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Religious Reformers in Britain at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: The Visits of Abdul Baha.

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Abstract

The central theme of this work is an examination of the contribution made by home-grown reformers to the construction of new religious frameworks in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century. I focus on the evolution of a worldview oriented towards Asia and key individuals that sought interaction with religious ideas from the 'East'. I will take as a case study the reception in Britain of the head of the Bahai religion, Abdul Baha, who visited in 1911 and again in late 1912. Through an analysis of the discourses he was invited to engage with, and the reasons his British hosts pursued these encounters, I recover lost aspects of what was a vibrant and multidimensional religious 'field'. This will necessitate a review of why and how scholars of the new 'science of religion', 'Celticists', leading Protestant reformers and others expended much energy in supporting the Bahai leader's public programme as he progressed through Britain.

These interactions and their prominent promoters, significant in the context of the history of religions in Europe, are now mostly 'forgotten' or are 'remembered' in a particular fashion. Endeavouring to answer why these events are consigned as a footnote in history exposes a complex nexus of factors bearing on agency, myopic interpretation and the manner in which this history has been captured and interpreted. A key factor is the effect of the catastrophic conflagration which beset the world in 1914 on universalist worldviews.

The figures analysed in this thesis were exponents of ideas and philosophies that are familiar in the present. Consideration of their experience illuminates similar contemporary discursive trends and leads me to posit the aetiology of such religious journeying as occurring long before it is generally thought such ideas were prevalent. Notwithstanding their eclectic interests, an important component in the construction of this discursive environment was the operation of a particular 'filter', one which still favoured Christianity as a pleroma.

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Declaration

This thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for another degree, either at National University of Ireland - University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism.

Brendan McNamara

Chapter 1 – Introduction

On July 26th 1907, the front page of British national newspaper, *The Daily Express*, carried an extraordinary story. Under the headline "Mystery of a Relic- Finder Believes It To Be The Holy Grail - Great Scientists Puzzled", the report described, with no inclination towards scepticism, a unique gathering convened to pronounce on the provenance of a small blue bowl found in Glastonbury by a young man domiciled in Bristol, which he claimed had a direct link to Jesus. There were, the newspaper revealed, "a small circle of eminent leaders of religious thought, antiquaries and scientists… discussing with the deepest interest, the discovery in remarkable circumstances of a glass vessel of beautiful workmanship and supposed great antiquity, in a spot near Glastonbury Abbey."[1] The story was further amplified in the editorial for the day.

> The astounding story, told at length in another column, of the finding of an alleged 'holy relic' at Glastonbury Abbey has a particular value in showing again the immense and widespread interest felt in things supernatural and mystic […] A Bristol gentleman discovers a mysterious vessel in Glastonbury. Twenty years ago he would have been merely laughed out. Today, eminent men, among them divines and scientists, solemnly meet to discuss his story and to discover what the vessel may be […] It does seem to us both interesting and admirable that the finding of an alleged 'holy relic' should stir the interest of a body of eminent men of widely differing opinions and culture.[2]

The location for the gathering was the official residence of the Anglican Dean of Westminster at Deans Yard in the shadow of Westminster Abbey. Over forty men and women had been specifically invited for the occasion. Amongst some high profile establishment personalities, the group included poets and educationalists, scientists, religious campaigners and reformers, suffragists, Celticists and Theosophists, many combining multiple interests across a number of movements and philosophies. Indeed the soiree represented a web of connections and intersections involving some of the most well-known figures of the period pursuing enquiries outside of traditional Christianity, those driving the "immense and widespread interest felt in things supernatural and mystic."[3] If the purpose of the meeting was to examine the claims

[1] Daily Express, 27/7/1907 cited in Patrick Benham, *The Avalonians*, Glastonbury: Gothic Image Publications, 1993, pp.77-78. Benham suspects that it must have been one of those present at the meeting who gave the detailed account to the *Daily Express*. Though tempting to conclude it may have been an act of self-publicity on the curator of the object's part, also present (according to the list of attendees) were some prominent newspaper men. List of attendees kindly supplied by Gerry Fenge.
[2] *Daily Express*, 26/7/1907. Cited in Gerry Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, Everett, WA: Starseed, Publications, 2010, p.41 (partially) and Benham, *The Avalonians*, pp.77-78.
[3] *Daily Express*, 26/7/1907.

made for a glass, sapphire blue bowl found in Glastonbury, which some actually considered could be the Holy Grail,[4] the event presents as a prism representative of strands of a vibrant discursive milieu around religion and ideas in the latter years of the 'long nineteenth century'.[5] Amongst the many and varied avenues of religious enquiry pursued by groupings and individuals represented at this gathering was an approach to religions in Asia as an element of new religious frameworks under construction.[6]

"East Comes West"[7]

This was not simply an engagement with ideas around 'Eastern' religions but found form in the actual visits of prominent religious reformers from Asia to Britain for the first time. Amongst the most prominent of these missionary travellers during this period we can include the Indian Vedantist leader, Swami Vivekananda (d.1902), who established a branch of his Vedanta society in London in 1895. Vivekananda ("bliss of discerning knowledge") was born Narendranath Datta in Kolkata in 1863, the son a successful lawyer.[8] He was one of the 'stars' of the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 and two years later established the Vedanta Society of New York, followed by a visit to Britain where he founded a London branch.[9] He visited London once more in 1896 and returned home to India in 1897 where he set up the Ramakrishna Mission which has spread worldwide. Vivekananda was celebrated everywhere he went, spoke excellent English and was regarded as a great orator.[10]

David Hewaviratne, better known as Angarika Dharmapala (d.1933), was also a prominent religious reformer who came to Britain around this time. He was born to a Buddhist family in Colombo, Ceylon, in 1864. Following a middle-class Catholic and

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[4] Grail legends concern a vessel used by Jesus (or used to collect some of his blood) and connect Celtic myth, Arthurian lore, Britain and Jesus. See, Roger Sherman Loomis, *The Grail: From Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol*, Princeton, 1991.

[5] Descriptor popularised by Eric Hobsbawm in his history trilogy, *The Age of Revolution, 1789–1848*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975 and *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987.

[6] It will not be necessary to engage here with the question of the taxonomies of 'religion', which, it is understood, is complex. See, Steven J. Suthclife, "New Age, World Religions and Elementary Forms", in Steven J. Suthcliffe and Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, *New Age Spirituality; Rethinking Religion,* Durham: Acumen, 2013.

[7] See, Terence Thomas, "East Comes West" in, Terence Thomas (Ed.), *The British; Their Religious Beliefs and Practices 1800-1986,* London: Routledge, 1988, p.72. Thomas is referring to a movement of knowledge rather than people.

[8] Biographical information gleaned from Diane Collinson, Kathryn Plant and Robert Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers,* Abingdon: Routledge, 2000, pp.140-147.

[9] On the World's Parliament of Religions, see, W.R. Houghton, (ed.), *Neely's History of The Parliament of Religions and Religious Congresses at the World's Columbian Exposition*, Chicago: Neely, 1893.

[10] Houghton, (ed.), *Neely's History of The Parliament of Religions and Religious Congresses at the World's Columbian Exposition* p.62.

Anglican education, he met Madame Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott (the founders of Theosophy) during their first visit to Ceylon in 1880 and became "a close associate of Olcott for a time."[11] He later ceased to ally himself with Theosophists and began promoting a 'scientific Buddhism', what David McMahan describes as an "indigenous modernity."[12] Also prominent at the Parliament in Chicago, Dharmapala has come to be regarded as one of the fathers of Buddhist modernism and worked tirelessly to create a world Buddhist mission. He first visited Britain in August of 1893, en route to Chicago, and for a brief period in 1897.[13] He was in Britain again in 1904 and 1926, and once more in 1927 when he established the London *vihara*.[14]

Hazrat Inayat Khan (d.1927) began promoting his spiritual teachings in Britain from 1912. Born in India, he was an initiate of the Chisti Sufi order and a gifted musician. He set out for America in 1910 and thereafter to Britain. Inayat Khan taught a Sufism which he regarded as being above religion. His 'universal Sufism' evolved outside the Islamic purlieus from which it had sprung and elicited respect from Hindus and Sikhs, as well as Theosophists and others.[15] He remained in Britain until 1913 before embarking on travels through France and Russia. Returning to live in England from 1914, he transferred his base to France in 1920. During his time in Britain he founded the Sufi Order of the West and set up a publishing house for his own output and the production of a regular magazine.[16]

Another traveller to Britain in the early twentieth century was the head of the Bahai religion, Abdul Baha (d.1921),[17] who came to Britain on two occasions. Having spent his youth and adult life as an exile in different cities across the Ottoman Empire, he was finally released from restrictions in 1908. During the last years of the

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[11] David L. McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p.95. See, Donald S. Lopez (ed.), *A Modern Buddhist Bible: Essential Readings from East and West,* Boston: Beacon Press, 2002, p.54.

[12] McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism,* p.113.

[13] Donald S. Lopez (Ed.), *A Modern Buddhist Bible: Essential Readings from East and West*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2002, Introduction pp.xvii-xviii.

[14] Bhihhku Sangharakshita, *Angarika Dharmapala: A Biographical Sketch,* Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1983, pp.28-40. J.Jeffrey Franklin has highlighted the influence of Buddhist thought in late Victorian discourse in Britain in *The Lotus and the Lion: Buddhism and the British Empire,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008. His analysis does not include the impact of the visits to Britain of Dharmapala.

[15] Information gleaned from Ron Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1999 pp. 65-66. Other accounts have Inayat Khan receiving guidance from his Murshid to travel to the West. See, for example, *The Biography of Hazrat Inayat Khan,* The Hague: East-West Publications, 1979. On-line edition, http://www.nekbakhtfoundation.org/home2.htm. Accessed, 27/6/'11. 21.30.

[16] See, Hazrat Inayat Khan, *Biography of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan (Part 2)*, London and The Hague: East-West Publications, 1979. On-line edition, http://www.nekbakhtfoundation.org/home2.htm. Accessed, 27/6/11. 21.30. See also, *Inayat Khan: A Biography,* Elizabeth de Jong-Keesing, The Hague: East West Publications, 1974 and Natalie Clayer and Eric Germain, *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, pp.52-54,

[17] Persian and Arabic names and terms are given in a simple form, as they sound in English, for ease of reading. As the thesis does not include a technical philological discussion, I have not used one of the various academic schemas or the Bahai transliteration convention. Citations appear as found.

nineteenth century Bahai spread to western countries and groups were founded in centres in Europe and North America. Following a period in Egypt, Abdul Baha visited Britain from September to October, 1911. He spent much of 1912 travelling in the United States and Canada and returned to Britain late in that year. Abdul Baha spoke at a variety of gatherings, delivering his addresses in Persian followed by English translation. He maintained a vigorous schedule of interviews with a steady stream of visitors and his activities attracted a good deal of press coverage.[18]

The importance of these encounters is acknowledged within the record of the individual traditions represented and to a lesser or greater extent more generally.[19] The analysis tends towards a common approach of tracking the trajectory of the movements in question with the emphasis on how these visitors were received, their impact in attracting adherents and sympathisers and the furthering of their particular cause. Almost no attention is given to the individuals who welcomed them to Britain (in some cases high profile religious figures in their own right), the frameworks around religion which they were endeavouring to fashion, and how interactions with Asian religions were adaptable to their worldview. All these missionary travellers were supported in their visits by a host of home grown religious reformers and seekers.[20] For example, practically all the notables present at the Deans Yard gathering were involved in some way with the public itinerary of Abdul Baha while he was in Britain. In particular, the host, Archdeacon Wilberforce, the 'keeper' of the Glastonbury Cup, W.T. Pole (d.1968), the prominent Protestant reformer R.J. Campbell (d.1956), along with the poet and educationalist, Alice Buckton (d.1944), were all closely connected to his reception.

I have chosen to focus on the religious journey of Abdul Baha in my thesis to investigate the nature of the vibrant discourse fashioned around his visits from the perspective of those home-grown religious reformers who facilitated his public programme. In so doing I hope to exemplify a category of pioneering engagements between prominent British and Asian religious figures and point to areas of possible future research concerning reforming missionary travellers. There are particularities with respect to Abdul Baha's travels which make this case study especially interesting.

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[18] Information gleaned from H.M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh,* Oxford: George Ronald, 1971.

[19] One could also include in this list of travellers the earlier visit of Keshub Chunder Sen (d.1884) whose visit was hosted by the Unitarian church. Chunder Sen did not achieve the same renown as Vivekananda but the same inclination towards seeking contact with religions from Asia is evident in the encounter. See, P.C. Moozamdar, *The Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen*, Calcutta: Nababhidan Trust, 1931.

[20] My use of the term is informed by a discussion in Steven J.Sutcliffe, "New Age, World Religions and Elementary Forms", in, Steven J.Sutcliffe and Invild Saelid Gilhus (Eds.), *New Age Spirituality; Rethinking Religion,* Durham: Acumen, 2013, pp.30-32. He writes (p. 31), "Seeking may be enacted at a concrete level as a search for practices and techniques; it may also be represent at a more abstract level as an investigation of sources of meaning and truth."

Firstly, if all of these personalities are recognisable in different contexts, little has been written outside of Bahai circles about Abdul Baha. Another point of distinction is that he did not hail from a colonial background or educational setting and was 'unfamiliar' in and with the British societal situation. Unlike other missionary travellers, he was the head of a religion which, though born out of an Islamic locus, was regarded as a new and independent entity and so was not, therefore, reforming 'from within'.[21] Why, we may ask, was he welcomed into this discursive space? Furthermore, Abdul Baha was arguably the recipient of a public welcome which greatly outstripped that garnered by any other Asian visitor, whether in the range of dignitaries who sought him out, the large audiences he appeared before wherever he went and the volume of press coverage that attended his public programme.[22] On the one hand this points to the existence of precious material for research but also highlights an important conundrum on why his visit has no profile in the present. Outside of Bahai histories, Abdul Baha's travels have been elided from historical memory. More, the nature of the discourse he engaged with, and those pursuing and promoting that discourse in Britain, are likewise forgotten or are remembered in a particular fashion.

Abdul Baha and Bahai

The Bahai Faith emerged from a Shii milieu in Persia[23] in the middle of the 19th century.[24] It has been described as a messianic movement whose mission "meant the

[21] On the independence of the religion from Islam see, Peter Clarke and Peter Bayer, *The World's Religions: Continuities and Transformations,* Oxford: Routledge, 2009, p.40. For a fuller discussion see, Peter Smith, *An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp.125-127.

[22] For a survey of press coverage see, Amin Egea, "The Travels of `Abdu'l-Bahá and their Impact on the Press", in, Iraj Amyan (Ed.), *Lights of 'Irfán: Papers Presented at the 'Irfán Colloquia and Seminars, Book XII*, Evanston IL: Bahá'í National Center, 2011.

[23] I will utilize 'Persia' throughout, the name Iran was generally known by at this time. The government of Iran began to insist on the changeover in use in 1935. For an interesting insight into why the change was then promoted see, "Persia or Iran" by Ehsan Yarshater, in, *Iranian Studies*, Vol. XXII, No.1, 1989, pp.62-65.

[24] Bahai histories of the origins and development of the religion include; Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944, H.M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh,* Oxford: George Ronald, 1971, *The Báb; The Herald of the Day of Days,* Oxford: George Ronald, 1973, *Bahá'u'lláh:The King of Glory,* Oxford: George Ronald, 1980. The Cambridge scholar, E.G. Browne (d.1926), took a particular interest in the development of the early Babi movement and Bahai. See, *Materials for Study of the Báb'í Religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918 and *A Year Amongst the Persians*, London: A & C Black, 1893. For more recent scholarly treatments see, William S Hatcher and Douglas J Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith: The Emerging Global Religion*, New York: Harper and Row, 1985 (Revised edition, Wilmette,IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1998) and Peter Smith, *Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith.* Peter L. Berger, *From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Bahai Movement*, PhD. Diss., (unpublished), New York; New School for Social Research, is an interesting sociological study, though methodologically unconnected to this work. Moojan Momen (Ed.), *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1981, is a good resource for ancillary observer accounts. Bahai studies as a category is well developed in Britain though most focus has been on early Babi/Bahai history and texts. Early work includes that of Denis MacEoin, whose, "From Shaykhism to Babism: A Study in Charismatic Renewal in Shí'i Islam",

abrogation of Islam and the beginning of a new religious dispensation."[25] Sayyid Ali Muhammad, titled the Bab (Gate), one of three central figures in the Bahai pantheon, claimed his purpose was to prepare the way for the appearance of a 'Promised One'. He was well known in contemporary western accounts for his courage and the bravery of his followers in the face of severe persecution and was executed by the Persian authorities in July, 1850. One of the Bab's pre-eminent followers, Mirza Husayn Ali, titled Bahaullah (the glory of God), became de facto leader of the community, claimed to be the focus of the Bab's expectation and is recognised as the founder of the Bahai Faith.[26] From 1853 until his death in 1892 he was a prisoner of the Persian, and thereafter, the Ottoman governments. His last place of captivity and exile was the Syrian Ottoman province of Syria in present day Israel.

Bahaullah's religious message posits a common foundation for the genesis of religions and casts Bahai as the latest emanation of God's will for humanity. Though being related to and emerging from an Islamic background, the religion is regarded as separate and independent. His teaching advocates the unity of humanity in an order based on justice for all. The tenets of his faith emphasise "a personal moral code based on traditional religious ethics, and embrace a liberal set of social teachings focussed on the need for universal disarmament and peace, a world tribunal, a universal language, the equality of men and women, the harmony of science and religion, the elimination of racism and the abolition of the extremes of wealth and poverty."[27] Inherent in the matrix of a large scriptural output is an institutional framework devoid of a clerical branch but based on elected local, national and international administrative bodies. There is an emphasis on the individual, community and elected institutions collaborating to implement principles and teachings that will transform their societal habitat. At the time of Bahaullah's death, his religion had attracted interest and adherents across the Middle East and India. The

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Ph.D. Thesis, Cambridge, 1979, (unpublished), was amongst the first studies of its kind. Early scholarship did incite some controversy, as evidenced by Moojan Momen's article, "Marginality and Apostasy in the Bahá'í Community", in, *Religion,* 37, 2007, pp. 187-209. Volume 38, 2008, included a number of responses. A longer list of publications is not included here as the issue is only of tangential interest with respect to the core thesis.

[25] Oliver Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Bahai Faith; A Comparative Study of Muhammad Abduh and 'Abdul-Baha 'Abbas*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2008, pp.12-13. Scharbrodt points out that many of the most significant reformers in the Middle East during the nineteenth-century were connected to movements of a mystical or millenarian orientation.

[26] E.G. Browne met with Bahaullah in 1890. Bahais regard the development of their religion as a single historical process from the Bab through Bahaullah, Abdul Baha, and later Shoghi Effendi, up to the present day. Whereas earlier publications took no account of difference and contradiction evident at various stages of development, later treatments have examined more closely the genesis and evolution of a movement through various stages to its present standing as an independent religion that has spread throughout the world. For example see, Nader Saiedi, *The Gate of the Heart: Understanding the Writings of the Báb*, Waterloo Ontario: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 2008. See also, for a discussion on this point, Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Bahai Faith*, p.21.

[27] Will van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada, 1898-1948*, Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 1996, p.10.

organisational schema of the new religion was not in place and detailed accounts of its background and claims, as well as translations of scripture, were only slowly penetrating the English speaking world. Today, the Bahai Faith is established worldwide, directed by its elected bodies. The spiritual and administrative centre is in Haifa, Israel, in the area near where Bahaullah died and was interred.[28]

The third central figure is Abdul Baha, Bahaullah's eldest son, who from a young age acted as his deputy and representative. Named as authorised successor in Bahaullah's will and testament, Abdul Baha oversaw the spread of the religion to western countries. Though confined to the Ottoman penal colony of Akka and its environs, Abdul Baha became an influential religious figure throughout the Levant.[29] Once freed from captivity, he travelled to Europe and North America to visit emerging groups of sympathisers. In Britain, he was received by many well-known public figures and personalities and engaged with individuals and organisations on issues concerning religion in the modern world. During his journeys Abdul Baha interacted with the British public and attracted widespread press coverage. He had contact with a variety of groups curious about 'Eastern' religions or spirituality, those interested in the possibility of "spiritual journeying outside of traditional Christianity."[30] There has been no focus on the groups and individuals who welcomed Abdul Baha, the head of a non-Christian religion, into a vibrant discourse around religious ideas before the onset of war or exploration of the agendas they were pursuing. Neither has there been any academic scrutiny on comparing the impact and legacy of these visits, their influence on religious discourse in Britain before World War One or their contribution to the opening up of interest in new religious movements which, some eighty years later, culminated in the rise of the 'counter culture'.[31]

Documenting Missionary Travels

The only setting in which these events have merited any great scrutiny is in literature produced from within the Bahai religion itself. Most Bahai treatments document Abdul Baha's itinerary, both his public and private interactions. The

[28] According to the Encyclopeadia Britannica, in 2010 there were 7,227,000 Bahais worldwide. See, Religion: Year In Review 2010. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Retrieved, 20th May 2016, at, http://www.britannica.com/topic/religion-Year-In-Review-2010/Worldwide-Adherents-of-All-Religions.
[29] Browne described meeting Abdul Baha in Akka in 1890. "One more eloquent of speech, more ready of argument, more apt of illustration, more intimately acquainted with the sacred books of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muhammadans, could, I should think, scarcely be found even amongst the eloquent, ready, and subtle race to which he belongs. These qualities, combined with a bearing at once majestic and genial, made me cease to wonder at the influence and esteem which he enjoyed even beyond the circle of his father's followers." See, Introduction to, *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb,* (1891 – 2 Vols.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, xxxvi.
[30] Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, p.162.
[31] See, Kim Knott, "New Religious Movements", in*, The British; Their Religious Beliefs and Practices 1800-1986,* p.159. Knott makes the point that the phenomenon of inquiry leading to the establishment of new religious movements dates from this period and not the 1960's.

emphasis is on Abdul Baha's connection to a growing number of interested sympathisers and his efforts to nurture their understanding towards the foundation of the first community of Bahai followers in Britain. His public presentations are cited as an example of a clear articulation of Bahai teachings which attracted significant public interest and media coverage. His public progress and appearances are analysed from this perspective in the main so that his engagements with leading religious reforming figures in Britain are not examined from the point of view of the goals they themselves were pursuing. Nor has attention been given as to why these figures expended such enormous effort in culturing a relationship with a prominent religious figure from Asia.[32] This approach is understandable in the context of a religion cataloguing the trajectory of its own history, the episode accounting for just one chapter in the life of one of its most important dignitaries. The events are regarded as seminal in the development of the religion as against its own history of foundation and diffusion, rendering redundant an in-depth analysis of the warp and woof of the religious and cultural landscape of the period.

In her study of the development of the Bahai community in Britain, drawn from her doctoral thesis, Lil Osborn records details concerning the encounters of Abdul Baha with religious and social networks during his stay in Britain.[33] Her work revolves around a theory of relevance and her focus is on the eventual emergence of a community of Bahai followers. She characterises those public figures who sought out Abdul Baha during his travels through Britain as eventually losing interest, Bahai ceasing to be relevant to them as it evolved through distinct stages of development and they pursued their own concerns. Though an interesting examination of Bahai with respect to relevance, this is yet another expression of viewing the matter from the perspective of the foundation in Britain of the religion itself. It does not take account of the disjunction suffered by a broad religious discourse, one element of which was an interest in Bahai, as a result of the onset of the First World War. In that maelstrom many societal discourses, including an enthusiastic, irenic and universalist engagement around religion, experienced disruption. There were more issues than 'relevance' in play for those pursuing multiple interests with respect to philosophies and ideas as the march to war progressed. Nor are the particular, personal circumstances of some of the figures connected to this discourse taken fully into account - circumstances which resulted in their experiencing a 'crisis of values' when a narrow and nationalist imperative impinged on their lives and collapsed their

[32] See, for example, Lady Sara Louise Blomfield (and others), *Abdul'-Bahá in London; Addresses and Notes of Conversations,* Oakham: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982, H.M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh,* Oxford: George Ronald, 1971, Robert Weinberg*, Lady Blomfield: Her Life and Times*, Oxford: George Ronald, 2012, and, Earl Redman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in Their Midst*, Oxford: George Ronald, 2011. For an overview of the significance of the visits in the context of Bahai history, see, Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944.

[33] Lil Osborn, *Religion and Relevance: The Bahá'ís in Britain, 1899-1930*, Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2014.

worldview. Outside this one treatment, the visits of Abdul Baha to Britain are referred to only tangentially in academic histories.[34]

A number of works published around the centenary of these events do endeavour to relate more of the interests and activities of those prominent in Abdul Baha's reception in the West, but without close analysis. Robert Stockman's, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* briefly draws a comparison between Abdul Baha's missionary journey and the travels in America of other Asian religious teachers.[35] Stockman acknowledges that, outside the nurturing and development of a discrete Bahai community of believers, other questions need to be addressed concerning Abdul Baha's connection to home-grown religious reformers. For example, the interaction of Abdul Baha with American culture and values, the reasons behind the interest shown by Americans in non-Christian religions and their warm reception of religious teachers from Asia; all of which must await, he concludes, a different study from his own. Another centennial volume covering the American leg of Abdul Baha's travels is a collection of essays edited by Negar Mottahedeh.[36] This volume concentrates on Abdul Baha's encounter with modern American society and his contribution on a variety of topical issues. It highlights his "interaction with tens of thousands of people"[37] and documents an explanation of his "vision of peace and solidarity in the context of twentieth-century modernity."[38] The collection points to interesting aspects of Abdul Baha's reception but does not scope out to any great extent the prevailing religious landscape and the personalities who were to the fore in his public programme, outside of those who identified themselves as Bahai. Earl Redman's, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in Their Midst,* is the only centennial volume to appear in Britain and takes the form of a compendium of accounts drawn from other sources, some of which are rarely cited.[39] More interesting in the detail contained concerning the main figures involved in Abdul Baha's reception is Rob Weinberg's biography on Lady Blomfield, published in 2012.[40] Blomfield (d.1939), an Irishwoman who married into the British aristocracy, was an energetic supporter of Abdul Baha and connected with many of her contemporaries pioneering religious enquiry outside of Christianity. Whilst profiling the true breadth of the discourse being pursued around religious ideas as Abdul Baha visited Britain, the biography can still only allude to the questions of motivation and agenda on the part of these protagonists.

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[34] For example, see, Oliver Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Bahai Faith.*
[35] Chicago: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2012, p.5.
[36] Negar Mottahedeh,(Ed.), *'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey West: The Course of Human Solidarity*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013,
[37] Mottahedeh, *'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey West,* p.1.
[38] Mottahedeh, *'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey West,* p.1.
[39] Earl, Redman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in Their Midst*, Oxford: George Ronald, 2011. For example, Redman has consulted various archives for personal accounts by early Bahais.
[40] *Lady Blomfield: Her Life and Times*, Oxford: George Ronald, 2012.

Nader Saiedi (in Mottahdeh's volume) does endeavour to contrast Abdul Baha's approach during his travels against the milieu he encountered. He contends that these visits synchronised with the ascendancy of a "Eurocentric ideology […] [which] legitimized various forms of colonial violence and violations of human rights by reducing the East to the level of nature while elevating the West to the abode of rationality and culture."[41] Consequently, he elaborates, Abdul Baha's message of peace, equality of the sexes, race unity and social justice, was a direct challenge to "Eurocentrism and its narrow definition of modernity."[42] But this reflection still conveys a somewhat 'binary' analysis which does not do full justice to the intersections of religion and culture where agency and meaning were nuanced and imbricated. These encounters cannot be portrayed in terms of opposing cultures and ideas coming together in dialogical contest in the way that protagonists face off in a ring. The acceptance of such a paradigm serves only to reify 'otherness', to fix the positionality of the various actors according to later assessments, and to mask the non-binary, relational nature of this religious history.[43] A more polyfocal scrutiny is indicated requiring close consideration of the discursive environment under review.[44]

In such a reading, discourse functions as an endeavour of consciousness, as "cultural praxis"[45] attempting to resolve "problematical domains of experience."[46] These events took place at a time not only of colonialist and imperialist hegemony, but also of rising militarism and nationalism within Europe, during a period when the

[41] Nader Saiedi, "Abdu'l-Bahá's Critique of Nationalist Amnesia", in, Mottahedeh, *'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey West,* p.63.
[42] Nader Saiedi, "Abdu'l-Bahá's Critique of Nationalist Amnesia", in, Mottahhedeh, *'Abdul'l-Bahá's Journey West,* p.63.
[43] Kambiz GhaneaBassiri makes a similar point when introducing his history of Islam in America. See, *The History of Islam in America: From the New World to the New World Order,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010,p.8.
[44] Helpful in this regard may be Hayden White's conceptualisation of discourse as moving "to and fro" in the midst of "received encodations of experience and the clutter of phenomena which refuses incorporation into conventionalised notions of 'reality', 'truth' or 'possibility'." See, Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism",* Baltimore ML: John Hopkins University Press, 1978, p.4. For want of space, I will not elaborate further on White and his theories on discourse. My thinking in terms of a discourse analysis theoretical framework that might be applied to the encounters I describe is influenced by Koku von Stuckrad's argument for a more "nuanced analysis and interpretation of the past and the present. From such a perspective, historical imagination is the complex interplay of several dimensions and practices [...]" See, "Reflections on the Limits of Reflection: An Invitation to the Discursive Study of Religion," in, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 22 (2010), p.163. See also von Stuckrad's earlier paper, "Discursive Study: From States of Mind to Communication and Action", in, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 15 (2003), pp.255-271. There is a large literature on the various methodological approaches to discourse analysis. See, Titus Hjelm, "Discourse Analysis", in, Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion,* Abingdon: Routledge, 2011, pp.134-151, for a good overview of the subject. See also, Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change,* Oxford: Polity Press, 1992, and Jude V. Nixon (Ed.), *Victorian Religious Discourse: New Directions in Criticism,* New York: Palgarve Macmillan, 2004.
[45] White, *Tropics of Discourse,* p.5.
[46] White, *Tropics of Discourse,* p.5.

ability of religious orthodoxy to cope with new conundrums thrown up by modernity was in doubt and against the backdrop of a new interest to research religions other than Christianity. Within these 'problematical domains of experience', many who inhabited Christian contexts welcomed Abdul Baha, many found common cause with his critique of contemporary societies and identified with central themes from his teaching, but they did so for a variety of reasons and sometimes were oriented towards different ends, very much from the perspective of their own worldview or agenda. It will be important, therefore, to scrutinize other relational factors so as to give depth to the picture emerging and highlight the complex dialogical landscape against which these events and interactions played out.

Protestant Discourse

The period has been reviewed from the perspective of Protestant discourse and the attendant 'crisis of faith' that era is generally understood to have experienced.[47] Primarily considered from the viewpoint of church history and the epoch's Christian perturbation, the esoteric interests of such as were in attendance at the Deans Yard gathering are almost totally discounted. As most of this commentary emanates from theological historians, it is not surprising that the primary emphasis is on "Episco-Presby-gational-Bapto-Methodist"[48] Protestant discourse and Anglican concerns. This is the conceptual paradigm that has informed the majority of the published analysis of the period's religious domain. Viewing these events through a Protestant theological lens and examining them as a function of intra-sectarian grappling with the prevailing 'crisis of doubt', titles of some of the works penned about this colloquy reveal the slant in the appraisal; for example, Walter Sylvester Smith's, *The London Heretics,*[49] or K.W., Clements', *Lovers of Discord: Twentieth Century Theological Controversies in Britain*.[50] Both volumes do profile the Reverend R.J. Campbell, arguably the most renowned religious personality of the era and founder of 'The New Theology' movement, a platform for Protestant reform some regarded as a new reformation and which attracted enormous support and controversy in equal measure.[51]

Though Campbell espoused wide religious interests and was, significantly, in attendance at the Deans Yard gathering to pronounce on the provenance of the Glastonbury Cup, none of his esoteric pursuits or his connection to religion in Asia

[47] Popular descriptor of the prevailing religious landscape. See, for example, James R. Moore, in Richard J. Helmstadter and Bernard Lightman (Eds.), *Victorian Faith in Crisis*, London: Macmillan, 1990. The era's religious climate will be considered in Chapter 2.
[48] Term cited by Robbins, *England, Ireland Scotland, Wales: The Christian Church 1900-2000,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p.82. It was a term coined in India during the period in question.
[49] Walter Sylvester Smith, *The London Heretics*, New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1968.
[50] K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord: Twentieth Century Theological Controversies in Britain*, London: SPCK Publishing, 1988.
[51] See, R.J. Campbell, *The New Theology,* London: Williams and Norgate, 1907.

merits consideration in these accounts.[52] The convenor of that meeting, Archdeacon Wilberforce, a leading cleric who was also a well-known point of contact for religious exploration in London, is accorded only a cursory mention.[53] Wellesley Tudor Pole, the curator of the artefact examined at Deans Yard and founder of a 'Celticist' Christian oriented movement centred round the sacralising of Glastonbury's landscape, does not rate a reference.[54] All three were central to Abdul Baha's public reception in Britain.

The reasons for this omission, I will argue, are complex and require consideration of various factors concerned with how events are remembered or are forgotten, the role of the individuals themselves in the creation of their own 'history', and the effect of major climacteric societal occurrences as with the onset of the First World War. The interplay combining agency of the main actor's involved, historical circumstance, allied to later interpretations of events from a myopic and particularised lens, all combined to create a past picture of these events which simply does not match the evidence available. It is, though, somewhat incongruous that Keith Robbins has argued that the only locus for understanding the prevailing Christian imbroglio was within Christian theology itself; there was "no need to be in contact with other faiths", he asserts, "whether at home or abroad, to seek to probe the heart of Christian faith."[55] But that is precisely the nature of the exploration then being pursued by the Deans Yard attendees, all of whom were committed Christians. My thesis seeks to recover that 'forgotten' aspect of 'contacts with other faiths' on the part of those prominent in Protestant reform discourse during this period, as reflected in their close connection to Abdul Baha.

Primary and Secondary Sources

My particular focus, therefore, will be on the background and circumstances which influenced prominent British religious reformers in their articulation of an approach to religion in Asia, to include what may be described as a 'dalliance' with Islam, all of which found form in the public reception of a non-Christian missionary traveller. Primary material consulted includes the published writings and (in some cases) autobiographies of the main protagonists, archives and newspaper resources.

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[52] Smith does include Theosophists in his review, though the focus is on Annie Besant, a familiar society figure even before her connection to Theosophy. See, Smith, *The London Heretics,* pp.145-163. Even a full length thesis on Campbell from the year 1991 has no critique whatsoever of Campbell's broader interests. See, Jacqueline David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J. Campbell*, Durham University: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 1991.

[53] He is cited in Smith, *The London Heretics,* p.218, but only then in his role as a supporter of Campbell. Wilberforce was the subject of two biographies; C.E. Woods, *Archdeacon Wilberforce: His Ideals and Teaching,* London: Elliot Stock, 1917 and George William Erskine Russell, *Basil Wilberforce: A Memoir,* London: John Murray, 1918 (2nd Ed.) Neither considers his wider interests, except to comment on his 'idiosyncratic' tendencies without analysis.

[54] Tudor Pole was not a cleric though he operated from the basis of a decidedly Christian worldview.

[55] Robbins, *England, Ireland Scotland, Wales*, p.83.

The work of pioneers of the 'science of religion', Friederich Max Muller (d.1900) and J.E. Carpenter(d.1927), and material concerned with era's 'crisis of faith' has been consulted towards explicating the autochthonous religious and intellectual milieu underpinning 'East/West' encounters detailed in this thesis. The archive collection of Carpenter's papers at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, has not previously been examined in this connection.

The work of Cambridge scholar, Edward Granville Browne, who espoused a long standing interest in Bahai and was centrally involved in Persian/British politics, will provide further historical and cultural context as will assessment of the phenomenon surrounding Edward Fitzgerald's (d.1883) translations of the Persian poet/astronomer, Omar Khayyam, which was a late nineteenth and early twentieth century cultural sensation in Britain. Itself an expression of the period's *zeitgeist*, the Khayyam phenomenon, along with Browne's public agitation for Persian nationalism, created a 'familiarity' with Abdul Baha, widely known as the 'Persian Prophet of Peace'.[56] Furthermore, material concerning the Chalice Well, a popular centre of Celticist religiosity founded by Wellesley Tudor Pole, has been surveyed towards explicating the genesis of a movement deeply embedded in an ongoing dialogical connection to other groups, as illustrated in the gathering described at the beginning of this chapter. *The Christian Commonwealth* newspaper, the mouthpiece for the 'New Theology' movement, has proven a particularly significant resource. The broadsheet has not hitherto been closely reviewed, over a number of year's publication, to access coverage of events and figures that feature in this treatment.[57] Other contemporary newspaper accounts, including specialist publications such as the Anglican *Church Times,* have also been reviewed along with diary accounts of Abdul Baha's travels. In particular the diary of Ahmad Sohrab, one of Abdul Baha's translators and composed in English, has proven a useful resource as has the various personal reports found in the Bahai magazine, *Star of the West*, first published in 1910.[58]

Secondary material consulted comprises academic and biographical material, specialised accounts, articles and on-line sources. There are a number of Bahai histories and biographies, including volumes published to mark the centenary of Abdul Baha's travels, as well as accounts of the period written from a Protestant theological perspective, all of which have required examination. I have also surveyed cultural histories of the period, scholarly work on historiographical memory and forgetting,

[56] For example see report in the Irish daily, *The Freeman's Journal,* December 14th, 1912.
[57] Both the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the National Library, London, hold an archive of the newspaper.
[58] Sohrab's diary covers the second visit and is available online, with supporting material, under the title *Abdu'l-Baha in Britain, 1913* ; *The Diary of Abdu'l-Baha's Translator* at www.paintdrawer.co.uk/david/misc/sohrab-diary-uk-1913.pdf. *Star of the West*, is also available online at http://staroftheWest.info/.

and how the construction of memory around the First World has impacted assessments of the pre-war period. All of these primary and secondary sources have not previously been parsed and interrogated in relation to each other, towards exposing the extent and variety of interests being pursued at this juncture by the main figures populating this study. I have also, at least partially, critiqued accounts found in secondary literature relating to these religious milieus, and their encounter with non-Christian religions, which is another element marking the original contribution of this thesis.

Each category of material consulted has exposed particular aspects which together comprise a lens through which I have viewed the period, the people and their discourse. The resource which, in a sense, ties all others together (through which that lens derives focus) is undoubtedly *The Christian Commonwealth* newspaper. It has provided a comprehensive record of the ongoing discursive interactions between a wide range of groups and individuals, giving texture and background not found elsewhere. A close reading of the newspaper for the years preceding Abdul Baha's arrival in Britain, published weekly with an estimated circulation of circa 72,000, conveys a growing editorial interest in groups and philosophies outside of Christianity, as well as social and political movements, and points to aspects of this discourse that have not previously been investigated. The broadsheet's coverage of the visits of Abdul Baha was extensive and catalogues interactions with all the chief actors involved in promoting this discursive event.[59]

Method and Theory

The theoretical basis on which I will proceed to address these issues needs to be framed against the intellectual and religious environment in which these encounters took place. From problematizing the popular assertion that this was an era of faith in crisis, it is not a big leap to sketch out the conceptual underpinning influencing a growing interest in 'comparative religion'. This period marks the birth of the academic discipline of the study of religions and the engagement of scholars in Europe with religions and philosophies outside of Christianity. The work of Max Muller and Carpenter will be surveyed as both contributed through their pioneering work to the establishment of a basis for encounters with religions from Asia, the promotion of a putative 'dialogue of religions' and 'interfaith' links. Investigation of their work, as it relates to my theme, makes clear that a similar underlying theoretical conception was foundational in their approach. Apart from many references throughout their oeuvre, this schema becomes quite apparent when we consider their contributions to the World's Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893, the event at which

[59] The September 26th, 1907, edition (p. 906) reports on new printing presses being employed that produced 24,000 issues in an hour so that the newspaper run was completed in an afternoon whereas previously it took two days. The newspaper cost 1d.

