. Conclusion**

Parker, writing on Birmingham church life during the second world war observed: ‘It is a tempting oversimplification to assume that because the war was so disruptive of normality, and because church congregations were obviously so depleted of their usual devotees, that these years mark a nadir in religious observance. However, this was clearly far from being the case: many continued to attend churches, despite the disruption of the ‘blackout’ and altered time schedules.’<sup>28</sup> He could equally have been writing about Birmingham local church life during the First World War. The conflict does not appear to have had a major long-term impact on the beliefs or activities of

---

<sup>28</sup> Stephen Parker, *Faith on the Home Front: Aspects of Church Life and Popular Religion in Birmingham, 1939-1945* (Bern, Switz., 2005) pp. 213-4



the evangelical free churches of Birmingham. Whilst there was temporary disruption of church life, with many members and attenders killed in the conflict, and the activities of many church auxiliaries were temporarily reduced or suspended due to the conflict, once the participants, civil and military, returned to the churches, the work of the evangelical free churches across the denominations mostly continued as it had before the conflict. The only significant exception to this was the Adult School movement, which had already been in decline from 1910 onwards, where the rate of membership decline increased – an exception possibly more related to the impact of the rise of theological liberalism within Quakerism which was influential within the Adult School movement.

There were, however, other impacts on local church life. The war provided greater leadership opportunities for women, particularly amongst the Baptist and Congregational churches where they began to serve as deacons. This process, unlike opportunities for women to serve in new secular spheres during the war, continued to expand after the war ended.

The advent of conscription forced large numbers of church members and attenders across the denominations for the first time to personally face the issue as to whether as Christians they could in conscience bear arms. A range of responses has been identified, varying from enthusiastic participation to absolute objection. The conflict also appears to have speeded up the process of ecumenical co-operation, as churches worked together nationally in areas such as recognition of military chaplains, and locally in organising local prayer meetings during the war, provision for soldiers billeted or hospitalised locally, and commemorations of those killed in the conflict.

The close of the conflict galvanised support for the newly emerging League of Nations and renewal of the denominational and interdenominational international co-operation across Europe and beyond which had been interrupted by the conflict. This thesis has demonstrated that in Birmingham there was little evidence of the First World War having had a negative impact on church membership or church attendance, but there is evidence of combatants and non-combatants alike being sustained through the conflict by their faith. There has also been some limited evidence of combatants coming to faith.

A range of responses to the conflict from Birmingham free church members has been demonstrated, varying from enthusiastic support to absolute opposition. There is little evidence of blind support for the conflict, as many caveated their endorsement with a variety of concerns including nationalism, hatred of enemies, false theology (e.g. salvation by death in war), moral challenges faced by the soldiers and concern about the treatment of Conscientious Objectors. In some churches the war appears to have caused division, but supporters and opponents of the war appear to have united around support for the League of Nations after the conflict.

## Appendix I: 1892 Religious Census Summary: Birmingham & Smethwick

Denomination	Morn	Aft	Eve	total	Adult Morn Sch
Wesleyans	8532	14249	14714	37495	1059
Baptists	6173	11204	8531	5908	1193
Congregationalists	6914	10778	10662	28354	477
Primitive Methodists	1133	2976	2277	6386	
Society of Friends	909	3222	2799	6930	2817
Unitarians	1193	1313	1183	3689	304
Methodist New Connexion	700	2072	1346	4118	
Presbyterians	820	1516	1469	3805	
United Methodists	1030	1817	803	3650	85
Welsh Calvinistic Methodists	127	71	199	397	72
Swedenborgians	450	241	577	1268	
Undenominational	885	4224	3294	8403	960
various	639	421	803	1863	
Salvation Army	712	1324	2514	4550	
Christian Brethren	382	793	783	1958	
Disciples of Christ	343	522	487	1352	
Public Institutions	1008	6040	250	7298	
Sunday lectures	45		6146	6191	
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>31995</b>	<b>62783</b>	<b>58837</b>	<b>153615</b>	<b>6967</b>

Attendance figures (including Sunday schools) extracted from the returns of the Religious Census of 27/11/1892.

## Appendix II: Summary of Birmingham Free Church Membership

<b>Membership</b>	<b>1913</b>	<b>1914</b>	<b>1915</b>	<b>1916</b>	<b>1917</b>	<b>1918</b>	<b>1919</b>	<b>1920</b>
<b>Baptists</b>	5959	6013	6161	6239	6289	<i>6289</i>	<i>6289</i>	6311
<b>Congregationalists</b>	7127	6880	6928	6780	6785	6793	6809	6858
<b>English Presbyterians</b>	<i>677</i>	<i>677</i>	682	682	710	714	720	
<b>Welsh Presbyterians</b>	<i>240</i>	240	<i>240</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>240</i>	265	265	
<b>Primitive Methodists</b>	<i>1866</i>	1866	1935	1880	1930	1965	1980	
<b>United Free Methodists</b>	1915	1885	1823	1833	<i>1833</i>	1759	1726	
<b>Wesleyan Methodists</b>	7859	7958	8074	7893	7798	7713	7583	
<b>Churches of Christ</b>	1183	1156	1134	1119	<i>1119</i>	1077	1068	1068
<b>Totals</b>	<b>26826</b>	<b>26675</b>	<b>26977</b>	<b>26666</b>	<b>26704</b>	<b>26575</b>	<b>26440</b>	<b>14237</b>

All figures are sourced from the appropriate denominational handbooks/  
yearbooks: see Appendices III-IX for details.

When no data is available, entries are copied from the previous year in italics.  
No local statistics were identified for the Brethren, Apostolics/Pentecostals,  
Quakers, Salvation Army or Seventh-Day Adventists.

### Appendix III: – Birmingham Baptist Churches Membership statistics

West Midland Assoc	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918-9	1920	1913-20	
Acock's Green	223	231	240	262	270	NO	283	22.51%	52
Alcester Street		27	29	29	32	STATS	32	18.52%	5
Aston, Christchurch	560	557	564	556	546		602	8.08%	45
<i>Including Bevington Road, Bracebridge Street, Burlington Street &amp; Victoria Road, Handsworth</i>									
Aston, Alma Street	18								
Aston Manor	35	38	37	37	43		55	44.74%	17
Beech Lanes	47	50	49	56	55		55	10.00%	5
Bordesley Gn, Victoria St.	114	121	121	109	104		95	-21.49%	-26
Bristol Road, Wycliffe	213	241	250	244	245		263	9.13%	22
Chester Road	168	228	245	241	261		306	34.21%	78
Balsall Hth Rd/Edward Rd	164	162	169	169	170		187	15.43%	25
Erdington	313	265	254	236	220		223	-15.85%	-42
<i>Witton</i>	28	23	33	41			40	42.86%	12
Graham St (Cannon St)	260	233	201	181	195		177	-24.03%	-56
<i>Including Alvechurch, Kings Norton &amp; Yardley, Slade Lane</i>									
Great King Street (People's)	257	262	258	254	251		262	0.00%	0
<i>Smith Street</i>									
Guildford Street	45	46	53	56	62		53	15.22%	7
Hagley Road	237	231	233	252	260		227	-1.73%	-4
<i>Carter Lane</i>	40	38	38	38	29		91	-16.51%	-18
<i>Ellen Street, Brookfields</i>									
Hall Green (1914)			23	29	31		31		31
Handsworth, Hamstead Rd.	192	188	197	211	218		205	9.04%	17
Handsworth, Albert Rd	87	97	101	106	99		38	-60.82%	-59
Harborne	113	134	135	132	139		159	18.66%	25
Heneage Street	316	313	315	315	309		301	-3.83%	-12
Highgate Park	238	198	193	214	220		161	-18.69%	-37
<i>Little Sutton (1914)</i>	16	16	22	22	22		16	0.00%	0
John Bright Street (Welsh)	49	49	47	48	55		54	10.20%	5
Kings Heath	310	318	325	318	321		351	10.38%	33
<i>Billesley</i>									
Lodge Road	54	66	67	69	68		67	1.52%	1
Moseley, Oxford Road	357	361	394	397	398		385	6.65%	24
<i>Hope Street</i>									
Northfield	22	26	33	34	43		73	180.77%	47
Saltley	169	171	171	175	171		171	0.00%	0
Selly Park	157	167	174	184	164		165	-1.20%	-2
Small Heath, Coventry Rd.	399	393	424	448	463		499	26.97%	106
Sparkbrook, Stratford Rd	246	239	239	248	256		250	4.60%	11
<i>Greet</i>									
Spring Hill	423	420	437	422	419		389	-7.38%	-31
<i>Summerfield</i>									
Stechford, Victoria Rd	28	28	31	43	42		45	60.71%	17
Warwick Street	26								
<i>Penn Street</i>									
Sutton Coldfield	59	66	71	78	81		71		
Umberslade, Christchurch	116	117	114	115	120		120		
<b>Total</b>	<b>6134</b>	<b>6196</b>	<b>6346</b>	<b>6432</b>	<b>6490</b>		<b>6502</b>		<b>306</b>
<b>Ministers</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>		<b>28</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Lay Leaders</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Officiating Clergy</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>2</b>		

#### Statistics extracted from Baptist Handbooks, 1913-1920

Entries in italics are missions or Sunday Schools attached to the church listed directly above. Dates in brackets indicate when church was founded or became independent from 'parent' church.

## Appendix IV: Birmingham Congregational Churches Membership Statistics

### Warwickshire Union: Birmingham District:

	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1914-19	
Acock's Green	196	187	187	113	113	106	106	106	-43.32%	-81
Aston, Park Rd	180	172	161	161	161	152	152	152	-11.63%	-20
Carrs Lane	1163	1173	1172	1172	1172	1162	1172	1187	-0.09%	-1
Cattell Road	63									
Dartmouth Street										
Digbeth Institute	170	147	241	260	260	300	300	300	104.08%	153
Edgbaston	431	423	423	423	423	340	340	340	-19.62%	-83
<i>Dartmouth Rd</i>	60	60	60	50	50	50	50	50	-16.67%	-10
Erdington	194	190	190	201	201	201	201	210	5.79%	11
Handsworth, Union Row							from Staffs Assoc	253		
Hay Mills	48	48	48	56	56	56	60	60	25.00%	12
Highbury, Graham St	146	145	143	135	135	133	133	133	-8.28%	-12
King's Norton	272	258	238	218	218	281	300	300	16.28%	42
Lozells, Wheeler St	303	303	303	289	289	324	324	324	6.93%	21
Moseley Road	548	548	548	588	588	588	588	588	7.30%	40
<i>includes Clifton Road, Edward Road &amp; Ladypool Road</i>										
Saltley Road	228	22	228	175	175	175	175	175	-23.25%	-53
Arden Road	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	0.00%	0
<i>Metropolitan Road</i>										
Small Heath, Cov.Rd	228	198	180	180	180	180	180	180	-9.09%	-18
Soho Hill	550	550	550	542	542	542	520	520	-5.45%	-30
<i>Lodge Road</i>	94	94	94	77	77	77	77	77	-18.09%	-17
Sparkhill	131	131	131	101	101	101	101	101	-22.90%	-30
Steelhouse Lane	203	190	190	153	153	153	153	150	-19.47%	-37
<i>Elkington Street</i>										
Stoney Lane	100	90	90	95	95	95	60	60	-33.33%	-30
Sutton Coldfield	319	308	308	320	320	303	320	348	3.90%	12
Watery Lane	175	170	170	130	130	120	120	129	-29.41%	-50
Westminster Road	550	487	487	487	487	487	487	487	0.00%	0
<i>Incudes Franchise Street &amp; Hutton Road</i>										
Wheeler St (Welsh)	110	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	0.00%	0
Winson Green										
Wylde Green	81	90	90	105	105	105	105	105	16.67%	15
<i>Banners Gate</i>										
Rubery	32	32	32	62	62	82	82	82	156.25%	50
Yardley, Church Rd	122	122	134	136	136	139	140	140	14.75%	18
<b>Total:</b>	<b>6732</b>	<b>6509</b>	<b>6563</b>	<b>6394</b>	<b>6394</b>	<b>6417</b>	<b>6411</b>	<b>6722</b>	<b>-1.51%</b>	<b>-98</b>
<b>Ministers</b>	19	22	20	21	23	24	22	23		0
<b>Lay Leaders</b>	4	6	5	5	4	4	5	3		-1
<b>Pastorate vacant</b>	6	3	5	6	5	3	3	6		0
<b>officiating clergy</b>			1	2						

### Staffordshire Association: Southern District

Handsworth	260	258	259	280	280	265	265	to Birm	2.71%	7
Winson Green	135	113	106	106	111	111	133	136	17.70%	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>7.28%</b>	<b>27</b>

### Total Birmingham:

**7127 6880 6928 6780 6785 6793 6809 6858 -1.03% -71**

Statistics extracted from Congregational Yearbooks 1914-1920

Entries in italics are missions or Sunday schools attached to the church listed directly above.

