

**Jeremy Mudditt
1938-2010**

Jeremy Mudditt died of cancer in April 2010, at the age of 71—just six months after the death of his wife, Meg, after a long struggle also with cancer. He was born in 1938, and therefore he was more or less a contemporary of my wife, and certainly his parents and hers belonged to the same London suburban Brethren milieu, along with other Brethren luminaries such as the Stunts. His services to the Brethren and to Brethren historiography demand review here.

I first met Jeremy at a Hildenborough Hall house-party at Frinton in August 1958. He seemed to me then to be a confident demi-god, infinitely older than I was, and I am now astonished at how small the age-gap was. He had intellectual and social style even then and I was pretty well transfixed. This had much to do with his background, in the milieu already referred to. It stamped his intellect, style and spirituality.

He was born to publishing, and Brethren and biblical publishing at that. For in 1935 his father, B. Howard Mudditt, the son of missionaries in China, had founded The Paternoster Press in London—its name alluded simultaneously to the Lord's Prayer and to Paternoster Row, in which printers and publishers were traditionally located, near to the firm's last London offices in Ludgate Circus adjacent to St. Paul's Cathedral (for years, the logo used the motif of the Cathedral). Howard Mudditt's market was primarily the Open Brethren, but that segment on the left which was to give birth in the 1950s to the progressive group, mainly from southern England and mainly with business, professional and academic connections, associated with names such as the Goodmans, the Cappers, Ken Hyland, James Houston, Cecil Howley, and Fred Bruce. Howard Mudditt established *The Harvester* more or less straightaway, and an evangelistic booklet, *Emergency Post*. He became the publisher of Fred Bruce's works for the evangelical public, such as *The Dawn of Christianity*. He published G. H. Lang, a radical Brethren writer whose teaching and writings influenced many Brethren Young Turks of the 1950s such as George Patterson, Roger Forster and David

Lillie, some of whom were at the roots of the charismatic movement in Britain.

Jeremy entered the business in 1957 before he was 20. It is fair to say that he remained in the shadow of his singular and mercurial father until the latter gave up managing it in 1975, thirteen years after the business had moved to Exeter, to Mount Radford Crescent, close to where the Vines' Mount Radford School had been located.¹ Once he was in command of the business, Jeremy soon recruited an academic, Peter Cousins, as an editor and took it in a markedly academic direction, though not one out of keeping with its traditions as established by Mudditt *père*—the firm had already published in 1970 I.H. Marshall's *Luke: Historian and Theologian*. The economic weakness of the business in the 1980s (possibly accounted for by the inclinations of the owner) may have acted as a brake at that time. These desires on Jeremy's part did not reach full growth until, following a period of heart trouble, the business was acquired by Send the Light Trust and moved to Carlisle in 1992 (there had already been co-operation which had led, among other things, to the tragic destruction of much of Jeremy's stock in a warehouse fire in Carlisle). Under STL, Jeremy continued as an editor and commissioner of books and then as a consultant. It is to the credit of the STL and Paternoster management in the 1990s and 2000s that they allowed Jeremy to give birth to five astonishing series of academic monographs (*Paternoster Biblical Monographs*, *Paternoster Theological Monographs*, *Studies in Christian History and Thought*, *Studies in Evangelical History and Thought*, and *Studies in Baptist History and Thought*). I had asked the question in a review in *Christian Graduate* in 1975 whether the decision to publish here Zondervan's *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* was wise in business terms, and the same question was in my

1. Incidentally, a school whose influence on mid-century Brethrenism deserves study. For example, at least two of the elders of Cholmeley Hall, Highgate in the 1950s and 1960s had been educated there, together with someone who became an elder of the then Grosvenor Meeting Room, Barnstaple. For a brief history, see the short article at www.exetermemories.co.uk/em/schools/mtradford.php.

mind as these series of monographs began to blossom at the turn of the century. Nevertheless, we can only be grateful that this thought from the dismal science deterred neither Jeremy nor his new masters at Paternoster. The whole undertaking was remarkable, a boon for British evangelical scholars and others, and a blessing to the church as a whole. It was truly the crown of a remarkable publishing life. We hold our breath as to whether this kind of publishing will survive Jeremy's death and the forced sale of Paternoster in 2009.

Brethren history, including the products of the Brethren Archivists and Historians Network and its principals, found an outlet in *Studies in Evangelical History and Thought* which they would have been most unlikely to have found elsewhere. At the same time, Jeremy eagerly adopted the suggestion of a new history of the Brethren, initially conceived of as a compilation based on earlier works of Rowdon and Coad. Under Jeremy's keen interest the project outgrew this beginning, and the result was Tim Grass's monumental *Gathering to His Name: The story of Brethren in Britain and Ireland* (2006); without Jeremy, it is certain that this would not have seen the light of day at this time, as it was a commissioned work. Likewise he took up with enthusiasm the publishing of a *Festschrift* for Harold Rowdon, histories of the Brethren in England and Scotland and a forthcoming biography of F. F. Bruce. All this was consistent with Jeremy's longstanding willingness to support and publish Brethren work: he published the *CBRF Journal* from about 1970; he acquired the shaky *Witness* late in the 1970s and merged it with *Harvester*; he stuck with the latter's growing weakness (when most key people on the progressive side of the Brethren myopically could not see the need for such a magazine) and tried to keep it alive by persuading Paternoster to take it on as *Aware* in 1992; he gave valuable time and energy to helping with Partnership's publications, including *Church Leaders Handbook* and *Serving God's People* (the sub-title, *Rethinking Christian Ministry Today* was, so far as I know, all his own work!). It is not clear how this enthusiastic, diligent, sometimes exasperated, not to say irritated, midwifery can be replaced.

Through everything, his spiritual commitment shone through, sometimes in an eccentric, but always in an engaging way. In Exeter,

he fellowshipped with the Brethren at Belmont Chapel and was an elder for a period. He was, I believe, of the body which brought Jonathan Lamb there early in the 1980s, and so began the period of change which has led to the beacon that exists today. In Carlisle, he and his wife, Meg, found it hard to settle with the Brethren and he enjoyed worship at the Anglican cathedral—like his editor, Peter Cousins, who often crept away from Belmont in his latter years to Exeter cathedral, Jeremy found the sometimes banal populism of modern evangelical worship hard to bear.

Looking back, it is clear that Jeremy was both a remarkable person and achieved remarkable things in the profession that had been chosen for him. The pity is that we who worked with him over long years—this one at least—did not see this clearly enough at the time, and so were unable to tell him and honour him as we should have done.

It is worth reading the obituary and comments at <http://christianbookshopsblog.org.uk/2010/04/24/jeremy-mudditt-rip-the-end-of-an-era-for-paternoster-press/> to learn more of his character, his erudition, his wit and his professional knowledge.

Neil Summerton