Dharmapala and Vivekananda made their first public appearances in the West. If neither Max Muller or Carpenter were able to attend in person, both were supporters of the Parliament, provided papers along with many other leading scholars, and considered the gathering a truly seminal event. Max Muller later wrote that the Parliament "should take its place as one of the most memorable events in the history of the world."[60]

Teasing out the question of a common basis of approach in the context of the Parliament allows us to utilize the analysis of Richard Hughes Seager in his appraisal of how scholars and representatives of various religious groupings together contributed to this novel event (and engaged in a discourse concerning religion in the modern world), the first set-piece 'East/West' convocation of its kind. Those seeking connection with religions from Asia still held that Christianity was both the point of departure and the terminus in such pursuits. According to Seager, participants at the World's Parliament of Religions were engaged in the construction of a discourse bounded by an "epistemological filter"[61] through which they explored their knowledge of the 'East' with a view to incorporating it into their own western consciousness. Specifically, as Seager describes it, an 'epistemological filter' operated throughout the proceedings in an attempt, in discourse with the eastern delegates, to adjust and portray "western and Christian theistic ideas to give them true universality."[62]

Not that religionists and scholars made similar contributions to the discussion.[63] If the missionary contributors at the Parliament made the point more boldly and scholars were "more informed and more conciliatory"[64] in their estimate of other religions, the fact remains that for the most part they all held in common the sense that the Bible "meets the questions raised in the philosophies of the East, and supplies their only true solution."[65] These positions oscillated between the articulation of a traditional Judeo-Christian worldview and a more enlightened, liberal Christian theism. In the end, the discussion for western delegates was, according to Seager and in Saidean terms, a theological expression of "an accepted grid,"[66] where 'other' religions were surveyed and placed along a continuum of acceptability in their adjudged proximity to 'true' religion in the form of Christianity. I will argue that this

[60] Max Muller, "The Real Significance of the Parliament of Religions", *Arena*, 61 (December 1894), pp.1-14. Cited in Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter, Chicago, 1893*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009, p.126.
[61] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* p.72.
[62] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* p.72.
[63] Seager records that the contribution of Jean Reville stood out as the only scholarly input "advocating a science of religion not hinged to theism." *The World's Parliament of Religions,* p.72.
[64] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* p.72.
[65] T.E. Slater, a London missionary in Bangalore, in an address to the Parliament. Cited in, Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* pp.71-72.
[66] Edward Said, *Orientalism,* New: York, Random, Vintage Books, 1979, p.6. Cited in Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* p.72.

intellectual underpinning was carried through thereafter in 'East-West' encounters, whether consciously or otherwise. As intellections, both 'epistemological filter' and 'accepted grid' are useful theoretical armatures with which to test the developing discourse, as initiated by figures such as Max Muller and Carpenter, and progressed by a variety of groups, philosophies and movements which welcomed Abdul Baha to Britain.

The epistemological filter interwoven into the tapestry of discourse at the World's Parliament of Religions was complimented by the 'Orientalist gaze' of participating western delegates. In a discourse about religion, Christianity was the central facet of Western culture which was being presented as in the ascendant. The Orient, an "inert fact of nature"[67] could be engaged from the perspective of "flexible positional superiority"[68] casting the "Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand."[69] The phenomenon has been characterised by Said in his celebrated work as the "systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage- and even produce- the Orient, politically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period."[70] Orientalism can be understood in this reading as operating in three different but closely connected spheres. It was the academic discipline, the study of the 'Orient', "it was a style of thought based upon a distinction between something called the 'Orient' and something called the 'Occident',"[71] and it was the institutional or corporate apparatus created to exercise actual control. This matrix constituted a frame of reference for thinking about the 'East', for perpetuating a concept of 'other' at the heart of which was the desire to have 'power over' colonised peoples.[72] For Said, according to Albert Hourani, Orientalism is primarily an "'Occidental' mode of thought […] inextricably bound up with the fact of domination, and indeed derived from it."[73]

Still, not all interactions were pursued from a purely 'Orientalist' perspective. In his review of the Iranian Constitutional revolution (1906-1911), Mansour Bonakdarian argues that Orientalist critiques, like that of Said, too easily dismiss "heterogeneous constituent histories and cultures in both the West and the Orient and the diverse range of dialogical interactions and reactions" which were a notable

[67] Said, *Orientalism*,p.12.
[68] Said, *Orientalism*,p.12.
[69] Said, *Orientalism*,p.12.
[70] Said, *Orientalism*,p.3.
[71] Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.63.
[72] For a discussion of different expressions of 'power' see, Thomas E. Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power: From Domination to Transformation,* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.
[73] Hourani, *Islam in European Thought,* p.63. Hourani accurately describes Said's critique, though he does not fully agree with Said's analysis.

feature of this period.[74] That is to say, encounters between the 'East' and the 'West' have been diverse and decussated, not only with respect to societies but also in how various actors or groupings have engaged in and reacted to such encounters. If, at the turn of the twentieth century, there was an imperialist policy at work in Britain endeavouring to deliver the 'benefits' of Western civilisation to the needy oriental 'other', it is also the case that not all perceptions, whether academic or popular, synchronised with that state-sponsored mission. Whatever the damaging and enervating effects of a rampant imperialism, representations of the 'Orient' frequently deny agency to inhabitants of colonized lands in informing those same representations. Overlooked, also, in "narrow, entirely fault-finding approaches are the amazingly fertile international, progressively 'cosmopolitan' cross-imperial, trans-imperial, and transnational encounters," of which there were many during these years.[75] Bonakdarian cites events such as the Nationalities and Subject Races conferences in the Hague and London (1907 and 1910 respectively), the Universal Races Congress in London in 1911, and other " international women's, labour educational, legal, peace, ethical, anticolonial gatherings,"[76] which, though certainly undergirded by self-centred agendas and counter-agendas, nonetheless brought participants together and opened new discursive spaces. In effect, Bonakdarian is echoing the point made by Richard King, "that in representing the Orient as the essentialised and stereotypical 'Other' of the West, the heterogeneity and complexity of both Oriental and Occidental remain silenced."[77] This analysis, I will argue, is particularly appropriate to apply when analysing the encounters featured in this treatment.

What seems more discernible in these transactions is the assertion of a form of Orientalism described by Richard J. Fox as 'affirmative' or by Ronald Inden as 'romantic'.[78] Through this lens the imagined essence of the 'East' is regarded as "inherently spiritual, consensual and corporate."[79] The affirmation of stereotypes which Orientalist discourse utilized to critique the 'moribund, unchanging and backward East', in this construct are now employed to depict a positive image to argue the superiority of Eastern culture. This remains an 'essentialising' exercise, casting both 'East' and 'West' in a mould fashioned by its arbiters. The 'romantic'

[74] Mansour Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006. Introduction, xvi.
[75] Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911*, Introduction, xx.
[76] Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911*, Introduction, xx
[77] Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion*, New York: Routledge, p.86.
[78] See, Richard G. Fox, 'East of Said', in, Michael Wiley (Ed.), *Edward Said: A Critical Reader,* Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, pp. 144-156. Ronald Inden categorizes this Orientalism as 'romantic' after European Romanticism. His work, *Imagining India,* Oxford: Blackwell, 1990*,* is a powerful critique of essentialism and constructs a theory of human agency. Much of the scholarship concerning these 'Orientalisms' focuses on India but can, I contend, be seen as applicable to representations of Persia in British life and culture. Persia was not a colony but still the locus for colonial machinations and influence.
[79] Richard G. Fox, "East of Said", p.151.

exaltation of these characteristics is still a distorted view, even if motivated by admiration, as it "participates in the projection of stereotypical forms that allows for domestication and control of the East."[80] What is sought and esteemed "has been profoundly inspired by Western culture, in particular by what the 'West' expected the 'East' to be."[81] An important aspect of this discussion, as highlighted by Fox and one not necessarily always to the fore, is that 'affirmative Orientalism' did provide a configuration and glossary that acted as a support for "the resistance by Europeans to Western capitalism and modern industrial society."[82] It enabled a condemnation of the "dystopian present in the European core"[83] and was an expression of "the dynamics of struggle against cultural domination"[84] on the part of some, who themselves were regarded as members of the 'establishment'. This theoretical measure may also be usefully applied to an examination of this developing discourse where pejorative aspects of the orientalist critique were given positive affirmation creating a counter positive image of the 'East', ready to be utilized for resistance to cultural and political hegemony.[85] It is a metric that is particularly helpful towards elucidating the approach taken by such figures as Campbell, Wilberforce and Tudor Pole in projecting their own religious agendas on non-Christian traditions.

'Forgetting' the Past

Having outlined and parsed the discursive event, the thesis will examine the complex reasons for its absence from historical accounts with reference to scholarship on the construction of memory and how events are 'forgotten'. This nascent discipline can suggest varied approaches and 'memory' studies have latterly become a popular focus in the study of religions. However, much of that work is in the area of 'religion as a chain of memory', the title of Daniele Hervieu-Leger's monograph.[86] A vigorous

[80] Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion,* p.92. Adding to the complexity, this cultural classification was seized upon by nationalists, for example in India, to foster identity in opposition to colonial control.
[81] Véronique Altglas, *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p.32.
[82] Richard G. Fox, "East of Said", p.152.
[83] Richard G. Fox, "East of Said", p.153.
[84] Richard G. Fox, "East of Said", p.153.
[85] Richard G. Fox, "*East* of Said", pp.144-156. J.J Clarke makes a similar observation in his *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought,* London: Routledge, 1997. Clarke considers that cultural influence from Asia has provided Westerners with "an instrument of serious self-questioning and self-renewal" (p.6) and "a position from which to appraise and reform institutions and thought indigenous to the West" (p.27).
[86] Daniele Hervieu-Leger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory,* (Transl. from *La religion pour memoire* by Simon Lee), New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000. See also, Maurice Halbachs, *On Collective Memory,* (Trans. by Lewis A. Coser), from *Les Cadres sociaux de la memoire* and from *La topographie legendaire des evangiles en terre sainte: Etude de memoire collective* (1941), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992. Hervieu-Leger is critiqued in Ron Geaves, "Forget Transmitted Memory: The De-traditionalised 'Religion' of Prem Rawat", in, *Journal of Contemporary Religion,* 24 (1), pp.19-33. A useful discussion can be found in, Tuula Sakaranaho, "Religion and the Study of Social Memory", in, *Temenos,* Vol. 47, No.2 (2011) pp.135-158.

contestation of ideas around memory as a social phenomenon and its usefulness as a tool in the study of religions has ensued, mainly around the question of 'how religions remember' or "how religious communities are constructed through remembrance, and how they act in the process of remembering."[87] My focus will be on how particular and popular discourses around religion fell out of memory, how interactions between religious reformers from Europe and Asia have been elided. This does not amount to a commentary on the fragmentation of the 'chain of religious memory' but, rather, that of memory around religion in times of change. My work is not an attempt to recover this history 'as it really was', to historicise these individuals and events, but rather to uncover an aspect of their activities and interests, the discourses they promoted and engaged in, now obscured and forgotten.

For this investigation I have found useful theoretical instruments drawn, in the first instance, from the work of Walter Benjamin (d.1940), who can be considered one of the founding figures in memory studies. Benjamin is consistently concerned with the plight of the oppressed and argues that history should be seen from the perspective of the defeated. In this view, any historical outcome was not the only possible result, other eventualities, other projects could have triumphed.[88] In his 'Theses on History' he proposes a non-linear explanation of time, not historicism's 'empty' homogenous time, the "sequence of events like the beads of a rosary,"[89] but an intersection of the past with the present which he termed 'now time' (*Jetztzeit)*.[90] This conjunction of past with present allows for the reinterpretation of historical moments in the context of any given here and now. For Benjamin, those lost to historical memory must not be forgotten. A corollary to the idea of 'now-time' in the work of Benjamin is the notion that cultural artefacts have an 'afterlife' (*Nachleben)*. The German art historian, Aby Warburg (d.1929), first began to use the term in his writings to refer to the survival of a work of art, not necessarily in another 'life' but rather in the form of a 'continuation' or even a revival.[91] Benjamin developed his own specific iteration of the concept to underpin a radical new reading of history that posits "a symbolic afterlife of the past which continuously influences our own historical imagination and understanding."[92]

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[87] Sakaranaho, "Religion and the Study of Social Memory", p.150.

[88] On Benjamin's conceptions, see, Michael Löwy (Trans. Chris Turner), *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'*, London & New York: Verso, 2005.

[89] Walter Benjamin, *On The Concept of History,* New York: Classic Books, 2009, p.22 (Thesis A).

[90] Benjamin, *On The Concept of History,* p.17 (Thesis XIV). Initial translations render *Jetztzeit* as 'here-and-now'.

[91] Warburg may not have been the originator of the term. For a discussion on Warburg and his espousal of the concept of afterlife, see, Aledia Assmann, "Theories of Cultural Memory and the Concept of 'Afterlife'", in, Marek Tamm (Ed.), *Afterlife of Events: Perspectives on Mnemohistory,* Basingstoke: Palgarve Macmillan, 2015, pp.79-84.

[92] Tamm, *Afterlife of Events*, p.11.

A more contemporary expression or elaboration of Benjamin is found in the work of Jan Assmann.[93] His opus on the construction of memory around Egypt, Moses and monotheism is provocative but keenly observed. Studies of that period at different times, he argues, speak more of the interests of their own era than those of the Egyptians at the time of Moses. Assmann contends that what factually happened in the past is less important than how it was received later and what impact it had. He introduces the concept of 'mnemohistory' which he describes as "reception history applied to history,"[94] but not simply how the past is received in the present but how it is influenced and reconstructed by what is happening in the here and now. From the perspective of mnemohistory key questions concern knowledge of the past in the present, why one historical recounting is favoured over another and the use of the past to confer legitimacy on what is happening in the present.[95]

Some scholars find fault with Assmann's conceptions and question whether a distinction can be made between 'historiography', to describe what happened in the past, as against 'mneomohistorigraphy', which endeavours to explain what is generally understood to have happened. My discussion around these points, referencing Benjamin as the founding figure in 'memory' studies, will explore (along with Assmann) more recent scholarship around the recovery of lost aspects of the history of religions in Europe. Amongst Assmann's detractors, Koku von Stuckrad sees enough historical evidence to observe that Western culture "is characterized by a dialectic of rejection and fascination,"[96] a discursive movement employing 'strategies of distancing' to delete disesteemed narratives or images. He proposes that Western culture has been shaped by the presence and influence of 'alternative' religious experience over the last few hundred years and does not regard it necessary to think in terms of 'mnemohistory' to resolve the conundrum around memory and forgetting.

All of these arguments are from the perspective that important events, movements or people, are 'forgotten'. These concepts offer effective tools to open a discussion on why the figures and events at the core of this thesis are presently obscure. How these ideas illuminate the manner in which the period before the First World War is remembered will more fully elucidate some of the complexities around our understanding of this period and any resonance these themes may have in the present. The home-grown British religious reformers featured in this study have

[93] For an explanation of 'mnemohistory', see, Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism,* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
[94] Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian,*p.9. Cited in, Tamm, *Afterlife of Events*, p.3.
[95] Marek Tamm, *Afterlife of Events,* p.4. Tamm is relaying ideas that originate in Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory", in, *Social Research* 75, 2000, pp.49-72 and, Alon Confino, "History and Memory", in, Axel Schneider and Daniel Woolf (Eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing. Vol 5. Historical Writing Since 1945,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp.36-51.
[96] Koku von Stuckrad, "Esoteric Discourse and the European History of Religion; In Search of a New Interpretational Framework", in, *Western Esotericism*, Vol. 20, 2008, p.229.

various 'afterlives'. Aspects of their activities have been assayed in different eras and contexts but not all of their interests have been accounted for.

A Cultural Turntable

As scholars of religion opened up new vistas in articulating an academic approach to religion outside of Christianity, and earnest seekers became more active, it may have seemed that a new era was nigh in terms of inter-religious understanding at the turn of the twentieth century, the period under review in this study. One of the pioneers of early studies in Buddhism in Britain, T.H. Rhys Davids (who was a collaborator and colleague of Carpenter's) saw the horizon opening up in these terms.

> And when we call to mind how closely intertwined are religious with historical beliefs and arguments, we realize in some degree what effect may follow upon the unveiling of a long history of civilization, upon the curtain being drawn back from a new drama of struggling races and rival religions, filled with ideas strangely familiar and as curiously strange. It is not too much to say that a New World has once more been discovered […] and that the inhabitants of the Old World cannot, if they would, go back again to the quiet times when the New World was not, because it was unknown.[97]

In the end, these hopes remained unfulfilled, this 'new world' was not realized and even the memory around the discourse leading to this expectation faded. Yet, to a real extent boundaries had been pushed out and if it took some decades for the full import to be realised, there was no 'going back'.

In more recent times some partial accounting for the 'lost fragments' and 'forgotten renderings' of the discourse and figures under review has, arguably, already been attempted and the contribution of these pioneers of religious enquiry brought into focus. It has been claimed that much of contemporary thought constitutes "a long series of footnotes"[98] on themes that emanate from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

> Putting this with more dejection, we all suffer from a series of nineteenth century 'hang-overs', and whether it is the strange creatures called 'evolutionism', or 'romanticism', or 'Marxism', or even 'psycho-analysis' (from the turn of the century), with which we wrestle, it is essential for the sake of our own self-knowledge to apprise the great trajectories of thought which lie

[97] T.H. Rhys Davids, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by Some Points in Indian Buddhism*, Second Edition, London: Williams and Norgate, 1891, p.215. Cited in, Thomas, *The British; Their Religious Beliefs and Practices 1800-1986,* p.97.

[98] Gary Trompf, *In Search of Origins; The Beginnings of Religions in Western Theory and Archaeological Practice,* New Delhi: New Dawn Press Group (2nd Ed.), 2005, p.16, cited in Wouter Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, Leiden: Brill, 1996, p.514.

> behind our own consciousness, and behind the stresses and strains of our contemporary society.[99]

Amongst these 'hang-overs' we might also include a fertile discursive landscape concerning 'comparative' religion which prevailed up to the conclusion of the 'long nineteenth century' at the outbreak of the First World War. Wouter Hanegraaff considers that the phenomenon of New Age religion "was born in the 19th century and had reached maturity not later than the beginning of the 20th."[100] Perhaps, he postulates, intellectually nothing really innovative has since been added.[101] He cites Herman von Keyserling's (d.1946) vision, writing in 1918, of how this milieu would evolve.

> Theo- and Anthro-posophy, New Thought, Christian Science, the New Gnosis, Vivekananda's Vedanta, the Neo-Persian and Indo-Islamic Esotericism, not to mention those of the Hindus and the Buddhists, the Bahai system, the professed faith of the various spiritualistic and occult circles, and even the Freemasons all start from essentially the same basis, and their movements are certain to have a greater future than official Christianity.[102]

Von Stuckrad also traces the aetiology of interest in modern variants of esotericism, Paganism and occultism to this period and contends that the re-emergence of contemporary interest is the result of the operation of a "cultural turntable" which "disseminated these ideas in a wider context"[103] with the dawning of the counter culture in 1960's.[104] This still does not explain how and why this history has lay dormant for all of this time. That Abdul Baha was a key participant in the discursive event that gave rise to this assessment, and that this occurrence has not previously been explored, provides further rationale for examining his visits to Britain in this thesis.

A 'Field of Religious Enquiry'

It may be useful, in applying these methodological and theoretical approaches towards tracing the course of this discursive event, to characterize the shared experience under consideration, as a 'field of religious enquiry', to borrow from

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[99] Trompf, *In Search of Origins*, p.16. See, also, Kim Knott, "New Religious Movements" in*, The British; Their Religious Beliefs and Practices 1800-1986,* p.159.
[100] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture,* New York: State University Press, p.522.
[101] Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture,* p.521.
[102] Herman von Keyserling, *Reisetagebuch eines Philosphen,* as quoted in English translation, in, James Webb, *The Occult Establishment,* La Salle, Illinois:Open Court, 1976, p.183. Cited in, Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, p. 508.
[103] Kocku von Stuckrad, "Reflections of Limits of Reflection: An invitation to the Discursive Study of Religion", in, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion,* 22, pp. 156-169, 2010, p.162.
[104] Wouter J. Hanegraaff is another such scholar who has contributed to this discussion.

Bourdieu.[105] Bourdieu's key concepts are rooted in the sociology of religion, though religion does not loom large in his work. His "conceptions of consecration, belief and habitus, but also his notion of 'field', come from his encounter with the sociology of religion" [106] and reflect his assessment of the work of Weber, Durkheim and Mauss. Field can be related to the idea of a force-field or even a battlefield, though Bourdieu was not inclined to delineate a "professorial definition."[107] How fields are structured depends on their history and how they were fashioned through struggle to take control of the capital on offer or available.[108] Loïc Wacquant, a collaborator of Bourdieu's, describes the concept thus;

> A field is simultaneously a space of conflict and competition, the analogy here being with a battlefield, in which participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of capital effective in it—cultural authority in the artistic field, scientific authority in the scientific field, sacerdotal authority in the religious field, and so forth—and the power to decree the hierarchy and "conversion rates" between all forms of authority in the field of power. In the course of these struggles, the very shape and divisions of the field become a central stake, because to alter the distribution and relative weight of forms of capital is tantamount to modifying the structure of the field.[109]

Overlaying elements of Bourdieu's concept of 'field' may assist to counter the flat and linear perspective from which these events and their propagators have been adjudged. The concept of 'field' more accurately portrays this structure as "the objective relations between the positions these agents occupy."[110] Jockeying for religious position or power was a characteristic of this field but it does not mirror Bourdieu's paradigm in its entirety. If many of the actors we will meet in these pages were clergymen or clergymen scholars, there were still more lay 'curious'[111] agents populating this arena and it was not limited to religious professionals striving to

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[105] See, for example, Pierre Bourdieu (Translated by, J. Burnside, C. Calhoun and L. Florence), *Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field,* Comparative Social Research, Volume 13, 1991, pp.1-44.

[106] Andrew M. McKinnon, Marta Trzebiatowska and Christopher Craig Brittain, "Bourdieu, Capital and Conflict in a Religious Field: the Case of the Anglican Communion" in, *The Journal of Contemporary Religion,* 2011, Vol 26, No. 3, pp. 355-370. See also, Erwan Dianteill, "Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociology of Religion: A Central and Peripheral Concern." *Theory and Society*,32.5/6 (2003), p.529.

[107] Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p.95.

[108] See, McKinnon, Trzebiatowska and Craig Brittain, "Bourdieu, Capital and Conflict in a Religious Field."

[109] *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology,* pp.17-18. Also, cited in, McKinnon, Trzebiatowska and Craig Brittain, "*Bourdieu*, Capital and Conflict in a Religious Field", p.532.

[110] Pierre Bourdieu (Translated by Chris Turner), "Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber's Sociology of Religion, in, *Max Weber: Rationality and Modernity,* Sam Whimster and Scott Lash (Eds.), London: Allen and Unwin, 1987, p.121.

[111] I am aware that 'curiosity' can itself have pejorative connotations in 'Orientalist' terms. See, Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment,* p.22. I employ the descriptor to distinguish scholars and clergymen against those comprising various groups and organisations

promote "their particular version of the sacred."[112] The field's various actors used or referred to different forms of symbolic capital; for example the capital associated with high clerical office while engaged in irenic and universalist pursuits, Tudor Pole with his Glastonbury Cup, the cultural capital generated by close association with a visiting 'Persian sage'. But the field was not disassociated and autonomous but rather overlapped and intersected with others, with respect to membership and also with respect to content. Agency expressed itself in religious exploration outside a purely institutional locus in an exchange of ideas between practitioners within the field and beyond. This field of religious enquiry, an aspect of the greater religious field, was not fixed, allowed for change and was "simultaneously independent and interdependent."[113] It is, of course, difficult to find a model that will precisely describe the nexus of relationships and interests across a network of multiple fields during this period, one which will capture the variables where relationships "between fields fluctuate as steadily as do relations within them."[114] This field functioned, at least in the first instance, as an expression of Christian renewal operating from a common presumptive perspective. It overlapped and was intersected with the overall Christian field. Interests intersected, networks connected and movements such as Bahai, Celticism, the Occult, Spiritualism, Suffragism, Theosophy and Vedantism were all drawn within its ambit. What I hope to show clearly is that this was a far more complex and nuanced phenomenon of religious enquiry than previously regarded.[115]

The main aim of this work is to scrutinize and contextualize the contribution made to the construction of new religious frameworks by those 'journeying outside of traditional Christianity' in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century. It is an attempt to recover an aspect of the history of these individuals and events now obscure in memory. That evolving worldview sought interaction with religions from Asia and a close discursive engagement ensued resulting in the reception to Britain of significant religious reformers from Asia including Abdul Baha, head of the Bahai religion. Why these interactions were transacted and the motives and agenda behind their pursuance are all questions I will endeavour to answer. These encounters and their prominent promoters, I argue, are significant in the context of the history of religions

[112] Bradford Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu", in, *Sociological Theory,* Vol. 21, No.2 (June 2003), p.156.
[113] Bradford Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu", in, *Sociological Theory,* Vol. 21, No.2 (June 2003), p.170.
[114] Verter, "Spiritual Capital", p.170.
[115] I have adapted some of Verter's analysis to argue 'with and against' Bourdieu in applying his concept of field to describe the matrix of relationships under review. I have preferred 'field' as a more accurate descriptor of this particular discursive environment as opposed to Colin Campbell's 'cultic milieu' ("The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization", in, Michael Hill (Ed.), *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain 5,* London: SCM, 1972, pp.119-13). Sutcliffe cites Campbell when discussing "the crowded marketplace of the early twentieth century", in, Steven J. Sutcliffe, "Gurdjieff as a *Bricoleur*. Understanding the 'Work' as a *Bricolage*", in, *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, Vol 6, No. 2 (2015), p.118.

in Europe. Set against the catastrophic conflagration which beset the world in 1914, which collapsed many worldviews, these figures and events appear as exponents of ideas and philosophies that are familiar in the present despite operating from an underlying bias which, in the face of all their eclectic interests, still favoured Christianity as a pleroma. Their experience is instructive counter posed against similar contemporary discursive trends, and posits the aetiology of such religious journeying as occurring long before it is generally thought such ideas were prevalent.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 – The 'Science of Religion';
Religious and Intellectual Milieu, is an exploration of the religious and intellectual milieu for the period under review. The idea of a 'crisis of faith', commonly understood to have been experienced in the Victorian heyday, is problematized and the concept of 'theodicy' is introduced to examine how religious frameworks were constituted as a response to evangelical fervour. The work of Max Muller and Carpenter is scrutinized as foundational in the articulation of the new discipline of 'comparative religion'. How the new 'science of religion' provided an intellectual underpinning to contacts with religions from Asia will be teased out. Cultural and political referents for understandings of 'Persia' are explored, including the activities of the 'Persia committee' and the phenomenon of Fitzgerald's translations of Omar Khayyam; all towards setting a context for the reception of Abdul Baha in Britain.

Chapter 3, Establishing Parameters for 'East-West' Encounters; Chicago and Oxford, further develops an analysis of the religious and intellectual landscape to include the interaction of Carpenter and Max Muller in the seminal World's Parliament of Religions. Similarly, another significant event, The Third Congress on the History of Religion in Oxford in 1908, is also examined. Carpenter and others associated with the reception of Abdul Baha in Britain were centrally involved in its organisation. Further parsing the context in which 'East/West' encounters were being pursued, attitudes to Islam and consideration of Bahai as a safe approach to Islam are investigated, leading to a discussion on how these religious and intellectual threads came together resulting in Abdul Baha's appearance in Oxford in late 1912. The role played in both Oxford events by another significant figure, T.K. Cheyne, is also scrutinized.

Chapter 4, The 'Curious'; The 'Celtic' Dimension to Pre-First World War Religious Discourse*,* introduces another constituency of interest as represented by home-grown Christian revivalist movement with W.T. Pole at its centre. The development of this 'Celticist' Christian movement highlights the concatenation of connections that

existed between ideas around 'comparative religion' and the 'curious' as evidenced by the reception held at the Dean of Westminster's home at Deans Yard in effort to prove the provenance of Tudor Pole's Glastonbury cup. The influence of the Celtic revival in Ireland on this eclectic movement is investigated, as are the movement's endeavours to reach out to connect with religions in Asia. How this culminated in Tudor Pole's central role in Abdul Baha's public progress through Britain provides a fascinating insight into the evolution of this religious field and the nature and scope of its discourse.

Chapter 5, Encounters With New Protestant Theodocies; R.J. Campbell, "The Disturber of our Comfortable Peace," introduces the Protestant reform movement, the New Theology, vigorously promoted by the most renowned cleric of the period R.J. Campbell. Campbell's fame reached far beyond the confines of his own church. The multiplicity of Campbell's interests is exposed through a close reading of *The Christian Commonwealth* newspaper which, more than any other publication, preserves a record of his connections to religions from Asia. His engagement with Theosophy and Bahai is detailed, as well as his public feting of Abdul Baha. The implications of Campbell's breakdown and withdrawal from public life, and his subsequent efforts to depict a particular past-picture of a vibrant 'field of religious enquiry', are all closely observed.

Chapter 6, Abdul Baha in Britain; 'East' Comes 'West', focusses on Abdul Baha's reception by the reform Protestant constituency lead by Campbell but which also included Basil Wilberforce, the Dean of Westminster. It will be important to explicate what they understood was foundational in the teachings of Abdul Baha, the manner in which 'filter' and 'grid' operated as enmeshed motifs in these encounters, and how their approach was informed by an 'affirmative Orientalism'. The factors associated with Wilberforce's indirect admonishment by his Anglican colleagues and superiors will be discussed as they highlight underlying attitudes that prevailed with respect to Islam, as well as internal conflicts evident within different strands of Anglicanism. These attitudes had a direct bearing on where Bahai resided along a notional 'grid' of what was acceptable or not, supporters arguing for a close relational connection to Christianity and detractors (of which there were not many) arguing that Bahai was fundamentally Islamic.

Chapter 7, The Elision of Memory; Forgetting Aspects of Early Twentieth Century Discourse, juxtaposes these events and pre-eminent actors, and the discourse they fashioned which welcomed engagement with religions from Asia, against contemporary appreciation of that period. How these personalities appear and are understood in the 'here and now' and how their 'afterlife' was constructed, are all parsed utilising intellections from Benjamin and drawing mainly on Assmann and von Stuckrad. Consideration will be given to an added layer of complexity in that these

reforming figures contributed significantly themselves to the articulation of their own afterlife. The relationship between the First World War and religion, and how the period before the war is depicted with respect to a broad interest in religious thought and ideas, will form the concluding discussion of the thesis.

Chapter 2 – The 'Science of Religion'; Religious and Intellectual Milieu

The 'long nineteenth century'[116] is renowned for its wondrous inventions.[117] Convenience, allied to technological progress, presented new conundrums and serious practical and conceptual problems while life was still grim for a vast portion of society.[118] Religion too was caught up in this maelstrom and my study is framed against the backdrop of contemporary currents of religious thought in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, the era is commonly cited as the period when "God became a mere hypothesis,"[119] religion losing out in its monumental battle with its great counterpoint, science. "Everywhere we see the beginnings of confusion and we want a clue to some sound order and authority"[120] wrote Mathew Arnold, as the nineteenth century moved towards its final quarter. The two most widespread social phenomena of the time were, according to Mc Mahan, "the Victorian crisis of faith and the emergence of the immense symbolic capital of scientific discourse."[121] In order to understand the milieu into which Abdul Baha arrived at the turn of the twentieth century it will be useful to briefly consider this 'crisis', its ramifications for religious thinking as the new century dawned, and to explore the prevalent religious and intellectual discourse he sought to engage with.

The Victorian 'crisis of faith' has been much commented upon and analysed.[122] The phrase itself is a popular mnemonic and often appears in publications without qualification. As a subject for study, it is not monolithic but rather presents as "a web

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[116] See, Eric Hobsbawn, *The Age of Revolution: Europe: 1789–1848* , London: Abacus, 1962 . *The Age of Capital: 1848–1875,* London: Wedenfield and Nicolson, 1975. *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987. The phrase was coined by Hobsbawn.

[117] See, George Cleays (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Nineteenth Century Thought,* Abingdon: Routledge, 2005.

[118] See, James R. Moore, in Richard J. Helmstadter and Bernard Lightman (Eds.), *Victorian Faith in Crisis*, London: Macmillan, 1990, p.158.

[119] Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis* p. xiv.

[120] Mathew Arnold, "Hebraism and Hellenism", in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), J. D. Wilson(Ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 129–144, cited in, Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature: An Introduction,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p.4.

[121] McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, p.107.

[122] See, for example, Anthony Symondson (ed.), *The Victorian Crisis of Faith*, Michigan: University of Michigan, 1969. Richard J. Helmstadter and Bernard Lightman (eds.), *Victorian Faith in Crisis*, London: Macmillan, 1990. Timothy Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt: Honest Faith in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. A.N. Wilson, *God's Funeral,* New York: W.W. Norton, 1999. Elizabeth Jay, *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain,* London: Macmillan, 1986. H. Mc Leod and W. Ustorf (eds.), *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. H. Mc Leod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914,* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996. C.G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800-2000,* London: Routledge, 2001. A.O. J. Cockshut, *The Unbelievers: English Agnostic Thought, 1840-1890,* London: Collins, 1964 and *Religious Controversies of the Nineteenth Century,* Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1966.

of many plots"[123] and consequently is not easily explicated. The impression is of large numbers modifying their beliefs or simply rejecting faith altogether. This perception has, in more recent times, been problematized. "That is to say", writes Frank Turner, "scholars […] no longer regard it as the inevitable and virtually self-explanatory result of the expansion of progressive historical and scientific knowledge."[124] For Timothy Larsen, the crisis motif is overblown and misleading as it is often the only qualifier adduced when faith in Victorian times is discussed.[125] The century was by and large, he concludes, a 'religious' century dominated by evangelical Christian fervour and, if some abandoned their faith (as they undoubtedly did), the overwhelmingly religious tenor of the period cannot be ignored. Intellectual, historical and literary studies and accounts of the time exaggerate the fact, Larsen argues, that the only topics of interest regarding religion in the nineteenth century are those of decline, crisis and secularization.[126] He prefers to discuss a 'crisis of doubt', a by-product or reaction to intense religiosity fuelled by evangelicalism and emphasis on personal religious experience, conversion, intimacy with God through prayers, Bible reading, divine guidance and the presence of the holy ghost. In support of this argument he cites the fact that many of the classic 'crisis of faith' figures of the period, such as George Eliot and Leslie Stephen, emerged from evangelical "commitments or contexts."[127] Many are those, he also contends, who wracked by honest doubt returned to orthodoxy, so that on Queen Victoria's death in 1901 it could be said the majority of her subjects were religious and very many intensely so.[128] If we can accept this assessment as correct, it still fails to capture the more nuanced picture that religion presents in Victorian times.

Turner finds it ironic that Victorian faith entered crisis "not in the midst of any attack on religion but rather during the period of the most fervent religious crusade that the British nation had known since the seventeenth century […], the last great effort on the part of all denominations to Christianise Britain."[129] Religion, he elaborates, was never assailed for its own sake by the promulgators of scientific naturalism. The faith that was rejected, by and large by the young intelligentsia, was not that tied to the religion of old orthodoxies but a "recently intensified faith associated with militant Christian institutions."[130] To understand the 'faith that was lost', Turner contends, social, cultural and political aspects of Victorian life and society must be critically and sensitively examined. When religion is viewed, he concludes, from the perspective of "social and psychological interaction between people, rather

[123] Cleays, *Encyclopaedia of Nineteenth Century Thought,* p.39.
[124] Turner, *Victorian Faith in Crisis*, p.10.
[125] Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt* p.1.
[126] Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt* p.2.
[127] Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt* p.12.
[128] "Every marital crisis does not end in divorce," he writes. *Crisis of Doubt*, p.15.
[129] Turner, *Victorian Faith in Crisis*, p.11.
[130] Turner, *Victorian Faith in Crisis*, p.11.

than an expression of interaction of human beings with the divine,"[131] the true nature of the Victorian crisis can be properly read. James A. Moore takes the argument further when he depicts the climacteric as a "crisis of legitimation"[132] amongst the Victorian intelligentsia, concerned with order and progress in society and the need to find solutions to social conflict, whilst retaining "their own status and emoluments in a diversifying economy,"[133] a crisis of ultimate beliefs as he describes it. It was in the social conflicts of the day that the rest of society experienced their crisis, contending with economic change and what Moore terms "the flux of bourgeois opinion, which tended to undermine personal meaning and coherence."[134] Social prescriptions emerged from these "internecine conflicts"[135] which were more or less political struggles, joined in effort to shape opinion and events. Moore offers a "notional tripod"[136] as support for a methodological framework against which the Victorian 'crisis' might be analysed. One leg of the imaginary tripod, he suggests, is 'professionalization', a trend he discerns in which independent expertise became institutionalised, as in the sciences. Secondly, 'secularisation' of religion, where religious ideas, values and representatives became marginalised from positions of power and authority in national life, and finally 'naturalisation' where religious power and authority "became vested in natural ideas, naturalistic values, and institutions led by professional interpreters of nature."[137]

There is, then, a view that the Victorian crisis was not one of faith or belief, per se, but a wider internal societal conflict, a contest to negotiate "new beliefs, new vehicles of consent that would seek to maintain continuity."[138] The term used by Moore to describe these 'new vehicles of consent' is theodicy, a theistic or theological conception concerned with building arguments in defence of God's omnipotence against the existence of physical and moral evil, though he seeks to broaden its definition and excise it from its classical theological formulation. He cites Richard Kennington in support of this elaboration,

> 'Theodicy' in the broad sense here employed means accounting for the relation between goodness and the expectation of happiness, and of evil and misfortune, in terms of human activity and the suprahuman whole, be it nature or history, in which he finds himself. [139]

[131] Turner, *Victorian Faith in Crisis*, p.11.
[132] Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis* p.153.
[133] Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis* p.153.
[134] Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis,* p.153-154.
[135] Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis* p.154.
[136] Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis* p.154.
[137] Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis* p.155.
[138] Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis* p.154.
[139] Richard Kennington, "Descartes and the Mastery of Nature", in, *Organism, Medicine, and Metaphysics: Essays in Honor of Hans Jonas on his 75th Birthday, May10, 1978,* Holland: Stuart F.

The development of a new theodicy (of this kind), involved a continuous effort by the intelligentsia to construct a new framework of belief that would reconcile God's ways to humanity and provide a platform from which to act to ameliorate the great social injustices evident in every town and city in the land, without accepting the evident suffering as a manifestation of 'evil' to be endured fatalistically. Moore outlines the complexion of this new theodicy and cites the various contributors to the thinking that underpinned its philosophy. In a sense, he is suggesting that two variants of a new theodicy emerged out of the Victorian crisis, one a 'church' response which sought accommodation with evolutionist ideas. The other, one of scientific naturalism which sought to displace the status quo, in which science and progress sought to master nature for the common good while still "reconciling social expectations to the realities of a liberalising industrial and imperial social order."[140] He writes.