## Appendix V: Birmingham Presbyterian Churches Communicant Statistics

<b>Birmingham Presbytery</b>	<b>1914</b>	<b>1914-15</b>		<b>1917-18</b>		<b>1918</b>	<b>1919-</b>
Broad Street	120	116	108	105	105	-15	-12.50%
Camp Hill	158	168	173	186	176	18	11.39%
Handsworth, St. George's 76	83	113	99	119	43	56.58%	
Moseley, St. Columba's 116	115	105	114	96	-20	-17.24%	
Nechells, Long Acre 131	124	127	125	132	1	0.76%	
Erdington, Summer Lane 76	76	84	85	92	16	21.05%	
<b>Total Birmingham English Presbyterians:</b>	<b>677</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>6.35%</b>
<b>Welsh Presbyterian (Calvinistic Methodist):</b>							
Suffolk Street 140			165		25	17.86%	
Including <i>Robert Road, Small Heath</i>							
Hockley Hill 100			100		0	0.00%	
<b>Total Welsh Presbyterians:</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10.42%</b>
<b>Total Presbyterians:</b>	<b>917</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>979</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>-21.48%</b>

Source: communicant figures from the Official Handbook of the Presbyterian Church of England

## Appendix VI: Birmingham Churches of Christ Membership Statistics

<b>Church of Christ</b>	<b>1913</b>	<b>1914</b>	<b>1915</b>	<b>1916</b>	<b>1917</b>	<b>1918</b>	<b>1919</b>	<b>1920</b>
Anderton Street	80	77	81	78	no	65	59	60
Bournville	101	104	108	108	stats	120	125	113
Erdington	39	44	46	51		38	36	36
Geach St./Summer Lane	257	214	214	218		208	210	201
Great Francis Street	114	122	122	121		89	90	108
Moseley Road	337	349	318	307		329	313	318
Sparkhill (Stratford Rd.)	255	246	245	236		228	235	232
<b>Total Birmingham</b>	<b>1183</b>	<b>1156</b>	<b>1134</b>	<b>1119</b>		<b>1077</b>	<b>1068</b>	<b>1068</b>

Source: Churches of Christ Yearbooks, 1913-1920.

## Appendix VII: Birmingham Wesleyan Church membership statistics

	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919
<b>XVIII Birmingham &amp; Shrewsbury District:</b>							
Birmingham (Moseley Rd)	972	994	1051	1065	1046	1045	1034
Birmingham Mission	1553	1559	1620	1572	1533	1509	1483
Birmingham (Belmont Row)	1037	1072	1087	1087	1058	1069	1070
Birmingham (Aston Park)	424	405	382	363	345	345	351
Birmingham (Sutton Park)	692	746	764	746	757	760	740
Birmingham (Wesley)	1553	1538	1526	1518	1479	1419	1389
Students	65	60	54				
Birmingham (Islington)	897	914	917	850	850	816	780
Birmingham (Bristol Road)	666	670	673	692	730	750	736
<b>Total Birmingham</b>	<b>7859</b>	<b>7958</b>	<b>8074</b>	<b>7893</b>	<b>7798</b>	<b>7713</b>	<b>7583</b>

Source: Minutes of several conversations at the Yearly Conference of the people called Methodists, 1913-1919

## Appendix VIII: Birmingham Primitive Methodist membership statistics

	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919
<b>West Midlands District</b>						
Birmingham 1, Bristol Hall	320	310	295	425	425	430
Birmingham 2, Lord Street	230	235	235	240	240	230
Birmingham 3, Regent Street	440	445	450	350	350	350
Birmingham 4, Jenkins Street	266	300	240	240	250	260
Birmingham 5, Sparkhill	300	310	320	335	360	360
Birmingham Mission	310	335	340	340	340	350
<b>Total Birmingham</b>	<b>1866</b>	<b>1935</b>	<b>1880</b>	<b>1930</b>	<b>1965</b>	<b>1980</b>

Source: The Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Church, 1914-1919

## Appendix IX: Birmingham United Methodist Church membership statistics

Yearbook Statistics:	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	socs
<b>I. Birmingham &amp; Dudley District</b>								
Birmingham, Unett Street	351	349	354	334	No	302	297	3
Birmingham, Edgbaston	576	565	535	547	Data	559	553	4
Birmingham, Gravelly Hill	157	170	170	174		150	150	1
Birmingham, Rocky Lane	278	268	255	237		189	181	1
Birm., Small H. & Farcroft Ave	453	439	416	448				
Birmingham, Villa Road	100	94	93	93		93	87	1
Birmingham, Small Heath						265	261	2
Birmingham, Farcroft Avenue						201	197	3
<b>Total Birmingham:</b>	<b>1915</b>	<b>1885</b>	<b>1823</b>	<b>1833</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1759</b>	<b>1726</b>	<b>15</b>

Source: Minutes of the Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1913-1919



## **Appendix X: Birmingham Congregationalists in the military (1915)**

<b>Acocks Green</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Aston, Park Road</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Bournbrook</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Carrs Lane</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Cattell Road</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Digbeth</b>	<b>436</b>
<b>Edgbaston</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Erdington</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Handsworth</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Hay Mills</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Highbury</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>King's Norton</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Ladypool Road</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Lozells</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Moseley Road</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Saltley Road</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Small Heath</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Soho Hill</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Steelhouse Lane</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Stoney Lane</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Sutton Coldfield</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Watery Lane</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Winson Green</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Wylde Green</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Yardley</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Birmingham Total</b>	<b>1244</b>

### **Churches beyond Birmingham:**

<b>Coleshill</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Knowle</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Minworth</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Olton</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Smethwick</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Total reported</b>	<b>1306</b>

**Source: 55th Annual Report of the Warwickshire Congregational Union, 18/3/1915, p.14**

**Note: no returns were received from the following Birmingham churches: Rubery, Sparkhill, Westminster Road, Wheeler Street (Welsh), Wylde Green.**

**Appendix XI: Sunday School teachers & scholars in the military (1914-5) – Baptists**

Acocks Green	28
Aston Manor	17
Beech Lane	1
Bonner Memorial, Hamstead Road	34
Brookfields	3
Cannon Street Memorial	8
Chester Road	14
Church of the Redeemer, Hagley Road	20
Daniell Memorial Hall, Hope Street	6
Edward Road	4
Erdington (incl. 1 female nurse)	17
Great King Street (People's Chapel)	6
Guildford Street	5
Harborne	17
Heather Road Mission	1
Highgate Park	13
Kings Heath	7
Lodge Road	3
Saltley	24
Selly Park	6
Small Heath, Coventry Road	44
Smith Street	1
Spring Hill	3
Stechford	2
Stratford Road	17
Victoria Street, Bordesley Green	26
Wycliffe	38
<b>Birmingham Total:</b>	<b>365</b>
Shirley	2
Smethwick	12
<b>Total Reported:</b>	<b>379</b>

**Source:** *The Birmingham Sunday School Union, Monthly Record*

**Notes:**

**a) no returns were received from the following Birmingham churches:**

Alcester Street, Christchurch (Aston), Handsworth (Albert Road), Heneage Street, John Bright Street (Welsh), Moseley (Oxford Road), Northfield.

**b) Apparent double entries:** January 1915 magazine lists 31 for Coventry Road Baptist & 11 for Highgate Baptist. March 1915 magazine lists 11 for Highgate Baptist & May 1915 magazine lists 44 for Small Heath Baptist. The more recent figures have been used on the assumption that they supersede rather than add to the earlier ones reported.

**Appendix XII: Sunday School teachers & scholars in the military (1914-5) –  
Congregationalists**

<b>Church</b>	<b>Teachers &amp; scholars in the military</b>
Acocks Green	9
Aston, Park Road	38
Carrs Lane	7
Cattell Road	16
Dartmouth Street	7
Digbeth Institute	4
Edgbaston	1
Handsworth	6
King's Norton	20
Lozells, Wheeler Street	14
Moseley Road	28
Ladypool Road	8
Saltley Road	10
Arden Road	5
Small Heath, Coventry Road	6
Soho Hill	34
Lodge Road	5
Steelhouse Lane (Ebenezer)	32
Stoney Lane	3
Watery Lane	8
Westminster Road	19
Winson Green	8
Yardley, Church Road	15
<b>Total Birmingham City</b>	<b>303</b>
Brierley Hill	8
Halesowen	5
Minworth	1
Olton	6
Smethwick	5
Wilnecote	2
<b>Total Reported</b>	<b>330</b>

**Source:** *The Birmingham Sunday School Union, Monthly Record*

**Note:** no returns were received from the following Birmingham Congregational churches: Erdington, Hay Mills, Highbury (Graham Street), Rubery, Sparkhill, Sutton Coldfield, Wheeler Street (Welsh), Wylde Green.

**Appendix XIII: Sunday School teachers & scholars in the military (1914-5) –  
Presbyterians, Methodists and others**

**Birmingham Churches**

	Presby	Wes M	Prim M	Utd Meth	others
Acocks Green Wesleyan		3			
Aston Villa Wesleyan:		13			
Bloomsbury Institution					4
Bristol Hall:			7		
Bristol Road Wesleyan		19			
Camp Hill Presbyterian:	4				
Central Hall Wesleyan:		3			
City Road Wesleyan:		5			
Conference Hall:			4		
Coventry Road Wesleyan:		20			
Dudley Road UMC:				16	
Erdington Presbyterian:	1				
Erdington Wesleyan:		3			
Floodgate Street Medical Mission:					4
Greet Primitive Methodist:			5		
Knutsford Street Wesleyan:		11			
Lichfield Road Wesleyan:		32			
Lord Street Primitive Methodist:			7		
Moseley Presbyterian:	12				
Muntz St UMC:				19	
New Spring St UMC:				2	
New Town Row Wesleyan:		8			
Peel Street Wesleyan:		19			
Prince Albert street UMC:				7	
Sparkhill Wesleyan:		15			
Stirchley UMC:				7	
Unett Street UMC:				2	
Villa Road UMC:				19	
Witton Wesleyan:		18			
<b>Birmingham Totals</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>8</b>

**Churches beyond Birmingham:**

Brierley Hill Primitive Methodist 10

**Total Reported 17 169 33 72 8**

**Source: The Birmingham Sunday School Union: Monthly Record.**

**Note: No returns were received from the following Presbyterian churches:**

Broad Street, Handsworth (St. George's), Nechells, Suffolk Street (Welsh), Hockley Hill (Welsh).

## **Bibliography**

### **1. Primary Sources**

#### **1.1 Archives**

##### **Birmingham City Library - Archives & Local Collection (BCA):**

these were consulted prior to the relocation of the archives and local collections to the new Library of Birmingham – all references are as catalogued prior to the move:  
Journals and magazines from this library are listed separately under 1.2 below:

##### **BCA L 10.21 Evangelical Free Church Councils:**

245481 Birmingham & District Annual Report, 1912-13.

169951 Birmingham & District Official Yearbook and report, 1900-06

SOS 273626 Rees, F.A., ed., *Problems of tomorrow, social, moral and religious.*

*Lectures in "After the war campaigning" arranged by Birm. & District FCC, 1918*

Arch ZZ65B 531727 West Midlands Fed of EFC Councils, Minute Book, 1910-33

206182 West Midlands Fed of EFC Councils, Official Yearbook and directory, 1907-8 (1<sup>st</sup>) & 1910-11.

L18 192023 EFC Birmingham Congress, 1906, *Free Church Chronicle*, 3&4/1906.

##### **BCA Birmingham YMCA:**

LF13.6 189286 Leaflets, posters, programmes, 1914-18

##### **BCA Adult Schools & Friends Institutes:**

###### **Midland Adult School Union:**

MS272/I/1 Minute Book, 1884-1894

MS272/I/6 Minute Book, 16/11/1911-13/12/1917

MS272/I/7 Minute Book, 4/12/1917-14/10/1920

MS272/I/17 Extension Committee Minute Book, 1911-1/10/14 & Musical Committee 1922-26

MS272/I/18 'One and All' Committee Minute Book, 28/7/03-12/6/19 & Secretaries Committee 10/28

MS272/I/22 Women's Schools Committee Minute Book, 1911-1917

MS272/I/36 Scrapbook containing photographs and news cuttings, 1924-1932

L48.76 222104 MASU Annual Reports 1908-10

L48.76 222103 *MASU Yearbook*, 1909-1918

LF48.76 221169 MASU collection of circulars, programmes etc. 1908 +.

**Severn Street First Day Schools, Class XIV:**

MS272/II/42 Severn Street First Day School, Class XIV, folder of miscellaneous items.

B.Col 48.11 *The Story of the Severn Street & Priory First Day Schools, Birmingham* by William White (London/Birmingham: 1895)

**Floodgate Street, Adult EM School (branch of Severn Street):**

MS272/III/1, Photos and news cuttings, 1887-1911

**Clark Street Adult School:**

MS272/IV/1 Minute Book, 1875-1883.

**Other Adult School & Friends' Institute items:**

L48.76 266826 Smith, E, *Glowing facts and personalities, Birmingham Adult School movement & William White*, 1916.

