

*BAHNR* 3: 128-132

**Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant secessions from the *Via Media*,  
c.1800-1850**

**Grayson Carter**

**Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001**

**486pp. ISBN 0198270089 £55.00**

This is an excellent piece of systematic and thorough research, but, before going any further, the reviewer must declare an interest. My own recently published work overlaps in several places with that of Dr Carter. Indeed for rather more than ten years we have known that we were working in parallel—a fact which has in no way interfered with the development of a co-operative friendship. Much of the research embodied in this book was the basis for the author's D Phil in 1990 at Oxford, where for some years he was Chaplain at Brasenose College, though he is a citizen (and now a resident) of the United States.

Dr Carter's book is concerned with the significant number of Anglican Evangelicals who, between 1800 and 1850, seceded from the establishment but did not join the Roman Catholic communion. It is a most important and extensive survey and has the great advantage that its author is a theologian as well as a historian and has usefully identified the wide variety of theological emphases which coloured the thinking of so many of his subjects. In two very balanced introductory chapters he traces the ambiguous relationship which so many evangelicals had with the establishment and the varieties of uneasiness ranging from such issues as patronage and baptism to the friction provoked by outspoken Calvinism all of which could be harbingers of secession. In successive chapters he covers the early movements in Ireland associated with Thomas Kelly and John Walker; the Western schism connected with certain members of the Baring family; and the Millennialist prophetic movement associated with Henry Drummond and Edward Irving.

For a long time the Western Schism has been shrouded in a good deal of conjecture, but with Carter's thorough account we now have a very much better idea as to how the movement evolved and who were its real protagonists. Particularly useful is his identification of the role

of the redoubtable Mrs. Charles Wall [*née* Baring]. It was she apparently who initiated the tradition of domestic piety at her Albury home, which in due course she sold to Henry Drummond who hosted there the famous meetings for the study of prophecy in the 1820s.

Carter's account of the early development of the prophetic movement associated with Irving and Drummond is similarly useful but this was a much more complex episode than the Western schism and his assessment of its development after 1830 is somewhat eclectic. His claim that 'only a handful embraced the "gifts" as genuine phenomena' and that 'no more than six evangelical clergymen' seceded to join the Catholic Apostolics is manifestly incorrect. The six he mentions fail to include the 'apostle' Henry Dalton, or other Irvingites like John Hooper, Frederick Earle, Charles Hewett, John Haughton, James Evill, Cuthbert Orlebar, and Jasper Peck all of whom were ordained ministers of the Establishment. Dr Carter briefly outlines the later rift between the 'Apostles' and the *Neue Apostolische Kirche* in the 1860s (technically outside his period) but there is no discussion of the movement's uneasy shift in the 1830s from the prophetic utterances (by which the Apostles were appointed) to the non-prophetic authority of the Apostles themselves who issued the colourful liturgy of the 1840s. Nor does he address the fact that a significant number of the Catholic Apostolic community regarded themselves as an order within Anglicanism and therefore were often only half-hearted separatists.

Of particular interest to readers of this journal will be the chapter devoted to 'The Irish Prophetic movement and the origins of the Plymouth Brethren' together with its sequel 'The Oxford Seceders'. Dr Carter has interestingly re-arranged a good deal of familiar material but it has to be said this part of the book suffers from some confusion of chronological focus. It is true that Darby would later become an important figure in the Brethren movement and in the development of prophetic interpretation, but his ecclesiastical and eschatological beliefs were far from being fully formulated during the 1820s and early 1830s. Carter focuses initially on Darby's prophetic views and his role in the subsequent Powerscourt conferences in the 1830s before considering his earlier ecclesiastical development. This is a misleading

introduction to events in the previous decade when Parnell, Cronin, Bellett, Groves and Hutchinson cannot yet be described as *Brethren*. (To do so is as anachronistic as calling John Keble and John Henry Newman, before 1830, Tractarians.) When discussing Darby's High Church background and his impact on Joseph Philpot, Frank Newman and other Oxford evangelicals, Carter has given the cautious Darby of the 1820s a premature prominence among those who could later be called Brethren. It is true that men like Bellett were friendly with Darby but at that stage they hardly regarded him as their 'leader'.

In this context Carter has invested the reluctantly seceding Darby with a confidence which only emerged later. Two examples must suffice. Carter's picture of 'the flamboyant Darby' who in 1830 'stirred up [Bulteel's] congregation with his theory of a new Jerusalem, with its dangerously separatist implications' (p. 261) is seriously off the mark. In fact Darby's sermon was delivered to a limited number of parishioners on a Thursday and (being based on Romans 11.22 as opposed to Hebrews 12.22.) was not concerned with the new Jerusalem. Carter also claims that Darby's reply to Professor Burton in 1831 made 'clear to opponents and supporters alike his assumption of leadership' (p.235) among the early brethren. This is anachronistic (for the reasons indicated above) but also implausible, as the pamphlet was anonymous.

One difficulty is that in this part of Dr Carter's analysis he has been unduly influenced by the recollections of men who, long afterwards, read back, into these episodes, roles, which at the time were unknown, and tenets which were unformulated. This is as true of Newton's reminiscences, shared with much younger admirers half a century after the events of which he was speaking, as it is with Tom Mozley's mischievous recollections of the Oxford of his youth. It is unfortunate that Carter uses, word for word without quotation marks, one of Mozley's characteristically muddled reminiscences about Bulteel (p.272). Such memories have often been used indiscriminately and they need to be weighed very critically. Carter is on much firmer ground in his account of the secessions of William Tiptaft and Joseph Philpot as his sources here include many more contemporary letters and writings. The paucity of material for the less well-known Oxford

seceders has rendered them very much more elusive. William Lambert and Charles Brenton are only alluded to very briefly; others like Richard Hill, Thomas Dowglass, and William Jarratt are not even mentioned. Cambridge seceders like Borlase and Morshead are referred to briefly but the second of these might have objected to being labelled as an Oxford man! (p.296)

The last chapters of this wide-ranging book take us into a very different world. Dr Carter exaggerates a little when he speaks of Baptist Noel's 'aristocratic lineage'—his father and all his grandparents were born commoners—but the enlightened, philanthropic and unsectarian Whig world in which he grew up, puts him and his secession into a totally different category from Dr Carter's earlier subjects. There was a refreshing pragmatism in Noel's course. His concern for the urban masses untouched by the church's ministrations, his doubts about the benefits of the establishment, his advocacy of pan-evangelical cooperation and his opposition to Tractarian views on baptismal regeneration together with the Scottish Disruption were all pushing him in the direction of secession. A visit to Switzerland in 1847 further influenced him against the establishment and yet, despite Evangelical Anglican anxieties, his departure in 1849 didn't trigger a further wave of secession. If the Privy Council's judgment on the Gorham case had gone in favour of the aggressive Bishop Phillpotts, there *might* have been more secessions but Dr Carter suggests that many evangelical Anglicans had already started publicly justifying non-secession *before* the judgment in case it went against them. In a final episode Dr Carter tells the curious story of James Shore who seceded in 1845. He continued to minister in a free Episcopal church of his own founding but was imprisoned for a while in Exeter for flouting the instructions of (again) Henry Phillpotts who was technically still his episcopal superior.

Dr Carter's work effectively reminds us just how turbulent were religious developments and animosities in the nineteenth century. The Brethren (like a number of other Victorian ecclesiastical identities) were often in consequence defined in terms of their discontent. The challenge of our own day is to recover the positive elements in the

thinking of charitable men like Groves who was only coincidentally a seceder. Construction is so much more difficult than demolition.

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