> This 'naturalisation' of religious beliefs […], which promised material salvation through moral achievement in history, formed the ideological resolution of the Victorian crisis and, as such, marked a profound transformation not only in intellectual culture, but throughout British society. 'Secularisation' is the word now usually applied to this transformation and I have no objection to the term provided that it is understood as the continuous displacement of one religion, both ideologically and institutionally, with another. For this is how the dissident intellectuals themselves understood the movement of their times. 'New doctrine' based on 'new revelations' were creating a 'new faith' that would proclaim a 'new gospel' for a new social order. To them the process was nothing less than a 'New Reformation'.[141]

If we cannot here fully explore the Victorian crisis from this broad perspective, we can at least note that during this period a new class of secular intellectual 'professional' emerged, willing and able to critique the nature of human beings (a domain previously defined by religion) and whose commentary became increasingly regarded as authoritative. Out of this ferment other discourses emerged that impinged on the crux of Victorian religion, one of which was an encounter with new religious ideas outside of Christianity. Within this discourse we can identify the emergence of a new scholarly discipline tentatively described as the study of 'comparative religion', or simply, the 'science of religion'. [142]

Spicker (ed.), Dordrecht, 1978, pp.221-2. Cited, Ibid. p.165. Max Weber addressed the conundrum of theodicy, how the power of a "transcendent unitary god" can be reconciled with an imperfect world of his own creation, in, *The Sociology of Religion,* Boston: Beacon Press, 1963, pp.138-150.

[140] Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis* p.166. The full discussion is contained in pp.161-180.

[141] Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis* pp.174-175.

[142] These terms are not necessarily interchangeable. See, Donald Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies*, New York: Palgrave, 1999, p.26, note 3.

'Comparative' Religion

Against a backdrop of a new focus on the critical study of original sources, which sought to locate Christian revelation as part of the history of humankind, the increased accessibility of the written and oral traditions of colonised peoples, and also in response to the ferment within Protestant Christianities, a new comparative approach to the study of religion was suggested by some scholars.[143] In his review of the birth of the scholarly discipline of the study of religion, Eric J. Sharpe, explores this particular strand of the religious milieu in the period leading up to and including the visit of Abdul Baha to Britain. The birth of the 'Science of Religion' is detailed and the major figures involved in developing a scholarly focus on the study of 'comparative' religion are profiled. Such were the developments in this arena over the ensuing decades that Sharpe, commenting on the years immediately preceding the First World War, identifies the relationship between Christianity and the great non-Christian religions of the world (information on which was then becoming available and widespread), as the most prominent theological conundrum of the era.[144] He outlines how this discourse on religion was proceeding against the backdrop of the Darwinian influenced efflorescence of science.

During this period, the expatriate German Oxford scholar, Friedrich Max Muller (d.1900), along with the Dutch scholar C.P. Tiele and following the German historical school,[145] gave birth to a study of religion that was "scientific, critical, historical and comparative."[146] Max Muller believed that science and religion were not irreconcilable, but suggested there might be a 'Science of Religion' which could do justice to both. If he was not the originator of the term, nor the single progenitor of the discipline, he is regarded as the 'father of comparative religion' and in, Sharpe's words, a "universal figure,"[147] the scholar who most effectively argued that in matters of religion (in a paraphrase of Goethe's epigram), "he who knows one, knows

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[143] Lourens P. van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Muller; A Life Devoted to the Humanities*, Boston: Brill, 2002, p.354. See also, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Scholar Extraordinary, The Life of Professor the Rt Hon. Friedrich Max Muller, PC.,* London: Chatto and Windus, 1974.

[144] Eric J Sharpe, *Comparative Religion; A History*, London: Duckworth, 1986, p.163. I have drawn from Sharpe which may now be regarded as somewhat dated, but he does connect individual contributions and includes such figures as Carpenter, Fairbairn and others. Peter Byrne's essay 'The Foundations of the Study of Religions in the British Context' in, Arie Molendijk and Peter Pels, *Religion in the Making: the Emergence of the Sciences of Religion,* Leiden: Brill, 1998, pp.45-64, is a contemporary and quite nuanced assessment of the emergence of the 'science of religion' in late Victorian/Edwardian Britain. The study focusses on institutional and methodological developments. Marjorie Wheeler-Barclay, *The Science of Religion in Britain, 1860-1915,* Charlottesville, VA.: University of Virginia Press, 2010, expands the range of actors at the heart of the new discipline to include Tylor, Harrison and W.R. Smith. Particularly interesting is her sense that, though focussed on the study of non-Christian religions, the 'science of religion' was greatly concerned with internal Christian debates.

[145] Sharpe, *Comparative Religion*, p.31

[146] Sharpe, *Comparative Religion*, p.31 and p.35.

[147] van den Bosch *Friedrich Max Muller,* p.35.

none."[148] Other scholars were, along with Max Muller, engaged in investigations of ancient civilizations and their scriptures while more were drawn to the study of so called 'primitive' peoples and their culture, all of which gave rise to questions concerning the origin and development of civilizations and religions. E.B. Tylor, in his celebrated monograph, *Primitive Culture*,[149] crystallised a developing hypothesis when he highlighted the need for a comparative approach to the study of cultures and their institutions from an evolutionary perspective.

Max Muller considered that a comparative approach to the study of religions might also bear fruit, but his frame of reference was derived from the comparative study of language, mainly issues of etymology. Max Muller, according to van den Bosch, "instigated the first systematic study of comparative religion in his four lectures on the science of religion" addressed to a "broadly-based audience interested in the study of religion without the traditional trappings of Victorian Christianity,"[150] at the Royal Institute of London in 1870. The lectures were later published under the title *Introduction to the Science of Religion,*[151] which Sharpe regards as the "foundation document of comparative religion in the English-speaking world."[152] Donald Wiebe opines that if Max Muller did not delineate a clear methodology in his *Introduction to the Science of Religion* he did articulate some preliminary issues to show that a scientific approach to the study of religions is possible. These proposals, Wiebe argues, are predicated on a sound scientific foundation and he should be regarded as the founder of the modern scientific study of religions "in the form in which it has achieved cognitive recognition in the modern Western university."[153]

Max Muller's embryonic framework for the study of religions, his attempt in Foucaultian terms 'to order multiplicities', rests heavily on the study of texts.[154] Even if there was some basis on which to develop such an approach with respect to Judaism, Christianity or Islam, a great deal of human religious experience and expression was at once side-lined. With respect to Hinduism, Brahmanic strands were reified and texts identified to fit a conception of a homogenous Hindu religious entity. Such a literary bias within religious studies, King warns, "tends to distort the subject matter under consideration."[155] It is clear that from the outset, Max Muller was investing the fledgling field with a distinctly 'Protestant' bias. Even so, Max Muller was making

[148] van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Muller,* p. 294. On the importance of Max Muller's contribution, see, Donald Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies,* New York: Palgrave, 1999, p.26, note 3.
[149] E.B.Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, John Murray: London, 1920, [1871].
[150] Tylor, *Primitive Culture* p.294
[151] London: Longmans Green, 1873.
[152] Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* p.xi and p.36.
[153] Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies,* p.11.
[154] Cited in, Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and the Mystic East*, London: Routledge, 1999, p.68. See, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977, pp.218-220.
[155] King, *Orientalism and Religion,* p.72. This discussion draws from King's analysis, pp.62-81.

innovative and novel strides in the discourse surrounding religion and its place in society, bringing method and a scientific approach to bear to a field hitherto disorganised.[156]

Parsing the study of religions into two related endeavours, Max Muller's stated primary focus was on, what he termed, 'Comparative Theology', concerned with the historical forms of religion, and less so with 'Theoretical Theology' or the philosophical aspect of the study, the conditions that make any religion possible.[157] Focussing on such signifiers suggests that Max Muller "failed to distinguish clearly religion from the study of religion,"[158] that he was in fact engaged in more than a study or search for knowledge, but rather his was a "religio-philosophic "[159] enterprise, "a *practical* activity."[160] He does express what can be described as 'religious intent' throughout his work, though, in a number of places, clearly demarcates scientific study from practical activity, advocating a "division of labour"[161] between the student and practitioner.[162] He proposed that the study of the history of religions should have a place in education, indeed a "recognised department on the teaching of every university." "Knowledge has a value of its own," he wrote, "even if it should not be of practical or marketable utility."[163] Regardless of whether religions were nothing more than a product of the imagination, he postulated, "an accurate knowledge of the causes and different phases of this universal disease might prove useful for its final cure."[164] He did not hold that the 'Science of Religion' would undermine religious faith but might result in the modification of some beliefs, though nothing essential to true religion would be lost. It is possible to discern elements, in what has been detailed thus far of Max Muller's scholarly endeavours, of the tracing out of a new 'theodicy', the formulation of a new overarching framework in the manner in which theodicies were formulated as a response to the crisis in Victorian faith as earlier described. It was a pursuit which, as van den Bosch remarks, set boundaries on the level of his achievements.

> His great interest in natural theology as a possible solution for the crisis of Victorian Christianity stood in the way of a broader approach to the study of religion and its concrete manifestations.[165]

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[156] Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* p.46.
[157] Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* p.43. See, also, Wiebe, p.12.
[158] Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies,* p.12.
[159] Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* p. 43.
[160] Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* p.252.
[161] Max Muller, cited in Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies* p.13.
[162] Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies,* p.13.
[163] Max Muller cited in Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies,* p.16.
[164] Max Muller cited in Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies,* p.16.
[165] van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Muller,* p.315.

Public Discourse

As well as a prodigious output (which we cannot hope to fully assess here),Max Muller marshalled an entire generation of scholars to contribute as editors, translators and commentators, to his series *Sacred Books of the East,* in the estimation of Tomoku Masuzawa, "an irreproachable scholarly achievement."[166] These seminal publications made available material related to eight "book religions,"[167] namely, the religion of the Brahmans, the religion of the followers of the Buddha, of Zarathustra, of Khung-fu-sze, of Lao-sze and of Muhammad.[168] In choosing what texts to include, Max Muller limited himself to what he thought the leaders of these religions regarded as critical for their understanding. He was anxious to include Jewish and Christian Scriptures but excluded them from the series in the face of withering criticism and opposition from his publisher who would not allow the Old and New Testaments to be considered in the same category as other sacred books.[169] Though he himself was critical of some of texts published ("much in them," he wrote, "is extremely childish, tedious if not repulsive"),[170] he still considered that the publications would in future be regarded as the "most instructive archives of the past, studied and consulted when thousands of books of the day are forgotten."[171] An advocate of Chicago's World's Parliament of Religions in 1893, he considered that the future held a promise of a new form of religion, moving beyond Christianity though still to be known as Christianity.[172] "The true religion of the future", he wrote, "will be the fulfilment of all the religions of the past."[173] "The Science of Religion," he further hypothesized, "may be the last of the sciences which man is destined to elaborate; but when it is elaborated, it will change the aspect of the world, and give new life to Christianity itself."[174] Sharpe considers that, perhaps incidentally, Max Muller set the foundations for what came to be known as the dialogue of religions, "insisting not only on accuracy with regard to dead traditions, but sympathy with regard to living traditions."[175]

It is difficult not to categorize Max Muller's work, in contemporary terms, as a clear contradictory duality, one which would be roundly criticised if promulgated by later practitioners in the study of religions. He is overtly Protestant while still

[166] Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 259. See also, Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* p.45. Arie Molendijk's *Friedrich Max Muller and the Sacred Books of the East*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, is a recent in-depth study of the genesis and content of the series.
[167] van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Muller* p.343.
[168] van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Muller* p.343.
[169] van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Muller*, p. 299 and p. 343. The publisher was Oxford University Press.
[170] van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Muller*, p.344.
[171] van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Muller* p.343.
[172] On the World Parliament of Religion see, J.H. Barrows (Ed), *The World's Parliament of Religions I-II,* Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893.
[173] Max Muller, *Life and Letters*, Vol. II, p.135, cited in Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* p.45.
[174] Max Muller, *Chips from a German Workshop 1,* p.xix, cited in Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* p.31.
[175] Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* p.45.

advocating a critical approach to the study of religions, seeing in history the unfolding of a rational purpose as a divine drama, "[…] a common fund of truth in all religions, derived from a revelation that was neither confined to one nation, nor miraculous in the usual sense of that word."[176] Towards the end of his life he became preoccupied by the prospect of a 'Christian-Vedanta'.[177] He sought a role in the Hindu religious revival of the late nineteenth century and endeavoured to influence Hindu monotheists, largely the Brahmo Samaj of Keshub Chunder Sen (d. 1884) and his successor, Protap Chunder Mozoomdar (d.1905), to formally adopt Christianity.[178] He summed up his personal life's quest as an effort,

> […] to prove that the yearning for union or unity with God, which we saw as the highest goal in other religions, finds its fullest recognition in Christianity, if but properly understood, that is, if but treated historically, and that it is inseparable from our belief in man's full brotherhood with Christ.[179]

The early pioneers of the new 'science of religion' were operating from within the prevailing paradigm of the Protestant religious and social upheaval of their time, the standpoint from which they viewed the opening world of 'other' religious experience, influenced by colonial and Orientalist strands of thinking. It was from that locus that Max Muller fashioned a response to his era's 'crisis' within Christianity, which was in the end a Christian response, in effect 'Protestantizing' the nascent discipline of the study of religions. He envisaged that, regardless of the greatness or otherwise of other religious traditions it would be seen that the eventual outcome of humanity's historical religious journeying would be a new 'super-Christianity', encompassing all other religions within its remit. Along with some of his contemporaries, he was fashioning a new 'theodicy', one which sought to meet and include the religious beliefs of those outside of Christianity ; one which also provided a framework for dialogue with a visiting religious reformer from Asia. His efforts contributed in no small measure in the case being made for the first time for a comparative and academic approach to the study of religions.[180] If Max Muller's star has faded over time he is still liberally referenced when religion in this period is discussed. Joseph Estlin Carpenter, a key contributor to the construction of an

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[176] Max Muller, cited in Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies,* p.20.

[177] King, *Orientalism and Religion,* p.122. Here King is echoing Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe : An Essay in Understanding,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988, p.134. For a discussion on missionary activity and empire see, David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp.156-172.

[178] Chaudhuri, *Scholar Extraordinary,* pp.330-335. Gwilym Beckerlegge, 'Professor Max Muller and the Missionary Cause', in, J.Wolffe (Ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain: Vol. 5, Culture and Empire,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997, is particularly helpful on Max Muller's involvement in missionary politics.

[179] Max Muller, cited in Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies,* p.20.

[180] His death in 1900 was greeted with many expressions of praise for his academic career. See, van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Muller,* p.481. Even his old adversary, Andrew Lang, eulogised him in a personal letter to his widow, though there was also a settling of old scores from his erstwhile academic enemies.

intellectual and discursive environment that sought connection to religions in Asia, is, though, very much forgotten.[181]

Carpenter

Ironically, the first two comparative religionists to devote regular courses of lectures to the discipline under that description in universities in Britain, did so in Non-Conformist theological colleges situated in Oxford; Joseph Estlin Carpenter in the Unitarian, Manchester College (at first when the College was based in London) and Andrew Fairbairn (d.1912) in the Congregationalist, Mansfield College.[182] Sharpe interprets this as an indicator that the Churches were not always implacably opposed to the comparative approach but more specifically, perhaps, it indicates that within Unitarianism and amongst Congregationalists the crisis of belief, allied to the proliferation of information on religions outside of Christianity, prompted some leading figures in these traditions to explore approaches to other faiths. A tradition of dissent overlain with a new liberal enthusiasm gave rise to a "fascination with non-Christian religions, social service, socialism, the peace movement, temperance, vegetarianism, even spiritualism"[183] amongst Unitarians and Congregationalists, as epitomised by the emergence of R.J. Campbell's (d.1956) 'New Theology' movement in the early years of the twentieth century.[184] Carpenter and Fairbairn, both of whom were trained clerics, adopted a comparative approach where Christianity was the standard against which other religions were measured and weighed, though their contribution towards the discursive milieu around religion during this period was significant. Carpenter began offering his course on the history of religions for the first time in 1876, just three years after the appearance of Max Muller's *Introduction to the Science of Religion* and later both he and Fairbairn (along with Tylor) were contemporaries of Max Muller in Oxford.[185]

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[181] See, C.H. Hereford (Ed.), *Joseph Estlin Carpenter; A Memorial Volume,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929. Arthur J. Long, "The Life and Work of J. Estlin Carpenter" in, Barbara Smith (Ed.), *Truth, Liberty, Religion: Essays Celebrating Two Hundred Years of Manchester College,* Oxford: Manchester College, 1986. Jane Anne Deacon, *Joseph Estlin Carpenter: An Intellectual Biography,* MA Dissertation: Lancaster University, 1977 (Unpublished). D.V. Marshall, *The Work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter,* MPhil Dissertation: Open University, 2001 (Unpublished).

[182] Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* pp.130-131. See, Hugh Chisholm, (Ed),"Fairbairn, Andrew Martin", Encyclopædia Britannica (11th ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911.

[183] R.K. Webb, "The Unitarian Background" in, Barbara Smith (Ed.), *Truth, Liberty, Religion: Essays Celebrating Two Hundred Years of Manchester College*, Oxford: Manchester College, 1986, pp.26-27.

[184] See, R.J. Campbell, *The New Theology*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1907. Campbell was a popular, sometimes controversial, minister at the Congregational City Temple in London from 1903-1915. He subsequently became an Anglican cleric. See, Keith Robbins, "The Spiritual Pilgrimage of the Rev. R. J. Campbell", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, April 1979, 30: pp.261-276. Both Carpenter and Campbell had contact with Abdul Baha during his stay in England. Chapter 5 will focus on Campbell's role in the reception of Abdul Baha in Britain.

[185] Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* pp.129-130. Comparative Religion was not actually taught in the University itself at this time. I have chosen to make Carpenter my focus in this section as, influential as

Carpenter shared some elements of Max Muller's theodical framework, espoused in response to the Victorian religious ferment and the inchoate, opening encounter with religions outside of Christianity. Study of the world's religions, though prosecuted with critical and objective vigour, would in the end serve to elevate Christianity and would prove that within Christianity resided, he wrote, "the purest, the truest religion the world has ever seen."[186] Some knowledge of God resided in other religions but God's revelation was only fully disclosed in the Christian faith. The world's religions were as "signposts on the path which has its terminus in Christ and the Christian faith." [187] In contrast to Max Muller's worldview, which foreshadowed a future 'super-Christianity,' Carpenter regarded Unitarian Christianity as a 'pleroma', to use the term favoured by James Freeman Clarke whom he greatly admired.[188] In this regard, Carpenter was at one with a broad discourse focussing on 'universal religion' originating within nineteenth-century Protestant liberal thought at both sides of the Atlantic. Other religions contained modicums of truth, but the position of Christianity established "the hierarchical relation between different religious beliefs and practices,"[189] setting the context in which other religions would need to frame their beliefs if they wished to engage with this discourse. Carpenter also speculated on a further stage in the evolution of religion beyond Christianity, a stage he was convinced was dependant on the appearance or formulation of a new corpus of sacred texts. He may have had in mind that the Bible, in some form, could fulfil this role but he also envisaged the emergence of a movement that would produce a new scripture. None of the extant texts of traditional or of modern religious entities (outside of Christianity) seemed to him fully capable of fulfilling the role of providing moral and spiritual stimulus to the coming religion of the future.[190]

If Max Muller had begun to elaborate a basis for a dialogue of religions (however vestigial the framework), Carpenter took a keen interest in developing interfaith links and networks.[191] He believed that the basis for interfaith dialogue

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Fairbairn was, he did not espouse a specialist interest nor was he as widely published and regarded as Carpenter.

[186] Carpenter cited in Marshall, *The Work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter,* p.24.

[187] H.H. Hoehler, "Christian responses to the world's faiths", in, *The Unitarian Universalist Christian,* (Boston, USA) 45, (2-4), p. 41. Cited in, Marshall, *The Work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter,* p.30.

[188] See, James Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions; An Essay in Comparative Theology,* Boston: James R. Osgood and Sons, 1871, Chapter XII. On Carpenter's opinion of Clarke, see, Marshall, *The Work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter,* p.28.

[189] Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *The History of Islam in America,* p.134.

[190] Marshall, *The Work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter,* pp.183-187. Marshall cites Carpenter's attraction to Bahai teachings though he felt the scriptural texts could not be the basis of a future super-religion. Marshall does not provide a reference for this view or its background.

[191] Carpenter was active in groups such as the International Council for Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers. See, Sharpe, *Comparative Religion*, p.253 and, Marshall, *The Work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter,* p.188. Hereford, *Joseph Estlin Carpenter; A Memorial Volume*, p.78 comments that, "he was unwearied in arranging conferences, congresses, Summer Schools" where representatives "listened to expositions of the faith of others or expounded their own." His publication, *Comparative*

rested on an evolving convergence leading to an ideal religion, a universal religion for the future of humanity. There was, he considered, a unity underlying the outward diversity of religions, yet to be discovered and acknowledged. The goal of interfaith dialogue was to move beyond divisive aspects of individual religions to establish basic truths on which a new universal system could be raised.[192] Convergence would come from an agreement on ideas (divergence of practice would not be a major obstacle), and from a new understanding that revelation awaits discovery in the major texts of different religions. We should note that Carpenter was wary of promoting the universalistic claims of Christianity, Buddhism and Islam, arguing that the religion of the future had not yet begun to materialise.[193]

Interfaith dialogue he saw as a vehicle for instigating the eventual convergence he anticipated. Even then, Carpenter still held that Christianity was the purest expression of religion for the interim period and that interfaith dialogue could be a means for elaborating a liberal Christian faith to a wider audience. Indeed, an understanding of the person of Jesus, he was sure, would help other religions strip away some of their distinctive characteristics; an articulation of a liberal Christianity was in fact central to the success of interfaith dialogue.[194] He considered that as long as the ideal outcome of convergence was as yet unattainable, Christianity (in particular Unitarianism) was the best expression of religion available to humanity. This nuanced position does not relieve Carpenter of the allegation that he absolutized his own beliefs as universally normative and, as Marshall contends, equated his own vision of the truth with *the* truth, an expression of inadvertent dogmatism.[195] For all that, an important element in Carpenter's paradigm for interfaith dialogue was that it should concern itself with issues of social justice and ethics, an exploration of ethical and social standards within which religions should operate, which was a very innovative perspective at this early juncture in the encounter of religions. Carpenter was known for his commitment to social service, a fact acknowledged when he was invited to inaugurate the new 'School for Social Science and Training for Social Work' at Liverpool University in 1911.[196] Though Max Muller was dead when Abdul Baha arrived in Britain, we can readily discern the influence of his work in the thinking and approach amongst those pursuing contact with religions outside of Christianity. Carpenter was not only connected to a number of Abdul Baha's main supporters but also hosted his appearance in Manchester College, Oxford, on the last day of 1912.

Religion, London: Oxford University Press, 1913, proved popular, extending to a number of reprints, the last 30 years after the original. See, Marshall, *The Work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter*, p.201.

[192] Marshall, *The Work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter,* p.188.

[193] Marshall, *The Work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter,* p.184.

[194] Marshall, *The Work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter,* pp.194-195.

[195] Marshall, *The Work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter,* p.191.

[196] Long, *Truth, Liberty, Religion,*p.276.

Political and Cultural Resonance

Factors pertaining to how 'Persia' was regarded in Britain at this time also had a bearing on Abdul Baha's reception, indicating the imbricated nature of the genesis and prosecution of this particular religious discourse. A variety of political and cultural resonances ensured that there was familiarity around the religious figure as he arrived in the West for the first time. Though he had spent most of his life in captivity in Ottoman Syria, Abdul Baha presented culturally (and linguistically) as 'Persian.' He was generally depicted in commentary during his western travels as being 'Persian'[197] and was often referred to as the 'Persian Prophet'.[198] At this time also, scholars and seekers in Britain were somewhat familiar with Bahai, in particular the episode of the Bab.[199] Further, when he first arrived in London in 1911, there was already a broadly based public discussion concerning Persia ongoing in the pages of Britain's newspapers, in the realm of literature and publishing, and frequently in debates on the floor of parliament at Westminster.

One reason for this profusion of interest was the activity of 'The Persia Committee', under the aegis of E.G. Browne and H.F.B. Lynch (d.1913), which campaigned with zeal to influence public and governmental opinion on Britain's foreign policy in Persia a period of revolution and constitutional crisis in that country, in particular between 1908 and 1913.[200] Browne, the foremost Persian scholar of his generation, devoted a great deal of energy to promoting the work of The Persia Committee.[201] He enlisted the support of forty-five members of Parliament to form a caucus for advocacy to change British government policy in Persia which was intent on stymying Russian influence and consequently favoured monarchists. The hope was

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[197] See, Mina Yazdani, *'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey West,* p.160. See also, the *Daily Mail,* September 2nd, 1911 and variously in *The Christian Commonwealth.*

[198] For example, *The Gazette Times,* September 30th, 1911, *Sacramento California Union,* October 26th, 1912 and *New York City Times,* December 6, 1912, amongst others. Also, *The Christian Commonwealth,* December 8th, 1912.

[199] See, Matthew Arnold, "A Persian Passion Play", in, The Cornhill Magazine. Dec. 1871 (24-144), pp. 668-687. Arnold writes (p.669) about the Bab and Babism, "most people in England have at least heard the name." Browne was clear in his designation of Bahai as a "later development" of the religion of the Bab, presenting "of all modern religions one of the most actively propagandist." See, "The Religious Influence of Persia: A Paper Read before the Persia Society", 20.5.1914, p.59. Accessed at, http://bahai-library.com/browne_religious_history_persia, on 7.12.2016.

[200] For the Persia Committee and the Persian crisis, see, E.G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905 to 1909,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910, Hasan Javadi, "E.G. Browne and the Persian Constitutional Movement", *Iran,* 14 (1976), pp.133-140, David McLean, "E.G. Browne and His Persian Campaign 1908-1913", *The Historical Journal,* Vo.21, No.2 (June 1978), pp. 399-408, Mansour Bonakdarian, "The Persia Committee and the Constitutional Revolution in Iran", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* Vol. 18, No.2 (1991), pp. 186-207 and *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911,* New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006.

[201] Browne's, *Literary History of Persia,* in four volumes, was published in London by Unwin between 1902 and 1906.

that Britain would instead proffer support to Persian constitutionalists.[202] He addressed meetings across Britain and succeeded in enlisting the support of *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Daily News* and (eventually) *The Times* newspapers in the prosecution of his campaign.[203] In the end, the Committee "failed to move the British government," [204] though it did accomplish some of its original goals in the "securing of amnesty for some of the Constitutionalists"[205] who ended up on the losing side of the conflict, but whose cause, according to Browne, "by no means had 'failed' in its endeavours."[206]

Trained as a medical doctor, Browne became interested in Persian literature in his youth, especially the poetry of Hafiz and Rumi which brought him to an interest in Islam, in particular, Sufism.[207] He was greatly attracted to the story of the Bab, valorising the Babi upheaval against Islamic orthodoxy. His characterisation of the suffering of persecuted Babi's as comparable to the plight of early Christians indicates his sense that the new religion occupied a position (on an imagined grid) closer to his own Christianity. Islam was more 'backward'. Babism, like Sufism, was resonant with pre-Islamic Persian cultural and religious sensibilities and he expected that "what Muhammad made of the Arabs, the Bab may yet make of the Persians."[208] Ridgeon argues that Browne's orientation cannot simply be described as 'Orientalist' (in Saidean terms), that his contribution to Persian literature was not influenced by a desire to 'essentialise' Persia but rather that he was genuinely endeavouring to give voice to "the rights of Persians for independence."[209] Even so, Browne's pursuits do clearly reflect 'affirmative' orientalist positioning.

Browne idealised Persia, its poetry and the modern religion born there.[210] His promotion of the story of the Bab and championing of the Constitutionalists in opposition to British policy can be seen as an endeavour to identify with what he considered were 'essential' Persian identities, religious and political. He saw a corollary between the efforts of the Constitutional movement and the earlier

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[202] See, Mansour Bonadarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911*, pp.247-275, in particular.
[203] Javadi, "E.G. Browne and the Persian Constitutional Movement", p.139, and, David McLean, "E.G. Browne and His Persian Campaign 1908-1913", p.406.
[204] David McLean, "E.G. Browne and His Persian Campaign 1908-1913", p.408.
[205] Bonakdarian, "The Persia Committee and the Constitutional Revolution in Iran", p.206.
[206] Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911*, p.348.
[207] See, Lloyd Ridgeon, "Ahmad Kasravi's Criticism of Edward Granville Browne", in, *Iran*, Vol. 24 (2004), p.224.
[208] Ridgeon, "Ahmad Kasravi's Criticism of Edward Granville Browne," p.225.
[209] Javadi, "E.G. Browne and the Persian Constitutional Movement", p. 135. Bonakdarian comments that "between December 1911 and the opening months of 1912, the committee would stage one of the most extensive public campaigns" the Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey (d.1933) experienced during his years (1905-1916) in office. *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911,* p.265.
[210] Ridgeon explains this juxtaposition quite well but still does not regard Browne as having been a 'romantic' orientalist. See, "Ahmad Kasravi's Criticism of Edward Granville Browne," p.222.

sacrifices of the Babi's, Persians endeavouring to "work out their own salvation,"[211] not simply as an expression of liberal sensibilities but also, perhaps, engaging perceptions of the 'East' to counter cultural hegemony at home as an expression of an 'affirmative' Orientalist orientation. As well as having written extensively on the Bab and recorded his impressions having met Bahaullah in a series of meetings, Browne knew Abdul Baha and had published an English translation of one his works from its original Persian which appeared in Britain in 1891.[212] In 1903, he contributed an introduction to a study of Abdul Baha published in London, declaiming in typical 'affirmative' orientalist terms, "[o]nce again, in the world's history has the East vindicated her claim to teach religion to the West, and to hold in the Spiritual World that pre-eminence which the Western nations hold in the Material."[213]

Browne produced a full length treatment, *The Persian Revolution of 1905 to 1909,* published in 1910. Regarded as an important contemporary chronicle of the Persian constitutional movement, it was directed mainly at the general public in effort to raise interest and garner support for applying further pressure on the government.[214] Included was an explanation of the Bahai attitude to the crisis relaying Abdul Baha's clear instruction for Bahais to avoid becoming involved in partisan politics, though Browne would have preferred them to have supported the constitutionalists.[215] Noteworthy in Browne's volume is his use of Persian language script, alongside English translations of both poetry and documents cited, including extracts of letters from Abdul Baha to his followers in that country advising adoption of a neutral position.[216] In late 1912 and early 1913, Browne met with Abdul Baha on a number of occasions in London. Another member of The Persia Committee, the future first Labour Prime Minister of Britain, Ramsay MacDonald (d.1937), also had an

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[211] Browne, cited in Ridgeon, "Ahmad Kasravi's Criticism of Edward Granville Browne," p.225.

[212] See, for example, *Materials for Study of the Báb'í Religion* and, *A Year Amongst the Persians*. Browne's interviews with Bahaullah took place during a visit to the Holy Land in 1891. He also became acquainted with Abdul Baha at that time. See, H.M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1970. Browne translated Abdul Baha's, *A Travellers Narrative; Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb,* London: Cambridge University Press, 2 Vols., 1891.

[213] M. H. Phelps, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, New York & London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903, p. 15.

[214] Javadi, "E.G. Browne and the Persian Constitutional Movement", p. 136. Bonakdarian records that the book elicited an initial favourable reception but most (British and international) reviews were contentious. It was, he concludes, useful "both as an indispensable account of Iranian nationalist 'awakening' and as an inventory of past British and Russian violations of Iranian sovereignty." *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911*, p. 228.

[215] Some individuals Bahais did support the constitutional movement as did the followers of Subh-i-Azal, Babi defectors who did not support the claim of Bahaullah. See, Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith*, pp.89-97.

[216] E.G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905 to 1909,* pp.424-429. Browne explores a number of possible reasons for the non-involvement of Bahai's in partisan politics and considers it posed a question of how "universalism" can allow for a "passionate patriotism" (p.425). Browne is portraying his academic inclinations and showcasing his linguistic abilities in embodying the original script and his own translations in the text, even if the volume was intended for the general public and the political class.

interview with Abdul Baha on January 2nd , 1913. They spoke about the Persian situation and Abdul Baha explained to MacDonald that, "[t]he Bahais are trying to bring together the whole world. One people, one family."[217] The publicly prominent discourse around Persia and the constitutional crisis, led by the most prominent 'authority' in Britain on the origins of the religion of Abdul Baha, meant that Persia and Abdul Baha were conjoined as somewhat familiar referents in the public domain. Abdul Baha was invariably identified as both 'Persian' and standing for 'Peace', creating a profile of public perception and positive recognition against the backdrop of a prominent political discourse which was much in the news. Connecting the political turmoil with religious hope, Carpenter postulated, "[H]as Persia, in the midst of her miseries, given birth to a religion which will go round the world?"[218]

The Cult of Omar

Contributing also to familiarity with a conception or understanding of 'Persia' around this period, and chiming with the period's 'crisis of doubt', was the growing popularity of Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubayiat of Omar Khayyam*.[219] It was at one time "the most famous verse translation ever made into English"[220] and enjoyed enormous popular success from the 1860's to the 1960's.[221] Though first published in 1859 (co-incidentally the same year as Darwin's *The Origin of Species*),[222] the poem's reputation grew slowly at first until it became "undoubtedly the most frequently published English literary work of the twentieth century."[223] The addition of exotic illustrations, in some cases by prominent artists, added another dimension which further broadened the appeal of the work.[224] By the early 1900's, the "cult of the Rubayiat"[225] had taken hold on both sides of the Atlantic, the poem had become a publishing sensation with lavishly illustrated editions appearing regularly and the name of Omar

[217] See, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.127 and Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá,* p.346. For the MacDonald interview, see, *Abdu'l- Abdu'l-Baha in Britain, 1913; The Diary of Abdu'l-Baha's Translator*, http://www.paintdrawer.co.uk/david/misc/sohrab-diary-uk-1913.pdf, p.104.
[218] *Comparative Religion*, London: Oxford University Press, 1913, p.71.
[219] Edward Fitzgerald, *Rubayait of Omar Khayyam, The Astronomer-Poet of Persia, Translated into English Verse,* 1st. ed., London: Bernard Quaritch, 1859.
[220] Dick Davis, "Edward Fitzgerald, Omar Khayyam and the Tradition of Verse Translation into English", in, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* Adrian Poole, Christine van Ruymbeke, William H Martin and Sandra Mason (Eds.), London: Anthem Press, 2011, p.1.
[221] Dick Davis, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.1.
[222] Edward Fitzgerald, *Rubayiat of Omar Khayyam,* Dick Davis (Ed.), London: Penguin Books, 1989, p.39.
[223] John Roger Pas, "'Under Omar's Spell': American Reprint Publishers and the Omar Craze", in, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.127.
[224] For example, *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, The Astronomer-Poet of Persia Rendered into English Verse by Edward FitzGerald with an Accompaniment of Drawings by Elihu Vedder,* Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1884.
[225] John D. Yohannan, *Persian Poetry in England and America; A 200 Year History,* Delmar: Caravan Books, 1977, p.199. Cited in Adam Talib, "La Gallienne's *Paraphrase* and the Limits of Translation" in, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect*, p.176. See also, Moncure Conway, "The Omar Khayyam Cult in England", *Nation* 57, No. 1478, October 1893, pp.305-305.

Khayyam was "a household word."[226] By his own account, Fitzgerald's translation of the obscure Persian poet (more prominent in his own time as a mathematician and astronomer) was a "tessellated"[227] rendering of unconnected quatrains but which produced a unique hybridity that resonated as 'essentially' Persian while at the same time resonating with "the emerging *Zeitgeist* of his country."[228] In effect, Fitzgerald created the modern persona of Khayyam, invoking "the sensibility of a half-imagined poet from an Asian country"[229] from almost a millennium before, a sensibility "found in Persian and embodied in English."[230] Why Khayyam became so popular has been much analysed and only a few points that relate directly to our theme need be cited here.[231]

Khayyam is often characterised as a hedonist, a sensualist offering a counterpoint to Victorian moralism, or at other times a materialist articulating a philosophy in tune with emerging Western modernity; *carpe diem,* with no thought of tomorrow.[232] Sufi references and Khayyam's Sufi credentials have also been teased out by Mark Sedgwick who considers the Rubayiat contains "some of the Sufism of Khayyam."[233] But another, perhaps more prominent, defining feature of Fitzgerald's Khayyam is his recurring expressions of religious doubt, echoing the era's 'crisis of faith'. Khayyam displays leanings towards agnosticism and Fitzgerald, in choosing the quatrains ("in some cases faithfully translated, some subtly altered or wholly improvised"),[234] is not simply recounting ancient Persian wisdom found in verse but instrumentalises Khayyam to address more contemporary issues. Marta Simidchieva finds contemporary denominational conflicts, the fragmentation of religious authority and secularisation are all themes addressed by Khayyam. Fitzgerald's translation of

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[226] W. Brampton, *Bookman* Vol.22, 1902, cited in, John Roger Pas, in, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.142, n.1. See also, William H. Martin and Sandra Mason, "The Illustration of FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* and its Contribution to Enduring Popularity" in, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.243. According to Garry Garrard ("Edward Heron-Allen: A Polymath's Approach to FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám"* in, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.111), Fitzgerald's work became popular first in America and only after 1900 in the United Kingdom. The poem has had over a hundred different publishers. See, Jos Coumans (Ed.), *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám. An Updated Bibliography*, Amsterdam: Leiden University Press, 2010.

[227] Fitzgerald's own description. See, Dick Davis, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.7.

[228] Dick Davis, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.12.

[229] Dick Davis, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.13.

[230] Dick Davis, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.12.

[231] Fitzgerald's Rubayiat was published in four revised and enlarged editions, first in 1859 and then in, 1868, 1872 and 1879. As well as work already cited, see, Christopher Decker (Ed.), *Edward Fitzgerald, Rubayiat of Omar Khayyam: A Critical Edition,* Charlottsville: University Press of Virginia, 1997.

[232] This analysis is informed by points made by Marta Simidchieva, "FitGerald's *Rubáiyát* and Agnosticism", in, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.56.

[233] Mark Sedgwick, *Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017,
p.124.

[234] Marta Simidchieva, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.55.

Khayyam, she contends, ("news brought back from this colloquy with the dead"),[235] is responding to contemporary evangelical zeal.[236] It is, perhaps, Khayyam's 'agnosticism', though not a term in use when Fitzgerald was working on the first edition of the Rubayiat, which (Simidchieva argues) resonates most with the 'spirit of the age' and accounts for the poem's enduring popularity well into the twentieth century.[237]

If the Rubayiat is not entirely "an ode to the transience of all that we know and value,"[238] its commentary on religious doubt entranced an ever growing band of aficionados amidst an increasing "questioning and uncertainty about traditional beliefs,"[239] particularly amongst the intelligentsia. Fitzgerald's Khayyam became an influential referent in contemporary intellectual life, particularly for those dissatisfied with religious orthodoxy. The orientation of Abdul Baha's teaching did not coincide with the thrust of Omar's philosophy but the confluence of circumstances where the 'Persian Prophet of Peace' enjoyed public acclaim and recognition during his sojourn in Britain, at the same time as the 'Poet-Astronomer of Persia' was all the rage, cannot be ignored. To some extent Abdul Baha's irenic outlook was juxtaposed against Omar's fatalism, without accentuating difference and still couched within familiarity with notions of 'Persia'. Both could be recognised as 'sage' Persians, addressing the contemporary religious turmoil. Including an excerpt from one of Abdul Baha's first public presentations in London, the correspondent of one newspaper remarked, "here is a translation [...] that will be found quite well worth reading if only for the luxuriant imagery that reminds one of Omar Khayyam."[240] In reporting Abdul Baha's arrival on the West Coast of the United States, *The San Francisco Examiner,* commented, "[o]ut of Persia has come one to refute the fatalistic teachings of Omar Khayyam." [241]

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[235] Dick Davis, *Rubayiat of Omar Khayyam*, p.3.