MS 1722/3/1 Friends Institute: Moseley Road and Branches, United Pastoral Committee, 25/1/1916-22/3/1937.

MS1722/5/3 First Day Adult School, Friends Hall & Institute, Moseley Road, No.2 Register, 2/6/1916-24/6/1917.

MS1722/5/4 Minute Book for Division 2A, Senior Division Class 15, 5/2/1915-28/2/1925.

MS1722/5/5 Class XV, Highgate Branch, First Day Adult School, Friends Hall & Institute, Moseley Road, Division 10A, Roll Book, 1909-1914

MS1722/5/7 List of class members serving overseas, with a roll of honour of those killed [1914-18]

LF 18.6 521010 Misc Leaflets, Moseley Road Friends Institute, 1916-1952:

LP48.76 1017678 "*Memories and Minutes*", Friends Hall and Institute Moseley Road 1898-1983.

LP18 Farm Street Hockley, *Number 322, The Friends Hall & Institute*, John CV Richardson (3/1999).

**BCA Brotherhood Movement:**

Birm Inst F/2 215072 Birmingham & Midland Union of PSA, ABC, Brotherhood, (Sisterhood) & Kindred Societies, Reports for 1908, 1909 & 1910 (1909-1911).  
L10.061 237440 Birmingham & Midland Brotherhood Federation, Year Books, 1912, 1913, 1915 & 1923.

**National Brotherhood Council, Birmingham Conference, 1913:**

L38.3 254378, *The Brotherhood Movement, a New Protestantism*. Presidential Address delivered to the National Brotherhood Conference, Birmingham, 22/9/1913 by the Rev C. Silvester Horne, MA, MP, National President, 1913-14 (Brotherhood Publishing House, London).

L10.06 246444 *Souvenir Handbook, National Brotherhood Conference*, Birmingham, September 1913 National Brotherhood Council (Brotherhoods, P.S.A.s, Sisterhoods and kindred societies) 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Birmingham, September 20<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>, 1913. Ed: Fred A Rees.

**BCA Baptist Churches:****West Midland Baptist Association:**

B18.21 West Midland Baptist Association Yearbook (from 1915)

Birm Inst C/18 262938 *A Message to the Anxious in Time of War* (WMBA)

Birm Inst C/18 262939 *A Message to the Bereaved in Time of War* (WMBA)

**BC2 Graham Street/Cannon Street Baptist Church:**

/6 Communion Register 1916-1943

/8 Church Book 1781-1922 (incl. Membership list)

/26 Church Meeting minutes, 1912-1924

/34 Deacons Meeting Minutes 1913-1921

/52 Sunday School Secretary's Reports 1894-1916

/57 Sunday School Teachers minutes 1908-1916.

**BC3 Moseley Road Baptist Church, Highgate Park:**

/6 Church Meeting Minutes 1915-22

/8 Deacons Meeting Minutes 1906-4/1916

/9 Deacons Meeting Minutes 5/1916-1928

/11 Membership Roll 1872-1933.

**BC8 Bordesley Green Baptist Church, Victoria Street:**

/2 Church Meeting Minutes (1913-1925).

/39 Souvenir Booklet of Sunday School Jubilee, 1879-1924

/53 Membership Roll 1891-1986

Birm Inst. C/19 Manual 1910, Report & Accounts for 1909

Birm Inst. C/19 Manual 1911, Report & Accounts for 1910

Birm Inst. C/19 Manual 1912, Report & Accounts for 1911

**BC13 Moseley Baptist Church, Oxford Road:**

/3/1/1/5 Deacons Meeting Minutes 9/1913-2/1917 (Box 5)

/3/1/1/6 Deacons Meeting Minutes 3/1917-11/1919 (Box 5)

/4/1/4 Church Meeting Minutes 11/1912-1/1920 (Box 4)

/4/2 Sunday School Committee minutes 1888-1940 (Box 4)

/4/2/2/1/3 Management Committee minutes 1910-1915 (Box 1)

/4/2/2/1/4 Management Committee minutes 1915-1923 (Box 1)

/6/3 Miscellaneous Annual Reports & memorabilia (Box 9)

L18.2 242332+ *Church Year Books*, 1911-1929

Birm Inst E/12 508699 A.H. Powell, *Jubilee of Moseley Baptist Church 1888-1938*.

L18.2 261312 Literary & Social Guild programmes 1913-1926.

P18.2 K.M. Jones, *Moseley Baptist Church, 1888-1988* (1988)

**BC14 Lodge Road Baptist Church, Hockley:**

/3/1/1/2 Deacons Meeting Minutes 18/5/1903-20/7/1918

/3/1/1/3 Deacons Meeting Minutes 31/8/1918-23/3/1924

/4/1/1/4 Members Meeting Minutes 8/7/1903-24/3/1915

/4/1/1/5 Members Meeting Minutes 15/4/1915-15/4/1919

/4/1/1/6 Members Meeting Minutes 1919-1929

**BC15 Wycliffe Baptist Church, Bristol Road:**

L18.2 212194 Yearbooks, Reports and Statistics, 1897-1916 [1898-1917]

L18.2 242185 Jean Ross, ed., *Wycliffe Baptist Church, Bristol Road, Birmingham, A Jubilee record, 1861 to 1911* [1911]

Birm Inst D/35 260816 Wycliffe BC Sunday School, Bristol Road, Sunday School Anniversary, Manual for 1915 [May 1915]

**BC18 Erdington Baptist Church:**



/3/1/1/2 Deacons Meeting Minutes 2/6/1908-31/3/1914 (Box 3)  
/3/1/1/3 Deacons Meeting Minutes 14/10/1919-15/5/1930 (Box 3)  
/4/1/1/1 Church Meeting Minutes 10/4/1878-26/3/1929 (Box 1)  
/5/1/2/1 Sunday School teachers Meeting minutes 1910-1924 (Box 9)

/5/4/1 *PSA 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary illuminated address with photos of members & letters of appreciation by members of the forces serving overseas* (1918) (Box 9)

/6/3/1 *Erdington (Six Ways) Baptist Church Birmingham, 1878-1978* by Margaret Fenter (1978) (Box 7) also at /8/1/16 (Box 7)

/7/1/4 Photo of First World War Memorial (c.1920) (Box 3)

/8/1/1 Scrapbook incl. early correspondence 1878-1986 (Box 6)  
Miscellaneous Material - Bundle of Papers, (Box 6)

**BC19 Hamstead Road Baptist Church, Handsworth:**

/3/1/1/2 Deacons Minutes 1913-1926 (Box 7)  
/4/1/1/1 Church Members Minutes 1882-1928 (Box 9)

**Bearwood Baptist Church:**

LF18.2 BEA Kemp, Ronald C., *A century of Christian witness, Bearwood Baptist Church 1898-1998* (Bearwood: 1998)

**Carter Lane Baptist Church, Lapal:**

p18.2 Carter Lane Baptist Church, 1787-1939, proposed new church and Sunday Schools [1939]

**Church of the Redeemer, Hagley Road (& Brookfields Mission Hall, Ellen Street)**

L18.2 217203 Handbook of the Church of the Redeemer, 1900, 1902, 1904-20.  
L18.2 217212 Owen, J.M. Gwynne, *The Chronicles of our church*, extracts from the records of the Church of the Redeemer, Edgbaston (Birmingham: 1902)

L18.22 213321 Brookfields Mission Hall Annual Report, 1905-1930 (pub 1906-1931)

L19.91 HUT Hutton, T.W., *Church of the Redeemer 1882-1957* (Birmingham: 1957)

**Edward Road Baptist Church, Balsall Heath:**

Lp18.2 *Edward Road Baptist Church, 1872-1972, Centenary Souvenir* [1972]

**Four Oaks/Little Sutton Baptist Church:**

L18.2 FOU A *history of Four Oaks Baptist Church, founded in 1774 as Little Sutton Baptist Church*, researched and written for Millennium 2000 by Isobel Holder and Don Checkland, text prepared for publication by Pat Newman (2001)

**Hall Green Baptist Church:**

p18.2 Ram, R.W., *Hall Green Baptist Church, a history of the church (1914-1975)*

**Heneage Street Baptist Church:**

L18.2 529362, Langley, A.S., *One Hundred Years, History of HSBC*, Leaflet No.128 (9/41)

**Kings Heath Baptist Church:**

L18.2 307878 *Chapel Manual*, 1916

**Northfield Baptist Church:**

p18.2 *The first seventy-five years, 1912-1987* (1987)

**The People's Chapel, Great King Street:**

LP18.22 PEO *The People's Chapel Great King Street, Birmingham, past, present, future* (c.1965)

Birm Inst A/4 210192 People's Chapel Diamond Jubilee, 1848-1908, book of quotations (1908).

**Selly Park Baptist:**

Birm Inst E/13 480035 Selly Park Baptist Church, Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, 1878-1938 [1938]

**Spring Hill Baptist Church:**

Spring Hill Baptist Church, Birmingham: *Jubilee Celebrations, 1887-1937*, March 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>, 1937, Souvenir Publication

**Stratford Road Baptist Church, Sparkbrook:**

Birm Inst C/25 376101 Knight, W.H., *Stratford Road, 1879-1929, a souvenir booklet issued in connection with the jubilee celebration of Stratford Road Baptist Church, Sparkbrook, Birmingham 1929.*

Lp24 254509 Sparkbrook Men's Meeting Summary of Gen Secs Annual Report, 1913 etc [1914 etc]

L18.2 WIL Williams, Edward, H.B., *Building for the future, the story of the Baptists in Sparkbrook, Stratford Road Baptist Church, Birmingham 1879-1979* (1979)

**Warley Baptist Church:**

LP18.2 WAR England, Eileen, *From Beech Lanes to Warley, 1798-1935, the story of the origins of Warley Baptist Church* [1996]

**BCA Congregational Churches:**

L18.1 220343 Annual Report of the Warwickshire Congregational Union, 1902, 1903-07, 1915-1919.

**Congregational Union Annual Assembly, Birmingham, 10/1916:**

D/15 267000 Official Programmes

D/15 267001 Handbook & Souvenir

**CB2 Birmingham Congregational Board:**

/3 Executive Committee Minutes 1905-1915

**CC1 Carrs Lane Congregational Church:**

/15 Church Meeting Minutes 1907-1915

/83 Young Men's Sunday School Class Minute Book 6/2/06-9/11/19

/100 Deacons Meeting minutes 1912-1918

/101 Deacons Meeting minutes 1918-1924

/110 Church Meeting Minutes 1915-1924

/123 Quarterly Teachers Meetings 1908-1935

/124 Sunday School Committee 1913-1920

/98 Church Book, 1746-1939

/141 Carrs Lane Manual 1894-1900

/142 Carrs Lane Manual 1903

/143 Carrs Lane Manual 1910

/144 Carrs Lane Manual 1914

/145 Carrs Lane Manual 1919

**CC2 Digbeth Institute (Congregational):**

/2 Management Committee minutes 31/12/1907-1933

/5 Workers Meeting Minute Book 19/2/1908-14/11/1916

/6 Deacons Meeting minutes 16/2/1917-28/4/24

/10 Roll of Church Members

/11 Digbeth Fellowship Minute Book 5/3/1909-14/11/1926.

Birm Inst A/4 197972A Carrs Lane Church Extension Scheme: Proposed Institute in Digbeth c.1907

**CC3 Edgbaston Congregational Church, Francis Road:**

/2 Deacons Meeting Minutes 1907-19, 1923-28

/23 Manuals 1911-1916.

/25 James, W.A., *The Story of Francis Road, 1856-1956* (Edgbaston Cong. Ch.: 1956)

**CC5 Erdington Congregational Church, High Street:**

/17 Church Meeting Minutes 1912-1932

/21 Deacons Meeting Minutes 1910-1928

/94 Erdington Men's Brotherhood minute book 1914-1933

/103 Church Manuals, 1901-41

/119 News cuttings relating to church & congregation, 1907-76

**CC7 Union Chapel, Union Row, Handsworth:**

/5 Church Meeting Minutes 1912-22

/12 Deacons Meeting Minutes 1905-1917

/13 Deacons Meeting Minutes 1917-1927

LF18 286530 Newspaper cuttings relating to Birmingham Chapels and churches collected by George H. Osborne (1895-1906)

**CC9 Lozells Congregational Church, Wheeler Street:**

/5 Church Meeting Minutes, 27/7/1910-2/5/1928

/16 Deacons Meeting Minutes 28/4/1908-2/5/1916

/17 Deacons Meeting Minutes 30/5/1916-28/8/1923

/35 Church Manual/Annual Report, 1900-01, 1912-16.

**CC10 Small Heath Congregational Church, Coventry Road:**

/8 Church Meeting Minutes 1912-1922

/16 Deacons Meeting Minutes 1918-1925.

/49 Pleasant Sunday afternoon attendance book 1913-14

/50 Pleasant Sunday afternoon attendance book 1915-17

/51 Pleasant Sunday afternoon attendance book 1918-21

**CC11 Westminster Road Congregational Church, Birchfields, Handsworth:**

/4 Church Meeting Minutes 1913-1925

/10 Deacons Meeting Minutes 1912-1916.

/19 Printed order of memorial service for those who died in the Great War (6/6/1920)

**CC12 Moseley Road Congregational Church, Balsall Heath**

/5 Church Meeting Minutes 25/2/1885-28/3/1923

/7 Deacons Meeting Minutes 23/3/1899-29/12/1915.

L18.1 264501 Moseley Road Congregational Church Manuals, 1891/2-1916

Lp18.1 299745 Diamond Jubilee Booklet, 1862-1922

L18.1 323017, Anniversary of Sunday Schools, 1900+

LF18.1 481585 Miscellaneous leaflets, 1907+

**CC13 Yardley Congregational Church, Church Road**

/2 Church Meeting Minutes 23/1/1900-28/7/1925

**CC14 Sparkhill Congregational Church**

/8 News cuttings, photos & memorial service for Rev. J. Bolton Potts, Minister 1913-1933. [1889]-1946.

**CC15 Watery Lane Congregational Church:**

/1 Church Meeting Minutes 31/12/13-3/14 & Deacons Meeting Minutes 1/1913-4/15.

/2 Church & Deacons Meeting Minutes 4/1915-12/1920.

**CC18 Lodge Road Institute and Mission Hall:**

/1 Souvenir of the 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of Lodge Road Institute and Mission Hall (17/3/1904)

**CC19 Winson Green Congregational Church:**

/1 Printed History [c.1955]

**CC20 Kings Norton Congregational Church, Watford Road:**

/1 Smith, R.A., ed., *Kings Norton United Reformed Church – 70 years at Watford Road* (1974).

**CC21 Elmwood Congregational Church:**

/13 Potter, Derek, *The Vision, Elmwood's Pilgrim Journey* [1802-1996] (1996)

**CC30 Ladypool Road Mission Hall (Congregational):**

/1 Executive Committee & Church Meeting Minutes 6/5/1908-9/4/1920.

/19 Stokes, B. *The History of Ladypool Road Congregational Church and (the 'mother church') Moseley Road Congregational Church* [1988]

D/35 Birm Inst 323020 Sparkbrook Gospel Mission, Ladypool Road, Birmingham, Report & statement of accounts for 1900.

**CC31 Aston Park Congregational Church:**

Deacons Meeting Minutes 22/9/1892-11/12/1919 (Box 2).

**CC35 Soho Hill Congregational Church:**

/7 Soho Hill Golden Jubilee Brochure, 1879-1929

/8 Soho Hill Diamond Jubilee Brochure, 1879-1939

**CC36 Sutton Coldfield, Park Road:**

Church Meeting Minutes, (Box 7), 3/7/1901-23/3/16 & 11/5/1916-3/10/29 (Box 1)

Deacons Meeting Minutes 1895-1916 & 1916-1929 (Box 3)

**CC38 Wylde Green, Highbridge Road:**

Church Meeting Minutes 1/1913-12/1929 (Box 3)

Deacons Meeting Minutes, 3/1911-4/1922 (Box 3)

Sunday School leaders minutes 1898-1904 (Box 4), 1904-1910 & 1911-17 (Box 3).

L18.1 848249 *Wylde Green United Reformed Church, 75 years, 1900-1975*

**BCA Presbyterian Church of England:**

PB1/5 Birmingham Presbytery Minutes 1919-1930

PB 1/15 Birmingham Presbyterian Office Bearers Association minutes, 1912-22

PB 1/16 *Official Handbook of the Presbyterian Church of England: 1917/18 & 1919/20*

**PC1 Camp Hill Presbyterian Church (1865-1947):**

/12 List of members

/26 Sessions Minute Book 1889-1899

/27 Sessions Minute Book 1900-1914

/28 Sessions Minute Book 1914-1929

/31 Management Committee minutes 17/11/1879-1894

/32 Management Committee minutes 1894-1918

/36 Communicants Roll Book, 1906-1916

/37 Communicants Roll Book, 1917-1932

/51 printed manuals, books and accounts 1869-1916:  
Annual Reports, 1891-1917

United Presbyterian Church, Camp Hill, Birmingham, Trustees Minute Book,  
2/5/1870-19/9/1876 (transferred to minute book of the Committee of Management)  
Committee of Management Meetings 8/3/1918 – 11/10/1934

**PC2 Broad Street Presbyterian Church**

/5 Sessions Minute Book, 4/1875-3/1885 & 10/1898-9/1931

/6 Sessions Minute Book, 3/1886-10/1898

/9 Management Committee Minutes 1903-1909

/10 Management Committee Minutes 1910-1917

/11 Management Committee Minutes 1917-1923

/15 Communion Roll, 1851-1969

/28 Correspondence, minutes & agenda of managers and annual meetings 1911-1914

/37 Printed programme for and leaflet advertising Grand Scottish Bazaar, 1906.

Held in Masonic Hall, New Street, 6-8/12/1906.

/38 Notes on the History of the Church [c.1950]

**PC4 Erdington Presbyterian Church, Holly Lane:**

/1 Management Committee Minutes 1911-1915

Erdington Interim Session Minutes 7/1910-7/1915

/7 Printed annual reports 1919-49

**PC6 Moseley Presbyterian Church (St. Columba's), Chantry Road:**

/5 Sessions Minutes 1892-1914

/6 Sessions minutes 1914-1917

/7 Sessions minutes 1918-1944

/8 General meeting of Congregational Minutes and reports 1917-1929

/9 Management Committee minutes 1893-1908

/10 Management Committee minutes 1908-1916

/11 Management Committee minutes 1916-1926

/17 Church membership roll, 1896-1950

/24-39 Misc Correspondence & papers, 1899-1920.

LF18.5 389390 Moseley Presbyterian Church, accounts, 1911, 1924-1960

Lp18.5 517953 Coventry, J, *Moseley Presbyterian Church, Chantry Road,*

*Birmingham: a retrospect, 1893-1940* (1940)

Lp18.5 663967 *1896-1971, 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Presbyterian Church of England, Chantry Road, Moseley, Birmingham 13* (1971)

**PC7 Long Acre Presbyterian Church, Nechells:**

Minutes of Managers Court, 1/1906- 20/6/1918

Birm Inst D/33 220350-53 Annual Statement of Accounts, 1904 -1907 (1905-1908)

**BCA Methodist Churches:**

**MA2 West Midlands District**

Primitive Methodist Quarterly Guide to the Birmingham Circuits:

/25 Jan-Mar 1912

/26 Jul-Sept 1912

**MA3 Birmingham United Methodist Council:**

/1 United Methodist Directory of the Birmingham Churches, 30/1-24/2/1910 & 5/5-28/7/1912

**MB4 Belmont Row (Birmingham East) Circuit (Wesleyan)**

/45 Circuit Sunday school council minutes 1912-1944

/74/1-27 Plans & Directories (Belmont Row Circuit) 1910-1916

/75/1-19 Plans & Directories (Belmont Row Circuit) 1916-1921

**MB5 Wesley Circuit (Wesleyan)**

/14 Circuit schedule book 1913-1925 (also contains news cutting re: erection of war memorial in Aston Villa church)

**MB9 Moseley Road Circuit: (Wesleyan)**

/21 Moseley Road Methodist Circuit Jubilee, 1888-1938 (Leaflet)

/22 Moseley Road & Sparkhill Methodist Circuit Birmingham, Centenary 1888-1988 (Moseley Road Wesleyan Methodist Church 1872-1940, Sparkhill Primitive Methodist Church, 1894-1954).

**MB10 Birmingham Mission (Wesleyan)**

/104 News cuttings, notices, circulars re: work of Birmingham Mission & Central Hall

/105 -132 Birmingham Mission Annual Reports 1902-1975



**MC2 Saltley Methodist Church, Alum Rock Road (Wesleyan)**

/14 Brotherhood meeting minutes 1911-27

*/37 Souvenir Handbook, Saltley Methodist Church Centenary, 1888-1988*

**MC26 Central Hall, Corporation Street (Wesleyan)**

/13 Register of members, [c.1900-1950]

/14 Sunday School Minute Book, 1893-1934:

/18 Sunday School Register, 7/1894-12/1900 & 1-6/1925

/19 Local Secretaries Record Book of the Central Wesleyan Sunday School

2/10/1892-1962.

/99 Special service for Intercession and memorial in connection with the War in South Africa, 13/2/1900. Rev FW Wiseman presiding

/104 Hymns for Methodist ecumenical Conference, public meeting in the Town Hall, Birmingham, 19/9/01

/116 Hymns to be used at the parade Service of the Birmingham Battalion of the Boys' Brigade, Whit-Sunday, 1904.

/129 Birmingham at Prayer! Fourth Anniversary of the declaration of war, Sunday August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1918, United Intercessory Service in the Victoria Square.

/130 Wesleyan Methodist Thanksgiving Service, Central Hall Birmingham, Nov 12<sup>th</sup>, 1918.

/548 Volume of news cuttings, mostly relating to opening of Central Hall, c.1900-1906

/549 Certificate presented to Fred Luke Wiseman BA, on the occasion of his setting a foundation stone in the New Central Hall, Tues 16/7/1901.

/575 Trustees Correspondence, 1911-20.

/578 Wesley Guild – record book of the work of the look-out committee 1914-15

**MC29 Coventry Road Methodist Church, Small Heath (Wesleyan)**

/24/1-2 Photo & transcript of War Memorial removed from Coventry Road Methodist Church in 1961.

**MC42 Asbury Memorial Church, Holyhead Road, Handsworth (Wesleyan)**

*/10 Asbury Memorial Church, "100 years of witness" 1873-1973*

Birm Inst D/46 510992 Asbury Memorial Wesleyan Methodist Church, Handsworth

Order of service on the occasion of the unveiling of a Memorial Reredos in memory of those associated with the above church who fell in The Great War, Sat 9/7/1921

**MC47 Lichfield Road Methodist Church, Aston (Wesleyan)**

/16 Aston Brotherhood Minutes 1913-1924

**MC51 Lozells Methodist Church, Lozells Street, Aston (Wesleyan)**

/16 *Lozells Street Wesleyan Mission, Aston Manor, Birmingham, Wesleyan Methodist conference, 1894-1915*

/19: *Lozells Street Hall Wesleyan Mission, Aston, 33rd Anniversary of opening of the hall, Oct 1927.*

/20 *Fifty Wonderful Years – a souvenir of the Jubilee of Lozells Street Hall Mission Oct 1928*, by 3 members of the Men's class:

/21 Jubilee Celebration at Lozells Street Hall, Aston, Oct & Nov 1928

/26 *A Miracle Happens* (Diamond Jubilee of Lozells Street Methodist Mission, 1938)

/36 *1878 and all that, being a brief history of The Methodist Mission, Lozells Street Hall* and a programme of the 80th celebration (1958)

/44 order of service for opening of New Lecture Hall, Lozells Street Mission, 23/6/09.

/49 Lozells Street Mission: Aston Manor, Birmingham: Sat 23/1/1909: Programme of Stone Laying Ceremony of Men's Social Club and evening

/51 Poster: Crusade against 3 evils of the times: Men's Class, Lozells Street Hall

/52 21st Birthday of Men's Class, Lozells Street Hall: Sun 16/12.

/92-3 Miscellaneous circulars incl.: Victory Thank-offering Fund, 1920.

/95 In Memoriam, Mr J.A. Richards, 4/1/1855-31/8/1916

/96 In Memoriam, Henry Smallwood Yoxall JP, d.25/8/1936

**MC60 Summerhill Methodist Church, Monument Road, Ladywood (Wesleyan)**

/44 Manual [1882]

/45 Summer Hill Centenary: *The Summer Hill Sunday School, a brief history* (Birmingham: 1933).

**MC83 Rocky Lane Methodist Church, Nechells (United Methodist Free Church)**

/181 Rocky Lane Church, *Historical Review 1850-1900*

**MC93 Harborne Methodist Church, South Street, (Wesleyan)**

/37 Allen, Martin W., *From Chapel to Church, 150 years of Methodism in Harborne* (1989)

**MC103 Sparkhill Methodist Church (Wesleyan)**

/8 Wesleyan Methodist Church, Warwick Road, Sparkhill, 1892-1932, Celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Opening of the Church (May/June 1932)

**MC104 Washwood Heath Methodist Church, Washwood Heath Rd., Saltley (UMFC)**

/54 United Methodist Church, Washwood Heath, Birmingham, A Souvenir of the Diamond Jubilee, 20/6/1871-20/6/1931

**MC119 Small Heath Methodist Church, Yardley Green Road (Primitive Methodist)**

/6 Small Heath Methodist Church, 1892-1992, collection of personal memories of former members.