[236] In one example, critiquing contemporary sectarian strife, he alludes to a famous Islamic *hadith* which predicts the dissolution into sects of the Muslim community after the Prophet's death. Cited in, Marta Simidchieva, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.60 and p.70 note 36. The *hadith* reference is 4580 in *Sunan Abu Dawud*, English translation by, Ahmad Hasan, 3 Vols., Lahore: Sh.M. Ashraf, 1984, p.166.

[237] The term was coined by T.E. Huxley in 1869. See, Marta Simidchieva, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* pp.64-65.

[238] Marta Simidchieva, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.67.

[239] William H. Martin and Sandra Mason, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.234.

[240] *The Gazette Times*, September 30th, 1911.

[241] *The San Francisco Examiner,* October 4th, 1912. See, Egea, "The Travels of `Abdu'l-Bahá and their Impact on the Press." One of Abdul Baha's translators in the United States, the future Persian diplomat and translator of Bahai scriptures, Mirza Ali Kuli Khan (d.1966), had enjoyed something of a career as a lecturer on "The Real Omar Khayyam". See, *The Washington Times,* February 5th, 1908. On Khan see, Marzieh Gail, *Summon Up Remembrance,* Oxford: George Ronald, 1987.

Narratives Subjoined

However intriguing apposite cultural and political intersections impacting the reception of Abdul Baha in Britain, our primary focus is on how these transactions can be viewed within the locus of a 'field of religious enquiry'. What the preceding analysis does articulate is the imbricated conjunction between politics, religion and culture as expressed in connected and overlapping discourses. A more obvious cultural mnemonic connecting Bahai and Abdul Baha to British public life can be discerned if we consider the work of 'Orientalist' scholars and their particular focus on the story of the Bab. Characterised as exceptionally courageous in the face of execution, at the same time cruel treatment was meted out to many of his followers who likewise perished, the parallel was sometimes drawn between the fate of the Bab and the life and death of Jesus Christ.[242] Some considered the courage and character of the Bab, as depicted at his execution in Tabriz in 1850, was Christ-like. In effect, just as focus on the Constitutional Revolution and Khayyam can be seen as projections of a romantic Orientalism, the promotion of the episode of the Bab took on similar features. For their part, Carpenter and Browne were much taken with the tragic and heroic circumstances associated with the Bab and his followers, and Carpenter wondered if the Bab had been aware or at all influenced by knowledge of the Christian Gospels.[243] Browne waxed eloquent in his assessment in an article published in 1892.

> I trust that I have told you enough to make it clear that the objects at which this religion aims are neither trivial nor unworthy of the noble self-devotion and heroism of the Founder and his followers. It is the lives and death of these, their hope which knows no despair, their love which knows no cooling, their steadfastness which knows no wavering, which stamp this wonderful movement with a character entirely its own […] for whether it succeed or fail, the splendid heroism of the Bábi martyrs is a thing eternal and indestructible.[244]

[242] For example, Ernest Renan, *Les Apotres,* (William G. Hutchinson, translator), London: Watts & Co., 1905, p.134. Douglas Martin lists other commentators from this period to include E.G. Browne, Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, A.L.M. Nicolas, Aleksandr Tumanskiy, Vicktor Rosen, Clement Huart, George Curzon, Mathew Arnold and Leo Tolstoy. See, *The Mission of the Báb: Retrospective, 1844-1994,* accessed at http://info.bahai.org/article-1-3-1-1.html, on 20.11.2014, p.1. See, in particular, Arnold, "A Persian Passion Play", pp.668-687.

[243] See, for example, correspondence between both on the subject of the Bab in the J.E. Carpenter Papers, held at Harris Manchester College, Oxford (HMCO), Folio 190-215/216. See, also, E.G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians, Part 1,* London: Adam and Charles Black, 1893, pp.59-64.

[244] E.G. Browne, "Bábism" in, *Religious Systems of the World*, 3rd Edition, London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1892, pp.352-353. Cited in Martin, *The Mission of the Báb,* p.5.

In delving further, Carpenter juxtaposed the development of the synoptic Gospels with the manner of canonisation of Babi scripture.[245] He found parallels in the story of the Bab with that of Jesus, referencing in particular reports of the Bab's ability to perform miracles, to foretell the future and a reported incidence of transfiguration.[246]

It is not, of course, that these commentators considered the Bab or his followers to be on an equal footing with Jesus and his disciples. They were rather seeking to extract from this dramatic narrative of the birth of a new religion, taking place in their own disrupted era, synchronous elements the focus on which could highlight central themes in the story of Christianity, themes which were seen to have been marginalised by the march of modernity. They considered that there were elements here that could be appropriated with which to 'reinvigorate' their own liberal Christianity, then struggling to offset evangelical zeal. The Bab and his followers were highly regarded, chiefly because their example affirmed heroic aspects of Christianity and these observers considered the Bab's character personified noble characteristics of Jesus. In the sense in which all positive expressions of universal goodness could be said to be 'Christian', so could these narratives be likewise subjoined. This view resonates with that of F.D. Maurice (d.1872), the prominent mid-nineteenth century scholar and theologian of the Church of England.[247] Maurice considered Islam an intervention of providence designed to turn Christians back to the fundaments of their own religion, though unlike Browne and Carpenter's appreciation of the Bab, his assessment was punctuated with little sympathy for Muhammad and Islam.[248]

Conclusion

Moore remarks that it would "be obliging of the Victorians if they used our own terminology to express their sense of crisis,"[249] and he adds that if they did we could more easily decipher the truth behind what was happening in their lives.[250] The point being made does suggest a broader nexus of issues underlying analysis of an era in which a multitude of significant processes were just being born and for which a lexicon had still to be elaborated. It suggests caution that we are careful not to overlay our contemporary understanding of these issues and processes on the multi-

[245] This point is made by A.S. Peake in *Joseph Estlin Carpenter: A Memorial Volume,* p.147. Peake cites for his reference Carpenter's *The First Three Gospels,* but the commentary he refers to is contained in *The Bible in the Nineteenth Century,* London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903, pp.324-328.
[246] *The Bible in the Nineteenth Century,* p.361. Carpenter's historical information is mostly taken from Browne.
[247] Maurice published an influential collection of lectures, *The Religions of the World and Their Relations with Christianity*, Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1854. See, Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*, pp.19-25. On Maurice, see, *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice: Chiefly Told in His Own Letters*. London: Macmillan, 1884.
[248] See, Hourani, *Islam in European Thought,* p.22.
[249] Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis* p.155.
[250] Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis* p.155.

dimensional nature of a fecund period. This observation has some bearing on the central core of this research which, as we shall see, concerns figures and events now barely referenced or considered. Why and how we 'remember', rather than whether we 'remember' correctly, becomes a central question to be addressed and how that connects to contemporary concerns over against those that confronted the Victorians. My intention is not to attempt to construct a rounded picture of 'how things were' but rather to highlight interesting and relevant aspects of the discursive terrain that are obscure in the present. Efforts to create a 'new faith' based on 'a new gospel', a 'New Reformation, underpinned responses to the greatly changed Victorian intellectual and religious milieu. This quest influenced the scholarly focus on religions in the world, as well as efforts on the part of home-grown British reformers to reach out to religious activists from Asia. Larsen is being plaintive (perhaps justifiably) when he bemoans the fact that an encyclopaedia of the Victorian world, published in 1990, completely excludes entries on Baptists, Congregationalists, Dissenters, Evangelicalism and Methodism, whilst including references to Madame Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society, Charles Bradlaugh, Babism, Bahaism, Spiritualism, and Transcendentalism.[251] His discontent does highlight that the Victorian 'crisis' also involved a wide variety of religious, spiritual and scholarly developments as elements of emergent new theodicies.

Sharpe regards Carpenter as an exceptional man and worthy of considerable credit for his contribution to laying the foundations for the elaboration of an accepted academic approach to the study of religions.[252] Yet, his name is little mentioned in contemporary scholarship. One explanation, Long suspects, is that "many of the theories which he presented and expounded with such cogent clarity are now accepted as commonplaces."[253] Both Carpenter and Max Muller shared some elements in common in the articulation of a new theodicy in response to the era's crisis of belief and a deepening encounter with religions outside of Christianity. They held a common desire to see Christianity ultimately recognised as the epitome of religious experience, though Carpenter's conception of Unitarianism as a pleroma also allowed for a further evolution of religion beyond Christianity, whereas Max Muller's paradigm anticipated religion of the future arriving at some kind of 'super-Christianity' apogee.

Max Muller's framework for interaction between religions leans more to concerning itself with a dialogue *about* religions, rather than *of* religions. In

[251] Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt*, p.5. See, also, Melinda Carey and George Ochoa, (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Victorian World: A Readers Guide to the People, Events and Everyday Life of the Victorian Era,* New York: Henry Holt, 1996.
[252] Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* pp.129-130. Sharpe appraises Fairbairn's contribution similarly. I have not reviewed his work here for lack of space and the fact that he did not have a major non-Christian field of interest. See, Sharpe, p.131.
[253] Long, *Truth, Liberty, Religion,* p.277.

Carpenters case, his approach is best described as making the argument for interfaith links, where Christianity had a particular role to play as the fullest expression of religion extant but simultaneously acting as an aid to convergence, which would usher in the dawn of a new stage in religious history beyond Christianity. Both were influential in the construction of a discourse around religion at the turn of the twentieth century in Britain that was born out of efforts to create a new overarching framework of belief in response to the era's 'crisis of faith', a framework which welcomed an encounter with religions from Asia.[254] The later forsaking of that worldview may well be a contributory factor in the eclipse in memory of the contribution of visiting religious reformers from Asia to this interchange. Max Muller's diminution and Carpenter's obscurity, mirrors the diminishing optimistic mood around the prosecution of inter-religious dialogue at the turn of the twentieth century.[255]

Other significant layers of the dialogical environment which welcomed interaction with Abdul Baha include contemporary perceptions of representations of 'Persia' in British life and culture. As Abdul Baha arrived in Britain, the work of The Persia Committee, driven in the main by its chief protagonist, E.G. Browne, assured a general, public familiarity with happenings in Persia. Browne was also regarded as the foremost expert on the development of the Babi religion, out of which the Bahai religion of Abdul Baha had emerged, and expended much of his academic capital on bringing the story of the Bab to the attention of the British public and scholarly class. Bahai was known to be Persian and Abdul Baha a charismatic religious figure, the head of a movement from the 'East' which exhibited Christian-like features. Likewise, the Khayyam phenomenon impacted the discursive space under review, considering its "immense, if diffuse, influence […] on English poetry and intellectual life."[256] The common heritage of both Khayyam and Abdul Baha and familiarity with notions of 'Persia' and 'Persian' then prevalent, as an outcome of "the ready reception and

[254] Richard Hughes Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter*, Chicago, 1893, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009, makes a similar point with respect to the proceedings of the Parliament and the 'East/West' encounter in America. See, p.72.

[255] In more recent times Max Muller's contribution has been re-evaluated, his position in the pantheon of significant figures in the history of the study of religion re-established and his religionist approach to the study of religion, though hotly contested, is still influential. See, for example, van den Bosch, p.518, Sharpe, *Comparative Religion,* pp. 45-46 and Wiebe, pp. 9-50. See also, Johannes Voigt, *F. Max Muller: The Man and His Ideas,* Calcutta: Firma K. Jukhopadhyay, 1967, G.W. Trompf, *Friedrich Max Muller as a Theorist of Comparative Religion,* Bombay: Shakantula Publishing House, 1978. Joseph Kitagawa and John S. Strong, "Friedrich Max Muller and the Comparative Study of Religion" in N. Smart, J. Clayton, P. Sherry and S.T. Katz (eds.), *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West, Vol, 3,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Ronald Neufeldt, *F. Max Muller and the Rig-Veda: A Study of Its Role in His Work and Thought,* Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1980, and, Thomas R. Trautman, *Aryans and British India,* New Delhi: Connaught Press, 2004. A highly critical view, from an Indian perspective, can be found in, Brahm Bharti, *Max Muller: A Lifelong Masquerade,* New Delhi: Erabooks, 1992. Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, assesses Max Muller's role in classifying language and religion towards the emergence of a discourse of 'world religions'. See pp.207-265.

[256] Dick Davis, *Rubayiat of Omar Khayyam,* London: Penguin Books, p.40.

acculturation of FitzGerald's Khayyam in the Anglophone environment,"[257] cannot be discounted as influencing the reception of Abdul Baha in Britain. Significantly, Bahai emerged out of a Persian Islamic milieu but could be seen, just like Khayyam, to occupy a position like that ascribed to Sufism, 'outside' of Islam.[258]

Scholars such as Browne and Carpenter admired the Babi and Bahai founders and their 'Orientalism' was more of the 'affirmative' variety. They looked at Abdul Baha, like many who welcomed him to Britain, as the head of a movement that could have a revitalizing effect on Christianity in crisis. Bahai origin stories were mined to highlight events and personalities that resonated with the birth of Christianity. At the turn of the twentieth century, therefore, the religion Abdul Baha represented had some profile in the public domain. It had originated in a country much spoken about, a seat of 'spiritual' and poetic inspiration. Important also was that it was not regarded as 'Islamic' and, though emanating from that background, was considered unlike Islam, open and amenable to people of Christian faith. Highlighting this aspect would prove to be especially important as Abdul Baha progressed through Britain. Within this matrix of religious, cultural and political resonance, he was widely feted on his arrival in London.

The activities of the Persia Committee, the phenomenon of Khayyam, and the visits of Abdul Baha, stand alongside a growing number of occasions and conferences focussing on a myriad subjects, evidencing a "cosmopolitan, cross-imperial, trans-imperial, and transnational"[259] dimension to "East-West" encounters during this period in question. These engagements defy a simple binary Orientalist appraisal, requiring instead an appreciation of an emerging intersected cultural, political and religious environment. Some of these elements of an evolving religious field of enquiry will require closer examination in the next chapter. The articulation of a conceptual paradigm of 'filter and grid', as it was applied in seminal encounters, will be analysed. This will include participation of British scholars of 'comparative' religion at the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893, the first set-piece 'East/West' encounter of its kind. Consideration of the Third International Congress for the History of Religion at Oxford in 1908 further illuminates the broadening of the parameters of 'East/West' religious interaction and the tenor of scholarly engagement. Efforts by scholars to chart a course for connection to religions from Asia reached a particular high point when Abdul Baha was received at the heart of academia in Oxford in 1912. Consideration of this event, and the figures that facilitated and made possible his appearance there, will also require examination. These strands of enquiry, when drawn together, will expose more fully how the positions adopted by scholars and

[257] Marta Simidchieva, *Fitzgerald's Rubayiat of Omar Khayam: Popularity and Neglect,* p.55.
[258] Mark Sedgwick, deals with the assumption that "Sufism is one thing and Islam another," in, *Western Sufism*, p.1.
[259] Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911*, Introduction, xx.

‘seekers’ influenced the intellectual and religious thought vortices which underlay attitudes to a variety of movements and religions outside of Christianity. This focus will begin to expose interplay and connectivity, from a common viewpoint, in a web of interactions around the reception of Abdul Baha in Britain.

Chapter 3 – Establishing Parameters for 'East-West' Encounters; Chicago and Oxford

It will be helpful to examine Carpenter's and (to a lesser extent) Max Muller's, contribution to the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, to further delineate the conceptual paradigm influencing their approach to religions outside of Christianity. This theoretical framework, discernible from how this novel event played out, informed the basis for further 'East/West' encounters thereafter on the part of scholars and seekers alike. The Parliament, conceived by its organisers to be representative of the major forces at work around religion as the nineteenth century came to a conclusion, exemplified "a spirit of national and world religious unity that many thought would characterize the twentieth century."[260] In his address to the Parliament (delivered in abstentia), Carpenter outlined his vision for "a universal concept of revelation free from all doctrines and creeds."[261] His paper specifically argued that religion requires a scripture if it is to achieve permanence, providing as it does "great sustenance for religious affection" [262]and fixing a standard for belief. A sacred book is indispensable to a missionary religion and the great philological advances of the era placed "the key of language into our hands,"[263] allowing for the articulation of a conception of revelation drawn from different scriptural sources and not confined to any particular religion. Religious texts may not all be of equal merit, he postulated, but "must all be explained in the same way"[264] as repositories of ethics, inspiration and incarnation, where life itself is a mode of revelation.

Developing his argument, Carpenter took Monier Monier-Williams (d.1899) to task for characterising Brahmanism, Buddhism and Islam as the "three chief false religions."[265] He cites Rumi, yet another Persian poet and 'spiritual thinker', who wrote, "all the vessels are emptied into one river, because he that is praised is in fact only one. In this respect all religions are only one."[266] "Thus conceived," he drew his

[260] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter*, pp. xxvi-xxviii.
[261] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p. 69. Carpenter's presentation was titled, "The Need of a Wider Conception of Revelation, or Lessons from the Sacred Books of the World". See, John Henry Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions, Vol.II,* Toronto: Hunter Rose and Co., pp. 842-850. The Parliament is described and assessed in Seager's monograph.
[262] Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions*, Vol. 11, p.843.
[263] Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* Vol. 11, p. 843.
[264] Barrows *The World's Parliament of Religions*, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* Vol. 11, p.845.
[265] Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* Vol. 11, p. 848. Monier-Williams was a distinguished Indologist and appointed the Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford in 1860, winning out over Max Muller in the contest for the chair. See, Arthur Anthony Macdonell (1901), "Monier-Williams, Monier", *Dictionary of National Biography* (1st supplement), London: Smith, Elder & Co. pp.186–187.
[266] Rumi, *Masnavi-i Ma'navi*, cited in Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* Vol. 11, p.848. A footnote relates that this is Winfield's translation (p.139). On Rumi and his identification with Sufism

discussion to a close, "the history of religion gathers up into itself the history of human thought and life. It becomes the story of God's continual revelation to our race."[267] Such sentiments were typical of Carpenter's exposition of what he considered a new landscape where religions could be seen to be connected and of equal validity. But, as discussed earlier, this was a nuanced approach and qualified by his belief that Christianity was a pleroma. Interestingly, in his presentation to the Parliament (also delivered by proxy), Max Muller chose to address a singularly Christian topic arguing for a "true revival of the Christian religion and a reunion of all its divisions," expressing the hope that the Parliament "might do excellent work for the resuscitation of pure and primitive ante-Nicene Christianity."[268] His comments critique his era's intra-Christian imbroglio and points to a return to an imagined more pristine early period. Christianity could be reformed and indeed other actors would specifically focus on a connection to religion from Asia as the yeast that would quicken that process. In that sense, his agenda was still decidedly 'Christian' despite his previous broad-based focus and the composition of the Parliament which comprised what were then regarded as the 'Ten Great Religions of the World'. Though he advocated the promotion of a critical approach to the study of religion, Max Muller still considered Christianity to be the acme of religious development, and in this first 'set-piece' international public dialogue of religions he made that case, if arguing that Christianity needed to reform.

Filter and Grid

The Parliament has been described as important in the developing encounter between Christianity and religions of the 'East' (both Dharmapala and Vivekananda were amongst a number of representatives of Asian religions centrally involved), though the rationale behind its institution as well as the manner in which the event played out is complex and multi-layered, "highly regarded but little understood."[269] It had particular relevance for the development of religious pluralism in America, but was also an influential forum with respect to the encounter of different religions outside of America, in Britain and elsewhere.[270] Without attempting a thorough

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and Islam, see, Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi; Past and Present, East and West,* London: Oneworld Publications, 2000.

[267] Carpenter, cited in, Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* Vol. 11 p.849.

[268] Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* Vol. 11, p.936. Tiele's paper to the Parliament, also delivered in abstentia, reviewed what he described as the comparative study of theology or the 'science of religion'. See, Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* Vol.1, pp.583- 590.

[269] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p.xxxiv.

[270] See, Richard Hughes Seager,(Ed.) *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices from the World's Parliament of Religions, 1893*, La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Co., 1993. Masuzawa is sceptical of the contribution made by the Parliament towards furthering the academic and historic study of religion citing Sharpe's "acerbic tone" when assessing its value as an historical event, his dubiety (she argues) a clear evidence of differing perspectives on the gathering's importance existing on opposite sides of the Atlantic. The fact that none of the presenting scholars (Max Muller and Carpenter were the British representatives) bothered to attend in person is offered as an indication of their ambivalence towards

review, we can extrapolate from Carpenter's support for the Parliament the extent to which he and other scholars of religion (a number of whom were invited to make presentations) identified with an unstated, underlying goal of the forum; namely to forge, as Richard Hughes Seager postulates, "a public religion for a globalizing society […] a common discourse for a single community of sentiment,"[271] as an outcome of liberal Protestant conjecture. The scholars of religion were engaging with a discourse, Seager further argues, that created a kind of "epistemological filter,"[272] in Saidean terms "an accepted grid,"[273] through which participants at the Parliament, both scholars and missionaries, explored their knowledge of the 'East' with a view to incorporating it in their own western consciousness.[274]

The filter was decidedly Anglo-Protestant and categorized cultures and civilizations according to how 'near' or 'far' they could be placed on a 'grid' with respect to the 'centre'; that is white, Christian America. A physical grid was actually represented in how the entire Columbian exposition (of which the Parliament was but one component) was constructed. The 'White City' was an architectural extravaganza at the centre of the exposition from which radiated the Midway Plaisance, a boulevard one mile in length, which in turn accommodated exhibitions depicting cultures and peoples from around the world. European cultural exhibits were placed closest to the White City and those more 'exotic' or 'primitive' at greater distances along the boulevard, depending on their perceived position on the evolutionary scale.[275] All told, the Parliament reflected a worldview "based on a set of interrelated religious, cultural and racial assumptions,"[276] and proposed these ideas as foundational to a discourse "about global community."[277] We will later see how this conceptual underpinning inflected itself within home-grown religious reform movements in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century and informed approaches to religions in Asia.

Seager posits that the inclusion of the scholars of religion in the proceedings not only lent their prestige to the event but also helped to "soften the hardest edges

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the project in general. However, as the Parliament ran from September 11th to the 27th, it may simply not have been convenient for European scholars to travel to Chicago. Certainly (as footnoted in Masuzawa) Max Muller was effusive in his assessment of the importance of the gathering and consideration of the transactions of the Third Congress on the History of Religion, held in Oxford in 1908, indicates that a 'purely' scholarly engagement with this discourse (as it would be understood today) was not the norm amongst scholars of religion at that time. See, Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions,* pp. 265-274, Sharpe, *Comparative Religion* pp. 136-142 and Allen and de Johnson, *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions,* Vol.1, pp. xxi-xxxiii.

[271] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p.72.

[272] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p.72.

[273] Edward Said, *Orientalism,* New: York, Random, Vintage Books, 1979, p.6. Cited in, Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p.72.

[274] This is a distillation of Seager's review of the contribution of scholars of religion to the Parliament, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* pp. 67-72.

[275] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* pp.24-30.

[276] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p.24.

[277] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p.24.

of Christian exclusivism" prevailing at the gathering.[278] He regards their contribution as synchronising with that of western Christian missionaries present in Chicago, aimed at forging a common discourse for an emerging global society. Their approach was from a "universalistic outlook rooted in the evolutionary model,"[279] promoting ethical monotheism as the epitome of human religiosity, western theism interwoven with Christian theology, though scholars and missionaries did not of course make similar presentations to the Parliament.[280] If the Parliament, envisioned as a "liberal, western and American quest for world religious unity,"[281] ultimately failed in its quest, it still opened, perhaps unwittingly, a portal to an idea of religious pluralism that grew in influence to be, even today, a contested ideological landscape.

This was due in no small measure to the (unanticipated) performance at the Parliament of the representatives from the 'East' who engaged in "the selective and often highly politicized appropriation of western ideas, techniques and critiques for use in undermining the claims of the west, asserting Asian independence and negotiating roles in the emerging global society."[282] This discursive strategy, where the 'Occident' (turning Said's depiction of the Orient on its head) was approached as an object suitable for study, culture bound, traditional and not yet attaining the highest levels of civilization, was employed to great effect by the contributors from the 'East'. This appropriation of an entity called 'the Occident', "as applied to political concerns and historical narratives," has been termed 'strategic Occidentalism' by James E. Ketelaar, where religious reformers from the 'East' changed, as it were, the rules of engagement (or at least the rules they were expected to adhere to), and engaged in a "complex interchange of difference."[283] In effect, the contributors from the 'East' employed a mimetic affectation of Seager's 'epistemological filter' and Said's 'accepted grid'. The tapestry of discourse at the Parliament was further nuanced by the interweaving of 'orientalist' viewpoints, specifically with what Richard J. Fox has

[278] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p.67.
[279] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p.68.
[280] Of the scholars who presented at the Parliament, Seager records that only Jean Reville from the Sorbonne advocated a non-theological, empiricist foundation for the academic study of religion with no connection to any philosophy or religious creed. See, Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p.68 and p.72. Joseph Kittigawa states that the scholars of religion were present at the Parliament as representatives of their faiths or denominations and not of the discipline of the history of religions. I can find no evidence to refute or accept this premise (no source for the proposition is offered in the text), though Reville's contribution would seem to contradict this assertion. See, Joseph M. Kittigawa, "The History of Religions in America", in, *The History of Religions: Understanding Human Experience,* Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987, pp.3-26. (Originally published in, *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology,* edited by Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kittigawa, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959.)
[281] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p.xxxviii.
[282] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p.96.
[283] James E. Ketelaar, "Strategic Occidentalism: Meiji Buddhists at the World's Parliament of Religions", *Buddhist-Christian Studies* II (1991), pp.37-56. Ketelaar is referring in particular to the Japanese Buddhist delegates to the Parliament, but his insightful analysis is equally applicable to other contributors to the event.

characterised as strategies of 'affirmative Orientalism'. In this formulation, the pejorative aspects of the orientalist critique were given positive affirmation creating a counter positive image of the 'East', ready to be utilized for effective resistance to cultural and political hegemony.[284]

In the end, the Parliament presents as the setting for an important convergence between the 'Orient' and the 'Occident', a unique moment in the history of 'East-West' religious encounters. The principles on which the Parliament was founded framed engagement with the 'East' in a manner that reflected how scholars of religion such as Max Muller and Carpenter approached, in a general sense, religions outside of Christianity. Both Max Muller and Carpenter's contributions were unambiguous and "served to buttress the theological options embedded in the ground rules of the Parliament."[285] The performance of the representatives of religions outside of Christianity at the event in Chicago presaged, in some respects, their manner of engagement with this same discourse during visits of religious reformers to Britain at the turn of the twentieth century. Consideration of the connection of scholars of religion to the Parliament, and an analysis of how this seminal event played out, is critical to developing an understanding of how a discourse was fashioned around the encounter with religions from the 'East' around this time.

Third International Congress for the History of Religion

Most of the major actors at the Parliament were represented in the British habitat and we can identify the application of similar theoretical considerations in the developing discourse in Britain. An important example of a growing transnational dialogue around religion, one which presented itself as purely academic and non-confessional, was the Third International Congress for the History of Religion convened in Oxford in September of 1908. Some of the central figures involved in its organisation were important facilitators of Abdul Baha's public progress through Britain just a few years later. In the operation of the congress, only the third such international forum (and the first in the 'English speaking world'), similar contradictions and conceptual nuance are apparent as in the framework which predicated discussion at the Parliament in Chicago. Though dedicated to a scholarly and scientific approach to its work, we can still perceive the operation of conceptual orientations such as 'epistemelogical filter', 'accepted grid' and 'affirmative orientalism'. Of special interest is how this found expression in attitudes towards Islam and reflected themes that would influence Abdul Baha's reception, in particular

[284] See, Richard G. Fox, "East of Said", in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader,* Michael Sprinker (Ed.), Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, pp.144-156.
[285] Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter,* p.67.

at Westminster and at Oxford. Joseph Estlin Carpenter was centrally involved in the organisation of the Congress.[286]

The endeavour, for which he acted as joint honorary secretary, was four years in the planning and followed the pioneering Congresses in Paris (1900) and Basel (1904).[287] It is clear from Carpenter's own correspondence that he was a vigorous promoter of the Congress and communicated widely with prospective supporters and contributors.[288] Carpenter's point of contact on the international organising committee was Jean Reville (d. 1908) who introduced the idea of holding the event in Oxford in a letter to Carpenter dated December 12th, 1904, commenting on how there was a sense that Oxford would be a fitting location for the Congress as it was "the city of Max Muller."[289] Reville was anxious that caution be exercised "against the possibility of an endeavour by a confessional party or by an anti-religious group to lay hands on the congress"[290] in effort to change its character by substituting a polemical or propagandist agenda as against its stated aim as a scholarly reunion. Even still, the very full programme listed a wide variety of presentations, including an address by D.T Suzuki (d.1966) on "The Doctrine of the Bodhisatva" and another by Ethel Rosenberg on "Bahaism: its Ethical and Social Teachings."[291] It would be tempting to overlay Carpenter's interests on the Congress programme, to see it as a mirror of his own concerns, but in reality he cannot have been responsible for its entire construction. The programme formulation is informative in that it highlights what combination of approaches constituted an 'academic' consideration of religions at this time and, to a large extent, what was 'popular' amongst those who espoused a serious interest in comparative religion.

Though it did not attract widespread media coverage, the congress, opened by E.B. Tylor (the renowned 'father of anthropology'), attracted nearly six-hundred participants and can be regarded as an important milestone in the academy's nascent

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[286] P. S. Allen and J. de Johnson (Eds.), *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions,* 2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908. Carpenter was the honorary secretary of the local organising committee and also served on the Executive Committee and the Papers Sub-Committee.

[287] See, Jean Réville (Ed.), *Actes du Premier Congrès International d'Histoire des Religions, 2 vols.,* Paris: Ernest Leroux, Part 1, 1901, Part 2, 1902. (Preface dated 1903).

[288] The J.E. Carpenter Papers are held at Harris Machester College, Oxford (HMCO). The Congress correspondence is contained in Box 7, Folio 1-168. The Congress was attended by a large number of prominent scholars and contributors from Britain and overseas.

[289] Carpenter papers at HMCO, Box 7, Folio 1. Reville died before the Congress came round.

[290] Carpenter papers at HMCO, Box 7, Folio 5.

[291] Allen and de Johnson vol. 1, *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions,* pp. 119-122 and pp.321-325, respectively. On Suzuki's contribution to the development of Buddhist modernism, see McMahan and Tweed. Suzuki had links with Theosophists and Bahais. See, Thomas A. Tweed, "American Occultism and Japanese Buddhism. Albert J. Edmunds, D. T. Suzuki, and Translocative History" in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 32 (2),* 2005, pp.249–281. Rosenberg was a prominent early Bahai in Britain. See, Robert Weinberg, *Ethel Jenner Rosenberg: The Life and Times of England's Outstanding Pioneering Worker,* Oxford: George Ronald, 1995. The presentation on 'Bahaism' was included in the section covering "The Religions of the Semites."

incursion into the field of the study of religions.[292] With figures such as Carpenter and theologian and Biblical critic, Professor Thomas Kelly Cheyne (Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford),[293] at the heart of its organisation, it also represents an intersection with discursive threads woven around the reception of Abdul Baha in Britain. The dearth of emphasis on Islamic subjects is noteworthy with only two sessions on Sufism included, one contributed by D.S. Margoliouth (d.1940), Professor of Arabic at the University of Oxford and the other by the noted scholar and Rumi translator, R.A. Nicholson (d.1945).[294] Both were included in the section 'Religions of the Semites' as was the presentation on 'Bahaism'. Not that Islam was considered unimportant and unworthy of focus, but rather various views prevailed centred around two distinct attitudes. On the one hand, Islam was regarded as an unfriendly competitor of Christianity, harnessing Christian-like teachings for its own ends, a corrupt and 'false religion'. Islam was likewise a re-working of ideas from other religions and certainly not on a par with Christianity, which occupied a unique position. On the other hand, Islam was gradually coming to be seen as an expression of human reason and sentiment striving "to know and define the nature of God and the universe,"[295] a force in history, if still not on a par with Christianity. Both views accommodated a growing sense that Muhammad was an important figure who had been influential in shaping history. Margoliouth, for instance, regarded Muhammad as "a great man, who solved a political problem of appalling difficulty,-the construction of a state and an empire out of the Arab tribes,"[296] and he (Margoliouth) had tried "to do justice to his intellectual ability and to observe towards him the respectful attitude which his greatness deserves."[297]

It is hard to ignore the fact that constructions of British identity, at the height of Empire, embodied a sense of superiority around commercial, scientific and egalitarian achievements and the idea that the white race, along with Protestant Christianity, represented the flowering of human progress. This "conflation of race,

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[292] Some regional newspapers, such as the *Aberdeen Journal* (29.6.1908 and 16.9.1908) and the *Manchester Courier* (16.9.1908), did carry reports. A comprehensive and generally positive report appeared in, *Nature,* Vol. 78, No. 2031, October 1st. 1908, pp.552-553.

[293] See, Frowde, *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions*, Introduction, p.v. No full treatment has appeared as yet on Cheyne. See, Stephen Lambden's brief assessment at http://www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/baha'i%20encyclopedia/thomas_kelly_cheyne.htm. See also, A.S Peake, "Cheyne, Thomas Kelly", in, *Dictionary of National Biography 1912-1921*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927, pp.119-20. In his later career, he was a Canon of Rochester. Cheyne was central to Abdul Baha's reception at Oxford.

[294] H. A. R. Gibb, "Nicholson, Reynold Alleyne", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, available at http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35230.

[295] Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*, p.16.

[296] D.S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam,* New York: G.P. Putnam's and Sons, 1906, Introduction, p. vii. Cited in Aida Yared, in, "Introducing Islam in Finnegans Wake: The Story of Mohammed in VI.B.45", in, *Genetic Joyce Studies*, Issue 1, Spring 2001, p. 6.

[297] Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam,* Introduction, p.vii.

religion and progress"[298]cast Muslims as racially as well as religiously inferior.[299] Such tendencies were evident in the transactions of the Congress and how it dealt with the religions of the 'Semites'. A more benign depiction of Muhammad was contested with an increase in levels of hostility between Christianity and Islam as a consequence of colonial expansion, allied with a concomitant heightening of evangelical missionary zeal to convert the 'heathen' masses of Muslims. Those connected to the Congress, for the most part, would have supported the idea that Islam was an "authentic expression of human need to believe in a God, and one which [had] values of its own,"[300] with Muhammad considered an important social reformer and gifted political leader. The event organisers included a number of liberal Protestant clergymen-scholars, including Carpenter and Cheyne. Both, along with many of the pre-eminent pioneers of the study of 'comparative religion' in Britain, were upholders of the superiority of Christianity, even if they did contend that all religions (including Christianity) should be subject to scholarly scrutiny.[301] For them, if not quite the "deceiver […] a genius misled by the Devil," [302] as Muhammad was sometimes represented, Islam was still depicted as inferior to Christianity and somewhat suspect. Their attitude to Islam echoed that of the celebrated scholar and theologian of the Church of England, F.D. Maurice referred to earlier.[303] He argued that it was necessary to know about other religions in the world and that Islam had served a vital function by calling humanity back to central truths, such as there being one God who made himself known to humanity and whose word is recorded in an authoritative book. Even so, Maurice claimed, Islam was "like all the religions of the world except Christianity."[304] Muhammad's vocation had been an expression of providence, but only in so much as it reminded Christians once more of the essential truth of their own religion.

In his opening remarks, the president of the Congress panel on 'Religion of the Semites' surveyed the (fairly) substantial contemporary scholarly work ongoing concerning Islam. Such work, he stated, is vital given the profound changes being wrought with the extension of colonial interest in Islamic lands, and for preparing "us

[298] GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America,* p.98. GhaneaBassiri discusses how each was defined with respect to the other in detailing what it meant to be 'American' around this time.
[299] For a development of this theme see also, McNamara, "An Irishwoman in Tehran, 1849-1853: Identity, Religion and Empire" in, H.E. Chehabi and Grace Neville (Eds.), *Erin and Iran; Cultural Encounters between the Irish and the Iranians,* Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015, pp.172-186.
[300] Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*, p.19.
[301] See, Chapter 2 for a discussion of this point with respect to Max Muller and Carpenter.
[302] Christian Snouck Hurgronje, *Mohammedanism;Lectures on its Origin, its Religious and Political Growth, and its Present State,* New York: G.P. Putnam's and Sons, 1916, p.25.
[303] See, p.47.
[304] See, Hourani, *Islam in European Thought,* p. 22. For Carpenter's non-interest in Islam see Chapter 2. The views of Cheyne are interesting in this regard and will be further discussed towards the end of this chapter.

Europeans to grapple with the serious problems of the next decades,"[305] predicting encounters both "friendly and hostile between the opposing forces represented by Christendom and Islamism."[306] Positing the conundrum in ever more 'Orientalist' formulations he concluded, "[t]o understand a problem is half of the solution, and often the more difficult half."[307] In essence, the ongoing research by 'Orientalist' scholars concerning Islam was presented as utilitarian. The impression remains, given the catalogue of research cited and the fact that only two sessions concerning a particular aspect of Islam were featured in the programme, that definite sensitivities were being observed.[308] In this intellectual maelstrom the emphasis on Islam was concerned only with aspects of Sufism and somewhat 'played down'.

For its part, Sufism was regarded amongst some scholars of the time as embodying a safe approach to Islam and its inclusion over against other facets of Islam also underscores a tendency to focus on elements of culture and religion which Europeans found attractive to the exclusion of obvious central tenets of Islam.[309] Similarly, the featuring of a presentation on 'Bahaism' at the Congress can be considered another 'safe' portal of approach to the Islamic world, given its emergence from that background and the sense amongst participants that it was "a religious movement which is assuming ever-increasing importance."[310] Delivered by Ethel Rosenberg, one of Britain's earliest self-professed Bahais, the presentation, titled "Bahaism: Its Ethical and Social Teachings", set out the role of the founding figures, the Bab, Bahaullah and Abdul Baha. It also enumerated specific tenets around the establishment of local, national and international 'Houses of Justice', elected bodies to minister and arbitrate at each functioning level and providing for those in need from donations collected from adherents.[311] Introducing the history of the movement, Rosenberg avowed that "Bahaism possess for us a unique point of interest in the fact

[305] Morris Jastrow, in, Allen de Johnson, *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions,* p.247.
[306] Morris Jastrow, in, Allen de Johnson, *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions,* p.246.
[307] Morris Jastrow, in, Allen de Johnson, *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions,* p.247.
[308] A quick survey shows that Christianity was covered in fourteen sessions, Buddhism in eleven sessions, and various aspects of Egyptian religion in nine sessions. Celtic religion merited four presentations and Shinto, two. Greek and Roman religions and various aspects of Hinduism merited multiple sessions. See, Allen de Johnson, *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions,* pp. xx to xxv.
[309] See, Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism,* Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997, p.9.
[310] Allen and de Johnson, *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions* vol.2, p.4.
[311] In an impressive collection of presenters at the congress, it is difficult at this remove to determine how many non- academics were featured. Certainly, it seems, Rosenberg was in a minority. An abstract of the presentation is contained in, Allen and de Johnson, *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions* vol.2, pp.321-324. On Rosenberg, see, Robert Weinberg, *Ethel Jenner Rosenberg: The Life and Times of England's Outstanding Pioneering Worker*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1995.

that it is a great world-religion which has taken its rise in our era."[312] A brief description of the inception of the religion in the person of the Bab is included, though, Rosenberg argued, it is in Bahaullah's hands that the movement has "become world-wide in its appeal."[313] If it had been confined only to its early beginnings, she expanded, it would merely have "effected a reformation within the religion of Islam."[314] Rosenberg's description of Bahai as 'a great world-religion' is certainly striking as is her presentation of an incipient organisational schema. Neither of these facets was promoted widely by Bahai sympathisers at this time.[315] The inclusion of 'Bahaism' in the programme of the Conference in the first instance, owed much to familiarity with the religion of the Bab, as referred to earlier, the precursor of Bahai dating from the mid-1800's, which had for some decades been the focus of interest amongst western scholars and Orientalists, in particular the Cambridge scholar, E.G. Browne.[316] Interest had been rekindled with the spread of Bahai under the leadership of Abdul Baha, still under house arrest in Akka at this time, with both Carpenter and Cheyne counting themselves as admirers, and a few like Rosenberg who were known as followers. Cheyne would later identify as a follower but from the standpoint of remaining in the church and seeing Bahai as an inspiration for re-imagining Christianity.