**BCA Unitarians:**

**UC2 Church of the Messiah, Broad Street:**

/93 Monthly Meeting of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of Warwickshire & the surrounding counties minutes 1893-27/2/1911

/94 Monthly Meeting of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of Warwickshire & the surrounding counties minutes 1911-1939

**BCA Birmingham Boys' Brigade:**

21.5 Ref: *Annual reports - Boys' Brigade Birmingham Battalion* (Birmingham: Boys' Brigade, Birmingham Battalion)

**BCA Birmingham Medical Mission**

Store B41.2 *Annual report - Birmingham Medical Mission 1898-1924*

**BCA Birmingham & District Boy Scouts:**

21.5 Ref: *Official year book and diary - Birmingham District Association of Boy Scouts, 1st-30th, 1910-39*

21.5: Horne, Percy W, *Fifty years of scouting in Birmingham and district* (Birmingham: 1957)

L21.5 Ref: Ilkeston, Baron, *At the sign of the Fleur-de-Lys, a record of 10 years of*

*Scout Work in Birmingham, 1908-1918* (Birmingham: 1919)

**BCA Birmingham Friends' Sunday Schools:**

F18.6 Ref: *Annual report - Friends' Sunday School Union* (Birmingham: Friends' Sunday School Union) 23rd-48th, 1913-1938

**BCA Birmingham Branch – Fellowship of Reconciliation:**

MS 640 Birmingham Fellowship of Reconciliation Account Book, Jan-June 1917.  
Lp75.9 'Our Roll of Honour' Birmingham Fellowship of Reconciliation Branch Council, n/d.

**BCA Cadbury Family Papers:**

MS 466A/248 Letter from Barrow Cadbury to his brother William from Sandringham Hotel, Hunstanton-on-Sea, reporting on a visit to the Netherlands and the outbreak of War. 4 August 1914

MS 466A/249 Passport of Barrow Cadbury, 1915-1921

MS 466A/250 Diary-journal by Barrow Cadbury of visit to France. July 1915

MS 466A/251 Letter to Barrow Cadbury concerning Independent Labour Press. June 1916

MS 466A/252-257 Letters and papers concerning donations to the Worcestershire Prisoners of War Committee and the fund for German Prisoners of War. September 1917

MS 466A/259 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, Class XV, Severn Street First Day Adult Schools, held in the Board Schools, Highgate Park, 14/1/1889.

MS 466A/260 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, Class XV, Severn Street Schools, Moseley Road branch, 1890.

MS 466A/261, cutting from *the Friend*, 18/1/1895: FFDSA Conference at Gloucester:

MS 466A/281 Press cutting on Barrow Cadbury's visit, as treasurer of the 'British Council of the Associated Churches in the British and German Empires for fostering friendly relations between the two peoples', to Berlin to address the Kaiser. *Morning Despatch*, Birmingham 14/6/13.

**BCA Birmingham Labour Churches and the Labour Movement:**

ZZ72a Birmingham Labour Church, Minute Book, No.4, 31/8/1898-10/1903,

ZZ72a Birmingham Labour Church, Minute Book No.5, 3/11/1903-8/11/1906

ZZ73a Birmingham Socialist Centre Minute Book, 5/5/1902-22/1/1912

A329.94249 LAB 963091 Birmingham Central Labour Party minutes, 6/6/1918-10/10/1919.

Lp19.9 245850 Stirchley Labour Church, syllabus of lectures for the season October

1<sup>st</sup>, 1911 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1912.

Lp19.9 257994 Stirchley Labour Church, syllabus of lectures for the session October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1913 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1914.

---

**Churches of Christ archives** (at time of consultation these archives were housed in the University of Birmingham's Special Collections – they have since been relocated to Westminster College, Cambridge and the Library of Birmingham archives)

**Birmingham Evangelistic Co-operation:**

Committee minutes 1914-1920

Annual Conference Minutes 1914-1921

**Charles Henry Street Church of Christ:**

/1 Church Register 1874 – c.1933

/2 1890 Directory

**Moseley Road, Balsall Heath, Church of Christ:**

/14 Sunday School Committee Minutes 8/12/1912-2/5/1926

/15 Sunday School Committee Minutes 4/7/1926-10/7/1938

/19 Sunday School Committee 3/9/1907-27/10/12 & Executive Committee 22/12/1912-25/5/30

**Anderton Street, Highgate, Church of Christ:**

/1 Church Meeting Minutes 1/1916-6/1947

**Erdington, Church of Christ:**

/1 Church Meeting Minutes 12/8/1908-22/4/1917

/2 Church Meeting Minutes 8/7/1917-1930

/5 Oversight Committee Minutes 28/9/1913 – 1/12/25

**Powell Street Church of Christ:**

/1 Meeting Minutes 11/1886-12/1915

**Stratford Road, Sparkhill Church of Christ:**

/1 Church Meeting Minutes 3/1898-11/1913

/2 Church Meeting Minutes 1/1914-11/1944

/6 Oversight Committee Minutes 4/1898-8/1902

/9 Oversight Committee Minutes 1/1912 – 6/1920

**Other locally held archives consulted:**

**Bournville Church of Christ** (located at Bournville United Reformed Church):  
Constitution & Roll of Membership, 30/7/1905 – present  
Church Business Meeting Minutes 30/7/1905-13/5/81  
Executive Committee becomes Oversight Committee Minutes 4/8/1905- 12/10/13  
Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes 30/10/1913-12/3/36-

**Carrs Lane Congregational Church** (located at Carrs Lane United Reformed Church):  
*Carrs Lane Manuals*, 1902-1934.

Coombs, S.M., *Carrs Lane Meeting House, A Retrospect 1898* (Birmingham)

Richards, Edith Ryley, *Private view of a public man, the life of Leyton Richards* (London: 1950)  
*Leyton Richards, 1879-1948 – booklet of obituaries and tributes* (Birmingham)

Richards, L., *The Christian's Alternative to War* (London: 1929)  
Richards, L., *The Christian's Contribution to Peace* (London: 1935)  
Richards, L., *The Crisis and world peace* (London: 1938)

*Carrs Lane Birmingham, Bicentenary celebrations, 1748-1948.*

**The People's Chapel, Hockley (Baptist):**

Church & Elders Meeting Minute Book, 22/5/1910 – 27/8/1916.  
Elders Meeting Minute Book 24/9/1916 – 23/4/1922  
Church Meeting Minute Book 4/9/1916 – 5/12/1932.  
1915 Communion attendance list.  
People's Chapel, Male Adult Bible Class – report for the year 1879.  
Sunday School Annual Reports, 1909-10, 1914-21

Boys' Life Brigade 1<sup>st</sup> Birmingham Company, fourth session 1916-17  
1<sup>st</sup> Boys' Life Brigade company orders, w/e 29/10/16 & 11/11/16

J.S. Wright, W. Ensor & W. Massey- personal letters of resignation as Sunday School teachers from Zion Chapel, Newhall Street (1848)

**Rubery Congregational Church** (located at Rubery United Reformed Church):  
Deacons & Church Meeting Minute Book, 2/1910-9/1926  
Trustees Meeting Minute Book 1880-1949.

Rubery Congregational Church, Centenary & Jubilee Celebrations, June 1953

**Stratford Road Baptist Church:**

Church Manual, 1915 & 1920

**Weoley Hill Presbyterian Church** (located at University of Birmingham special collections):

GB150 DA48 Box 3: Chetwynd Hall Presbyterian Church of England Minute Book: Congregational Meeting Book, 1922-1969, with minutes of Committee Meetings, 2/1918-11/22.

List of members, undated, stamped 'Weoley Hill Village Church'

Correspondence including list of preachers at Chetwynd Hall, Oct 1917-Mar 1918.

**Birmingham Battalion Boys' Brigade Archives:** (located at Birmingham Boys' Brigade Battalion HQ)

Birmingham BB Executive Minute Book 4/9/1916-16/1/1928 (E/M Vol 1 Box 8)

1st Birmingham BLB Company: Notes from Friends Institute Reports & Minute Books (Box 18)

The BB 8<sup>th</sup> Birmingham Company: 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday Celebration Souvenir Booklet, 1906-1927 (Box 18)

Hutton, T.W., *Church of the Redeemer 1882-1957* (Box 18)

Boys' Life Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Norton Company, minutes of committee meetings 14/5/1907- 9/9/09.

*"The Years Roll On"*, the 6<sup>th</sup> Birmingham Company, The Boys Brigade.

Lapsed Companies (File No.1) in Box 18: Diary of Eric Skinner, 1921-26, 6<sup>th</sup> BB, contains: BB Birmingham Battalion: leaflet advertising Presentation of New Colours, Town Hall, Birmingham 27/4/24, 'Dedicated to the memory of Officers and Old Boys of the Battalion who fell in the Great War, 1914-1918.'

**The British Library, London:**

PP v2501aq *The Brotherhood Year Book* 1911-1914

YD.2005a.2833: *The Challenge of Brotherhood*: Presidential address delivered by Arnold Butler JP, National President 1919-20, at Central Hall, Corporation Street,

Birmingham, Sept 1919 (National Brotherhood Council).

X.700/7051 Brotherhood Booklets No.3: *At the Cross Roads*, by Arthur Henderson  
MP ex-President National Brotherhood Council [1919]

08248 BB27: *Adult School Social Service Handbook* (London, 1914)

08365 e20: *Fellowship and Progress, report of Adult School National Conference, at  
"The Hayes", Swanwick, 29/4/-4/5/1920* (London: 1920)

**Dr Williams's Library, London:**

Report of the Warwickshire Congregational Union (incl.), 1921

Chambers, Ralph F., *The Strict Baptist Chapels of England, Vol 4: The Industrial  
Midlands* (London, 1963)

5106 Wa. 34 *The Birmingham Congregational Handbook* 1914

5106 Wa. 35 *The Birmingham Congregational Year Book* 1902

5106.Wa. 36 *Olton Congregational Church, Jubilee of the present buildings, 1901-51*

5106 Wa. 37 *LMS Triple Jubilee: The LMS & the West Midlands* (1945)

5106 Wa. 41 *Bournbrook Congregational Mission, Dartmouth Road.*

5106 Wa. 64 *1896-1946, Jubilee of the Presbyterian Church of England, Chantry  
Road, Moseley, Birmingham 13.*

**Angus Library & Archive, Regent's Park College, Oxford:**

W. Gordon Innes, *A Short History of Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church, Soho  
Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B21, founded 1737 in Cannon Street, Birmingham  
(1972)*

Rev GW Bevan, *Memoirs of Chester Road Church, Birmingham 1905-1950, Some  
personalities of the Church during the period, (1955)*

Mr E. Goodall, *Chester Road Baptist Church, Sutton Coldfield, Jubilee Souvenir,  
1905-1955.*

*The People's Chapel, Great King Street, Birmingham: 1848-1948 Centenary souvenir.*

*Selly Park Baptist Church, 1878-1938, Diamond Jubilee Souvenir.*



*Small Heath Baptist Church, Coventry Road, Birmingham 1873-1948, 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Souvenir.*

Rev. LG Stapleton, “*Born in a Cemetery,*” *A Souvenir History of Witton Baptist Church, George Road, Erdington, Birmingham 23* (1950).

**Methodist Archives, The John Rylands Library, University of Manchester:**  
MAB H715 Wesleyan Methodist Conference, Birmingham: roll of Honour & Memorial Service, Friday, July 16<sup>th</sup> 1915.

MAB H716 Wesleyan Methodist Conference, Roll of Honour & Memorial Service, July 21<sup>st</sup> 1916.

Memorial and Intercession Session, August 5, 1917.

**Labour History Archive & Study Centre, the People’s Museum, Manchester:**

**National Council of British Socialist Sunday School Unions:**

148 Potted history by Jim Simmons – extracted from the *Labour Leader*

166 National Log Book

201 List of Schools

**Worcestershire County Records Office:**

**Society of Friends:**

b898.2/1204/8/v Committee for aiding conscientious objectors to war service.

Minutes 5/5/16-19/10/19.

---

**1.2. Newspapers, Magazines & Journals: (published in Birmingham unless stated)**

*The Asbury Magazine, an illustrated monthly* Vols 1-3 (Asbury Adult Bible Class, Wesleyan, 1896-98)

*Baptist Quarterly* (Baptist Historical Society, London)

*Bible Advocate* (Churches of Christ)

*Birmingham & Midland Brotherhood Record* (10/1916) incl.: *The Brotherhood Journal* (London) Conference Number.

*Birmingham Daily Mail*

*Birmingham Daily Post*

*Birmingham Daily Press*

*Birmingham Evening Dispatch*

*Birmingham Gazette*

*The Birmingham Methodist, a monthly magazine for the promotion of circuit and connexional interest (1887)*

*Birmingham Sunday School Union: Monthly Record (1900-19)*

*Bournville Works Magazine (Cadburys)*

*The Bridegroom's Messenger (US Pentecostal)*

*British Millennial Harbinger (Churches of Christ, London)*

*British Millennial Harbinger and Family Magazine (Churches of Christ, London)*

*The Brotherhood Journal, Conference supplement, report of the 14<sup>th</sup> National Conference, Birmingham (Brotherhood Movement, London: 10/1913)*

*Brotherhood News (Birmingham & Midland Federation of Brotherhoods & Kindred Societies, 10/1912-3/1913)*

*Calendar (Church of Messiah, Unitarian, 1896-1920)*

*Carrs Lane Journal and Missionary Chronicle (1909-19)*

*Carrs Lane Missionary Chronicle (1905-08)*

*Confidence (Apostolic/Pentecostal, Sunderland/Durham: 1908-26)*

*Congregational Quarterly (London: 1923+)*

*Daily Scout: a record of events at the Imperial Scout Exhibition (7/1913)*

*Ebenezer Congregational Church Magazine (1920)*

*Ebenezer Magazine* (Ebenezer Congregational Church, 10/1892)

*Edgbaston Congregational Magazine* (5/1899)

*Edward Road Baptist Church Magazine* (8/1912-7/1914, 4/1915, 1924)

*Erdington Baptist Church Magazine* (3/1922)

*The Free Church of England Magazine* (Emmanuel Free CoE, Saltley: 8/1912)

*The Gospel Guide* (Churches of Christ: 1914-16)

*The Home Messenger* (Belmont Row Wesleyan Church Circuit: 5/1912)

*The Home Messenger* (Kings Heath Baptist Church: 9/1896 & 6-7/1927)

*Islington (St. Martin's Street) Wesleyan Sunday School, Birmingham, Old Scholars' and Teachers' Association Magazine* (annual: 1913-15 & 1917-18)

*The Labour Mail, a journal of socialism, trade unionism, political reform*  
(Birmingham Labour Representation Committee: 6/1906-7/1907)

*The Lozellian* (monthly organ of Lozells Street Wesleyan Mission, Aston: 2-3/1912)

*The Magazine of the Wesleyan Methodist Church* (London)

*The Marksman, a monthly journal of useful information for local scouts* (Birmingham & Midland Scout Magazine Union: 9/1914)

*The Messenger of the Sparkbrook Men's Meeting* (Sparkbrook Baptist, 1912-16)

*The Methodist Recorder & General Christian Chronicle* (London)

*The Midland Free Churchman* (West Midlands Federation of Evangelical Free Churches: 1898-1902)

*Midland Temperance Witness* (1901-14)

*Monthly magazine of the Presbyterian Church of England, Chantry Road, Moseley*  
(12/1914-1925)

*Monthly Messenger* (Christ Church Baptist Church, Aston: 12/1910)

*Monthly newsletter* (Broad Street Presbyterian Church, Birmingham: 6/1900-5/1901)

*Moseley Baptist Church Monthly Magazine* (1913-15)

*Moseley Road Congregational Magazine* (4/1911, 12/1912, 1/1914, 1920)

*New Central News, monthly messenger of the New Central Hall* (Wesleyan: 7/1913 & 11/1913)

*One & All, the organ of Adult Schools & PSA Classes* (MASU: 1891-94, 10/1900)

*One & All* (National Adult School Union, London: 1907-08, 1910, 1917)

*One & All, Birmingham & District Supplement* (MASU: 1903-10)

*One & All, Midland Supplement* (MASU: 1911-22)

*Our Monthly Record* (Carrs Lane Congregational Church: 1897-99)

*The Pioneer* (Birmingham Labour Church & Socialist Centre: 6/1899-2/1902)

*The P.S.A. Magazine – a journal devoted to the interest of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon classes throughout the kingdom* (Nottingham: 2/1893)

*Rotton Park Forward/Forward* (Rotton Park Independent Labour Party: 7/1912-7/1914)

*Saint George, the journal of the Ruskin Society of Birmingham* (1/1898-10/1900)

*Saint George, a national review dealing with literature, art and social questions in a broad and progressive spirit* (Saint George Press Ltd., London: 1/1901-5/1911)

*Scouting, the official organ of the Birmingham & District Association of Boy Scouts* (10/1919-12/1920)

*The Soho Forward* (Handsworth Labour & Socialist Party: 12/1913)

*The Sparkbrook Men's Meeting Quarterly Messenger* (Sparkbrook Baptist: 1917-22)

*The Spring Hill monthly messenger* (Spring Hill Baptist: 1909-14, 1919-20, 1922-24)

*Summer Hill Magazine, an illustrated monthly* Vols 1-2, 4, 7-8, 10 & 12 (Summer Hill Wesleyan Church: 1897-98, 1900, 1903-04, 1906, 1908)

*Sutton Coldfield Congregational Messenger* (7-12/1910)

*The Sutton Coldfield & Wylde Green Congregational Magazine* (1911-2/1918)

*The Swallow* (monthly journal issued by members of the Friends' Ambulance Unit, Uffculme Hospital, Birmingham: 2/1918)

*The Torch* (Kings Heath British Socialist Party: 7/1912-1/1913)

*Town Crier* (a weekly Birmingham Labour/Trade Union journal: 10/1919+)

*The Weekly Evangel* (US Pentecostal)

*Wesleyan Church Magazine* (Moseley Road Wesleyan Church circuit, 1914-1917)

*West Midlands Federation of Evangelical Free Church Councils, Record of Work & Notes* (1903-06)

*Westminster Chimes* (Young Men's Class, Westminster Road Congregational Church, Handsworth: 12/1917-4/1920)

*The Wheatsheaf* (Birmingham Industrial Co-operative Society, 1911-20)

*The Wolverhampton Worker* (Wolverhampton Trades & Labour Council, 3/1913-5/1915)

*Word and Witness* (US Pentecostal)

*Wycliffe Baptist Church Manual* (1900-11)

*Wycliffe Magazine* (Wycliffe Baptist Church: 1912-22)

*The Young Socialist* (British Socialist Sunday School Unions, Glasgow: 1903-19)

### **1.3. Annuals, Handbooks, Yearbooks, Conference reports & proceedings**

*The Thirtieth Annual Report of the Committee of the Society for the promotion of permanent and universal peace* (1846)

*Report of the speeches and general proceedings of the Great Peace Congress* (Brussels: 1848)

Edmund Fry & A.R. Scoble (eds), *Report of the proceedings of the second General Peace Congress held in Paris, August 1849* (London: 1849)

Dale & Patterson (eds), *Report of proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Council of the Presbyterian Alliance convened at Philadelphia September 1880* (USA: 1880)

*Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Baptist World Alliance* (Philadelphia: 1911)

*Proceedings of the OEcumenical Methodist Conference, held in City Road Chapel, London, September 1881* (Nashville, Tenn., USA: 1882)

*The International Congregational Council, London 1891, authorised record of proceedings* (London: 1891)

Hanson J.W., ed., *The World's Congress of Religions, the addresses and papers delivered before the parliament* (Chicago: 1894)

*The Labour Annual, 1895* (Manchester: 1894) et seq.

*The Reformers Yearbook, formerly the Labour Annual* (London: 1905, 1907, 1908)

*The Labour Yearbook, 1925* (London: 1925)

*Handbook of the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends* (Birmingham: 1908)

*The Peace Year Book, 1910* (Westminster: 1910) et seq.

*9<sup>th</sup> National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, held at St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich, March 1914* (London: 1914) et seq.

*Baptist Handbook* 1914 et seq.

*Congregational Year Book* 1914 et seq.

*The Minutes of the 95<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Church, held in Linthorpe Road Church, Middlesbrough, June 1914* et seq.

*Minutes of the Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church held in Fore Street Chapel, Redruth July, 1914,* et seq.

*Minutes of several conversations at the 171<sup>st</sup> Yearly Conference of the people called Methodists began in Leeds on Wed July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1914* et seq.

*Churches of Christ Yearbook & 69<sup>th</sup> Annual Report 1914,* et seq.

*Official Handbook of the Presbyterian Church of England 1914-15* et seq.

*British Parliamentary Papers, Session 1852-3, Population 10, 1851 Census of Great Britain* (Shannon: 1970)

*Birmingham Illustrated, Cornish's stranger's guide through Birmingham* (Birmingham)

*Cornish's Birmingham Yearbook* (Birmingham)

*Birmingham Red Book and Reference Almanack* (Birmingham)

#### **1.4. Other Primary Sources**

Appleton, Lewis, *Memoirs of Henry Richard, the Apostle of Peace* (London: 1889)

Baden-Powell, R., *Scouting for Boys* (London: 1908)

Begbie, Harold, *The Life of William Booth, vol. 2* (London: 1919/New York: 1920)

Booth-Clibborn, Arthur Sydney, *Blood against Blood* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., New York: n/d)

Brazier, Reginald J. & Sandford, Ernest, *Birmingham and the Great War, 1914-1919* (Birmingham: 1921)

Cadbury, Helen, *Charles M. Alexander: a Romance of Song and Soul-winning* (London: c.1920)

Cairns, D.S., ed., *The Army and Religion: an Enquiry into its Bearing upon the Religious Life of the Nation* (London: 1919)

Catchpool, T. Corder, *On Two Fronts: Letters of a Conscientious Objector* (London, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.: 1940)

Catchpool, T. Corder, *Letters of a Prisoner for Conscience Sake* (London: 1941)

Chalmers, T., Bulmer, R., et al., *Essays on Christian Union* (London: 1845)

Dale, A.W.W., *The Life of RW Dale of Birmingham* (London: 1902)

Dale, R.W., ed., *The Life and Letters of John Angell James* (London: 1861)

Dawson, George, *The Present War and the Causes of its Mismanagement: A speech delivered at Birmingham* (Birmingham: 1855)

Friedrichs, Hulda, *The Life of General Booth* (London: 1913)

Graham, John W., *Conscription and Conscience, a History, 1916-1919* (London: 1922)

Peake, Arthur S., *Prisoners of Hope and the Problem of the Conscientious Objector* (London: 1918)

Pole, T., *A History of the Origin and Progress of Adult Schools* (Bristol: 1816)

Rowntree J.W. & Binns, H. B., *A History of the Adult School Movement* (London: 1903)

Smith, Edward, *Glowing Facts and Personalities, chiefly associated with the Birmingham Adult School movement and the late Alderman William White, first president of the Midland Adult School Union* (London: 1916)

Ward, William, *Brotherhood & Democracy* (London: c.1911)

Wreford, Dr Heyman, *The Sin against the Soldier and the Saviour* (Exeter: n/d)

*For His Name's Sake, being a record of the witness given by members of Churches of Christ in Great Britain against militarism during the European War 1914-1918* (Heanor, Leics.: 1921)

*Library of Christian Co-operation Vol 3, the Church and International Relations* (New York: 1917)

*A Handbook for workers among boys in Birmingham* (Birmingham: [1913])

*The Tribunal Manual* (Chester: 1917)

## **2. Secondary Sources**

### **2.1. Books & chapters in collected volumes**

Ackers, Peter, 'The Churches of Christ as a Labour sect, special note', in J.M. Bellamy & J. Saville, eds., *Dictionary of Labour Biography 10* (London: 2000), pp. 199-206

Adams, Christine, ed., *Underneath the Banner, 100 years of Boys' Brigade in Cotteridge, 1907-2007* (Birmingham: 2007)



Aitken, John, ed., *Census of Religious Worship, 1851, The Returns for Worcestershire* (Worcester: 2000)

Anderson, Allan, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: 2004)

Anderson, Allan, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (London: 2007)

Argent, Alan, *The Transformation of Congregationalism, 1900-2000* (Nottingham: 2013)

Arkininstall, Paul & Bolton, Rob, *Forward!, the Birmingham Battalion of the Boys' Brigade, 1902-2002* (Walsall: 2002)

Barclay, Oliver R., ed., *Pacifism and War: When Christians Disagree* (Leicester: 1984)

Barnsby, George J., *Birmingham Working People: A History of the Labour Movement in Birmingham, 1650-1914* (Wolverhampton: 1989)

Barnsby, George J., *A History of the Wolverhampton, Bilston & District Trades Union Council 1865-1990* (Wolverhampton: 1994)

Barnsby, George J., *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country, 1850-1939* (Talybont: 1998)

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

Bebbington, D. W., *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: 1988)

Bebbington, David W., 'Baptists and politics since 1914', in Clements, K. W., ed., *Baptists in the Twentieth Century* (Didcot: 1983), pp. 76-95

Betteridge, Alan, *Deep Roots, Living Branches: A History of Baptists in the English Western Midlands* (Leicester: 2010)

Binfield, Clyde, 'A crucible of modest though concentrated experiment: Religion in Sheffield, c1840-1950' in Hugh McLeod, ed., *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities, 1830-1930* (London: 1995)