Though presenting as non-confessional and 'academic', the Congress evidences the application of 'filter' and 'grid' from, for the most part, an affirmative orientalist perspective. It reflected negative attitudes to Islam and the emergence of Bahai, along with Sufism, as an acceptable 'approach' to the Islamic world. Even so, it should be noted, only certain aspects of what Rosenberg presented about Bahai could be said to be of interest for promoters of this particular discourse. Other actors in this religious field would engage from this same perspective as we shall later see. But the

[312] Allen and de Johnson, *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions* vol.2, p. 321.
[313] Allen and de Johnson, *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions* vol.2, p.321.
[314] Allen and de Johnson, *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions* vol.2, p.321.
[315] It would seem that a small core of those connected, including Rosenberg, were gaining a broader understanding of Bahai precepts outside of the generalised principles that informed most of the attention it received in the public sphere at this time. It was this core group that founded a 'Bahai community' as such in Britain, which abides today. The development of a Bahai community, beyond the visits of Abdul Baha to Britain, is outside the purview of this treatment. See, for example, Philip R. Smith, "The Development and Influence of the Administrative Order in Britain", in, Richard Hollinger (Ed.), *Community Histories: Studies in the Bábi and Bahá'í Religions, Vol. 6*, Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1992,Weinberg, *Ethel Rosenberg,* and, *Lady Blomfield: Her Life and Times,* Oxford: George Ronald, 2012, and Lil Osborn, *Religion and Relevance:The Bahá'ís in Britain, 1899-1930*, Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2014.
[316] Browne did not take part in the Congress. Browne and Carpenter sat together on the board of the Orient Library which began publishing Bahai texts in their 'Wisdom of the East' series in 1909, around the time other publications of Bahai texts also appeared. Correspondence between them on the story of the Bab is held at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, Box 4, Folio 190-225.

culmination of tracing out this scholarly basis for engagement with religions from Asia might well be the occasion of Abdul Baha's appearance in Oxford during his second visit to Britain in late 1912. It was an event for which Carpenter and Cheyne, two of the chief movers of the Congress, were mostly responsible.

Oxford

Abdul Baha's appearance at an event in Manchester College, Oxford,[317] in late 1912 was directly related to the interest of one of the Congress organisers, Professor T.K. Cheyne, Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford, who enlisted Carpenter's assistance. An ordained priest of the Anglican Church, Cheyne sat on the editorial board of the liberal Protestant newspaper, *The Christian Commonwealth*. The newspaper, the official organ for the 'New Theology' movement, and mouthpiece for promoting the views and activities of leading Protestant reformer, R.J. Campbell, covered every aspect of Abdul Baha's public schedule while in Britain.[318] By this time unwell and almost entirely an invalid, Cheyne was still anxious to host a meeting for Abdul Baha in Oxford. He let it be known that his friend Carpenter, the Principal at Manchester College, would provide a venue and he would arrange to gather together an audience. A preparatory meeting took place in late October, 1912, when Lady Blomfield (d.1939),[319] a prominent supporter of Abdul Baha, addressed a meeting at the College, hosted by Carpenter, under the title "What is the Bahai religion."[320]

On the last day of 1912 spoke at Manchester College to a large audience. Carpenter took the chair and began by referencing Cheyne's interest in Bahai and demonstrating his own familiarity with the history of the movement by delivering a brief history and background. He concluded by stating Bahai "does not seek to create a new sect, but to inspire all sects with a deep fundamental love"[321] and that Benjamin Jowett (d.1893), one time Master of Baliol, had once remarked to him that Babism "as the present movement was then known, might become the greatest religious movement since the birth of Christ."[322] Carpenter's depiction of the movement differs from what Rosenberg, an avowed follower, had presented at the Congress, and highlights the possibility for the rejuvenation of 'all sects' rather than Bahai claiming to be a religion in its own right. It was those aspects of Bahai which could affect an 'anti-Nicene' type of reformation within Christianity which were of

[317] Now Harris Manchester College.
[318] Its role will be examined in more detail in Chapter 5.
[319] See, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield.* Sarah Louisa Blomfield hailed from Borrisoleigh in Co. Tipperary and, though from a working class background, had married into the London aristocracy.
[320] Information from Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* pp.119-120.
[321] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 22nd, 1913, p.302 (i and ii).
[322] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 22nd, 1913, p.302 (i and ii). Dr Benjamin Jowett was a renowned administrative reformer in the University of Oxford, a theologian and translator. See, Peter Bingham Hinchcliff, *Benjamin Jowett and the Christian Religion,* London: Clarendon Press, 1987.

interest to Carpenter. Cheyne's interest was likewise mediated by a combination of 'filter and grid', though his self-identification as a Bahai while still happily maintaining the status quo of his religious orientation and affiliation will require some explanation.

Abdul Baha's Oxford address was carried in full in *The Christian Commonwealth* under the heading "Aspects of Natural and Divine Philosophy."[323] The presentation highlighted the importance of science in human endeavour and humanity's mastery of nature within a supernatural framework or dominion.[324] It did not comprise a survey of Bahai history and teaching but is notable for its call for peace and an exposition of the role religion could play in ensuring a peaceful future. Reflecting general unease and growing uncertainty, not that long before the outbreak of the First World War, the presentation incorporated an appeal for a broadening intellectual engagement on the part of universities with issues such as peace and reconciliation. Referenced in the presentation was the on-going conflict in the Balkans. Around this time a peace conference of representatives from the countries involved was convened in London in effort to resolve the issue.[325] Emphasised also were the dangers arising out of religious prejudice as well as the overlaying of fundamental principles of religion with "dogmas and superstitions."[326] The content would not have challenged the understanding of those listening who were coming to admire Bahai for its universal and pacifistic traits. Carpenter was clearly impressed, later describing Bahai as "the most remarkable movement which modern Mohammedanism has produced."[327] This is how the scholarly constituency, as represented by Carpenter and echoing Browne, viewed this new movement from Asia; as a modern emendation of Islam, one which was 'close' to Christianity.

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[323] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 22nd, 1913, p.302 (i and ii). An Arabic language transcript carried over a couple of pages was followed by the English translation. Packages containing large numbers of the newspaper were sent to various countries for dissemination by Abdul Baha's entourage. See, for example, *Abdu'l- Abdu'l-Baha in Britain, 1913; The Diary of Abdu'l-Baha's Translator* , http://www.paintdrawer.co.uk/david/misc/sohrab-diary-uk-1913.pdf, p.112. The diarist also records (p.64) that some 10,000 copies of one of the special editions devoted to Abdul Baha's visit was sent by the newspaper to the United States for distribution. He also states (p.32) that a translation into Arabic of a talk Abdul Baha gave in America, and published in an Arabic newspaper not identified, was brought to Britain and sent to various centres "for circulation in the orient". It maybe that facilitating such circulation is precisely why the Oxford talk was published in full in Arabic in *The Christian Commonwealth.*

[324] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 22nd, 1913, p.302 (i and ii). I can find no record of publication of this address, beyond its appearance in the *The Christian Commonwealth.* Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.141, synopsises the address from reports in the *Oxford Times.* Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p.354, states only that the address concerned the place of science in the life of mankind and the supreme place of the supernatural with respect to nature. *The Diary of Abdu'l-Baha's Translator*, pp.216-217, contains what seems to be a longer extract from the *Oxford Times* report, without attribution.

[325] See, Michael Graham Fry, Erik Goldstein, Richard Langhorne (Eds.), *Guide to International Relations and Diplomacy,* New York: Continuum, 2004.

[326] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 22nd, 1913, p.302 (i and ii).

[327] J.E.Carpenter, *Comparative Religion,* London: Williams and Norgate, 1913, p.70.

While we might understand Carpenter's engagement in the context of currents within that part of the religious field which laid a foundation for Abdul Baha's welcome in Britain, Cheyne's involvement merits further scrutiny considering his more definite identification with liberal Protestant reform movements and his standing in the theological-academic community. Influenced by German radical criticism, Cheyne was an acknowledged expert and pioneer of the "Higher Criticism" of the Bible in the English-speaking world.[328] His long and distinguished career as an academic and theologian was, though, by this time embroiled in some controversy.[329] His actual self-identification as a 'Bahai', and what he understood that to mean, greatly illuminates the imbricated nature of the discourse which grounded these transactions.

Cheyne's Cosmology

"Why I am a Bahai is a large question," Cheyne wrote to a friend, "but the perfection of the character of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha is perhaps the chief reason."[330] His further note of explanation, "I am one of the Baha'is who remain in their mother church,"[331] is a prime example of how the chief promoters of Abdul Baha's public schedule in Britain related to his teachings and how they contextualised them. Cheyne was an avid promoter of Abdul Baha's visits and instrumental in ensuring *The Christian Commonwealth* newspaper gave much coverage to Bahai and to Abdul Baha's itinerary. In an editorial he penned for that newspaper, which appeared about a month after the Oxford event, Cheyne explained why he and others were so engaged.[332] Outlining the respect for other religions inherent in Bahai teaching, "each prophet must be studied with reference to his period and surroundings"[333] though "we recognise that Baha'o'llah has a special mission to this age,"[334] Cheyne expressed the opinion that,

> This is a favourable time for asking English Christians to reconsider their attitude towards Eastern religions, because of the visit of the leader of the Bahai movement, Abdul Baha ('Servant of the All-Glorious'), who is

[328] See for example, *The Prophecies of Isaiah* (2 Vols.), London: Trench & Co., 1880-81 and as editor with J.S. Black, *Encyclopedia Biblica* (4 Vols.), New York: Macmillan & Co., 1899-1903.
[329] Cheyne came in for strident criticism for his proposal of the 'Jerahmeelite Theory', which contended that the main tribes of Israel did not come out of Egypt but, instead, inhabited Northern Arabia. See, Henry Preserved Smith, "Israel or Jerahmeel", *The American Journal of Theology,* Vol. XI, No. 4 (1907), pp-553-568. For further criticism see, J. Bowden, *Who's Who in Theology,* London: SCM Press, 1990.
[330] Letter from T.K. Cheyne to John Craven, from the website of the Oxford Bahá'í community, http://www.oxfordbahais.com/history/ accessed on 23.12.14 at 17.00. Cited in Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.141.
[331] Letter from T.K. Cheyne to John Craven, from the website of the Oxford Bahá'í community, http://www.oxfordbahais.com/history/ accessed on 23.12.14 at 17.00. Cited in Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.141.
[332] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 29th, 1913, pp.324-325. Editorials in the newspaper were not usually attributed as was this one.
[333] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 29th, 1913, pp.324-325.
[334] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 29th, 1913, pp.324-325.

> conspicuous for his avoidance of the errors into which many leaders have fallen […] Nor must we enter into details respecting Abdul Baha's teaching […] They are in a high degree adapted to the wants of the present age. But the central truths are those of Judaism and Christianity- the love of God and the love of man.[335]

The 'English Christians' who were being invited to revaluate their attitudes to 'Eastern' religions were of course that liberal Protestant constituency catered for by *The Christian Commonwealth* newspaper. Considered in another way, Cheyne was seeking affirmation for a particular aspect of the liberal Protestant project which was then being vigorously promoted by *The Christian Commonwealth* newspaper; culturing an approach to religions from Asia. Islam did not figure large in this worldview. Yet, in championing Abdul Baha, there was a definite embracing of a religious reformer (whose religion had emerged from that milieu) on the part of those leading this discourse, and more widely amongst groups and movements engaged in traversing the boundaries of traditional Christianity. Bahai could be seen as an entrée to an engagement with Islam. Abdul Baha's teaching was characterised as particularly suited to the requirements of the era, the 'central truths' of which could be summed up as those at the heart of Judaeo-Christian teaching. The exploration of 'other' religions was definitively from the perspective that Christianity was at once the starting point and some form of Christianity the terminus in religious exploration. Bahai was 'Eastern', its interlocutor was an exceptional leader, but its 'message' was fundamentally 'Christian'. The 'epistemological filter' was very much in play. Cheyne continued,

> Abdul Baha is not a Mohammedan, and it is a mistake to describe Bahaism as a Mohammedan sect. But there is no reason why a really broad-minded Mohammedan should not be a Bahai, or, for that matter, why a broad-minded Christian or Jew or Zoroastrian should not enter the community. Just as the moulders of the doctrine gather pearls of truth in all seas, so neophytes of the community may adhere with affection to the church, synagogue or sect to which they owe their spiritual birth. The Bahai community is really not so much a church as a fighting religious order, whose members are, to adopt the beautiful phrase of Heinrich Heine, *Ritter des Theologengeist.*[336]

Cheyne's statement that Abdul Baha is not a Muslim is of particular interest. An approach to 'Eastern' religions was all well and good. If other religious movements (such as Bahai) could be seen to embody attributes reflective of Christian teaching, could indeed be seen to open up avenues for Christian regeneration, they could be

[335] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 29th, 1913, pp.324-325.
[336] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 29th, 1913, pp.324-325. Christian Johann Heinrich Heine (d.1856) was a German poet and essayist. Heine's phrase translates as "knights of the theological spirit."

readily accepted. That this might mean, however, that Islam could have any positive influence on the progress of Christianity or both could be seen as on a par with each other, was a separate matter altogether. It was important, therefore, that the separateness of Bahai from Islam was well established and no particular focus of attention placed on its emergence from an Islamic background. Reflecting themes and attitudes that informed the Third Congress on the History of Religions, views on Islam became the fulcrum for another inflection of the concept of an 'accepted grid'. Distancing Bahai from Islam was seen as important to establishing its credentials. Cheyne's pronouncements clearly express his sense of Christian superiority over Islam, though couched in respectful and benign terms. Bahai, might well, he later wrote, bridge the gap between "action and reaction" [337] in Islam.

In his monograph *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions*,[338] Cheyne expresses what could be described as a 'red line' in extending the principle of the 'oneness of religion' or the 'oneness of the prophets'. He avers that "a Christian may well strengthen his own faith by the example and fervour of many of the Muslims. But to say that the Kur'an is superior to either the Old Testament or the New is, surely, an error, only excusable on the grounds of ignorance."[339] While indicating an evolving appreciation of Islam as an influential force in world affairs, with a significant figure at its centre, the superiority of Christianity is still proclaimed. As a view gaining increasing currency in religious discourse it did betoken an advance on the view that Islam was a false religion and Muhammad a charlatan. Proceeding in this vein, Cheyne explained, the representatives of Christianity and Judaism at the time of Muhammad were not exactly role models for Judaeo/Christian precepts, such that "ignorance on Muhammad's part was unavoidable."[340] Unavoidable also was the "anti-Islamic reaction"[341] on the part of "the Order of the Sufis."[342] "One may hope," Cheyne concludes, "that both action and reaction may one day become unnecessary. *That* will depend largely on the Bahais."[343] In this analysis, Cheyne erroneously depicts the evolution of Sufi thought within Islam, characterising it in general 'Orientalist' terms as a reactionary movement largely 'outside' and 'against' Islam while embodying interesting and attractive elements.

However, this review will be incomplete if we do not acknowledge that Cheyne's worldview was even still more complex and distinctly avant-garde for his day, while at the same time taking account of the fact that at the time he penned *The*

[337] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* London: Adam and Charles Black, 1914, p.14.
[338] London: Adam and Charles Black, 1914.
[339] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* p.14.
[340] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* p.14.
[341] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* p.14.
[342] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* p.14.
[343] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* p.14. Italics in the original text.

Reconciliation of Races and Religions his powers were no longer at their zenith.[344] Cheyne revered Vivekananda, Abdul Baha and Inayat Khan as "missionaries of Eastern religious culture to Western,"[345] along with several Buddhist missionaries he did not mention by name. Bahaullah, the founder of the Bahai faith and Abdul Baha's father, he compared to St. Paul, who would fulfil a similar purpose in the contemporary shaping of the 'mother church'. Though arguing vehemently for the idea that there have been many 'Christs' and that an 'historical' appraisal of the Gospels is called for, yet still "the God-man Jesus […][the] real incarnate God"[346] occupies a unique position. Cheyne postulated a coming 'universal' religion, one where 'East' and 'West' embrace, where love, joy and peace reign. Writing in August 1914, when the Great War was gaining momentum and pressuring all thoughts of optimism, Cheyne's entreaty is trenchant in his repetition of Abdul Baha's appeal for peace made during his sojourn in Britain in advance of the conflict.[347] His plea reflected the waning vestiges of influence and popularity of a universalist outlook that characterised religious discourse prior to the onset of war.

Even though Christianity should be less intolerant to other faiths and belief systems, Cheyne further argued, the coming religion will require Islam to 'reform'. Muhammad's claim to prophethood could be accommodated only if he is regarded as one prophet amongst many and Muslims accept that the "Kur'an is only adapted for Arabian tribes, not for all nations of the world."[348] Cheyne ranged peripatetically across ideas and teachings, lauding the ability of 'Eastern' thought to regenerate the Christian 'West'. In effect, he articulated a position that is affirmatively Orientalist, while still operating from behind his own epistemological filter. In the end it is the 'mother church' that will be regenerated and even though it will need transformation from within to meet the challenges of the future, "the 'one true Church' corresponds of course with the one true God."[349] This veneration of the 'church' above all, in this case the Anglican Communion, is yet another interesting element of Cheyne's worldview. His cosmology comprises a high degree of connection to a number of visiting religious reformers from Asia; Vivekananda, Abdul Baha, Inayat Khan as well as Keshub Chunder Sen and unidentified representatives of Buddhism.[350] But it is what they can do for the 'mother church' that is most important. We can, therefore, recognise in Cheyne's articulation of his identification with Bahai a representation of

[344] He died February 16th, 1915, after a long illness.
[345] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* p.11. See, also, Gwilym Beckerlegge, "The Early Spread of Vedanta Societies: An Example of 'Imported Localism'", Numen, Vol. 51, Fasc.3 (2004), pp. 296-320, for a discussion on how Vivekananda's early Western followers occupied dual religious spaces.
[346] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* pp.202-203.
[347] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* pp.189-193.
[348] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* p.193.
[349] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* p.196.
[350] It might not be a stretch to consider that amongst these was Dharmapala who visited Britain around this period.

the concept of Bahai as a 'solvent' or an 'entreé' that may offset the distance between Christianity and Islam, an instrument for bringing Muslims towards 'the mother Church'. Not that Cheyne wished that followers of other religions should 'become' Christians, but rather an evolving Christianity could accommodate all-comers, who might still be known as Buddhists, Muslims etc. but whose central tenets would be "those of Judaism and Christianity."[351] What was omitted, consciously or otherwise was that, though Bahai was delinked from the religious background of its origination and presented itself as a distinct religious entity, Abdul Baha did not disguise his Muslim background from his self-representation and indeed frequently spoke highly of both Muhammad and Islamic teachings.[352]

Writing after the First World War had begun, and some distance away from the events surrounding Abdul Baha's second visit to Britain, Cheyne briefly reviewed what he considered the highlights of Abdul Baha's "apostolic journeys."[353] In his brief sketch of the main events of the first visit, Cheyne mentions that Abdul Baha spent twenty six days in London, on one occasion visiting a social project in Vanners at Byfleet, Surrey, and on another paid a weekend visit to Bristol.[354] Whereas these were the only locations outside of London visited by Abdul Baha during that first sojourn, none of his major appearances in the city merit a passing reference. There is no mention of Abdul Baha's appearance at the City Temple, London, as guest of R.J. Campbell, perhaps the most renowned religious figure of his era. Nor is the event in St. John's, Anglican Church at Westminster recorded where Archdeacon Basil Wilberforce feted the traveller from Asia before a large attendance.[355] From Abdul Baha's second visit to Britain, the occasions that stand out for Cheyne, following his arrival in Liverpool on December 14th, 1912, are his appearance at Oxford on the last day of that year, his subsequent stay in Edinburgh where (Cheyne records) he addressed Theosophists and Esperantists, a second visit to Bristol and a visit to Woking Mosque just four days before he left Britain for France. This selective itinerary omits a number of major engagements and a multitude of informal sessions, newspaper interviews and reports. It is not, perhaps, meant to be an exhaustive assessment or review but the omissions are somewhat curious.

Perhaps, Abdul Baha's engagement with the City Temple congregation and that of St. Johns, Westminster (even at this early remove), were becoming difficult to assess and categorize. Now that war had broken out, and all major figures

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[351] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 29th, 1913, pp.324-325. See, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* Introduction, ix, for Cheyne's critique of what he describes as Max Muller's advice to Brahmanists that they call themselves Christian.

[352] For example, Abdul Baha continued to wear his 'Oriental' attire throughout his travels in the West. While in Akka, he frequently attended the mosque.

[353] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* pp.165-167.

[354] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* p.165. For an account of Abdul Bahas visit to Vanners see, Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá,* pp.155-156.

[355] On Campbell, see Chapter 5 and Wilberforce, Chapter 6.

prosecuting this discourse were fully behind the national effort against the 'enemy' and advocates of the justice of the cause for the prosecution of war, the construction of a particular 'history' of these events was already in train, chiefly promulgated by some of those centrally involved.[356] Cheyne himself expressed his abhorrence for the conflict, but was careful not to criticise Britain's involvement. Not shy of complaining the un-Christian behaviour of the "leaders of 'German culture',"[357] Cheyne aligned himself with the view that Britain had "made strenuous efforts to preserve peace, and has entered into the war under a grave sense of duty to a smaller State, towards which we had moral and treaty obligations."[358] Just how destructive of the articulation of a universalist optimism, based on a new reading of religion from a comparative perspective, the First World War proved to be will form part of my later review of why the events analysed here fell out of historical memory. It is evident that very soon after these encounters this religious field experienced a violent 'turn' or rupture. Consequently, how these events would be 'remembered' became shortly a matter of selective revisionism on the part of some of those centrally involved.

Conclusion

The World's Parliament of Religions was a unique event which epitomised trends and, to an extent, set out parameters for a discourse and encounters between religions. Not that this was the overt intention of the organisers but, through a series of interchanges and particularly through the contributions of religious reformers from Asia, a "complex interchange of difference"[359] was set in motion. Clearly, the missionaries and scholars who argued the 'Christian case' did so from the standpoint of the expected sovereignty of Christianity in one form or another. For their part, the Asian visitors employed strategies where the 'Occident' was critiqued in similar terms as the 'Orient' had been, inverting positions and challenging views of superiority. Prominent scholars of religion, including Max Muller and Carpenter, contributed to the Parliament programme and lauded its novelty. The 'terms of engagement', constructed as the Parliament progressed, crystallised the adaptation of theoretical approaches such as 'epistemological filter', 'accepted grid', and 'affirmative Orientalist' positions. These developments influenced the progress of religious discourse around encounters with religions from Asia in the British context and became formative of a particular religious field of enquiry.

A similar conceptual grounding as had informed the Parliament was evident in the organisation of the Third International Congress for the History of Religion held in Oxford in the summer of 1908. Though Max Muller had by this time passed away, the

[356] For Wilberforce's vehement advocacy of the prosecution of war, see, C.E. Woods, *Archdeacon Wilberforce,* p.17. On Campbell, see, David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage,* pp.232-236.
[357] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* Introduction xx.
[358] Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions,* Introduction xiii-xx.
[359] Ketelaar, "Strategic Occidentalism: Meiji Buddhists at the World's Parliament of Religions", pp.37-56.

city had been chosen as the venue for the Congress in his honour and Carpenter was centrally involved in the event's administration and the selection of papers. Notable by its absence from the programme was any serious treatment of Islam. The outward looking and comparative approach to religions outside of Christianity was evidently prosecuted with some bias. Islam was deemed anything from 'uninteresting' to 'the work of the devil', though some understanding for its position in the world and the influence of its founder was garnering respect and becoming the subject of serious commentary. There was still a tendency to regard Muslims as racially as well as religiously inferior, to conflate both as conjoined elements in the argument for the superiority of British identity.

The inclusion of papers on Sufism, representing a safe approach to Islam, was matched by the featuring of a presentation on Bahai which had emanated from an Islamic milieu but was now becoming known as a 'modern' religious movement. It was seen to embody 'Christian-like' features and prominent supporters were keen that it not be regarded as an offshoot of Islam. One of the chief founding figures, the Bab, was already well known in academic circles, chiefly through the efforts of E.G. Browne, the noted Persia expert from Cambridge. His life and death were portrayed as mirroring the experience of Jesus by a number of Orientalists. By 1908, some three years before he arrived in Britain, Abdul Baha was likewise becoming a recognised religious figure and Bahai a subject for discussion, privileged along a grid of acceptability as a possible entrée to Islam.

Amongst significant figures to support Abdul Baha's reception in Britain, one of the most prominent was the Biblical scholar T.K. Cheyne who was active in liberal Protestant reform and a celebrated Oxford don. Cheyne collaborated with Carpenter in the organisation of the Third International Congress for the History of Religion and both later joined in arranging for Abdul Baha's appearance at Manchester College where he addressed an audience composed mainly of academics on the last day of 1912. Cheyne's cosmology was complex though still predicated on the overarching position of Christianity. In particular his veneration of the 'mother church' as the enduring expression of Christian faith, an entity that could accommodate within itself the changing nature of the religious scene (even assimilate aspects of religion from Asia as its own), was a marked feature of his worldview. His failing health and controversy around some of his commentary on Biblical history apart, Cheyne presented a typical liberal Protestant approach, one shared by scholars such as Max Muller and scholar-clerics like Carpenter. The religions of the world merited respect and deserved scholarly attention but some occupied the outer reaches of acceptability to Christianity. This was especially true of Islam to such an extent that Cheyne protested loudly that Abdul Baha should be considered as disconnected from his religious locus of origination. Abdul Baha was not a Muslim and the Bahai community

was not really a 'church' in its own right.[360] According to Cheyne, Abdul Baha's visit gave 'English' Christians the opportunity to reconsider their attitudes to 'Eastern religions', highlighting a sense that Bahai provided an entrée to other faiths, or particular aspects that, though still 'Eastern', were similar to Christianity. In introducing Abdul Baha to his audience in Oxford, Carpenter also underscored the regenerative possibilities for Christianity residing in Bahai as opposed to Rosenberg's articulation at the Congress of 'Bahaism' as an embryonic religion in its own right. Both instances exemplify in what manner the 'epistemological filter' was deployed.

In the operating characteristics of the World's Parliament of Religions and the Third Congress on the History of Religion we can discern the outline of parameters that bounded future 'East/West' interactions. Foundational to this discourse was the work of such scholars as Max Muller and Carpenter, striving to fashion a framework or theodicy in the face of modernity and the Victorian 'crisis of doubt'. In the person of Cheyne we are introduced to a religious scholar whose complex identity craved connection to religions from Asia and whose interests ranged itinerantly. These scholars were part of an avant-garde brigade of thinkers and religious activists, sometimes both at the one time, who were striving to effect a 'Reformation' in Protestantism. One aspect of their emerging worldview was an approach to religions from Asia. But the figures featured in this chapter were not the only actors in this evolving field of religious enquiry. The attitudes exhibited by personalities like Max Muller, Carpenter and Cheyne, and variations of them, were inflected into a broader discourse that attended Abdul Baha's progress through Britain. The transactions that ensued will be dealt with in greater detail in subsequent chapters and the imbricated nature of these encounters examined to uncover various strands of interest and influence as my thesis proceeds. Contributing to the augmentation of this discussion was another of the Deans Yard attendees, Wellesley Tudor Pole, the keeper of the Glastonbury Cup.

[360] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 29th, 1913, pp.324-325.

Chapter 4 – The 'Curious'; The 'Celtic' Dimension to Pre-First World War Religious Discourse

My review of this discursive palette conveys a textured picture of the developing intellectual landscape prevailing with respect to the study of religions as the nineteenth century came to a conclusion. It provides some insight into the questions that exercised scholars in the emerging field, though the figures cited here were not alone in pushing out the boundaries of thinking.[361] The extent to which this discourse permeated outside a narrow, scholarly locus was a matter of conjecture. The noted pioneering anthropologist, Andrew Lang (d.1912), considered, writing in 1901, that although English philosophers and scholars had focussed on the origins of religion for a period of circa thirty years, there was still "no general excitement" and little public interest in this debate which had been left to the "curious" and "the learned."[362] Even then, only a few scholars, he contended, were interested in the discipline and, according to a colleague of Lang's, the study of beliefs and anthropology were almost entirely neglected by undergraduates at Oxford.[363] When asked as to why that was Lang's colleague replied, because "there is no money in it."[364] Yet, there was certainly some specialised interest and we can readily see how openly the sometimes friendly and, at other times, acrimonious discourse on the origins of religion was played out amongst what might today be described as leading 'public intellectuals' of their time.[365] It was, though, the 'curious' and the 'learned' who were articulating for the first time what might be termed a 'discursive space', a 'space' into which visiting religious reformers from the 'East' could be received during their sojourns in Britain. It was the 'curious' and the 'learned' who welcomed these reformers, in some cases hosting them, drawing them into a complex discussion that sought to shape Victorian and post-Victorian conceptions of religion. They set out, at least on a preliminary basis, what they considered an objective approach to a proliferation of knowledge concerning a variety of religions but still of course from within a paradigm of liberal Protestant theology.

What is striking is that those engaged in this religious exploration at this time in Britain (and in the main this concerned Protestant Christianities, though not

[361] In terms of seminal publications, mention must also be made of James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, Vol. 1*, London: Macmillan, 1890, and Herbert Spencer's, *The Principles of Sociology*, (3 vols.), New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1876-96.
[362] Andrew Lang, *Magic and Religion,* London: Longmans Green, 1901, pp.6-7.
[363] On Lang, see, Robert Ackerman, *The Myth and Ritual School: J.G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists,* London: Routledge, 2002.
[364] Lang, *Magic and Religion*, p.7.
[365] Moore considers that George Eliot was the first to use the term in the way we understand it today. See, Moore, *Victorian Faith in Crisis,* p.171.

exclusively) were in many instances connected to each other. There was an easy mobility across organisations and ideas, whether liberal Christian positions or congregations, esoteric or spiritualist interests, 'Eastern' oriented philosophies such as Theosophy, social causes as in the suffragist movement and groups directly associated with religious reformers visiting Britain from Asia.[366] A unique insight into how this phenomenon manifested itself might be found in a gathering convened in July, 1907, in the home of the Anglican Archdeacon, Albert Basil Wilberforce (d.1916), Canon of Westminster Abbey, Rector of St. John the Evangelist, Smith Square in London, and Chaplain of the House of Commons.[367] Wilberforce was the son of a bishop and grandson of William Wilberforce (d.1833), the abolitionist. He was appointed to his positions of prominence by the Prime Minister, William Gladstone (d.1896) who, in the notice of appointment, asked only that Wilberforce not use the pulpit at Westminster to further the campaign he was then waging for total abstinence from alcohol.[368] The Archdeacon combined his establishment duties with an interest in a variety of ideas and activities concerning religion, including the occult and spiritual healing, and he was closely associated with leading Theosophists. He had lectured on the relationship of 'eastern' religions to Christianity and Russell (one of his biographers) recounts, somewhat acerbically, that "[h]e communed with 'Spooks' and 'Swamis' and 'Controls'."[369] He was acutely aware of the political nature of his establishment position yet still able to pursue his esoteric inclinations.

Deans Yard

Over forty guests had convened at Wilberforce's invitation in his Deans Yard residence in the shadow of Westminster Abbey. Amongst some high profile establishment personalities, the group included the well-known Congregationalist

[366] This point is highlighted in Osborn as it concerns those interested in the Bahai message. See, Lil Osborn, *Religion and Relevance: The Bahá'ís in Britain, 1899-1930,* Los Angeles: Kalimat Press 2014. Literature on the development of religious movements at the turn of the twentieth century is fairly scant while new movements after the Second World War are quite well catered for.

[367] See, C.E. Woods, *Archdeacon Wilberforce: His Ideals and Teaching,* London: Elliot Stock, 1917 and George William Erskine Russell, *Basil Wilberforce: A Memoir,* London: John Murray, 1918 (2nd Ed.) and Osborn, pp.53-59.

[368] Russell, *Basil Wilberforce,* p.68, cited by Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* p.54. See also, Woods, *Archdeacon Wilberforce,* pp.96-97.

[369] Quotation from Russell, *Basil Wilberforce*, p.120. See also, Patrick Benham, *The Avalonians*, Glastonbury: Gothic Image Publications, 1993, pp.67-70. Amongst his varied interests and leanings, Wilberforce was an admirer of Swami Vivekananda and connected to his activities in London in 1895 and 1896. See, Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West*, Vol.3, pp.275-278 and Vol. 4, p.165. He was centrally involved in Abdul Baha's visit to London in 1912 and welcomed him speak to at St. John's. See, Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 145-149. Along with H.R. Haweis (d. 1901), who had been at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago as an 'unofficial' Anglican delegate, he was amongst the most popular Anglican preachers of his era. Haweis' church was very well attended but he was less accepted by the establishment than Wilberforce. See, Burke, *Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. 3, pp.275-282 and H.R. Haweis, *My Musical Life,* London: W.H. Allen, 1894. Wilberforce was the spiritual mentor to Lady Blomfield, a central figure in Abdul Baha's visits to Britain who herself was connected to a variety of figures journeying outside of mainstream Christianity at this time.

Minister, R.J. Campbell (d.1956),[370] the poet and educationalist, Alice Buckton (d.1944),[371] noted scientist, Sir William Crookes (d.1919),[372] and Viscount Halifax (d. 1934), a leading campaigner for the corporate reunion of the Church of England with Rome.[373] The purpose of the soiree was to examine the claims made for a glass, sapphire blue bowl found in Glastonbury in 1906, that became known as the Glastonbury Vessel or Cup and which Wilberforce considered could be the Holy Grail.[374] Its owner (or keeper), Wellesley Tudor Pole (d.1968), then just twenty three years old, simply contended that it was at one time in the possession of Jesus and was a unique object which had particular implications for the Glastonbury area in which it was found and the role this and other sacred landscapes would play in the revival of an 'indigenous' Christianity.[375]

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[370] Campbell was rector of the City Temple in London and one of the most well-known pastors of his generation. He was founder of the 'New Theology' movement before suffering a breakdown and resiling from avant-garde and alternative positions he had adopted and retiring to a quietest life as an Anglican Minister. See, Walter Sylvester Smith, *The London Heretics*, New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1968. See, also, R. J. Campbell, *The New Theology*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1907. He met Abdul Baha on a number of occasions and invited him to address the City Temple congregation in London. See, Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp.144-145.

[371] Alice Buckton and Wellesley Tudor Pole were significant figures in the Celticist spiritual movement. Both entertained close links with Abdul Baha during his sojourn in Britain and thereafter. See, Tracy Cutting, *Beneath the Silent Tor: The Life and Work of Alice Buckton, 1867-1944,* Wells, Somerset: St. Andrews Press, 2004, Patrick Benham, *The Avalonians,* Glastonbury: Gothic Image Publications, 1993, Dion Fortune, *Avalon of the Heart,* York Beach ME: Weiser Books, 2000, Marion Bowman, "More of the Same? Christianity, Vernacular Religion and Alternative Spirituality in Glastonbury", in, Steven J. Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman (Eds.), *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, and "Restoring/Restorying Arthur and Bridget: Vernacular Religion and Contemporary Spirituality in Glastonbury", in, Marion Bowman and Ulo Valk (Eds.), *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life: Expressions of Belief,* Sheffield: Equinox, 2012. For a review of Buckton's Froebelian credentials, see, Stephanie Mathivet, "Alice Buckton (1867-1944): The Legacy of a Froebelian in the Landscape of Glastonbury", in, *History of Education,* Vol. 35, No. 2, March 2006, pp.263-281. See also, Osborn, pp.101-107 and Balyuzi, p.213 and 347-348.

[372] See, Trevor H. Hall*, The Spiritualists: The Story of Florence Cook and William Crookes*, New York: Helix Press, 1963. Crookes met Abdul Baha in London in 1913. See, Jan Teofil Jasion, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in the West; A Biographical Guide of the People Associated with his Travels,* Paris: Editions Bahá'íes France, 2012, p. 106. Crookes was the discoverer of the element, thallium, and cathode rays.

[373] Charles Lindley Wood, second Viscount Halifax, father of Edward Wood the future Foreign Secretary and Viceroy of India. Viscount Halifax was an avid collector of ghost stories, collections of which were published after his death by Edward. See, Peter G. Cobb, "Wood, Charles Lindley, Second Viscount Halifax (1829-1934)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, Oct.2008. http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.ucc.ie/view/article/36997. Accessed on, 16/3/2013 at 19.45.

[374] Grail legends concern a vessel used by Jesus (or used to collect some of his blood) and connect Celtic myth, Arthurian lore, Britain and Jesus. See, Roger Sherman Loomis, *The Grail: From Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol*, Princeton, 1991.

[375] Details from Gerry Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, Everett, WA: Starseed Publications, 2010, pp.16-43. See also, Elizabeth Gaythorpe, (Ed.), *My Dear Alexias: Letters from Wellesley Tudor Pole to Rosamond Lehman*, London: Neville Spearman, 1979, pp.35-40, Benham, *The Avalonians*, pp.65-83, and Robert Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield: Her Life and Times,* Oxford: George Ronald, 2012, p.49. Blomfield was a friend of Wilberforce and Buckton, an admirer of Vivekananda and friend to Theosophists and Suffragists.

In unveiling the find to his audience, Tudor Pole was making the argument that the vessel presented possibilities for the articulation of a new religious framework, one which was uniquely Christian in its orientation, authentically western in origin and centred on Glastonbury. In the course of the discussion, Tudor Pole was questioned closely about all aspects of the curio and those present showed a clear interest without any indication of scepticism being recorded in the transactions of the meeting, in common with the reactions of other notables who had viewed or would later inspect the artefact, figures such as Annie Besant, the President of the Theosophical Society and the famed expert on the occult, A.E. Waite.[376] The scientists present, it was noted, were generally impressed, advised further investigation and Wilberforce felt confirmed in his view that the vessel was indeed the Holy Grail.[377] He was not, though, unmindful of how this eclectic gathering and its purpose might appear to his superiors and in his opening remarks had pronounced the proceedings "strictly private, not for publication."[378] Regardless, the full story of the gathering made the front pages of the *Daily Express* newspaper and became the subject for the editorial of the day.[379] If somewhat sensationalist, the newspaper's commentary is still revealing of how seriously the 'find' was considered. That such a select convocation of religious leaders, scientists and grandees would convene to pronounce on its provenance, the editorial averred, was "interesting and admirable"[380] and reflected a change in general religious interests.