- Binfield, Clyde, ed., *The Cross and the City: Essays in Commemoration of Robert William Dale 1829-1895* (Cambridge, 1999)
- Bolton, Robin, *Boys of the Brigade, Vol.1* (Market Drayton: 1991)
- Bolton, Robin, *Boys of the Brigade, Vol.2* (Aldridge, Walsall: 1993)
- Boulton, David, *Objection Overruled* (Letchworth: 1967)
- Brady, Steve & Rowdon, Harold, eds., *For a Time Such as This: Perspectives on Evangelicalism, Past, Present and Future* (London/Milton Keynes: 1996)
- Braithwaite, Constance, *Conscientious Objection to Compulsions under the Law* (York: 1995)
- Briggs, Asa, *History of Birmingham, Vol II, Borough and City, 1865-1938* (London: 1952)
- Briggs, John H.Y., 'Elite and proletariat in Nineteenth-century Birmingham Nonconformity', in Sell, Alan P.F. (ed), *Protestant Nonconformists and the West Midlands of England* (Keele: 1996), pp. 96-98
- Brock, Peter, *Twentieth-century Pacifism* (London: 1970)
- Brock, Peter, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914* (Princeton, N.J.: 1972)
- Brock, Peter, ed., *These Strange Criminals: An Anthology of Prison Memoirs by Conscientious Objectors from the Great War to the Cold War* (Toronto: 2004)
- Brown, Callum G., *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800-2000* (London: 2001)
- Brown, Malcolm & Seaton, Shirley, *Christmas Truce: The Western Front, December 1914* (London: 2014 edition)
- Bryman, Alan, ed., *Religion in the Birmingham Area: Essays in the Sociology of Religion* (Birmingham: 1975)
- Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain, Vol. II* (London: 1999)
- Cadbury, Deborah, *Chocolate Wars* (London: 2010)

Ceadel, Martin, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-45: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: 1980)

Ceadel, Martin, 'Christian Pacifism in the era of two world wars' in W.J. Sheils, ed., *The Church and War*, Studies in Church History 20 (Oxford: 1983), pp. 391-408

Ceadel, Martin, *Semi-detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945* (Oxford: 2000)

Chinn, Carl, ed., *Birmingham: Bibliography of a City* (Birmingham: 2003)

Coutts, Frederick L., *The Better Fight, the History of the Salvation Army, Vol VI: 1914-46* (London: 1973)

Cox, Jeffrey, *The English Churches in Secular Society, Lambeth, 1870-1930* (New York/Oxford: 1982)

Currie, R., Gilbert A., & Horsley L., *Churches and Church-Goers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford: 1977)

Currie Martin, G., *The Adult School Movement* (London: 1924)

Davies, Rupert; George, A. Raymond & Rupp, Gordon, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, Vols. 3 & 4*, (Peterborough: 1983 & 1988)

Devine, T.M. & Jackson, Gordon, eds., *Glasgow vol 1: Beginnings to 1830* (Manchester, 1995)

Dekar, Paul R., *For the Healing of the Nations: Baptist Peacemakers* (Georgia, USA: 1993)

Drake, Peter & Harris, Paul, *Birmingham and the Chamberlains* (Stroud: 2007)

Ellsworth-Jones, Will, *We Will Not Fight: The Untold Story of World War One's Conscientious objectors* (London: 2008)

Finnemore, D.L., *Boys!: A Complete Manual for Workers among Boys* (London: [1925])

Fraser, W. Hamish & Mayer, Irene, eds., *Glasgow vol 2: 1830-1912* (Manchester: 1996)

Gardiner, A.G., *Life of George Cadbury* (London: 1923)

- Garnett, J., Grimley, M., Harris, A., Whyte, W., & Williams S., eds., *Redefining Christian Britain: Post-1945 Perspectives* (London: 2006)
- Gilbert, A.D., *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914* (Harlow: 1976)
- Gill, Robin, *The Myth of the Empty Church* (London: 1993)
- Graham, E. Dorothy, *Chosen by God: A List of the Female Travelling Preachers of Early Primitive Methodism* (Evesham: 2010)
- Hall, Arnold, *The Adult School Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Nottingham: 1985)
- Hennock, E.P., *Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth-Century Urban Government* (London: 1973)
- Hochschild, Adam, *To End All Wars: How the First World War Divided Britain* (London: 2011)
- Holman, Bob, *Woodbine Willie: The Unsung Hero of World War One* (Oxford: 2013)
- Hopkins, Eric, *Birmingham: The Making of the Second City, 1850-1939* (Stroud: 2001)
- Horton, Charles H. & Le Vack, Dale, ed., *Stretcher Bearer!: Fighting for Life in the Trenches* (Oxford: 2013)
- Hughes, Michael, *Conscience and Conflict: Methodism, Peace and War in the Twentieth Century* (Peterborough: 2008)
- Husselbee, Leslie & Ballard, Paul, eds., *Free Churches and Society: The Nonconformist Contribution to Social Welfare, 1800-2010* (London: 2012)
- James, W.A., *The Story of Francis Road, 1856-1956: A Short History of Edgbaston Congregational Church* (Birmingham: 1956)
- Jeal, T., *Baden-Powell* (London: 1989)
- Jordan, E. K. H., *Free Church Unity: History of the Free Church Council Movement, 1896-1941* (London: 1956)
- Joseph, Fiona, *Beatrice: The Cadbury Heiress who Gave Away her Fortune*

(Birmingham: 2012)

Kelly, T., *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Liverpool: 1992)

Kienzle, Beverly Mayne & Walker, Pamela J., eds., *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity* (California, USA: 1998)

Killingray, David & Edwards, Joel, *Black Voices: The Shaping of our Christian Experience* (Nottingham: 2007)

Killingray, David, 'The Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Movement, Revival in the West Midlands, 1875-90?' in *Revival and Resurgence in Church History* (Studies in Church History 44, 2008), pp. 262-74

Koss, Stephen, *The Pro-Boers: The Anatomy of an Anti-war Movement* (Chicago, USA: 1973)

Laity, Paul, *The British Peace Movement 1870-1914* (Oxford: 2002)

Langley, A.S., *Birmingham Baptists Past and Present* (London: 1939)

Lethbridge, J.P., *Birmingham in the First World War* (Birmingham: 1993)

Lethbridge, J.P., *More about Birmingham in the First World War* (Birmingham: 1994)

Lloyd, Martin, *Digbeth-in-the-Field, 1938-1988* (Birmingham: 1988)

Lunger, Harold, *The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell* (Missouri, USA: 1954)

Machin, G.I.T., *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain* (Oxford: 1987)

Malcomson, Keith, *Pentecostal Pioneers Remembered* (Longwood, Fla., USA: 2008)

Marks, Winifred, *George Cadbury Junior, 1878-1954: A Short Biography* (n/p: n/d)

Marshman, E.A., *A History of the Northfield Adult Education Centre, 1892-2005* (n/p: n/d)

Martin, G.C., *The Adult School Movement: Its Origin and Development*, (London: 1924)

McLeod, Hugh, 'Class, Community and Region: The Religious Geography of

- Nineteenth Century England' in Michael Hill, ed., *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 6 (London: 1973)
- McLeod, Hugh, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London: 1974)
- Mews, Stuart, 'Religious life between the wars, 1920-1940' in S. Gilley & W.J. Shiels, eds., *A History of Religion in Britain* (Oxford: 1994)
- Morris, J.N., *Religion and Urban Change, Croydon, 1840-1914* (Woodbridge: 1992)
- Mosse, George L., *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: 1990)
- Parker, Stephen, *Faith on the Home Front: Aspects of Church Life and Popular Religion in Birmingham, 1939-1945* (Bern, Switz.: 2005)
- Payne, Ernest A., *The Baptist Union: A Short History* (London: 1959)
- Peacock, Roy, 'The 1892 Birmingham Religious Census', in Alan Bryman, ed., *Religion in the Birmingham Area, Essays in the Sociology of Religion* (Birmingham: 1975), pp. 12-28
- Pearce, Cyril, *Comrades in Conscience: The Story of an English Community's Opposition to the Great War* (London: 2001)
- Peel, Albert, *These Hundred Years: A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales 1831-1931* (London: 1931)
- Phillips, Christopher, *Birmingham Votes, 1911-2000* (Plymouth: 2000)
- Powell, W. Eifion, 'The Welsh Nonconformist Diaspora', in Alan P.F. Sell, ed., *Protestant Nonconformists and the West Midlands of England* (Keele: 1996), pp. 120-125
- Price, Fred, *Moseley Presbyterian Church of England: A Candid History, 1893-1972* (Moseley: 1991)
- Pursey, Helene, ed., *Celebrating One Hundred Years of Learning and Social Justice: A History of Fircroft College of Adult Education* (Birmingham: 2009)
- Rae, John, *Conscience and Politics: The British Government and the Conscientious Objector to Military Service, 1916-1919* (London: 1970)

- Ramsbottom, B.A, *The History of the Gospel Standard Magazine*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Harpenden: 2010)
- Randall, Ian, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century* (Didcot: 2005)
- Randall, Ian & Hilborn, David, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance* (Carlisle: 2001)
- Richards, Leyton, *Christian Pacifism after Two World Wars* (London: 1948)
- Rider, Robert J., *Reflections on the Battlefield, from Infantryman to Chaplain 1914-1919*, edited by Alan C. Robinson & P.E.H. Hair (Liverpool: 2001)
- Roberts, Sian, *Birmingham, Remembering 1914-1918* (Stroud: 2014)
- Robinson, William, *What Churches of Christ Stand For* (Birmingham: 1926)
- Robinson, William, *Christianity is Pacifism* (London: 1935)
- Robbins, Keith, *The Abolition of War, the Peace Movement in Britain, 1914-1919* (Cardiff: 1976)
- Robbins, Keith, 'Protestant Nonconformists and the Peace Question' in Alan P.F. Sell & Anthony R. Cross, eds., *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century* (Carlisle: 2003), pp. 216-39
- Robbins, Keith, *England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, The Christian Church, 1900-2000* (Oxford: 2008)
- Robson, Geoff, *Dark Satanic Mills?, Religion and Irreligion in Birmingham and the Black Country* (Carlisle: 2002)
- Ruston, Alan, 'Protestant Nonconformist Attitudes towards the First World War', in Alan P.F. Sell & Anthony R. Cross, eds., *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century* (Carlisle: 2003), pp. 240-63
- Sandall R. & Wiggins A., *The History of the Salvation Army, volumes 1-5*, (Edinburgh: 1947-68)
- Sell, Alan P.F., ed., *Protestant Nonconformists and the West Midlands of England* (Keele: 1996)
- Sell, Alan P.F. & Cross, Anthony R., eds., *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century* (Carlisle: 2003)

Shaw, Jane & Kreider, Alan, eds., *Culture and the Nonconformist Tradition* (Cardiff: 1999)

Sheldon, W.C., *Early Methodism in Birmingham: A Memento of the Opening of the New Central Hall*, 1903 (Birmingham: 2003 edition)

Simmons, Jim, *Soapbox Evangelist* (Chichester: 1976)

Smith, Chris, *The Great Tipton Zeppelin Raid* (Dudley: 2016)

Snape, Michael, *God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars* (Abingdon: 2005)

Springhall, J.; Fraser, B. & Hoare, M., *Sure and Stedfast. A History of the Boys' Brigade, 1883 to 1983* (London: 1983)

Sumrall, Lester, *Pioneers of Faith* (South Bend, Indiana, USA: 1995)

Swartley, Willard M., *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Case Studies in Biblical Interpretation* (Scottsdale, Penn., USA: 1983)

Sykes, Tom, 'The Brotherhood Movement' in *Modern Evangelistic Movements* (Handbooks of Modern Evangelism, London/Glasgow/New York: 1924)

Thompson, David M., *Let Sects and Parties Fall: A Short History of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland* (Birmingham: 1980)

Thompson, David M., 'R.W. Dale and the "Civic Gospel"' in Alan Sell, ed., *Protestant Nonconformists and the West Midlands of England* (Keele: 1986), pp. 100-03

Todman, Dan, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: 2007 edition)

Tosh, John, *The Pursuit of History* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: 1991)

Tudor Jones, R., *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962* (London: 1962)

Tuffley, J.W., *Grain from Galilee: The Romance of the Brotherhood Movement* (London: 1935)

Tuffley, J.W., *The Sowers: A Present-day Romance of Fellowship* (London: 1937)



Upton, Chris, *A History of Birmingham* (Chichester: 1993/1997)

Vickrage, Harry M., *Seventy-five Years of Co-operative Endeavour: A History of the Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-operative Society Limited* (Birmingham; 1950)

Wallis, Jill, *Valiant for Peace: A History of the Fellowship of Reconciliation 1914 to 1979* (London: 1991)

Watters, A.C., *History of the British Churches of Christ* (Birmingham: 1948)

Whitworth, Robert W., *Northfield Baptist Church 1912-2012, the First Hundred Years* (Birmingham: 2012)

Wickham, E.R., *Church and People in an Industrial Society* (London: 1957)

Wilkinson, Alan, *Dissent or Conform?: War, Peace and the English Churches, 1900-1945* (London: 1986)

Williams, David, *The Birmingham Gun Trade* (Stroud: 2009 [2004])

Williams, Edward, H.B., *Building the Future: The Story of Baptists in Sparkbrook, Stratford Road Baptist Church, Birmingham, 1879-1979* (Birmingham: 1979)

Williams, Sarah, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark, c.1880-1939* (Oxford: 1999)

Wright, Anthony & Shackleton, Richard, eds., *Worlds of Labour: Essays in Birmingham Labour history* (Birmingham: 1983)

Yeo, Stephen, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis* (London: 1976)

*The Life of a Church, Lozells Congregational Church, Wheeler Street, Birmingham, 1832-1973* (Birmingham: c.1973)

*The Rays Outspringing: The Story of the Girls' Life Brigade 1902-1952* (London: 1951)

## **2.2. Journal Articles**

Ackers, Peter, "Who speaks for the Christians?" The Great War and conscientious objection in the Churches of Christ: A view from the Wigan coalfield', *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 5.3 (1993), pp. 153-67

Ackers, Peter, 'The "Protestant Ethic" and the English Labour movement: the case of the Churches of Christ', *Labour History Review*, 58:3 (1993), pp. 67-72

Ackers, Peter, "'West end Chapel, back street Bethel": Labour and capital in the Wigan Churches of Christ c.1845-1945', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 47:2 (1996), pp. 298-329

Aitken, John, "'Never before, yet never again": Birmingham in the 1851 religious census', *Birmingham Historian*, 22 (2002), pp. 24-29

Alexander, Paul, 'Historical and theological origins of Assemblies of God Pacifism' *Quaker Theology*, 12 (2005-06)

Allen, Bernard M., 'Priestley and the Birmingham riots', *Unitarian Historical Society, Transactions*, 5:2 (1931-34), pp. 113-32

Allison, Neil, 'Shakespeare's man at the front: the ministry of the Revd. William Cramb Chatteris OBE MC during the Great War (1914-1918)', *Baptist Quarterly*, 41 (2005), pp. 224-35

Allison, Neil, 'Baptist chaplains' revivalism at the front', *Baptist Quarterly*, 42 (2007), pp. 303-13

Anderson, Olive, 'The reactions of Church and Dissent towards the Crimean War', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 16:2 (1965), pp. 209-20

Anderson, Olive, 'The growth of Christian militarism in Mid-Victorian Britain', *English Historical Review*, LXXVI (1971), pp. 46-72

Anon, 'History of Spring Hill College, Birmingham, England', *The American Quarterly Register*, XII (1839), pp. 80-181

Bailey, Charles E., 'The British Protestant theologians in the First World War: Germanophobia unleashed', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 77:2 (1984), pp. 195-221

Bailey, Victor, 'Bibles & dummy rifles: The Boys' Brigade', *History Today*, (10/1983), pp. 5-9

Bartley, Paula, 'Moral regeneration, women and the Civic Gospel in Birmingham 1878-1914', *Midland History*, 25 (2000), pp. 144-61

Bebbington, David, review of Hughes, *Conscience and Conflict: Methodism, peace and war in the twentieth century* in *English Historical Review*, CXXIV (2009), pp. 750-52

Beckerlegge, Oliver A., 'The northern Bible Christians,' *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 31.2 (1957), pp. 39-43

Bell, Stuart, "'Soldiers of Christ arise": Religious Nationalism in the East Midlands

during World War I', *Midland History*, 39:2 (2014), pp. 219–35

Boggende, Bert den, 'Richard Roberts' vision and the founding of the Fellowship of Reconciliation', *Albion*, 36:4 (2004), pp. 608-35

Bourne, John, 'The Midlands and the Great War', *Midland History*, 39:2 (2014), pp. 157-62

Brock, Peter, 'The peace testimony of the early Plymouth Brethren', *Church History*, 53:1 (1984), pp. 30-45

Casey, Michael W., 'The overlooked pacifist tradition in the old paths Churches of Christ, Part I: The Great War and the Old Paths division', *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 6:6 (2000), pp. 446-60

Chapman, Diana, 'The rise and demise of women's ministry in the origins and early years of Pentecostalism in Britain', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 12.2 (2004), pp. 217-46

Clements, Keith, 'Baptists and the outbreak of the First World War', *Baptist Quarterly*, 26 (1975), pp. 74-92

Cuthbertson, Greg, 'God, Empire and War: the nonconformist conscience and militarism in Britain 1850-1900', *Theoria: a Journal of Social & Political Theory*, 65 (1985), pp. 35-48

Dedman, Martin, 'Baden-Powell, militarism and the invisible contributors' to the Boy Scout scheme, 1904-1920', *Twentieth Century British History*, 4:3 (1993), pp. 210-23

Dekar, Paul R., 'Baptist peacemakers in nineteenth century peace societies', *Baptist Quarterly*, 34 (1991), pp. 3-12

Doyle, Barry M., 'Urban Liberalism and the "Lost Generation": politics and middle-class culture in Norwich, 1900-1935', *The Historical Journal*, 38:3 (9/1995), pp. 617-34

Doyle, Barry M., 'the structure of elite power in the early twentieth-century city: Norwich, 1900-35', *Urban History*, 24:2 (1997), pp. 179-99

Fantom, Paul, 'Zeppelins over the Black Country: the Midlands' first blitz' *Midland History*, 39:2 (2014), pp. 236-54

Field, Clive, 'Keeping the spiritual home fires burning: religious belonging in Britain during the First World War', *War & Society*, 33:4 (2014), pp. 244-68

Freeman, Mark, 'The decline of the Adult School movement between the wars', *History of Education*, 39:4 (2010), pp. 481-506

Gilley, Keith, 'Gertrude von Petzold – the pioneer woman minister', *Unitarian*

*Historical Society, Transactions*, 21:1/4 (1995-98), pp. 157-72

Goodwin, Leigh, 'The Response of Early British Pentecostals to National Conscription during the Great War (1914-1918)', *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association*, 34:1 (4/2014), pp. 77-92

Green, Andy, 'The anarchy of empire: reimagining Birmingham's Civic Gospel', *Midland History*, 36:2 (2011), pp. 163-79

Hartigan, John, 'Volunteering in the First World War: the Birmingham experience, August 1914-May 1915', *Midland History*, 24:1 (1999), pp. 167-86

Hopkins, Eric, 'Industrial change and life at work in Birmingham, 1850-1914', *Midland History*, 27:1 (2002), pp. 112-29

Hughes, Michael, 'The development of Methodist pacifism, 1899-1939', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 53 (2002)

Killingray, David, 'Black Baptists in Britain, 1640-1950', *Baptist Quarterly*, 40:2 (4/2005), pp. 69-89

Mangan J.A. & Galligan, Frank, 'Militarism, Drill and Elementary Education: Birmingham nonconformist responses to conformist responses to the Teutonic threat prior to the Great War', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28:3-4 (2011), pp. 568-603

Mann, Horace, 'On the statistical position of religious bodies in England and Wales', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 18:2 (1855)

Morris, Jeremy, 'The strange death of Christian Britain: another look at the secularisation debate', *The Historical Journal*, 46:4 (2003), pp. 963-76

Randall, Ian, 'British Evangelicals and the First World War', *Anabaptism Today*, 11 (1996), pp. 9-15

Randall, Ian, 'Evangelicals, ecumenism and unity: A case study of the Evangelical Alliance', *Evangelical*, 22:3 (2004), pp. 62-71

Randall, Ian, 'Evangelicals and European integration', *European Journal of Theology*, 14:1 (2005), pp. 17-26

Ruston, Alan, 'Unitarian attitudes towards World War 1', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, 21.4 (1998), pp. 269-84

- Rutherford, J., 'Congregationalism in Birmingham', *Transactions of the Congregational History Society*, 1 (1901-04) pp. 330-44 & 368-79
- Short, Colin C., 'The Bible Christians in Birmingham', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 50.2 (1995), pp. 33-46
- Springhall, J.O., 'The Boy Scouts, class and militarism in relation to British Youth Movements, 1908-1930', *International Review of Social History*, 16 (1971), pp. 125-58
- Springhall, John, 'Debate: Baden-Powell and the Scout Movement before 1920: citizen training or soldiers of the future?' *English Historical Review*, 102:405 (1987), pp. 934-42
- Warren, Alan, 'Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and citizen training in Great Britain, 1900-1920', *English Historical Review*, 101:399 (1986), pp. 376-98
- Warren, Alan, 'Baden-Powell: a final comment', *English Historical Review*, 102:405 (1987), pp. 948-50
- Whitley, W.T., 'The German Baptist Brethren', *Baptist Quarterly*, 1 (1923), pp. 42-44
- Wilkinson, P., 'English youth movements 1908-1930', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 4:2 (1969), pp. 3-23
- Williams, J. Bickerton, 'Congregationalism in Birmingham', *The Christian Witness & Congregational Magazine*, NS III (1867), pp. 87-89
- Wilson, Elizabeth, 'the eyes of the authorities are upon us, the Brethren and World War 1', *Brethren Archivists and Historians Network Review*, 3:2 (2004)
- Yalden, Peter, 'Association, community and the origins of secularisation: English and Welsh Nonconformity, c1850-1930', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 55:2 (2004), pp. 293-324
- 2.3. Unpublished Theses**
- Blanch, M.D., *Nation, Empire & the Birmingham Working Class, 1899-1914*, University of Birmingham PhD thesis (1975)
- Boggende, Bert den, *The Fellowship of Reconciliation 1914-1945*, McMaster University PhD Thesis (1986)
- Cho, Kyu-Hyung, *The move to independence from Anglican leadership: an*

*examination of the relationship between Alexander Alfred Boddy and the early leaders of the British Pentecostal Denominations (1907-1930)*, University of Birmingham PhD Thesis (2009)

Johnson, Neil, “*So peculiarly its own*”, *the theological socialism of the Labour Church*, University of Birmingham PhD Thesis (2015)

Pugsley, David P., *The Great War and Methodism: the assimilation of Dissent?*, University of Birmingham M Phil Thesis (1995)

Summers, D.F., *The Labour Church and allied movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries*, University of Edinburgh PhD Thesis (1958)

#### **2.4. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (DNB) entries**

Boase, G.C.; Brooks, Michael W. (revised), ‘Chamberlain, John Henry (1831–1883)’, *Oxford DNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004)

Johnson, Mel, ‘Simmons, Charles James (1893–1975)’, *Oxford DNB*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2013 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/105625>, accessed 2 August 2016]

Porter, Andrew, ‘Founders of the London Missionary Society (*act.* 1795)’, *Oxford DNB* (Oxford University Press, May 2006; online edn, Sept 2012) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/42118>, accessed 5 March 2013]

Tudur Jones, R., ‘Dale, Robert William (1829–1895)’, *Oxford DNB*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7015>, accessed 9 April 2013]

Tudur Jones, R., ‘James, John Angell (1785–1859)’, *Oxford DNB*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14614>, accessed 9 April 2013]

Walker, Paul, ‘Stanford, Peter Thomas (1860–1909)’, *Oxford DNB*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2013; [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/104527>, accessed 21 Jan 2014]

Ward, Roger, ‘Hallas, Eldred (1870–1926)’, *Oxford DNB*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2013; [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/105127>, accessed 12 Sept 2014]

Williams, I.A., ‘Cadbury, George (1839–1922)’, rev. Robert Fitzgerald, *Oxford DNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2010

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32232>, accessed 27 May 2010]

## 2.5. Internet sources

Anderson, Allan, *Peace, Pacifism and Reconciliation in Pentecostal Theology*, URL: <http://bham.academia.edu/AllanAnderson>, accessed 29 September 2014

‘Religious History: Protestant Nonconformity’, *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham* (1964), pp. 411-34. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/> accessed: 9 September 2009

‘Religious History: Places of worship’, *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7: The City of Birmingham* (1964), pp. 434-82 URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=22981&strquery=nonconformity> accessed: 9 September 2009.

‘Smethwick: Protestant Nonconformity’, *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 17: Offlow hundred (part) (1976)*, 129. URL: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36183> accessed: 28 May 2008

*The Commonwealth Graves Commission: war dead search engine*: URL: <http://www.cwgc.org/>

R K. Francis, *British Churches of Christ Archives* URL: <http://www.netcomuk.co.uk/~pdover/franidx.htm>

*A memoir of David King*, *British Churches of Christ Archives* URL: <http://www.netcomuk.co.uk/~pdover/memoir.htm>

*Queen Victoria’s Chocolate Gifts for her Men at War*. URL: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A16858696> accessed: 28 May 2008

*Man who built city’s civic pride*, URL: [http://icbirmingham.icnetwork.co.uk/expats/pastpres/tm\\_objectid=11996804&method=full&siteid=50003&headline=man-who-built-city-s-civic-pride-name\\_page.html](http://icbirmingham.icnetwork.co.uk/expats/pastpres/tm_objectid=11996804&method=full&siteid=50003&headline=man-who-built-city-s-civic-pride-name_page.html)

M. Foster, *Militarism and the Scout Movement* (Scout History Association, 1997), URL: <http://www.netpages.free-online.co.uk/sha/military.htm>  
British Boy Scouts, URL: <http://www.netpages.free-online.co.uk/bbs/bbs.htm>

Birmingham History Forum:  
URL: <http://birminghamhistory.co.uk/forum/showthread.php?t=27265&page=2>

Walker, C.R., *The Scouts Defence Corps and 'The Red Feather'*, URL: [http://www.scoutingmilestones.co.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=143&Itemid=219](http://www.scoutingmilestones.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=143&Itemid=219)