The attendees did not welcome the public attention the breaking of the story attracted, especially as there ensued a media stir with national and regional periodicals following it up and seeking out the individuals who had been present.[381] A second gathering, the following January, specifically convened to pronounce on the age of the artefact, ended inconclusively. Wilberforce may have regretted his initial enthusiasm for the vessel and there is some evidence that his central involvement in the matter "led to some complications" [382] with his superiors. If so, and if claims for the vessel and its significance receded (at least from public scrutiny),[383] Wilberforce continued to be active in other investigations with respect to religion and spirituality, Russell averring that "Wilberforce was always a good deal swayed by what was in the air."[384] If his views were "changeable and eclectic,"[385] he combined serious interest in

[376] Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, p.23 and Benham, *The Avalonians*, p.67.
[377] See, Benham, *The Avalonians*, pp.68-76.
[378] Wilberforce cited by Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, p.18.
[379] *Daily Express*, 26/7/1907. Cited in Fenge, p.41, and (partially) in Benham, *The Avalonians*, pp. 77-78.
[380] *Daily Express*, 26/7/1907. Cited in Fenge, p.41, and Benham, *The Avalonians*, pp.77-78.
[381] Benham, *The Avalonians*, p 78-81.
[382] Benham, *The Avalonians* , p.82.
[383] Claims for and interest in the vessel did not entirely abate. See Benham, *The Avalonians*, and Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, for the complete story.
[384] Russell, p. 68. Cited by Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, p.54.
[385] Russell, *Basil Wilberforce,* p.57.

the occult, the suffragist movement, Celticism[386] and 'Eastern' religions, while he "never lost hold of the central facts of Christianity."[387] His response to the Victorian religious ferment was to valorise the free movement of the "spirit", whilst always keeping that traditional Christianity occupied a unique position. He proved to be an influential figure in acting as a link between a variety of disparate groups and individuals interested in movements and ideas outside of Christianity while still maintaining his traditional position and role in British society.

In fact, many of those involved in the Deans Yard consultations were closely connected to a broader discourse outside a purely 'Western' spirituality or esotericism that welcomed interaction with religious reformers from the 'East' and were centrally involved in Abdul Baha's reception in Britain. The meeting comprised a loose affiliation of high profile personalities across religion and the sciences, some of whom were actively investigating various claims and ideas newly introduced.[388] These were high status individuals and, by and large, it was the intelligentsia which was predominantly engaged in these activities.[389] The affiliations of those in attendance at Deans Yard in July 1907 present a tapestry of interconnections, the individual threads of which comprised many of the contemporary movements or philosophies then popular. Focus on some of those involved in the encounter just described may serve to clarify how these representatives of the 'curious' contributed to the construction of a response to the crisis of doubt concerning religion at this time, of which the Glastonbury vessel is but one representation and their relationship to a visiting religious reformer from the 'East', Abdul Baha, yet another. The purpose of the

[386] 'Celticism' is more a modern descriptor as explained by Leerssen , "[N]ot a study of the Celts and their history, but rather the study of their reputation and the meanings and connotations ascribed to the term 'Celtic'." It seems a particularly apt description of the Celtic oriented interests of Tudor Pole and others. See, Joep Leerssen, 'Celticism', in, Terence Brown (Ed.), *Celticism, Study Imagologica: (Amsterdam Studies on Cultural Identity) 8,* 1996, pp. 1-16. Cited in Bowman and Valk, *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life*, p.329.

[387] Russell, p.68.

[388] Osborn's analysis of different networks, the individuals they comprised and their association with Abdul Baha is instructive in this regard. See, Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, Chapter 2, pp.87-129. Accounts of Abdul Baha's visits to Britain include mention of a number of these leading individuals and their various affiliations. Interestingly, biographies of Wilberforce and Campbell contain little or no analysis of their wider esoteric interests. Tudor Pole's biography does, as do his own writings. Cutting mention's Buckton's affiliation to the Bahai movement without analysis. The fundamental Christian orientation of these figures identities is emphasised throughout. See, Russell, *Basil Wilberforce*, Woods, *Archdeacon Wilberforce*, Campbell, *The New Theology*, Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, and Cutting, *Beneath the Silent Tor*, respectively.

[389] Fenge counts amongst those present, the American Ambassador, Whitelaw Reid, The Dean of Westminster, Armitage Robinson, Canon Duckworth, senior political figures, artists, and an assortment of Dukes and Lady's. He also notes that Mark Twain (Samual Clemens) had previously had a private viewing of the vessel at the Wilberforce residence. See, Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, pp. 17-19. An account of this episode, as cited by Fenge, is contained in, Albert Bigelow Paine, *Mark Twain, A Biography: The Personal and Literary Life of Samual Langhorne Clemens,* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1911 (3 Vols.), pp. 1387-1388. Benham lists antiquarians and experts in antiquarian artefacts as being in attendance. See, Benham, *The Avalonians*, p.75.

gathering was, ostensibly, to "substantiate the psychically derived story"[390] of the origin of the vessel. For its finder, it may have presented an opportunity, his passport "to a fuller rapport with the larger world establishment,"[391] a means of accruing the symbolic capital required to be an influential participant in this field of religious enquiry. Ultimately, the Deans Yard assemblage and its deliberations can be seen as a prism, where various elements of the discourse on religions outside of traditional Christianity converged with the conjunction of a number of those leading the way in forging that discourse, even if the specific topic under consideration was emblematic of but one specific discursive facet. Focus on the provenance and utilization of the Glastonbury vessel will serve to explicate just how many and varied were the elements that were blended into this discursive mix. It will also underscore the role played by one of its most intriguing actors, one who was intensely involved in Abdul Baha's public programme in Britain.

Tudor Pole's Quest

How the cup came to be in Glastonbury and was eventually found by Tudor Pole is a long story of dreams and intimations on his part, and that of his family and friends who were joined with him in the find. Tudor Pole, a self-professed medium with inclinations towards Theosophy and psychical research, became interested in Glastonbury as a spiritual centre, by his own account, in the year 1902 and later came to believe that "there was a wonderful find to come to light at Glastonbury - a find that would link the founder of the Christian faith with modern leaders of Christian thought."[392] His interest tweaked, Tudor Pole made frequent pilgrimages to the area, as much as possible around St. Bride's Day (Feb.1st), and, following a visionary experience, guided a 'triad of maidens' (his sister and two friends) to the discovery of the vessel in St. Bride's well at Glastonbury in the autumn of 1906. It soon came to light that the vessel had been placed there previously by a certain Dr. J.A. Goodchild, a medical doctor, mystic and Celticist, who purchased the cup in Bordighera, Italy, in 1887. The bowl was presented to Goodchild's father who pronounced it a sacred object and it remained for some time in his safe keeping.[393]

In 1897, Goodchild had a vision (he later recounted), during which he was directed to take the cup and place it in the Women's Quarter at Glastonbury, a task he duly accomplished in the year 1897. Goodchild and Tudor Pole were adamant that

[390] Benham, *The Avalonians*, p.65.
[391] Benham, *The Avalonians* , p.65.
[392] Tudor Pole, cited by Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, p.19. See, also, Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, p.14 and Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, p.99. In later life, Tudor Pole was known by his initials, W.T.P. following in the style of Blavatsky (H.P.B.), one of the founders of Theosophy. See, Lehman and Tudor Pole, p.13 and, on Blavatsky, see, Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient History Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
[393] Benham, *The Avalonians*, pp.7-15.

there was no collusion in the independent recovery of the vessel in 1906, though Tudor Pole did doubt the veracity of how Goodchild came by the cup and endeavoured to trace its provenance without success.[394] Tudor Pole and Goodchild had indeed been in contact with each other on a number of occasions prior to the find and had "discussed Christian origins connected with Glastonbury."[395] A more recent account goes so far as to speculate that the placing and finding of the vessel was effected on dates of significance corresponding to elements of the Golden Dawn tarot design based on constellations of the zodiac in an attempt to utilize magic to achieve the goal of spiritual regeneration.[396] In any event, it is clear that Goodchild and Tudor Pole were well versed in the meanings and motifs they were endeavouring to articulate through the agency of the vessel, and the significance of the particular location where it was found in St Bride's well.[397]

The Glastonbury Cup was placed in a specially designated room in the Tudor Pole household in Bristol, white curtains draping the walls and an altar type table with candles reserved as the resting place for the artefact. Variously referred to as an 'oratory' or a 'chapel', both signifying a place dedicated to prayer, the location became an object of curiosity and veneration, a focal point for "mystical services, open only to women, combining Christianity and Celtic rites."[398] For two years after the Deans Yard convocation, the oratory in Bristol attracted a wide variety of seekers, including Wilberforce, Campbell, Buckton and Goodchild. Though the Celtic associations with the vessel and its significance as a sacred artefact connecting modern Britain to the time of Jesus were the primary focus of its veneration, other meanings were imbricated during this period. The 'Jesus Cup' (as it was sometimes referred to) having come from the Holy Land, its mission began to be represented as being for 'universal' good, "both the keepers of the Cup and many visitors declared its

[394] Details from, Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, pp.23-31,and Benham, *The Avalonians*, pp.7-50. The cup, apparently, has been examined many times since the Dean Yards gathering (but not in recent years), including extensively by William Crookes. No clear verdict as to the exact age of the vessel has been pronounced, though estimates from various examinations down through the years vary from five centuries before the Common Era to the 1800's. See, Gaythorpe, *My Dear Alexias*, pp.38-46.
[395] Tudor Pole, cited in Gaythorpe, *My Dear Alexias*, p.37.
[396] Alan Royce, "The Perfume of the Rose", *The Avalon Magazine,* Glastonbury, Summer 1998, p.20. Cited in, Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, p.104.
[397] Bride is a form of Brighid or Bridget, variously described as a pagan Celtic Goddess or a Celtic Christian saint. The Irish St. Bridget (d.523) established a Christian settlement in Kildare around the year 480 where she was Abbess of a monastery for men whilst also taking charge of a second monastery for women. As an historical figure, it may be that Bridget of Kildare became conflated with an earlier deity and perhaps, also, with saints of the same name from Wales and Sweden. She reputedly came to Glastonbury in 488. A church was raised in her name which was supposed to have at one time housed relics of the saint and a nearby spring became known as Bride's well, the water known for its power of healing and fertility. Apart from the Joseph of Arimathea myth and Arthurian apologues, Glastonbury has a long association with Celtic mythology through St Bride. Information from, Bowman and Valk, *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life,* pp.388-399.
[398] Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield*, p.49.

purpose was to make a bridge between East and West."[399] Tudor Pole, while dismissive of the idea that the artefact was actually the Holy Grail, declared the Cup an important symbol for all religions, a mysterious and sacred totem that could be instrumental in "bringing into sympathetic touch one with another the followers of all the great religious teachers in East and West."[400] He envisaged the establishment of other centres around the world which would perform the same function, promoting universal brotherhood while still within the ambit of existing and "different world religions."[401] In 1910, visitors from India made the journey to Bristol and left expressing the hope that the vessel would become the instrument for creating a new mystical awareness shared by people of various beliefs.[402]

Tudor Pole (almost immediately after the Deans Yard gathering) set out on a quest that would periodically occupy his energies for the rest of his life. Having consulted one clairvoyant and received a letter (unsolicited) from another, Tudor Pole became obsessed with the idea that secret, ancient manuscripts existed that would prove the provenance of the cup. The psychic communications pointed to a cache of documents hidden in the grounds of the Seraglio Palace in Constantinople. The existence of long hidden, secret texts (repositories of ancient wisdom), was part of Hermetic lore, including that Constantinople was one of the possible sites where such treasures could be unearthed.[403] Tudor Pole made a number of attempts over many years to recover manuscripts but all proved unsuccessful.[404] The quest did not preclude Tudor Pole from pursuing his Celticist leanings in yet other directions, inspired by Goodchild's idea that a pre-Christian culture had existed in Ireland which had extended itself to Glastonbury and Iona, and which was the repository of an authentic Western mystical tradition, the true roots of spiritual life in the West.[405] In Tudor Pole's overarching religious framework, his antidote to his era's crisis of doubt, Glastonbury was to be the centre for a Christian renewal, the locus for a revival, a

[399] Benham, *The Avalonians*, p.112.
[400] Tudor Pole, letter to *The Christian Commonwealth,* 17th of October, 1910. Cited in, Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* p.106.
[401] Tudor Pole, "Focus Points of World Religions", in, *The Christian Commonwealth,* 19th of October, 1910. Cited in Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* p.107.
[402] Benham, *The Avalonians* , p.106. These comments are attributed to Professor L.T. Vaswani and Rev. Promotho Sen, who visited in September of that year.
[403] On the attempts by the 15th century Hermeticist monk, Leonardo da Pistoia, to search out manuscripts in various cities, see Clement Salaman, and Dorine Van Oyen, and William D. Wharton, and Jean-Pierre Mahé, *The Way of Hermes: New Translations of The Corpus Heremticum and The Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius.* Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2000, p.9. Another treatment of the efflorescence of interest in Hermeticism in the 15th century can be found in, Wouter Hanegraaff and R.M. Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447-1500): The Hermetic Writings and Related Documents*, Tempe Arizona: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005.
[404] See Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, pp.36-53 and Benham, *The Avalonians*, pp.85-87.
[405] Benham, *The Avalonians*, p.12 and Osborn, p.104.

'second coming' in the very place Christianity "first touched Britain."[406] The Cup would find its home in Glastonbury which would become a centre for physical and spiritual healing to rival the Catholic pilgrimage site at Lourdes.[407] At the Deans Yard assemblage he outlined his vision of the Christian Churches in Britain joining to become a harmonious channel for the Holy Spirit to bring about this regeneration. If that unity could not be achieved, he warned, then other agencies would be found and the Churches would have lost their opportunity, the most stupendous "since the days of our Lord, for carrying on the evolution of the world,"[408] and the privilege would pass to another country. Glastonbury was to be the epicentre of the renewal, though still but one of three points of supreme spiritual importance across Britain and Ireland.

Over the next few years, Tudor Pole pursued plans to reawaken what he considered the three great spiritual centres of Britain and Ireland, Glastonbury (sometimes referred to as 'Avalon' after the island of Arthurian legend), the Scottish island of Iona and 'the Western Isle', an as yet unidentified island somewhere in Ireland. These three locations were regarded as the 'heart' of the expected spiritual renaissance; the capital cities of London, Edinburgh and Dublin "were as a triangle of the 'brain' of their respective nations."[409] The effort involved pilgrimages at Glastonbury and Iona (visits to Ireland would come later), the vessel being taken to all those spots considered sacred and prayers offered.[410] Outside of messages Tudor Pole claimed he received *au delá*,[411] it is difficult to overlook Goodchild's influence on the prosecution of his various activities. Goodchild's Celticism was influenced by his connection to William Sharpe (d.1905), who wrote popular novels about the Celtic past under the pseudonym of Fiona McLeod. Sharpe, along with Goodchild and Tudor Pole (at one time or other), maintained links with central figures in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a brotherhood initiated in 1888 by a group of Rosicrucian Freemasons centred on theurgy, magic and esoteric thought. Simultaneous with his quest, Pole developed a relationship with Neville Meakin (d.1912), a leading figure in one of the 'Temples' or sub-groups of the Golden Dawn, the Stella Matutina Temple. Meakin was also Grand Master of the Order of the Table Round, claiming to be the fortieth descendant of King Arthur. Pole became Meakin's novice, moving through various grades of the Order with definite hopes of one day replacing him as Grand Master, only to be foiled on the eve of initiation to the highest grade on Meakin's

[406] Tudor Pole, cited in Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, p.31.
[407] Tudor Pole, cited in Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, p.31.
[408] Tudor Pole, cited in Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, p.32.
[409] Benham, *The Avalonians*, p.103.
[410] Benham, *The Avalonians* , p.104. Tudor Poles influence on later developments at Iona is catalogued in W. Graham Monteith, "Iona and Healing: A Discourse Analysis", in Sutcliffe and Bowman, *Beyond New Age*, p.109. Tudor Pole later identified 'the Western isle', sometimes referred to as 'the Holy Isle of the West', as Devenish Island in Loch Erne, Co. Fermanagh, but not until 1930. See, Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, pp.170-176.
[411] Meaning, "the beyond", a term used by Tudor Pole in his own writings to describe the realm from where messages came to him. See, for example, Gaythorpe, *My Dear Alexias*, p.209.

sudden, untimely death. Tudor Poles ambitions were thwarted when other leading figures in the Order closed ranks and froze him out.[412]

The Celtic Revival

It may elicit a fuller understanding of Tudor Pole's Celtic avidities (which included an approach to religions in the 'East') if we reflect on the extent to which Celticism was concurrently influential in Ireland at around this time. The thought-world of the leading lights of what has been termed the 'Celtic Revival' in Ireland was bounded (according to Joseph Lennon and much like Tudor Pole's) by "a narrative-grounded mysticism,"[413] heavily influenced by antiquarianism, origin legends and Theosophy. In the case of Irish writers such as W.B. Yeats (d.1939), A.E. (George Russell, d. 1935), James Stephens (d.1950) and James Cousins (d.1956), these "Celtic imaginings"[414] set Irish culture on the road to cultural decolonization. In the main, these figures emerged from a Protestant milieu grappling with their own particular crisis of doubt while heavily influenced by Indian philosophy and Theosophy. In their case, interest in Celtic origins and the 'mystic East' has been characterised as a response to estrangement and political isolation felt by Anglicans in an increasingly Catholicised Irish society. But these inclinations have also been seen as a response to Protestant evangelicalism in the remoulding of "a millennium-old Irish narrative,"[415] based on migration legends to Ireland from the 'Orient', to assert a unique and ancient Irish culture and spirituality. That both influences are credible establishes an interesting correspondence to Tudor Pole and his fellow seekers (engaged in fashioning their own eclectic Celtic-related theodicy from out of the Protestant ferment), while also delineating a distinct alterity.[416]

The revivalists, like Tudor Pole, were obsessed with Celtic origins. They shared a desire to "revive the residual and resistant cultural forms that were perceived to be

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[412] Benham, *The Avalonians*, pp. 102-105. For a history of the Golden Dawn see, Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn: A Documentary History of a Magical Order*, *1887-1923,* London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1972.

[413] Joseph Lennon, *Irish Orientalsim: A Literary and Intellectual History,* Syracuse N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2004, p.212.

[414] Lennon, *Irish Orientalsim,* p.214.

[415] Lennon, *Irish Orientalsim,* xxxi.

[416] Lennon, *Irish Orientalsim* p.214. For his part, R.F. Foster characterised this interest as a response to estrangement and political isolation felt by Anglicans in an increasingly Catholicised Irish society. See, R.F. Foster, "Protestant Magic: W.B. Yeats and the Spell of History", in, *Paddy and Mr. Punch: Connections in Irish and English History*, London: Penguin, 1993, p.220. Selina Guinness agrees with the assessment of Vivien Mercier that the popularity of Theosophy among a core group of Irish Protestants, from similar backgrounds might partly be in response to "the stimulus of evangelicalism." See, Selina Guinness, "'Protestant Magic' Reappraised: Evangelicalism, Dissent, and Theosophy", in *Irish University Review*, Vol. 33, No. 1, Special Issue: New Perspectives on the Irish Literary Revival (Spring - Summer, 2003), pp.14-27 and Vivien Mercier, "Evangelical Revival in the Church of Ireland, 1800-69", in, *Modern Irish Literature: Sources and Founders*, Eilis Dillon (Ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p.80.

equally ancient and linked across continents in racial and cultural sensibility,"[417] what Cousins described an as "Aryan chain."[418] The Irish revivalists held fast to the idea that Ireland's destiny was to spiritually re-invigorate Europe, and perhaps the world, through the re-discovery of an essential, Irish, Celtic spiritual heritage. Interwoven with these motifs was a semiotic connection to the 'Orient', identification with the 'mystic East', in an attempt to unite the colonized periphery of Empire, imagining a counterpoint to its acknowledged centre.[419] Tudor Pole's political inclinations leant towards Fabian socialism and he espoused no particular sympathy for issues relating to Ireland.[420] Despite the colonial milieu in which he operated, there is no evidence that Tudor Pole espoused any racial or imperial tendencies, a charge sometimes levelled at proponents of Theosophy and the Irish revivalists, in particular Cousins who espoused notions of "race tradition" [421] while not necessarily advocating a hierarchical structure of race.[422]

If there is little evidence of direct links between Tudor Pole and the Irish Celtic revivalists, intersections can be found in mutual contacts and acquaintances. Sharpe (McLeod) and Yeats were known to each other and Yeats was at one time, along with George Russell and others, a Theosophist and involved with the Golden Dawn.[423] We can identify commonalities in their impulse and approach as occult practitioners; the Irish artists pursuing their visionary journey primarily through, poetry, literature and painting, Tudor Pole engaged in his quest to establish the provenance of a sacred

[417] Lennon, *Irish Orientalism*, p.328.
[418] James H. Cousins, *The Renaissance in India,* Madras: Ganesh, 1918, p. 33. Cited in Lennon, p.329.
[419] See, Lennon, pp.332-333 and p.372.
[420] There is little evidence available concerning Tudor Pole's politics. He was connected to leading Fabians. Interestingly, though he was in an exempt profession or business, he enlisted during the First World War as a private soldier. Before being persuaded to take a commission he agitated for an improvement in the conditions for enlisted men. Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, pp. 78-83.
[421] Lennon, *Irish Orientalism*, p.328 and p.343. The concept of race in Cousins' work is explored in, David Burleigh, "Rumours of the Infinite: An Irish Poet in Japan", in, *Ferris Studies,* No. 28, March, 1993. Cited in, Lennon, *Irish Orientalism*, p.343.
[422] Theosophy, despite its universalistic message, has been accused of embodying 'European imperial traditions' in its hierarchies having been invariably under the control of white Europeans or Americans. This characterisation has been contested, most particularly by James A. Santucci, who argues that Theosophical views on race relate to a long series of cyclic progressions, involving root races and sub-races, towards spiritual perfection. Lennon (for one) finds it difficult to digest that the mahatmas who guide the philosophy, "The White Lodge" or "The Great White Brotherhood", by their designation perpetuate bias even on the astral plane. Theosophists would counter that this is an ethereally mediated system, a global esotericism, and not concerned with 'race' as we ordinarily understand the term. See, James A. Santucci, "The Notion of Race in Theosophy", in *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions,* Vol. 11 (Issue 3), 2008, pp.37-63. For a contrary view see, Lennon, p.328 and Peter Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: The Emergence of the Western Guru,* London: Secker and Warburg, 1993, p.108. Washington's monograph is in the form of an expose.
[423] For the revivalists connection to Theosophy, see, Lennon , *Irish Orientalism,* pp.328-329, Benham, *The Avalonians*, pp. 102-103 and Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, p.101. On Yeats and the Golden Dawn, see, Kathleen Raine, "Yeats, the Tarot, and the Golden Dawn", *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (Winter, 1969), pp.112-148.

artefact. All were religious specialists experimenting with different mystical and esoteric ideas and practices while accumulating significant cultural or religious capital.[424] They shared a vision of the re-invigoration of an essential Celtic spiritual heritage that would proffer a significant contribution to new religious formulations in Britain and Ireland and beyond. If they also shared in common an approach to the 'mystic East', Tudor Pole's main thrust was to establish a new 'indigenous' Christian figuration, fashioned around the Glastonbury vessel find.

What is particularly striking, in reviewing Tudor Pole's contribution to the articulation of discursive strategies in the construction of religious frameworks, is the extent to which a 'Celtic' network (as represented by Tudor Pole and his associates) incorporated within its internal discourse a broad variety of influences and inclinations. Tudor Pole, as Osborn relates, was "enmeshed in brotherhoods, fellowships and organisations promoting spirituality."[425] While running a moderately successful business, he travelled widely in pursuit of various esoteric goals, championed spiritual centres across Britain and Ireland, was greatly interested in Christian socialism and women's suffrage, and connected to some of the leading lights across a variety of contemporary movements.[426] The interweaving of Celticism, Theosophy, Hermeticism, antiquarianism and origin legends in the construction of Tudor Pole's religious identity drew together various strands of the discourse around religion, a fuller spectrum of which was epitomized by those gathered at the Deans Yard assemblage and the subsidiary web of connections they represented. Tudor Pole considered himself "a Universalist," belonging to "the Schools of Mysteries […] conversant with the tenets of the world's philosophies and religions."[427]

His Celticism and search for an authentic Christian spirituality did not obviate his interest in Theosophy or Hermeticism [428] and interaction with figures such as Wilberforce exposed him to an approach where wisdom and enlightenment were sought in exploration of the philosophies of the 'mystic East'. Tudor Pole, Alice Buckton (another of those attending Wilberforce's gathering to view the vessel) and others shared a vision of a Christian spiritual renewal in Britain, through the reactivation of sacred sites in Iona (Scotland), Ireland and Glastonbury, with an emphasis on pilgrimage and the feminine.[429] According to Benham, Tudor Pole and his

[424] Tudor Pole could be described, following Weber's typology, as in the 'magician' mould. See, Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion,* Boston: Beacon Press, 1963, pp.20-31.
[425] Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, p.103.
[426] Osborn, *Religion and Relevance* pp. 104-107. Tudor Pole did sometimes struggle to make ends meet, see, Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, pp.176-178.
[427] This is his own retrospective assessment, writing in 1965. See, Gaythorpe, *My Dear Alexias*, p.116.
[428] For Tudor Poles own written 'credo', penned towards the end of his life, see, *A Man Seen Afar,* pp. 18-21.
[429] Bowman, in Bowman and Valk, *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life*, p.399. Alice Buckton was also a keen Celtic revivalist and an author of some renown. Her drama, "The Coming of Bride", presented in

immediate associates "felt they had inaugurated the Church of the New Age, a church in which woman was in the ascendant and Bride, the Celtic embodiment of the Universal Feminine, was restored and harmonized with a mystical understanding of the Christian faith."[430] Their esoteric leanings included a belief in the use of magic, a connection to 'powers' that would instigate widespread spiritual renewal.[431] Though not jointly involved in the vessel find, Tudor Pole and Buckton went on to have long (if separate) associations with Glastonbury and the "restorying" of mythologies, to connect "myth, belief story, vernacular religion and contemporary spirituality," providing "a constantly evolving means whereby varied groups of people interact with the past, the landscape and whatever they perceive as their spiritual goals."[432]

While all his beliefs and practices may seem retrospectively, as Bowman describes them, idiosyncratic, we might better view Tudor Pole as something of a *bricoleur,*[433] reconstructing, remixing, and re-using ideas, signs and symbols towards creating new insights or meanings, but still located within a broad Christian paradigm as Tudor Pole and his companions, "in their own way honoured Christianity."[434]

Glastonbury (in the year 1914), unites the motifs of the valorisation of the feminine and the importance of sacred landscapes, while endeavouring to renew interest in Bride herself.

[430] Benham, *The Avalonians*, p.50.

[431] Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, pp.104-105. Osborn, cites a number of articles written on this aspect by Alan Royce which appeared in *The Avalon Magazine* in the Summer of 1998. More recently, Osborn has been exploring the interest in magic on the part of Tudor Pole and his circle involved in this Celtic network. See for example, "The Baha'i Faith and the Western Esoteric Tradition" paper delivered by Lil Osborn to the 5th ESSWE Conference Western Esotericism and the East, University of Latvia, 16-18 April, 2015.

[432] Bowman, in Bowman and Valk, *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life*, p.329. For Tudor Pole and Bucktons' relationship with Glastonbury see, Benham, *The Avalonians*, and Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*. See also, Gaythorpe, *My Dear Alexias*, and, Oliver G. Villiers, *Wellesley Tudor Pole: Appreciation and Valuation*, Canterbury: Bells, 1977, pp.19-22. Tudor Pole is regarded as the founding father of the Chalice Well Trust which has preserved important Glastonbury properties for prosperity. Tudor Pole's influence on how the property is run is still very much in evidence. See, Chalice Well Trust, *Chalice Well: The Story of a Living Sanctuary*, Glastonbury: Chalice Well Trust, 2009, no author attributed.

[433] See, Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage* (Paris, 1962), English translation as, *The Savage Mind,* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966. Joe Kincheloe postulates an expanded concept of *bricolage.* Yvonna S. Lincoln summarises his construct as *bricolage* that works the "margins and liminal spaces between both formal knowledge, and what has been proposed as boundary knowledge, knitting them together, forming a new consciousness." Lincoln, "An Emerging New Bricoleur: Promises and Possibilities—A Reaction to Joe Kincheloe's 'Describing the Bricoleur'," *Qualitative Inquiry*, Volume 7 Number 6, 2001, p.694. Also helpful on the concept of *bricolage* is, John Hartley, *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts*, London: Routledge, 2002. See, also, Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, and, Véronique Altglas, *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. A more recent treatment is Steven J. Sutcliffe, "Gurdjieff as a *Bricoleur*: Understanding the 'Work' as a *Bricolage*" in, *International Journal for the study of New Religions*, Vol 6, No. 2 (2015), pp. 117-135. Sutcliffe argues less for the *bricoleur* creating 'new' systems from 'old' materials and characterises Gurdjieff's *bricolage* as a "serial exploitation of a series of complex environments" (p.124).

[434] Bowman, in Steven J. Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, *Beyond New Age*, p.99.

Tudor Pole's "collection of resources"[435] was still prosecuted from a perspective of 'filter' and 'grid'. His career as a *bricoleur* saw him journey beyond the confines of Britain and Ireland in his search for ultimate meaning. It was during his second quest attempt in Constantinople, in the year 1908, that Tudor Pole (according to his own account), first heard of "a group of Persians, known as Bahai's, who were said to be associated with a movement for the promotion of peace and brotherhood among members of all religious faiths."[436] On further investigation he discovered that their leader Abdul Baha "had been a prisoner for nearly forty years and was still confined with his family in the fortress city of Akka in Palestine."[437] It was the beginning of a connection that provided an occasion for a particular contribution to the construction of religious discourse in Britain and the reception of a religious dignitary from Asia just a few years later, one that would involve Tudor Pole as a central actor in the encounter. Indeed, all of the central figures present at Deans Yard, Tudor Pole, Wilberforce, Buckton, Campbell, and (to a lesser extent), Crookes, would each play significant roles in the reception of Abdul Baha in Britain.

Discovering Abdul Baha

Given the pivotal part he would play in Abdul Baha's sojourn in Britain, and indeed the concentration of his energies in promoting the Bahai movement over the succeeding decade, we might well ask why Tudor Pole, given his focus on western spiritual roots, Celticism and Glastonbury, should culture a profound interest in what was then regarded as a relatively unknown Persian offshoot of Islam whose leader languished in an Ottoman penal colony. How did the story and teachings of Abdul Baha fit into Tudor Pole's theodical religious framework? Consideration of Tudor Pole's prior interest in Theosophy and Hermeticism, the approach to the 'Orient' inherent in some elements of a Celticist worldview which Tudor Pole held in common with the Irish Revivalists, the imbrication of universalist connotations to the function of the Glastonbury vessel while housed in its Bristol oratory, even the influence such figures as Wilberforce exercised on his thinking; nowhere can we readily locate an explanation for Tudor Pole's sudden interest on first hearing about Abdul Baha in Constantinople during his second attempt to find proof of provenance for the Glastonbury Cup. Nor is there contained in the accounts of his life and activities any close examination of his new found interest. If there is a dearth of evidence to be found relating to Tudor Pole's engagement with the story of Abdul Baha, we can at least attempt to fill out some of the lacunae.

[435] Sutcliffe, "Gurdjieff as a *Bricoleur*", p.134.
[436] Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground,* p.140.
[437] Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground*, p.140.

Tudor Pole met Bahai's for the first time in the Ottoman capital, they shared with him "interesting stories and information,"[438] and he was greatly taken with the idea that Abdul Baha was still able to exercise a profound influence over his followers even though incarcerated in Akka over many years.[439] "When I returned to London", Tudor Pole wrote some two years later,

> I found that little was known of the movement, and I determined to visit Abdu'l Baha, known to the outside world by the name of 'Abbas Effendi', on the first available opportunity and discover for myself the secret of his power.[440]

This is hardly explicates why this movement, above any other emanating from the 'East', should elicit such an engaged response amidst his strenuous efforts to establish the provenance of the Glastonbury vessel and to reanimate the three spiritual 'heart centres' of Britain and Ireland. Tudor Pole's statement does beg the question whether he associated Abdul Baha with magical powers, confined as he was to a remote Ottoman backwater yet still able to achieve influence amongst groups of people far flung around the world. Gerry Fenge, author of a biography on Tudor Pole, postulates that a definite sequence can be identified in Tudor Pole's developing interest in Abdul Baha.[441] Having been drawn in the first instance to Glastonbury, discovered the vessel and struck out to establish its derivation in Constantinople, he there encounters the story and information concerning the incarcerated Bahai religious leader. At Dean's Yard, Tudor Pole had warned that, should the Christian churches be unable to come into greater harmony to bring about Christian regeneration, other agencies would be found. Perhaps, Fenge surmises, Tudor Pole would have found this a "logical outcome"[442] in a sequence of mystically influenced events, that he was being led to discover an external agency for the fulfilment of his Glastonbury vision.[443] Writing some years later, Tudor Pole underlined his understanding of the primary mission of Bahai (presumably the understanding he garnered from his first tentative engagement with Bahais) as being "to enable every follower of earlier world beliefs to obtain a fuller understanding of the religion with which he already stands identified and to acquire a clear apprehension of its purpose."[444] There is no intimation that he was familiar with the movement's history and emergence from a Shia milieu, but rather

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[438] Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.49.
[439] Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground,* p.140*,* Weinberg, *Ethel Rosenberg,* p.115. See also, *The Christian Commonwealth,* 28/12/1910, cited (partially) in Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, p.103.
[440] *Christian Commonwealth,* 28/12/1910.
[441] Gerry Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, Everett, WA: Starseed Publications, 2010.
[442] Details and quotation from personal correspondence with Gerry Fenge, 22/3/2013.
[443] Tudor Pole had also made reference at Deans Yard to a great teacher who will appear in the year 1911, a woman, who will be recognised by a few. (Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole*, p.33.) As Abdul Baha was still incarcerated in Akka when he first encountered Bahais in Constantinople in 1908, and of course was male, Tudor Pole could not have thought this figure was Abdul Baha.
[444] Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground,* p.141.

considered that it may be regenerative of existing 'world beliefs'. This was very much in keeping with what was generally understood about Bahai at that time**.** It resonates with the approach of Cheyne and Carpenter, as discussed earlier, whose interest in Bahai reflected their hope that it could aid in revitalizing Christian faith. Similarly, it coincides with Browne's valorisation of the Bab as manifesting Christ-like attributes, again hopeful that this example would aid in the renewal of a 'true' Christian spirit.

Tudor Pole's emphasis was decidedly on 'universalist' elements and what he discerned to be 'the power' of Abdul Baha, the secret of which he was anxious to uncover. Whatever he had heard of Abdul Baha's personality, it is clear that he was intrigued by the notion that here was an individual who embodied special abilities, such that he was eager to meet him.[445] We might also argue that, based on his assumption that at this time "very little was known of the movement,"[446] the idea that he would be introducing the philosophy for the first time in Britain (having 'discovered' it in the course of his quest) may also have been appealing to him. He did not know that a small handful of admirers of Abdul Baha was already in place in London, some of whom had been to visit Abdul Baha in his place of incarceration, along with a small group of sympathizers from the United States.[447] Weinberg relates that Tudor Pole was able to meet with this London group sometime after his return from Constantinople.[448] From his memoirs we know that he sought information from the noted Cambridge scholar, E.G. Browne, who had written extensively about the roots of the Babi movement in Persia and had interviewed the founder of the Bahai Faith, Abdul Baha's father, Bahaullah, during a visit to Akka in 1890.[449] Browne's work was widely known in academic circles. He had also delivered some public lectures on the subject and contributed a number of articles of a general nature on the religion to more widely accessible publications.[450] Figures such as Carpenter were aware of and in communication with him about his findings.[451] However, it was mainly the earlier

[445] Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground,* p.141.
[446] *Christian Commonwealth,* 28/12/1910.
[447] See, Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, pp.41-42, and Weinberg, *Ethel Rosenberg* and *Lady Blomfield,* biographies of two of the most prominent of these early Bahai followers, both of whom Tudor Pole would come to know quite well. On the early visits to Akka by Bahai sympathizers, see, Kathryn Jewett Hogenson, *Lighting the Western Sky: The Hearst Pilgrimage & Establishment of the Baha'i Faith in the West*, Oxford: George Ronald, 2010.
[448] Weinberg, *Ethel Rosenberg,* p.115.
[449] See, Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground,* p.140. Tudor Pole, erroneously cites Browne's meeting with Bahaullah as taking place in the "1880's".
[450] For example, Edward Granville Browne, "Babism", in, *Religious Systems of the World: National, Christian and Philosophic; A Collection of Addresses Delivered at South Place Institute in 1888-89,* London: Swann Sonnenschein, 1890, pp. 333-353. See, Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, pp.33-34 and, Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944,* p.31. For a detailed listing of Browne's publications, see, Moojan Momen (Ed.), *Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne on the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions,* Oxford: George Ronald, 1987.
[451] A small number of letters between Browne and Carpenter are held in the Carpenter archive at Harris Manchester College, Box 4, Folio 190-225. In one of Browne's letters he commends Carpenter's "tribute to the Báb'ís" which gave him great pleasure.

precursors of the Bahai movement, the followers of the Bab, whom Browne had popularised. [452] The fact that Tudor Pole was unaware of Browne's work before his discovery of Abdul Baha gives some indication that Browne's endorsement of the exploits of the Bab's followers, and the application of his considerable scholarly energies to making this history known, was slipping from popular notice. In any event, Browne's personal recollections of Bahaullah were such as to impress Tudor Pole. "The impression left on Professor Browne […]," he wrote, "[…] was one of surpassing spiritual majesty , accompanied by an aura of holiness leaving no doubt that here one was in the presence of a Messenger of God."[453] This chimed with the impression he was forming of Abdul Baha. He soon became conversant with other aspects of the Bahai story and became deeply involved in its promotion.

Conclusion

It was around this time (the period following the Deans Yard assemblage) that, amongst some of those pursuing variant religious ideas in Britain, an interest in Abdul Baha began to take shape and develop. Whether Tudor Pole was the informant for Buckton, Wilberforce, Campbell and others, we do not know. Contemporaneously, another of those who played a vital part in the subsequent reception of Abdul Baha in Britain, Lady Sara Louisa Blomfield (d.1939), was herself making contact with a small group of Bahai sympathisers which had newly emerged in Paris.[454] A member of the aristocracy, Lady Blomfield counted amongst her intimate friends and spiritual guides both Wilberforce and R.J. Campbell. She was also friends with Sir William Crookes (one of the Deans Yard attendees) and Sir Edwin Arnold (d.1904), author of *The Light of Asia*[455] (a popular, epic poem on the life of the Buddha) and through them underwent a thorough study of Theosophy. She was well acquainted with leading figures in Theosophy such as Alfred P. Sinnett (d.1921) and Annie Besant, with whom she shared an Irish background, and she followed closely the career of Vivekananda.[456] Lady Blomfield, though not present at Deans Yard, was central to this evolving discourse and connected to most of the personalities present. Through her own direct interest in Vivekananda and her indirect connection to Dharmapala through Arnold, her links with leading Theosophists, suffragists and liberal churchmen

[452] Browne devoted considerable energy and time during his career to the Babi and Baha'i Faiths. He was particularly taken with the exploits and sacrifice of the early followers of the Bab. See, Osborn, pp.32-40, Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith*, and Moojan Momen (Ed.), *Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne on the Bábí and Bahá'í Religion*.
[453] Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground,* p.141.
[454] See, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* pp.36-51.
[455] First published in 1879, Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia,* London: Keegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1938. Arnold was a founding member with Dharmapala of the Mahdi Bodhi Society. See, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield*, pp.18-35, and William Perris, *Edwin Arnold: His Services to Buddhism,* Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1970, p. 4. BPS online addition accessed at http://what-buddha-said.net/library/Wheels/wh_158.pdf on 18/03/2013 at 17.30.
[456] Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield*, pp.28-35.

such as Campbell, and indeed scholars of comparative religion such as Carpenter, she was very much, along with Wilberforce (her chief 'spiritual mentor'), a key figure linking different discursive strands.[457]

More published material concerning Abdul Baha and the Bahai teaching also became available for the first time during this period, in the first instance English translations of Bahai texts produced for a growing band of sympathisers in America. Before long published material generated in Britain was produced. Both Browne and Carpenter sat on the board of the Orient Library which began publishing Bahai texts in their 'Wisdom of the East' series in 1909, around the time other publications of accounts and teachings also appeared.[458] The distribution of a magazine, published in the United States and titled *Bahá'í News* (later *Star of the West*), from the year 1910, provided a common English language platform for sympathisers in America and Britain, with stories and accounts of events contributed from both sides of the Atlantic, as well as communications from Abdul Baha.[459] Finally, adding to this mounting frisson of interest, which caused Tudor Pole to comment that the movement was "beginning to take a more serious hold on public attention,"[460] was a number of visits from prominent sympathisers from America, Iran and elsewhere, who brought with them "a greater knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings and their practical application."[461] If we cannot point to one individual or incident responsible for a rising tide of interest, from around the year 1908 onwards, we can discern that the central figures from the Deans Yard convocation were all involved in one way or another in bringing Abdul Baha to public prominence.[462] Information was introduced from a number of different informants, participants in this strengthening field of religious enquiry, perhaps recollecting earlier published accounts such as those of Browne, and leading to the appearance of a tranche of new literature.[463]

A Celticist movement, as represented by Tudor Pole and his associates, made a significant contribution to this vibrant discourse on religion. As a grouping it was connected to a number of contemporary religious and social causes involving, in the main, high status individuals. As diverse as was the interplay with a variety of philosophies, the Celtic network counted establishment figures amongst its supporters as the Deans Yard gathering and subsequent events illustrate. It was transnational,

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[457] Blomfield's connection to Carpenter may have been mediated by the Oxford Biblical scholar, Professor T.K. Cheyne. Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield*, p.119-121. Her reverence for Wilberforce is detailed on pp.34-35.

[458] Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield*, p.47. Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company published an English translation of Abdul Baha's *Some Answered Questions,* in 1908.

[459] See, *Star of the West Archive.* Accessed at http://staroftheWest.info/, on 5/5/2013 at 20.42.

[460] *Bahá'í News [Star of the West],* Vol. 1, No. 18, p.5. Cited in Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield*, p.54.

[461] Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield*, p.46. See also, pp.47-51.

[462] See, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* pp.36-51.

[463] In the following years, a number of publications were published in Britain on the Bahai teachings, popular, historical and scriptural. See, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.47.

juxtaposing as it did fundamental commonalities with the main thrust of the Celtic revival in Ireland, including an approach to the 'Orient' and points of identification with the 'mystic East'. It exhibited an affirmative Orientalist perspective which still "presupposed the supremacy of European culture."[464] Tudor Pole's endeavour to legitimate an artefact, the motifs and meanings he had attached to it and the role he conceived for it as a talisman for awakening a Christian revival in Britain and Ireland, formed the matrix for his religious framework. His central focus, in the first decade of the twentieth century, was the establishment of a western Christian sodality with its centre at Glastonbury, mystically joined with sacred sites in Scotland and Ireland, what we might describe as a new theodicy, an attempt to instigate a 'new reformation'. In the promotion of his Celticist ideas and efforts around a sacred 'Christian' artefact, Tudor Pole exhibited a range of eclectic interests and engaged in *bricolage.*

Tudor Pole first turned to Browne in effort to gain a fuller understanding of his new found interest. It is possible to detect the same conceptual framework at work in their approach as that which animated the relationship of scholars of comparative religion, such as Max Muller and Carpenter, with the World's Parliament of Religions as detailed earlier. Browne's assessment that the Bahai teachings "are in themselves admirable, though inferior, in my opinion, both in beauty and simplicity to the teachings of Christ"[465] and his declaration that his interest in the Bahai religion related only to "the light it throws on the genesis and evolution of other religions"[466] corresponds to Tudor Pole's understanding as stated at that time and later.[467] There are echoes of Seager's epistemological filter and Said's accepted grid through which participants at the Parliament, both scholars and missionaries, explored their knowledge of the 'East' with a view to incorporating it in their own western Christian consciousness.[468] There are also echoes of the characterisation of Bahai as an entrée, a safe approach to religion in Asia. Writing just a few years after his first contact with Bahai, Tudor Pole expressed himself convinced "that the Baha'i movement has an important part to play in the religious regeneration of the world, and especially the Eastern world."[469] It was, in his view, the ability of Bahai teaching to 'regenerate', to enable followers of other religions to better understand their own that marked it out. He was particularly taken with experiences of a mystical or magical nature which he recounts as occurring during his interviews with Abdul Baha.[470]

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[464] King, *Orientalism and Religion,* p.88.
[465] E.G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion,* Cambridge: The University Press, 1918, xx.
[466] E.G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion,* Cambridge: The University Press, 1918, xx.
[467] See, Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground,* p.144. "I should make it clear that, in my view, Jesus' advent in our midst was and is a unique event in world history, an event that is as real and availably present today as it ever was." Also, Tudor Pole's 'Credo' as contained in Villiers, *Wellesley Tudor Pole*, pp.29-30.
[468] See, pp.34-35
[469] Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground,* p.164.
[470] See, Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground,* pp.147-150, for an example of same.

Other notables present at the Deans Yard conclave, those deeply interested in Tudor Pole's Glastonbury Cup, addressed their interests and activities from a similar perspective. Amongst those present was one of the most renowned religious dignitaries of his generation, R.J. Campbell. Combining a liberal Protestant sensibility with interest in socialism, Celticism, spiritualism and Bahai, he led a popular movement for the reformation of Protestant Christianity. Reflection on his background and activities further aids in tracing out the contours of this field of religious enquiry and the extent to which the esoteric and traditional were jointly pursued by establishment figures. We must also begin the task of untangling why the more recondite pursuits of these personalities are obscure in memory, and more importantly, why this discourse itself is recorded in a particular manner.

Chapter 5 –New Protestant Theodocies; R.J. Campbell, "The Disturber of our Comfortable Peace" [471]

In the years prior to Abdul Baha's arrival in Britain, the "mecca of non-conformity in London"[472] was the City Temple on the Holborn viaduct, the most prestigious Congregational church in Britain, "the Free Church equivalent of Westminster Abbey in symbolic significance."[473] From his first connection to the church in 1902, when he commuted from his post in Brighton to take the Thursday mid-day service in effort to relieve the workload of the incumbent minister, R.J. Campbell's "numinous personality" [474] attracted increasingly large attendances from across Christian groups and congregations. When he took over full-time, in 1903, Campbell, then thirty five years old, "frail, ascetic -looking, [and] prematurely white haired,"[475] was preaching to standing-room only attendances at the City Temple. A survey in the *Daily News* newspaper from around this time recorded a combined attendance of 10,561 for Sunday services at all Anglican churches in the City of London (including St. Pauls), whereas the two City Temple Sunday services attracted over 7,000 alone, with slightly more men than women.[476] His star rose even further so that for the next dozen years he became "a substantial public figure,"[477] his sermons and activities widely covered in newspapers, most especially *The Christian Commonwealth*.[478] Picture postcards and the *R.J. Campbell Birthday Book* (containing his favourite quotations, picture and autograph), as well as a *Rosary from the City Temple* (threaded from printed material containing the writings and sermons of the minister), were all widely available.[479] Many expressed themselves "over-awed by his presence,"[480] enchanted by his "semi-mystical attrait,"[481] and he was acknowledged as the harbinger of a new renascence for non-conforming Protestantism.[482] Hailed by

[471] A.G. Gardiner, *Prophets, Priest and Kings,* London: J.M Dent & Sons, 1914, p.237.
[472] Smith, *The London Heretics*, p.200.
[473] K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord*, p.19.
[474] Keith Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* London: The Hambledon Press, 1993, p.140.
[475] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain* p.133.
[476] Smith, *The London Heretics*, p.213.
[477] Smith, *The London Heretics*, p.213
[478] His sermon presentations were published in collected editions by Hodder and Stoughton. See Robbins, Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain*, p.141.
[479] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain* p133 and p.141.
[480] Lord Sorenson, cited in Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain*, p.147.
[481] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain* p.147.
[482] For discussion on Campbell's sometimes controversial contribution to Protestant discourse, and information about his life generally, see, A.G. Gardiner, *Prophets, Priests and Kings,* London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1914, J.F. Newton, *Preaching in London,* New York: Doran, 1922, W.E. Orchard, *From Faith to Faith,* London: Putnam, 1933, Albert Clare, *The City Temple: 1640-1940,* London: Independent Press, Ltd., 1940, W.S. Smith, *The London Heretics*, New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1968 and H.C.G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists,* London: Oxford University Press, 1973. More recent treatments are

some as the leader of a 'new reformation'[483] he himself considered that his era would usher in "a great religious and ethical awakening, the ultimate results of which no man can completely forsee."[484]

He was not afraid to court controversy, as in his very public stand against the Education Act of 1902 which Protestant non-conformists regarded as maintaining an inequitable status-quo where the majority of elementary schools were Anglican run, providing little or no choice to children of their denominations.[485] In October, 1904, Campbell was once more embroiled in controversy. Comments he made in an article for *The National Review* concerning proper Sunday observance, in part postulating that workers were idle and lacking in desire to engage in charitable work for its own sake, caused outrage amongst working men when daily newspapers translated his remarks into sensational headlines.[486] A contemporary, the journalist and author A.G. Gardiner (d.1946), wrote of him;

> Whether to friend or foe, the Rev. R.J. Campbell is one of the most arresting personalities in the London of our time. He is the voice of disquiet and challenge. He is the disturber of our comfortable peace […] He has challenged our religious structure at its centre and has set the mind of his time seething with unrest and enquiry.[487]

Campbell believed that God had granted the British people certain powers unique to them, that England occupied a special position in the world as "[m]illions of swarthy subjects receive, or ought to receive, at her hands peace and good government."[488] For him there was no contradiction between imperialism, progressive liberalism and nonconformity. In any event, prominent politicians sought him out, attended his services and coveted his support. Even prior to his accession to the pulpit at the City

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included in, K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord: Twentieth Century Theological Controversies in Britain,* London: SPCK Publishing, 1988, Keith Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* 1993, Jacqueline David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* unpublished PhD thesis, Durham University, 1991, Peter Hinchliff, *God and History: Aspects of British Theology 1875-1914,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, Lil Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* and Keith Robbins, *England, Ireland Scotland Wales: The Christian Church 1900-2000,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Campbell's autobiography, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage,* London: Williams and Norgate, appeared in 1916. Only Osborn contains an assessment of his esoteric or wider religious interests. Bahai histories contain references to his interaction with Abdul Baha.

[483] See, Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, p.51.

[484] Campbell in, *The New Theology*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1907, pp.14-15. Cited in David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p.115.

[485] David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* pp.93-94.

[486] October, 1904, pp. 289-299. Cited in, David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* pp.102-104

[487] A.G. Gardiner, *Prophets, Priest and Kings,* pp.237 and 239.

[488] Campbell, quoted in, A.H. Wilkinson, *Rev. R. J. Campbell: The Man and his Message,* London, 1907. Cited in Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* p.140.

Temple in the heart of the capital city, Campbell had become "a celebrity."[489] If he did not actively cultivate a 'personality' centred popularity there is ample evidence that "he revelled in it once it had become apparent."[490]

The New Theology

Campbell's challenge to religious configurations centred around his teaching of a 'New Theology', in the first instance in a series of barely noticed sermons at the City Temple and then entering into controversy as a result of an interview he gave to the *Daily Mail* in January, 1907, which brought his ideas to a wider audience and precipitated some negative reaction. His much discussed monograph, *The New Theology*, published in March of that year (the same year he attended the Deans Yard gathering convened to examine the Glastonbury Cup), further embroiled Campbell in an often heated national debate that divided opinion.[491] The book was an instant best seller with 20,000 copies sold within the first eight days of publication and ran to nine editions.[492] Damned by those who opposed him, it was hailed by his supporters "a turning point in the history of the world."[493] The term 'New Theology', though not a new descriptor, soon became ubiquitous in public discourse, the subject of numerous newspaper articles and books both supportive and otherwise.

If Campbell was not the only proponent of the New Theology, it was he who "popularised, publicised, and made the New Theology nationally and internationally known more than any of the others."[494] As a term it was "loosely used to characterize

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[489] *The Sussex Daily News*, 9 March 1903. Cited in, David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p.60.

[490] David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p.61. David catalogues the various and opposing opinions around Campbell's love of the limelight (pp. 61-64).

[491] *The New Theology,* London: Chapman and Hall, 1907. A German translation, *Die neue Theologie*, appeared in Jena in 1910. For an in depth treatment of the various tenets implied by the term 'New Theology, the supporters and critics, positions taken in print and in the pulpit, see, David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study*, pp. 112-192, Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* pp. 142-145 and Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* pp.48-53. The controversy attracted high profile supporters and detractors. Wilberforce preached from his pulpit in support of Campbell and published a positive treatment, *The New (?) Theology,* London: Elliot Stock, 1908. Bishop Charles Gore, a leading Bishop of the Church of England, was critical in his compilation of lectures and sermons, *The New Theology and the Old Religion,* London: J. Murray, 1908. An exhaustive list of publications on the issue would be quite extensive.

[492] *The Christian World,* 28 March, 1907, p.4. Cited in, David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p.136. Publication ceased when Campbell purchased the rights for the book in 1915 to curtail its availability. Given the success of his published work, and his yearly stipend as minister at the City Temple of £3,000, "a colossal sum at the time" (David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p. 103), Campbell must have been quite wealthy.

[493] Smith,*The London Heretics,* p.219.

[494] David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p.117. At least one of Campbell's detractors referred to the movement as 'Campbellism'. Letter of G. Tyrrell to A.L. Lilley, 20 March 1909, Lilley M.S., 30874, Library of the University of St. Andrews. Cited in, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p.186. Clements records a short list of prominent supporters, though strangely omitting Wilberforce. See, K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord*, pp.37-38.

a theological outlook which stressed the concept of divine immanence, the vital importance of the Holy Spirit within and the relevance of philosophical Idealism."[495] It implied liberalism in dogmatic matters, the outcome of a spiritual awakening, "a renewal of life and energy within various Christian communions and even beyond them."[496] It was not intended as a new creed, but more an attitude and spirit of approach, its author proposed, though he did argue that traditional beliefs, such as the Fall, the scriptural basis for revelation, heaven and hell, sin and salvation, were "not only misleading but unethical."[497] As well as questioning orthodox theological positions,[498] Campbell's teaching was certainly a challenge to the status quo as it pertained to the clerical class and may explain some of the fire in the invective that subsequently came his way. "The true Church of Christ in any and every age consists of those only who are trying like their Master to make the world better and gladder and worthier of God," Campbell wrote, arguing that the New Theology represented a moral and spiritual movement of believers of whatever denomination.[499] "Jesus was God," Campbell avowed, "but so are we."[500]

Even Campbell's critics agreed the issues the New Theology sought to address chimed with the great challenge facing Christianity; that of making it relevant in the face of a *zeitgeist* of religious doubt, social upheaval, scientific efflorescence and universalist optimism.[501] For a time the controversy enthralled the country. Campbell's arguments, and in particular his articulation of Christian verities in language accessible to the public, garnered much popular support, but also attracted a great deal of vitriol and criticism.[502] He was variously branded a pantheist or a Buddhist, accusations he sought to counter by explaining the basis of his worldview as monistic, embedded in idealist philosophy.[503] His Anglican friend, Archdeacon

[495] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* p.142.
[496] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain*, p.142. Here Robbins seems to be quoting Campbell but does not give a reference for the statement.
[497] Campbell, *The New Theology*, p. 9. Cited in, Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* p.143.
[498] Chapter V of the New Theology (pp.68-84) is titled "Jesus the Divine Man" and argues for the 'historical' Jesus.
[499] Campbell, *The New Theology*, p.228 and p.258.
[500] Campbell, *The New Theology*, p.92.
[501] For example, see, K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord*, p.41, Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* p.123. David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* pp.117-123.
[502] Keith Robbins, *England, Ireland Scotland Wales: The Christian Church 1900-2000.* See, also, K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord*, pp.30-31. David is of the opinion (*A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p.184) that the press, not Campbell, set the agenda for the New Theology debate. This may be partially true but does not take account of Campbell's own agency in attracting attention for his views. Her inclusion of a detailed catalogue of press coverage of the controversy (Appendix B, pp.382-408) accurately depicts just what a cause for discussion these issues were amongst the specialised and mainstream press of the time.
[503] K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord*, p.31. Campbell's complimentary comments relating to Gautama (*The New Theology*, p.69), and his juxtaposing of virgin birth stories of the "Buddhist Messiah" and Jesus to refute their provenance (*The New Theology*, p. 101), might have been a factor in this particular accusation. J. Jeffrey Franklin's contention that "Buddhism pervaded, if diffusely, late-nineteenth-

Wilberforce, openly supported him but he was generally excoriated in Church of England circles as arrogant and superficially smart.[504] Critics were careful not to dismiss the movement outright, in some instances characterising it as "a serious phenomenon,"[505] as many of the liberal theological tendencies crystallised and amplified in the New Theology were very much part and parcel of Protestant discourse across the various denominations at this time.[506] Some welcomed the debate and the opportunity to focus on the issues thrown up, while still relentlessly attacking its chief exponent. *The Christian Commonwealth* became the voice of the movement and its editor, Albert Dawson (d.1930), sought to broaden the appeal of the newspaper, endeavouring to make it relevant to liberal constituencies within the Church of England and to other progressive spiritual movements.[507] Within a few months, under Dawson's energetic stewardship, the newspaper reported the highest ever circulation.[508] The religious and secular press presented view and counter view, those of Campbell's many admirers as well as his many critics.[509] For one correspondent, writing in *The Christian World,* there was "no disguising the fact that we are standing at a most critical moment in the history of religious thought in the English-speaking world."[510] That 'moment' gave great impetus to the "discussion of God and Theology in the ordinary household, as well as in ecclesiastical and academic circles."[511]

Around this time, Campbell became actively involved in a number of radical organisations and became a member of both the Independent Labour Party and the Fabian Society, establishing close friendships with James Keir Hardie (d. 1915), one of the leading lights in the labour movement, and George Bernard Shaw (d.1950), then one of London's most prominent Fabians.[512] In a sermon he preached at the City Temple in autumn of 1905, Campbell declared himself a socialist. Christianity, he contended, is socialism in a new, more relevant iteration; anything that promotes

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century British thought" is perhaps overstated but that it was "a critical component of central Victorian debates" adds a further dimension to a broad discourse on religions occurring at this time. See, *The Lotus and the Lion,* Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 2008, p.3. Campbell's growing interest in other religions and philosophies found expression in the pages of the *The Christian Commonwealth* as time went on.

[504] See for example, Rev. J. Neville Figgis, The *Church Times,* September 27, 1907, p.386. The *Church Times* is the newspaper of the Church of England.

[505] The *Church Times,* December 6, 1907, p.767. No author attributed.

[506] See, K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord*, pp.19-20.

[507] Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* p.48.

[508] Smith,*The London Heretics,*p.217. Smith recounts that the paper ran a competition for the best definition of the 'New Theology'. Submissions included, "Reasonable Theology", "The Second Reformation" and "The Survival of the Fittest in the Orthodoxy of the Past."

[509] *The British Weekly* and *The Christian World* were highly critical with *The Christian Commonwealth* firmly supportive. See, David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p.112.

[510] Rev. J. Warschauer, *The Christian World*, February 7th, 1907, p. 21. Cited in, David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* pp.112-113.

[511] David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p.112.

[512] Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* pp.47-48.

social progress is, in fact, Christianity.[513] "I am a socialist," he proclaimed, "[…] because I am a Christian as I understand the word."[514] To some, the New Theology represented "the religious counterpart of socialism"[515] and Campbell was nothing less than a "seer,"[516] a prophet of his time. To others, Campbell was a "quack" and "adventurer,"[517] and a small number of his congregation defected. Campbell faced mounting opposition and, if not revelling in notoriety, "enjoyed a bit of martyrdom,"[518] depicting himself as the most unpopular man in England, while the City Temple remained "packed, twice on Sundays and once on Thursdays."[519] Seeking ways to formalise the new movement, Campbell established (with others) the 'League of Progressive Thought and Social Service' (known as the Progressive League) which, by 1909, counted one hundred branches countrywide with three to four thousand members.[520] He courted international connections and attended a gathering of Liberal Christians at Montreux, actively seeking "a place for his movement in the world-wide protest against outmoded dogmatic Christianity."[521] The one great fundament of the New Theology, Campbell pronounced, was unity, "the unity of the individual with the race, and of the race with God."[522] Through all this drama, Campbell was "rarely out of the limelight,"[523] his health, which had long been fragile, was failing, and he suffered from recurring bouts of "nervous exhaustion."[524] Buckling under the strain of his exposure and activities, Campbell curtailed his public appearances and sought to build bridges with some of his colleagues who had become estranged. The public aspect of the controversy subsided and by 1911 the Progressive League had begun to run out of steam.[525]

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[513] Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* pp.47-48. Campbell wrote about this in his, *Christianity and the Social Order,* London: Chapman & Hall, 1907. This treatment includes a section on socialism and feminism.

[514] Campbell, *The Christian Commonwealth,* March 28, 1908. Cited in, W.S. Smith, *The London Heretics*. p.212.

[515] John Webster Grant, *Free Churchmanship in England, 1870-1940: With Special Reference to Congregationalism,* London: Independent Press, 1940, p.139.

[516] Wiberforce, cited in Smith, *The London Heretics,* p.218.

[517] Smith, *The London Heretics,* p.219. Smith is citing the view of contemporary and critic of Campbell, Dr. P.T Forsyth, then Principal of Hackney Theological College, Hampstead.

[518] Smith, *The London Heretics,* p.217.

[519] Smith, *The London Heretics,* p.217

[520] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* p.144.

[521] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* p.145.

[522] Campbell, "The Aims of the New Theology Movement", *The Hibbert Journal,* Vol.V, No.3. April, 1907, pp. 481-493. Cited in David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p.123.

[523] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain*, p.144.

[524] See Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* pp.145-146 as well as, pp.136-137. Campbell suffered episodic breakdowns. Whether these were spiritual or emotional crises was a matter of some debate.

[525] See, Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain*, pp.144-147 and K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord,* p.19. Clements considers the public controversy had reached its zenith by 1907, though it is clear the debate ensued for a number of years thereafter.

One of the Great 'Let Downs of the World'

In late 1911, Campbell embarked on a tour of America which involved speaking engagements in many cities.[526] On his return, in February 1912, his precarious health was even more compromised. A notice in *The Times* of London announced that he was suffering from "exhaustion and a grave heart weakness"[527] and he had decided to resign his connection to any organisation outside the City Temple.[528] It began a period of indisposition and some conflict with City Temple office bearers which eventually resulted in Campbell taking steps, in early 1914, to 'go over' to the Church of England. Writing later, Campbell stressed that his action was more a matter of him disengaging from theological opinions he had earlier held. In particular, a response to criticism of his book, *The New Theology,* propagated by Anglican Bishop Charles Gore (d. 1932) in a series of lectures delivered in Birmingham (subsequently published), which caused him to completely reassess his position.[529]

The onset of war in 1914 effectively silenced the New Theology controversy which, to some extent, had already cooled in its intensity. Campbell took a prominent role in rallying public opinion in support of Britain's participation in the conflagration, to the confusion of many who felt that the New Theology was inherently pacifistic.[530] In early 1915, he purchased the rights for *The New Theology* and withdrew it from circulation and that Summer went to France to witness the fighting first hand, eager to assist in any way, though too old (at 47) to enlist.[531] "The world crisis and his personal crisis," Robbins writes, "seemed suddenly to come together."[532] On October 10th he officiated at his last service at the City Temple and a few days later he was received into the Church of England as a minister.[533] It was a moment of great disappointment for many, the end of an era of discursive high drama. Smith's assessment captures a sense of the bathos surrounding this denouement, though there was little time to ponder its meaning and impact now that the prosecution of war overshadowed all interests and debates.

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[526] *The Christian Commonwealth,* October 11th, 1911, p.27 gives his itinerary.
[527] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain*, p.145.
[528] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain*, p.145. The notice appeared on February 20th.
[529] Bishop Charles Gore, *The New Theology and the Old Religion*, London: J. Murray, 1908.
[530] Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, delivered his conscription speech at the City Temple, on the 10th November 1914, with Free Church leaders including Scott Lidgett, Campbell, John Clifford and Robertson Nicoll present. *The Manchester Guardian*, 11th of November, 1914, p.9. Cited in, David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p.232.
[531] David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* pp.235-236. Campbell volunteered at a field hospital, distributed gifts and aid donated by the City Temple and took part in religious services. He was known amongst the soldiery for his great personal empathy.
[532] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain*, p.146.
[533] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain*, p.146. Bishop Gore's book is, *The New Theology and the Old Religion,* London: John Murray, 1907.

> Campbell's tenure at The City Temple was a dozen years. The years of brilliant tumult were from 1907 to 1910. When he had gone, those who had sat under his spell must have wondered if it had not all been a dream. They had had the sense of riding the crest of a new reformation into a reformed society. The Kingdom of God was attainable- perhaps almost at hand. Then the angelic man who had brought them to these heights became confused, confessed his error, and left them, as the War came upon them and swept away the old Europe. When the great let-downs of the world are recounted, a special word will need to be said for the pre-War congregation at London's City Temple.[534]

Campbell's retrospective accounting of the period is contained in his autobiography, penned in 1916, titled *A Spiritual Pilgrimage*.[535] There he tells his story from his newly adopted position, varying the focus on events and skewing their analysis to suit his new situation. None of Campbell's esoteric interests are detailed and facts about his background obscured or omitted, as if better expunged from the record now that Anglican orthodoxy has been re-embraced. In her reading, Osborn considers that Campbell is being honest in his "brutally self-critical"[536] account, detailing only what was in fact relevant to him of all his interests and involvements. But for Smith, Campbell's apologia is not satisfactory. "One gets the impression," he surmises, "that he wants to occupy all positions simultaneously. It is not, in 1916, the work of a perfectly lucid mind."[537] Smith may well be correct on this last point. In reports of his various maladies, from his early years, nowhere is the exact cause or nature of Campbell's recurring indisposition baldly stated, save for an unusually candid (short) article which appeared in *The Christian Commonwealth* on July 15th, 1914, under the headline "Rev. R.J. Campbell's Breakdown." The piece, unattributed, relates how startled the City Temple congregation was by the announcement (the previous Sunday) that "the Rev. R. J. Campbell had had a nervous breakdown after the Thursday service,"[538] and would not be able to occupy the pulpit for the foreseeable future. He would take a holiday, the article concluded, expressing anxiety around his wellbeing owing to his "previous illnesses."[539]

Whatever his perturbation, in settling in to a quietist career as an Anglican cleric never again to crave the limelight, Campbell sought to fashion a different perspective from which his role during these turbulent years would be viewed and remembered.[540] There is, therefore, a challenge in constructing a full picture of the range of his interests and activities. Along with his past-correcting autobiography, and

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[534] Smith, *The London Heretics,* p.233.
[535] R.J. Campbell, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage,* London: Williams and Norgate, 1916.
[536] Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* p.53.
[537] Smith, *The London Heretics,* p. 222.
[538] *The Christian Commonwealth*, July 15th, 1915, p.730.
[539] *The Christian Commonwealth*, July 15th, 1915, p.730.
[540] The matter of historical memory, as it relates to these events, will be considered in Chapter 7.

the purchase of the publishing rights of his book *The New Theology* (so as to suppress its circulation), Campbell directed that all his personal papers be destroyed on his death, a wish his family fulfilled.[541] Further, Campbell's published corpus, apart from a few references cited earlier, is mainly concerned with Christian theology, and to an extent his championing of socialism as a material expression of Christian belief. His weekly sermons rarely focussed on his varied interests, other religions or movements, and when they did it was only in passing, concentrating in the main on Biblical exegesis.[542] In the mode of communication where he saw himself as 'preacher', fulfilling his priestly function, perhaps he felt obliged only to broach purely Christian theological subjects. This might be one reason why his activities have been analysed only within the context of the internal Christian aspect of the era's crisis of doubt, as such analysis has concentrated mainly on his published writings. We must look elsewhere to seek to chart the pursuance of his other concerns, to expose a broader discursive engagement on the part of the Reverend Campbell and the New Theology, which includes a close connection to a religious reformer from Asia.

Uncharted Dimensions of Early 20th Century Protestant Discourse

An important locus for examining a wider range of Campbell's interests is *The Christian Commonwealth* newspaper of which he was the Chairman of the Editorial Board and which served as a vehicle for his teaching and opinions.[543] The New Theology debate took centre stage in the pages of *The Christian Commonwealth* from around 1907, with the newspaper becoming a leading promoter of the movement.[544] An increase in coverage of the suffragist debate and of the rise of the Independent Labour Party can be discerned from this period and references made, for the first time, to the Theosophical Society and Bahai.[545] A presentation by Annie Besant of the Theosophical Society, "Spiritual Life for Man and the World,"[546] was published in October 1907, followed soon after by a more serious foray into 'alternative' thought in the form of a series of articles (late 1907 and early 1908) written by Dudley Wright

[541] This fact is recorded by David based on telephone conversations she had with Campbell's granddaughter (Mrs. Pauline Bidwell) in January, 1989. Cited in, David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell,* p.14. See also, Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* p.135, note 7.

[542] He did, around this time, begin to preach about the need for "universal peace." For example see his sermon in *The Christian Commonwealth*, June 3rd, 1908, p.521.

[543] Copies of the *The Christian Commonwealth* for the years 1881-1919 are held at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, location N. 1119, b.2.

[544] The first New Theology article is included in the issue of January 17th, 1907, p.301. A special "New Theology Edition" followed in the February 14th, 1907, which included a favourable commentary from Archdeacon Wilberforce.

[545] On July 11th, 1907, the paper published a promotion for a pamphlet "The Story of the Bahai Movement- A Universal Faith" by Sydney Sprague ("Its selling in thousands"). The first treatment is Dudley Wright's, "The Bahai Movement; A Universal Religion", December 18th, 1907, p.214.

[546] *The Christian Commonwealth*, October 16th, 1907, p.39.

(d.1949),[547] which, as well as Bahai [548] and Theosophy,[549] also outlined details of belief and background with respect to Christian Science,[550] Buddhism,[551] Zoroastrianism,[552] and Sweedenborgianism.[553] All of Wright's articles set out foundational beliefs and practices in a sympathetic manner with no effort to critique comparatively against Christian liberalism.

In contrast, an interview in May, 1908, with Ananda Metteya (Charles Allen Bennett, d. 1923) the English Buddhist convert, did seek to probe his attitude towards Christianity and in particular the New Theology.[554] The Bhikku pronounced Buddhism to be in "perfect agreement"[555] with the New Theology, particularly with respect to its views on the historicity of the resurrection, in line with Campbell's belief in a 'spiritual' rather than material resurrection, where the spiritual awakening of the human being was seen to prove Christianity and not the resurrection of Jesus. The question of whether a 'world religion' (one religion for the world) was possible or necessary was discussed in an unattributed article in November 1909, the author's conclusion being that such an outcome would be desirable but any new construct would necessarily remain fundamentally Christian.[556] This was followed some two weeks later by a long piece on Bahai under the heading "The Need for a World Faith"[557] and, in February of the new year, a special pull-out supplement devoted to Theosophy.[558] A further supplement explaining various aspects of Theosophy was published the following April, followed soon after by a major piece from Annie Besant.[559] Over the following two years, along with articles on Buddhism,[560] Brahmo Samaj (in the form of interviews with Professor T.L. Vaswani, d.1966),[561] an obituary

[547] Dudley Wright was a prolific author, a Freemason who embraced Catholicism and later Islam. See, Simon Mayers, "From Masonic Author and 'Righteous Gentile' to Catholic Evangelist: An Examination of the Protean Discourse of Dudley Wright", a paper delivered at an international study day for European Freemasonry, held at the Belgian Museum of Freemasonry on 27th March, 2013. Accessed at, http://simonmayers.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/script-for-dudley-wright-presentation.pdf, on 7/3/2014 at 17.30. His best known work (still in print in various editions) is *Vampires and Vampirism,* London: W. Rider & Son Ltd., 1914.
[548] *The Christian Commonwealth*, December 18th, 1907, p.214.
[549] *The Christian Commonwealth*, January 1st, 1908, p.255.
[550] *The Christian Commonwealth*, November 13th, 1907, p.101.
[551] *The Christian Commonwealth*, November 27th, 1907, p.142
[552] *The Christian Commonwealth*, December 4th, 1907, p.158.
[553] *The Christian Commonwealth*, January 29th, 1908, p.319.
[554] Author unattributed. Anand Metteya was an ordained Bhikku and pioneer of Buddhist practice in the West. See, Stephen Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture* , Berkeley, CA.: Parallax Press, 1994.
[555] *The Christian Commonwealth,* May 13th 1908, p.567.
[556] *The Christian Commonwealth*, November 10th, 1909, pp.107-108.
[557] Penned by one Harrold Johnson.*The Christian Commonwealth*, December 1st, 1909, p.159.
[558] *The Christian Commonwealth*, February 16th, 1910.
[559] The supplement was published on April 13th, 1910 and the article on May 1th, 1910.
[560] "What is Buddhism", *The Christian Commonwealth*, August 17th, 1910, p.8. Unattributed.
[561] "Indian View of Christianity- Where East and West Meet", *The Christian Commonwealth*, October 12th, 1910, pp. 17-18, unattributed, and, "The Light of the East", November 2nd, 1910 - the text of two

for Sister Nivedita (d. 1911) which describes Vivekananda's prominent disciple as "a dauntless soul of rare intellect,"[562] the newspaper contained regular and lengthy coverage of Theosophy and the Bahai movement.[563]

It is clear that of non-Christian movements and philosophies, Theosophy and Bahai attracted the most consistent attention and promotion from those in control of the *The Christian Commonwealth*. The print-champion of the New Theology, it can be argued, was increasingly articulating a developing aspect of its worldview; an approach to religions and schools of thought outside of traditional Christianity. Over the period of mounting interest and controversy surrounding Campbell and his teaching, the mouthpiece of the New Theology reticulated into its promotional schema of the new liberal Christian enterprise, various strands of extrinsic thought as different facets of one distinct, enlarging discourse. The newspaper was attempting, according to the writer G.K. Chesterton (d.1936), "to broaden out the Christian religion,"[564] though he added his concern that it might go too far "until it ceases to be Christian or religious."[565]

Beyond the definite editorial line taken by *The Christian Commonwealth*, Campbell lent his substantial personal capital to the profiling of Theosophy and Bahai by inviting their pre-eminent interlocutors to speak to his congregation at the City Temple, events covered in full by the periodical.[566] On October 16th, 1907, Campbell welcomed Besant to his Thursday midday service before a packed congregation in the City Temple.[567] "[I]t is not my desire to indulge in personalities which might be embarrassing to her," Campbell began proceedings, "but I feel it is due to ourselves to say that we recognise in Mrs. Besant one of the greatest moral forces of the day. She has well earned the respect now so freely accorded to her by the British public, and by many thousands of thoughtful men and women all over the world."[568] For her part, Besant, hinting that however popular he might be Campbell was still taking a risk in

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addresses Vaswani delivered at the home of W.T. Pole in Bristol on the occasion of his visit to view the Glastonbury Cup.

[562] *The Christian Commonwealth*, November 1st, 1911, p.75. Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble) was Irish born, the piece conveys, and daughter of a Congregationalist minister.

[563] For example, on Theosophy, December 28th, 1910, "Mrs. Besant on the Future of India", p.243. May 24th, 1911 p.599, "Annie Besant President of the Theosophical Society"(unattributed). May 31st, 1911, p.606, "The Emergence of a World Religion", by Annie Besant. December 20th, 1911, p.194, "The Service of Hinduism", by Annie Besant. March 6th, 1912, p.369. "Annie Besant Lecturing at the Queens Hall". March 13th, 1912, p.89, "Seeking the Master", again Annie Besant.

[564] Interview with G.K. Chesterton in *The Christian Commonwealth,* October 9th, 1912, p.32.

[565] *The Christian Commonwealth,* October 9th, 1912, p.32.

[566] Campbell did invite a range of guest contributors to speak at the City Temple but most were fellow clerics. On one occasion, George Bernard Shaw spoke on "The Religion of the British Empire." See, *The Christian Commonwealth,* November 22nd, 1906, p.141. Abdul Baha's appearance at the City Temple will be dealt with in the following chapter.

[567] *The Christian Commonwealth,* October 16th, 1907, p.39.

[568] *The Christian Commonwealth,* October 16th, 1907, p.39.

inviting her to his pulpit, endeavoured at the outset to deflect any criticism away from him that might be forthcoming.[569] She explained,

> We are all grateful to the minister of the City Temple for the courage with which he has given utterance to opinions which are in the air for educated and thoughtful people, but which only the few have the courage to express. But when a truth is in the air the expression of that truth is one of the greatest services that man can render to man: For truth, you must remember, is largely dependent upon the utterance of those who see it and are brave enough to speak it, and thousands welcome a truth that they know to be true, but have not the courage to speak it out while speech is still confined to the minority. It is therefore the more important that I may not be held in anything I say to compromise in any fashion the message which here is normally delivered. For my opinions are mine, as yours are yours, and in speaking here tonight I speak the truth as I see it, not desiring that any shall accept it who as yet see it not, and least of all desiring that any word of mine shall render heavier the burden or greater the difficulty which you (turning to Mr. Campbell), sir, have to face.[570]

Besant's exposition, reportedly delivered with great oratorical ability, is devoid of any overt mention of Theosophy or its tenets and, though referencing 'Indian thought', proceeds to paint broad brush strokes around principles of immanence which would not be mistaken if presented as tenets of the New Theology. "For every one of us, if we only think of it," she declared, "each one is at work to carve his own life into a perfect image, the image of the Divine manifest in man. It is not that the Divine is not within you; were it not so, how should you bring it forth?"[571] In the New Theology's parlance, as Campbell had articulated previously, "[w]hat we are here to do is grow the soul, that is to manifest the true nature of the spirit, to build up that self-realisation which is God's objective with the universe as a whole and with every self-conscious unit in particular."[572]

In closing, Campbell referenced Besant's earlier remarks and addressed the question as to whether he was compromised by her presence in his pulpit. "The fact is," he said, "that we at the City Temple have learned to disregard these things; it is no use troubling about what compromises you, or what does not. Speaking for myself, I

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[569] Besant and Campbell would have been well known to each other through their common interest and activity in the Fabian Society and the Labour movement (and also, perhaps, suffragism and spiritualism). Besant was a well-known public figure though it is important to note that by 1907 she had become Britain's pre-eminent Theosophist interlocutor. An interesting treatment of Besant's career can be found in Mark Bevir, "Annie Besant's Quest for Truth: Christianity, Secularism, and New Age Thought", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Cambridge University Press, vol. 50 (1999), pp.215-239.
[570] *The Christian Commonwealth,* October 16th, 1907, p.39.
[571] *The Christian Commonwealth,* October 16th, 1907, p.39.
[572] Campbell, *The New Theology*, p.34.

can say I am only proud to have had such a great preacher enunciating great truths standing side by side with me in this historic pulpit."[573]

Implications for the Religious Field

Even if Besant seems to have carefully fashioned her message for her audience (a restraint un-practiced in her numerous articles in *The Christian Commonwealth*), the significance of Campbell welcoming the country's leading Theosophist to his pulpit cannot be ignored. Set against the subsequent appearance of Abdul Baha at a Sunday service in the City Temple, Campbell's warm reception of Besant is indeed striking as she represented (unlike the Bahai leader) a philosophy that had emanated in the main from amongst a Protestant constituency and manifested as a counter to the status-quo arising from 'within'. It can be argued that Campbell's profiling of Theosophy was potentially more problematic for him amongst his clerical peers than his interest in a religious movement originating in a far off land, attractive and resonant to harbingers of the New Theology, yet from 'outside' and 'other' unlike Theosophy, or more correctly, unlike most Theosophists. At the very least, Besant's presence in the pulpit of the City Temple communicated that liberal Christianity (in its expression as the New Theology) and Theosophy, had common goals and purposes. Both movements enjoyed widespread support, challenged the status quo, promoted "immanentist, neo-platonic, gnostic and quasi-pantheistic"[574] concepts and advocated an approach and connection to religion from Asia.

The event at the City Temple also highlighted that both movements had impressive numinous figures as leaders. Apart from this significant encounter, and the numerous articles on Theosophy published in *The Christian Commonwealth* (many by Besant herself), the record of Campbell's links to Theosophy is sketchy. Many of his friends and contacts were active in Theosophy circles and he undoubtedly attended gatherings of Theosophists.[575] It may be that Campbell found Theosophy's emphasis on directly available knowledge and insight intriguing, the combining of "Oriental cultural ideas with concepts from Western science,"[576] and all emanating from a distinctly familiar, Protestant oriented habitat. One particular episode deserves recounting; an occasion when Campbell's interactions with Theosophists created a

[573] *The Christian Commonwealth,* October 16th, 1907, p.39. In the next chapter, I will juxtapose the reception afforded to Abdul Baha at the City Temple with that of Mrs. Besant.
[574] Jason Goroncy, *Hallowed be Thy Name: The Sanctification of All in the Soteriology of P.T. Forsyth,* London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013, p.36. Goroncy is referring to the New Theology movement in his theological critique but his description is an accurate summation of some key aspects of both movements.
[575] Many of those attending the Deans Yard gathering (Chapter 3) were connected to Theosophy, including W. Tudor Pole.
[576] Bruce Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived,* p.73.

modicum of scandal as reported in the pages of *The New York Times*.[577] "Campbell Expects To Be Reincarnated," ran the headline, following on,

> The Rev. R.J. Campbell, the well-known City Temple preacher, told the Theosophical Society this week that he had often felt that, as an individualized entity, he had lived before. Mr. Campbell also declared that he was coming to believe that it was not at all improbable that Christ would come again, and that, in that event, he would be reincarnated. Mr. Campbell added: "I rather agree with those who think that His work, next time, will be to lay the foundations of a world-religion-the synthesis of all religions that is certain to follow upon the establishment of the world civilization which is now approaching."[578]

The rest of the article records opinions of church figures in New York critical of Campbell's views, with one lengthy contribution of support from a cleric (unnamed), "a great admirer of his work,"[579] who was at pains to explain Campbell's declarations as "a simple misunderstanding of his utterance."[580] The tendency to explain away Campbell's leaning towards esotericism as a 'misunderstanding' is interesting indeed and foreshadows later efforts to filter these interests out of the retrospective record as mere quirks of character, not at all important, in most cases not even worthy of note.[581]

In fact, over and above his interest in Theosophy, there is much evidence that points to Campbell's deep engagement with various elements of a broad contemporary discourse on religious and social ideas outside of Christianity, in close concert with some notable contemporaries. Always interested in the Independent Labour Party (a friend of Keir Hardie) and the suffragist movement, in particular the Women's Freedom League under the presidency of Charlotte Despard (d.1939), he was introduced through his close associate, Wilberforce, to Tudor Pole and the

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[577] *The New York Times,* February 2nd, 1911. Accessed at, http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F30712FE3F5D16738DDDAC0894DA405B818DF1D3, 28/3/2014, at 20.55. Campbell's activities were often reported internationally and a number of reports were carried in *The New York Times*. See the New York Times archive, http://query.nytimes.com/search/sitesearch/#/R+J+Campbell/. An area of interest, not possible to pursue at this juncture, is the great deal of reportage carried in the national and local press in Britain, only some of which I have been able to reference throughout this project.

[578] *The New York Times,* February 2nd, 1911.

[579] *The New York Times,* February 2nd, 1911.

[580] *The New York Times,* February 2nd, 1911.

[581] There is barely a reference to these interests in, Smith, *The London Heretics,* Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell*, K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord* and none in Campbell's autobiography, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage.* Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, does cover Campbell's broader interests in some detail but then doubts that he considered them in any way relevant.

Glastonbury Cup, and possibly to Bahai and Abdul Baha for the first time.[582] Amongst other connections, he cultured a friendship and admiration for Oliver Lodge (d.1940) a noted scientist and founding member of the Psychic Research Society, and, as we have seen, he was an admirer of Annie Besant of the Theosophical Society.[583] When perceived in the broader context of this enlarged discursive panorama, far from being the only 'focal point' of this religious ferment, Campbell's role can be seen in terms of how much he was a product of the emphases and trajectory of a broader discussion and a collaborator with others in its articulation. This is to invert the commonly held retrospective assessment of Campbell's career, a view greatly supported (intentionally or otherwise) by his later actions and autobiography. In almost all treatments, Campbell is cast as the axis around which the pre-eminent colloquy of his time (concerning Protestantism) rose to prominence and fell in controversy.[584] In that reading, where the predominant discourse is characterised solely as a product of Christian intra-sectarian ferment, aspects of a wider religious matrix are occluded and the central figures representing various strands of interest and religious experimentation are marginalised. My research makes explicit that in this period we are confronted with a far more nuanced discursive landscape around religious ideas than is generally regarded. We must accommodate a different perspective of religious journeying across the traditional and the esoteric and a fuller understanding of the relationships between a number of key actors representing diverse interests and viewpoints.

What may better describe the broader web of connections that actually accrued is to consider the milieu around Campbell and his contemporaries as 'a field of religious enquiry', a term I have utilised heretofore. Borrowing from and presenting at least some of the features found in Bourdieu's concept of 'field' and Laurence J. Taylor's 'field of religious experience', this particular religious milieu can be described as comprising a linkage of various communities and ideas, a "network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions."[585] There were dominant and subordinate positions in a loosely constructed paradigm with a Protestant referent centre, extending out to less defined 'outer edges'.[586] Utilizing the theoretical

[582] Osborn makes the point that Campbell also had a connection to Bahai through T.K. Cheyne with whom he served on the editorial board of the *The Christian Commonwealth.* Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* pp.48-49. On Hardie, see, Caroline Benn, *Keir Hardie*, London: Hutchinson, 1992 and, on Despard, Margaret Mulvihill, *Charlotte Despard: A Biography*, London: Pandora, 1989.

[583] Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* p.52. See, also, *The Christian Commonwealth*, October 16th, 1907, p.39.

[584] Only Osborn sketches a broader discursive engagement.

[585] Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p.98.

[586] This formulation is an attempt to describe the contemporary community of interest of disparate parts as distinct from the monolithic representation of the discourse which considers only the intra-Christian sectarian aspects. The concept of 'religious field' is following Bourdieu who (according to Erwan Dianteill) takes the theories of Durkheim, Mauss and Weber and folds them into the concept of

armature of 'field', Campbell and his contemporaries can be described as constituents of "a religious regime."[587] As a 'field', it suffered a singular disruption with the onset of the First World War.

Within that framework we can examine the influences bearing on the discrete role and activity of Campbell and the New Theology. Campbell's opinions, as cited in *The New York Times,* echo sentiments variously promulgated by Max Muller and Carpenter (though not necessarily those relating to reincarnation) as detailed earlier. The expectation of the establishment of some new form of universal religion with Christianity at its core is highlighted, the 'work', perhaps, of the returned Christ. Indeed, the pages of *The Christian Commonwealth,* taken together with allusions made in Campbell's explicatory monograph on the New Theology, outline a universalist and irenic core in the articulation of this new Protestant theodicy. Surprisingly, these facets of Campbell's worldview rarely attract attention though, at the time of the publication of his book *The New Theology*, Campbell was involved with many schools of thought expressive of the spirit of inquiry that marked the period. Campbell claimed that the New Theology was the religious counterpart of the great social movement "now taking place in every country of the world toward universal peace and brotherhood."[588] He went further, referencing his belief in the "fundamental unity of the whole human race,"[589] and that, though his focus was Jesus and Christianity, he was "not trying to prove the impossible, namely, that Christianity is the only true religion and the rest are all false."[590] In fact, he continued, "[w]e shall get on better when that kind of nonsense ceases to be spoken."[591]

Clearly, however, both the point of departure and the terminus of Campbell's religious journeying were oriented in Christianity; "Jesus seems to sum up and focus the religious ideal for all mankind."[592] The New Theology's approach to other religions developed over time, as detailed in the pages of the publication most associated with

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field. See, Erwan Dianteill, (Translated by Andrew Wallis), *Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociology of religion: A Central and Peripheral Concern,* "Theory and Society", 32:529-543, 2003, p. 529. See also, Pierre Bourdieu (Translated by , J. Burnside, C. Calhoun and L. Florence), *Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field,* Comparative Social research, Volume 13, 1991, pp.1-44. In particular see, Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 94-114. It follows Taylor in his representation of Catholicism in the north-western part of Ireland (in the late 1980's), as "a field of religious experience," a loosely constructed paradigm, somewhat like a magnetic field, "strong perhaps at the centre but not clearly bounded and defined at the edge." Lawrence J. Taylor, *Occasions of Faith: An Anthropology of Irish Catholics,* Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1995, pp.30-31. Both Taylor and Bourdieu's sociology of religion focusses mainly on Catholicism but the concept might be stretched in this way to help describe the complexity that has been blurred as a result of how the events described have been remembered.

[587] Taylor, *Occasions of Faith,* p.31.

[588] Campbell, *The New Theology*, p.14.

[589] Campbell, *The New Theology*, p.33.

[590] Campbell, *The New Theology*, p.70.

[591] Campbell, *The New Theology*, p.70.

[592] Campbell, *The New Theology*, p.70.

its promotion, *The Christian Commonwealth.* In surveying this coverage it is possible to detect the comparative basis of the engagement, along with a distinct and overt expression of cultural superiority employing the same theoretical yardstick as that of Max Muller and Carpenter as indicated in this statement of Campbell's on the uniqueness of Jesus.

> It is not merely that the strongest civilisation on earth reverences that name, but that there is no other civilisation which can produce a parallel to it. The nearest approach to it is that of Gautama, and I think it would be generally admitted that the influence of even this mighty and beautiful spirit has never maintained the immediacy, intensity and personal value which distinguishes that of Jesus.[593]

We can, therefore, identify the influence of (in particular) Max Muller's scholarly endeavours in the tracing out of this new theodicy (the New Theology as a new overarching framework), formulated as a response to the 'crisis' in Victorian faith described earlier. Max Muller contended that the eventual outcome of humanity's historical religious journeying would be a new 'super-Christianity', encompassing all other religions within its remit. Viewed in this light, it can be argued that the New Theology sought to affirm aspects of new philosophies and other religions as established components of its worldview, as features already extant within its own 'Christian' paradigm; and this in effort to become that new 'super-Christianity' foreshadowed by Max Muller. In this context, the newly fashioned theodicy was not adverse to operating its own 'epistemological filter', or applying Said's 'accepted grid', evolving an approach to extrinsic movements with a view to integrating acceptable tenets into its own broadening discursive sweep while filtering out, or ignoring, aspects not considered compatible, and thus becoming the dominant influence within the 'field'.

Conclusion

It has been contended that Campbell was "neither a great nor original thinker,"[594] that his "popular attempts at theology are like a bad photograph-under-developed and over-exposed."[595] The bitterness of some of the criticism and its

[593] Campbell, *The New Theology*, p.69.
[594] Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* p.50. Osborn is reflecting later assessments some of which are not very complimentary. John Webster Grant in, *Free Churchmanship in England, 1870-1940: With a Special Reference to Congregationalism*, London: Independent Press, 1940, p.139, considers him a "superficial thinker" and Logie Barrow, in his, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and the English Plebians, 1859-1910,* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986, p.230, characterises the New Theology as "vaguely universalist optimism […] yeasted with fashionably evolutionistic waffle." Cited in Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* p.50. Robbins states that Campbell "stated boldly, even crudely, what more meticulous minds perhaps formulated more circumspectly." See, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* p.142.
[595] Reverend P.T. Forsyth writing in *The Tribune*, January 22nd, 1907, p.8. Cited in David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell* p.130.

personalised nature, emanating mainly from clerics or theologians who were his contemporaries as well as some later commentators, tends to under-value his capacity and contribution. Campbell's initial fame was centred mainly on his charismatic personality and an ability to reach and influence those with whom he came in contact, in particular the many thousands who heard him preach each week.[596] That in itself would mark him out as unique amongst his peers and perhaps also be such as to inspire envy amongst them. His detractors did acknowledge that the questions he raised in promoting the New Theology highlighted issues that needed to be discussed. Bishop Gore, for one, expressed "gratitude to Campbell for articulating certain questions which have been gathering over the years,"[597] though he did not necessarily like the answers Campbell came up with, elaborating his critique into "a powerful apologia for orthodoxy, not just in a general, but in a specifically Anglo-Catholic, sense."[598]

Such comments do underscore the fact that most reviews of Campbell's theodicy, and the drama surrounding the postulation of the New Theology, regard his religious framework as bounded and residing exclusively within the contextual domain of pre-First World War, "Episco-Presby-gational-Bapto-Methodist"[599] and Anglican Protestant discourse. It is exactly that paradigm that has informed the majority of the published analysis of Campbell's career. His contribution has primarily been viewed through a Protestant theological lens and examined as a function of intra-sectarian grappling with the contemporary crisis of doubt and Robbins argues that this is the only locus for this discussion.[600] As we have seen, Campbell represented one of a number of interconnected reference points within this field, his efforts towards Christian renewal also directed at pushing out the boundaries of interface with religions and ideas outside of traditional Christianity. All the time, of course, employing strategies as seen through his 'epistemological' filter, ready to engage from the vantage point of an 'accepted grid', and pursuing his interests with an 'affirmative' Orientalist gaze.

Assaying Campbell's career from a purely Christian theological perspective sketches only part of what was a fuller discursive space that he sought to contribute to, one which attempted to set parameters for a "single agreed metaphysical world-view to typify the age."[601] The broadening out beyond the boundaries of Christian thought progressed from a comparative perspective where the 'other' being brought into view was measured against a Christian yardstick, but it included a range of

[596] For example, see David, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage: A Biographical Study of R.J.Campbell* p.132.
[597] K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord*, p.41.
[598] K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord*, p.41.
[599] Term cited by Robbins, *England, Ireland Scotland, Wales: The Christian Church 1900-2000,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p.82. It was a term coined in India during the period in question.
[600] Robbins, *History, England, Ireland Scotland, Wales*, p.83.
[601] K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord*, p.46.

interests and activities, the promotion of esoteric thought and movements, and a full engagement with a broader discourse than Campbell's critics will allow. A reading of *The Christian Commonwealth* for the years when the New Theology controversy was at its height, given the newspaper's central role in articulating Campbell's views, points to features not previously examined. As Campbell himself sought to omit all his esoteric and 'unorthodox' leanings from the record in his autobiography, later writers might be forgiven for not searching further in those areas. Or, it may be tempting to postulate that they were operating their own 'epistemological filter' or 'accepted grid' when it came to analysing the New Theology controversy. In that filtering, Campbell's non-mainstream leanings have been judged to be idiosyncrasies, eccentricities of little importance when accounting for his work retrospectively. Such an assessment misses the point that these 'peculiarities', far from being extraneous quirks, represent the varied interests of the day that engaged Campbell and his associates. If we cannot fully explain why Campbell stepped back from his prominent roles, the outcome of his actions contributed to fixing a particular vantage point from which this whole discursive event has been viewed, a solecism generally perpetuated by later commentators. Indeed most of the comment, whether critical or laudatory, contemporary or more recent, has combined to create a view from one perspective only of this whole affair. In relinquishing his leadership of the New Theology movement and re-embracing Anglican orthodoxy, Campbell himself perpetuated the myth that this discursive interplay was mainly about *him* and Protestant upheaval, that he was the focal point for all that was good or bad during these years of controversy, the challenger of the Protestant status quo whose efforts, at once publicly celebrated and denounced, had ultimately failed.

Campbell may have been a central actor in the midst of an important discursive event but he was not the only one. We might better regard him as an important 'hub', but one of a number within a web of relationships and discursive intersections that can be described as 'a field of religious enquiry', as much a product of this discursive milieu as he was its instigator. During the period in question, Campbell fashioned a unique position for himself as the most widely known advocate for an alternative Christian religious framework that included an accommodation with new scientific discoveries, a connection to social theories then under construction, and an approach to religious experience outside of Christianity, a 'comparative' approach that mirrored the perspective found in the work of scholars such as Max Muller and Carpenter.[602] Campbell contended that true Christianity was no longer being taught in churches; "I do not think" he opined in a sermon at the City Temple, "[…] that our object should be to find a remedy that will save the churches […] What

[602] In his autobiography, after he had resiled from all former interests, Campbell still cited Max Muller's *Sacred Books of the East* as an influence, though he had come to regard them as "a selection of what was best worth preserving out of piles of rubbish, and even as it was they contained great quantities of dreary and unedifying matter." Campbell, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage,* p.105.

does it matter whether the churches are saved or not so long as the soul of the nation is saved."[603] Further, his argument that "anything that tends towards universal brotherhood is Christian [...],"[604] gave encouragement to the idea that beliefs outside of traditional Christianity might actually throw light on the true nature of the religion of Jesus.[605] He and others opened a discursive portal to philosophies, religions and ideas, which, in reality, could never thereafter be fully closed. Focus on his esoteric interests and activities opens a new, uncharted dimension, constitutive of this seminal discursive 'event'; an encounter and engagement with new religious movements and ideas, in particular the welcoming into this discursive space of a religious reformer from Asia.[606] Campbell was amongst the first of his admirers to seek out Abdul Baha on his arrival in Britain in 1911. He had followed the story of Abdul Baha's release from captivity and was in communication with him as he journeyed towards London. Interrogating the record of Campbell's reception of Abdul Baha in London (and that of Wilberforce) will further elaborate the novel basis of these encounters.

[603] Cited in, Smith, *The London Heretics,* p.216.
[604] R.J. Campbell, *Christianity and the Social Order,* London: Chapman & Hall Ltd., 1907, p.149.
[605] Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* p.47.
[606] Neither, Robbins, Clements, Hinchcliffe or David devotes any attention to Campbell's extra-curricular interests. Osborn and Fenge do. In his autobiography, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage,* he himself omits mention of all such inclinations.

Chapter 6 – Abdul Baha in Britain; 'East' comes 'West'

The imperial edict of banishment imposed upon Abdul Baha and his followers by the Ottoman authorities, placing them under restriction in the city of Akka, was not strictly applied at the turn of the century, allowing for small groups of admirers to visit him in his home.[607] In 1898, a group of fifteen men and women from Europe and America travelled to the Levant with the express hope of seeing Abdul Baha.[608] Further groups followed in the succeeding years, though such visits became problematic from around 1904 with Abdul Baha's renewed confinement. A series of investigations into his activities by the Ottoman authorities were instigated around that time, at least in part precipitated by suspicions aroused due to the arrival of travellers from Europe and America.[609] This was a period of much political and social upheaval across the Ottoman Empire. Events reached a climacteric on July 23rd, 1908, when the Young Turks Committee of Union and Progress issued an ultimatum to the Sultan, Abdul Hamid II (d.1918), forcing him to restore the Constitution of Midhat Pasha (d.1883) which had been suspended some thirty years previously. The royal injunction to restore constitutional government included a general amnesty for political and religious prisoners, including the leader of the Bahais who was set free.[610] Not long after his release, Abdul Baha transferred his residence to Haifa, then a

[607] The imprisonment of the Bahai group in Akka (in Ottoman Syria, present-day Israel) dated from the year 1868, during the lifetime of Bahaullah. He, his family (including Abdul Baha) and some followers, 54 persons in all, were consigned to the Ottoman prison city in August of that year. See, Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions,* pp. 198-200, for a review of Ottoman state papers bearing on the case.

[608] These sympathisers were led by Mrs Phoebe Hearst (d.1919), a philanthropist and wife of American Senator George F. Hearst. For an account of the Hearst visit see, Kathryn Jewett Hogenson, *Lighting the Western Sky: The Hearst Pilgrimage and the Establishment of the Bahá'í Faith in the West,* Oxford: George Ronald, 2010. These journeys are regarded as seminal events in the rise of the religion outside the area of its birth. See for example, Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By,* Wilmette IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944, pp.257-260.

[609] The renewed confinement was also an outcome of the "open rebellion against the authority of Abdul Baha on the part of some family members, who sought to embroil the authorities in pressing their case." See, *Momen, The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions: 1844-1944*, pp.318-321. Most, but not all, visitors were admirers as Momen recounts (p.317). For example, the missionary Rev. H.H. Jessup who afterwards wrote unfavourably about Abdul Baha.

[610] For accounts of Abdul Hamid's tenure as Sultan see, Alma Wittlin, *Abdul Hamid: The Shadow of God,* (Translated by Norman Denny), London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1940 and Sir Edwin Pears, *Life of Abdul Hamid*, London: Constable and Company, 1917. Western accounts characterise the Sultan as a bloodthirsty despot. More recent analysis focuses on his role as the last Caliph and a pioneer of pan-Islamic identity. See for example, Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam; Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 and Noah Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State,* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008. Accounts of events leading to Abdul Baha's freedom can be found in Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá,* pp.123-125, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.48 and Mottahdeh, *'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey West,* p.1.

growing town across the bay from Akka.[611] Later, in October of 1910, he left Haifa for Port Said in Egypt in the company of two attendants on the first leg of his journey to Britain. It seems clear from accounts that he had not divulged his intentions to family and friends, the general view being that his trip to Egypt was for "a change of air"[612] on the advice of his physician. After a sojourn of one month in Port Said, Abdul Baha boarded a ship to Europe, only to abort his plans due to ill-health. He landed in Alexandria where he remained until August 1911.[613]

Before he left for Egypt, Abdul Baha had received some western admirers in his home, including Alice Buckton (present at the Deans Yard gathering) who spent some weeks as his guest.[614] Buckton shared her experiences at meetings on her return to London and a definite line of communication was opened where messages and letters went back and forth between sympathisers in Britain and Abdul Baha. About one month after Abdul Baha's arrival in Egypt, Tudor Pole journeyed to see him, bringing gifts "from his English friends."[615] Discussions with Abdul Baha, Tudor Pole later recalled, concerned the penetration of the Bahai message in America and Britain and the fact that Abdul Baha expected that its influence would grow.[616] When back in London, Tudor Pole addressed meetings relaying his experiences of being in Egypt and meeting with Abdul Baha. On December 31st, 1910, he addressed an audience of some eighty participants at the Higher Thought Centre in London, one of the bigger meetings of those interested and comprising, perhaps for the first time together, the main figures driving interest in the movement, including Lady Blomfield.[617] At another gathering, speaking once more about his visit to Egypt, Tudor Pole clearly conveyed his view that those associated with Bahai should definitely remain as members of their existing churches or organisations. The function of the Bahai message was, he explained, to regenerate existing congregations or institutions. The possibility of a visit by Abdul Baha to Britain was mooted and the news shared that an invitation had been issued for him to address the First Races Congress, to be held that July in London.[618] Further, Tudor Pole began to urge those identifying with Bahai to prepare themselves for such a visit by joining "in prayer and concentration each evening at 9 o'clock, upon

[611] During less restrictive times, Abdul Baha built a house in Haifa near the German colony, transferred members of his family to reside there, and sometimes resided there himself. See, Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions: 1844-1944,* p.318.
[612] Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá,* p.133.
[613] While in Egypt the party of travellers was added to. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá,* pp.135-136.
[614] *Bahai News [Star of the West],* vil. 1, no.6, p.12. Cited in Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.50.
[615] Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá,* pp.137-138, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* pp. 53-54, and Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground,* pp.145-149, all contain accounts and references to this visit.
[616] Writing in 1968, Tudor Pole also recounts what he considered were mystical experiences he had while in Abdul Baha's company. See, *Writing on the Ground,* pp.145-149.
[617] Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.54.
[618] Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield*, pp.54-55.

love and unity" so that all would be "fittingly prepared" [619] to receive Abdul Baha in their midst. At a Theosophist summer school, Tudor Pole gave an address on 'Bahaism', sharing a platform with the noted suffragist leader, Charlotte Despard.[620] Archdeacon Wilberforce and Lady Blomfield were also active, addressing audiences and congregations, in effect preparing the ground for the hoped for visit. Around this time the minister at the City Temple, R.J. Campbell, welcomed a young Persian student visiting from Paris to speak from his pulpit on the Bahai movement, followed by a lively discussion and questions from Campbell (amongst others) who commented that he had received a message from Abdul Baha who had taken an interest in his work in London. There are, Campbell commented, "many gaps in the recorded Christian teachings that needed to be filled."[621] Lady Blomfield offered the use of her apartment in Cadogan Gardens in central London to house the visitor on his arrival but, much to their disappointment, Abdul Baha did not travel to Britain to address the First Races Congress. He let it be known that he would travel to London the following month.[622]

What Was Understood

A significant outcome of Wellesley Tudor Pole's travel to Egypt to visit Abdul Baha was the publication of a detailed article in *The Christian Commonwealth* newspaper, outlining the Bahai teachings under the title "A Wonderful Movement in

[619] Quotations from, Arthur Cuthbert, *Star of the West,* vol. 2, nos. 7 and 8, p.14. Cited in, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.55. Tudor Pole would significantly employ the idea of group prayer or concentration during the Second World War with the institution, at his suggestion, of the "Silent Minute" campaign, marked each evening on the BBC with the chimes of Big Ben. See, Oliver G. Villiers, *Wellesley Tudor Pole: Appreciation and Valuation,* pp.16-19.

[620] Despard, the head of the Women's Freedom League, later that year penned a three part article on the Babi poetess, Tahirih, which appeared in *The Vote* magazine under the title "A Woman Apostle in Persia". Despard was a formidable activist as a suffragist, vegetarian and social reformer. In later life she was domiciled in Ireland, a member of Sinn Fein and prominent communist. See, Andro Linklater *An Unhusbanded Life: Charlotte Despard: Suffragette, Socialist, and Sinn Feiner*, London: Hutchinson, 1980 and Margaret Mulvihill, *Charlotte Despard: A Biography*, London: Pandora, 1989. She is buried in Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin. Her biographies do not recount her prominence as a supporter of Abdul Baha's activities during his time in Britain.

[621] Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* pp.52-53.The student was Tammaddun'ul Mulk, who later acted as an interpreter for Abdul Baha during his first visit to London. According to Weinberg (who does not provide the source), considerable interest was shown at this meeting about the persecution of Persian Bahais. Campbell asked about future 'Houses of Justice' as referred to by Bahaullah and mentioned that he had already received a solicitous message from Abdul Baha who had shown interest in his work in London. Campbell commented on the young student's appearance at the City Temple during the first interview he had with Abdul Baha in London. See, *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.850.

[622] Information from, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* pp.55-58.The Congress was the initiative of the Union of Ethical Societies of America and England, supported by more than 50 countries, and attended by 30 presidents of parliaments and 40 colonial bishops. It has been postulated that Abdul Baha did not attend the Congress owing to the presence there of a leading Azali, a follower of Bahaullah's disaffected half-brother. See, also, Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions,* pp.324-325.

the East".[623] The article contained a message to readers from Abdul Baha and characterised the movement as a "religious and social uprising in the East" whose adherents are estimated in the millions and whose "power and influence are growing week by week!"[624] Tudor Pole went on to give a pen picture of the religious leader, describing a charismatic personality, averring his conviction that the movement "will vitally affect the religious and social evolution of the world."[625] He also gave details of various meetings about to take place in London, Bristol and the North of England, betokening a growing interest and diffusion. This coverage is noteworthy as *The Christian Commonwealth* newspaper, as well as being the recognised mouthpiece of the New Theology movement, was poised to play a leading part in the reception of Abdul Baha. The paper covered Abdul Baha's visits to Britain extensively, publishing messages from him and quotations from Bahai scriptures in its pages in advance of his arrival in Britain.[626] Its significance as a publication of record with respect to Abdul Baha's visit cannot be overestimated, given its reproduction of presentations and interviews, the original records for which are no longer extant.[627] Many newspapers carried articles and excerpts (sometimes entire transcripts) of Abdul Baha's presentations while in Britain whereas *The Christian Commonwealth* covered each event in depth. On occasion, the paper's coverage of the visit found its way into mainstream newspapers within and outside of Britain.[628]

When Abdul Baha was travelling to Britain (August 1911), and stayed a few days on route in Thonon-les-Bains near Geneva, the paper published a telegram received from him and expressed itself "proud to be the channel of communication

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[623] *The Christian Commonwealth,* 28th December, 1910, p.231.

[624] *The Christian Commonwealth,* 28th December, 1910, cited in, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.53. Numbers of adherents of the Bahai religion are variously estimated for around this time but as no formal process to record registration or affiliation was in place, no accurate reckoning is possible. Estimates for adherents in Iran for the year 1891 by George Curzon, in his *Persia and the Persian Question,* London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1966, (first published, 1892) estimated that 13% of the Iranian population, over 1 million people, was Bahai at that time. Cited in Adam Berry, "The Bahá'í Faith and its Relationship to Islam, Christianity and Judaism: A Brief History," in *International Social Science Review,* Vol. 79, No.3/4 (2004), pp.137-151. Peter Smith estimates the numbers in the 1880's to be in the order of 100,000, a figure which Moojan Momen regards as a reasonable estimate. See, Peter Smith, "A Note on Babi and Bahá'í Numbers in Iran," *Iranian Studies*, vol. 17, nos. 2-3, 1984, pp.295-301, and, Moojan Momen, "A Preliminary Survey of the Bahá'í Community of Iran during the Nineteenth Century", *Iran im 19. Jahrhundert und die Enstehung der Baha'i Religion*, Christoph Burgel and Isabel Schayani (Eds.), Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1998, pp.33-51. (This article appears in English.)

[625] Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.54.

[626] Jan Teofil Jasion, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in France: 1911 & 1913,* Paris: Editions bahá'ies France, 2015, p.94. Also, mentioned in Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.54.

[627] See, for example, introductory note to Eric Hammond (Ed.,) *'Abdu'l-Baha in London: Addresses and Notes of Conversations,* Oakham: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982 p.4. See, also, Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* p.61.

[628] Egea, "The Travels of `Abdu'l-Bahá and their Impact on the Press," pp.1-26. Egea relates that *The Christian Commonwealth* coverage of Abdul Baha's first public engagement in London, found its way into the pages of the *The Los Angeles Times, The Buffalo Express,* and *The American* (Baltimore).

from the great religious leader of the East."[629] It went on to feature an article about Abdul Baha's activities "in every one of its issues" during his time in Britain "and even issued two special supplements."[630] The editor, Dawson, who was fluent in shorthand, was regularly in attendance during Abdul Baha's engagements.[631] On September 2nd, 1911, the *Daily Mail* newspaper in London (then the "most widely read and popular national newspaper" in Britain)[632] published an article announcing Abdul Baha's plan to travel to England, under the headline "Bahaism, A New Religion From Persia – 'Prophet's' Visit To London." The piece strikes a note of mystery, explaining that Abdul Baha's movements are being kept secret, even those who know him still unaware of when he will arrive. Some historical background is included, some figures cited for adherents in Iran and western countries, the correspondent concluding with a description of Bahai as "a spiritual Esperanto," citing a few words from the editor of *The Christian Commonwealth* (Dawson) who describes it as "a world movement" that seeks "to unite all faiths and religions as one."[633]

These unific facets of Bahai teaching were those the proponents of the New Theology found most congruent in the prosecution of their own reforming enterprise. The emphasis was clearly that Bahai not be regarded as a new religion per se (echoing comments by Tudor Pole cited earlier) but more a reforming movement whose purpose was to bring about regeneration and unity amongst existing religions. It could be said that, in general, those who were interested were still unsure of the standing of Bahai, and the descriptors 'movement', 'religion', 'faith' and 'Bahaism' were variously utilized and interchangeable.[634] Information by way of translation of primary texts, giving a detailed outline of Bahai doctrine, was not yet available and various views were current as to whether Bahai was an inclusivistic philosophy or an exclusivistic religion. When it was first introduced in Europe and North America, Bahai was often introduced as fulfilling Biblical prophecies, as an augmentation or re-interpretation of already held beliefs and doctrines rather than a new religion.[635] The possibility for sympathisers to occupy a dual religious location was clearly stated, even though the need to develop a fixed organisation was understood by some.[636] A small number of sympathisers were convinced of the need to develop a distinct Bahai 'identity' but the

[629] *The Christian Commonwealth,* 30.8.1911. Cited in Jan Teofil Jasion, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in France*, p.51.
[630] Jasion, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in France,*p.51.
[631] Walter Sylvester Smith, *The London Heretics*, p.215.
[632] According to K.W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord*, p.30. Cited in, Jacqueline David, *A spiritual pilgrimage: a biographical study of R.J.Campbell,* p.129.
[633] *The Daily Mail* (London), September 2nd 1911, p.2. Cited in, Jasion, *Abdu'l-Bahá in France,* p.54. Jasion further records that the *Daily Mail* article was republished by newspapers in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore.
[634] For example, the *Daily Mail* , op. cit., uses 'religion'. Dawson employs all descriptors at different points in his articles for *The Christian Commonwealth.*
[635] For a discussion of the establishment of the Bahai movement in the West, see, Oliver Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Bahá'í Faith,* pp.93-97.
[636] See, Richard Hollinger (Editor), *Community Histories; Studies in the Bábí Religions (Vol. 6)*, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 1992, Introduction, pp.vii to xx.

impression held by others was that Bahai was a movement rather than a discrete religion, and for some even, a movement within a Christian paradigm. There was no compunction to evolve a clear definition of membership and it was common for those who considered themselves Bahais to remain involved in other religious denominational activities and not detach from their churches.[637]

For his part, Abdul Baha's public addresses did not underscore points of distinction between followers of different religions or openly propose that a new church or denomination was being suggested, though he often spoke about the 'religion' of Bahaullah.[638] In smaller, more intimate gatherings and in conversation with individuals, he elaborated in more detail and responded to questions about the role he perceived for the Bahai message. He did not insist that people forsake their churches and encouraged the efforts of those who were endeavouring to reinvigorate their congregations. Equally, he offered guidance and direction to those amongst his sympathisers who sought differentiation and organisation for an independent entity.[639] Robert Stockman suggests that Abdul Baha had "dual goals"[640] during his engagements in Europe and North America. He wanted to spread Bahai principles (around a central tenet of the oneness of humanity) in the hope that these ideas would "leaven human society with principles that would better civilization,"[641] while at the same time endeavouring to encourage and affirm the interest of those who wished to know more. To achieve this, Stockman proposes, Abdul Baha sought to depict a "polyreligious world,"[642] where specified religious beliefs and practices could be understood to have a wide variety of meanings, allowing for individual differences in race, ethnicity and religion to be traversed. In this construct, the polyvalence of religious terminology allowed for different understandings to be arrived at by different people. "By utilizing polyvalence," Stockman concludes, "'Abdu'l-Bahá was

[637] For example, see contributions made by two prominent Bahai sympathisers from this period at a public meeting at Westminster Palace Hotel on December 20th, 1912. After Abdul Baha's presentation, Alice Buckton took the floor and pointedly emphasised that "this was no *new* religion" but a locus where all religions could find a common meeting place. Immediately following, Hippolyte Dreyfus rose and posed the question "Is it a religion or a movement? […] I say, yes." Cited in, *Star of the West,* Vol. 111, No. 17, January 19th, 1913, pp.9-10. For further discussion see, Richard Hollinger, "The American Bahá'í Community, 1892-1895", in John Danesh and Seena Fazel (Editors), *Search for Values; Ethics in Bahá'í Thought*, Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2004, Introduction xx.

[638] For example, in his address at Westminster Palace Hotel, cited in *Star of the West,* Vol. 111, No. 17, January 19th, 1913, p.9.Tudor Pole also represented the Buckton viewpoint.

[639] For a discussion on these points, see, Scharbrodt, *Islam and The Baha'I Faith,* pp.95-96. See, also, Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, p.123. Stockman describes various approaches taken by Abdul Baha in his presentations and interaction with smaller groups and individuals. See, Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* p.150.

[640] See, Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* p.123.

[641] See, Stockman *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* p.123.

[642] Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America,* p.84. Cited in, Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* p.123.

able to speak to the involved and the interested at once and inspire them in different ways."[643]

This element of Abdul Baha's engagement with those who received him has been dealt with elsewhere and the forgoing summarizes only some of the particularities considered.[644] What we are more concerned with here is what the leading promulgators of new Protestant religious frameworks were hoping to achieve by nurturing a close connection to a religious reformer from Asia. Campbell and his collaborators on the editorial board of *The Christian Commonwealth* (including the editor) expended much energy to promote Abdul Baha's activities and presentations during his stay in Britain. They decidedly took the view that this was a religious phenomenon aspects of which aligned with their own objectives. In so doing, it can be argued (in concert with a 'polyvalence' of presentation), they employed their own epistemological filter or accepted grid in what they chose to emphasise in the course of this discursive interplay. In promulgating a liberal, socially engaged Christianity, it was the Bahai 'movement' aspect on which they focussed, though many details of Bahai teaching, outside of universalist, irenic and unific elements, were promulgated in the pages of their newspaper. These tenets included, the institution of elected councils of nine to oversee Bahai affairs instead of individual "paid officials,"[645] the abolition of monasticism, the foundation of community gatherings called 'Nineteen Day Feasts', emphasis on education (in particular for the girl-child) and the standing of Muhammad as a prophet of God.[646]

In London

Abdul Baha arrived in London on September 4th, 1911.[647] Over the next four weeks he addressed numerous gatherings, many smaller events in people's homes

[643] Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* p.123

[644] For example, see, Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* pp.119-126 and, Scharbrodt, *Islam and The Baha'I Faith,* pp.93-98

[645] Dudley Wright, "The Bahai Movement: A Universal Religion" in, *The Christian Commonwealth,* December, 18th 1907, p.214.

[646] Dudley Wright, "The Bahai Movement: A Universal Religion" in, *The Christian Commonwealth,* December, 18th 1907, p.214. See also, the January 1st, 1913 edition, p.263, for the text of a talk given by Abdul Baha in San Francisco on October 12th, 1912, at the Emanu-el Synagogue, under the heading "The Fundamental Unity of All Religions" which discussed, among other things, the station of Muhammad. The newspaper also printed the entire Persian script for this presentation. *The Christian Commonwealth* coverage of Abdul Baha's activities (occasionally with pictures) for the first month of the visit alone, includes, September 6th, 1911, p.843; September 13th, pp.849-850 and p.856; September 20th, p.866, p.871 and p.875; September 27th, p.896, p.889 and p.898. Pictures of Abdul Baha could also be purchased from the newspaper.

[647] All sources agree (with only minor discrepancies) on the dates of arrival and departure and on the engagements kept by Abdul Baha while in Britain. See for example, Eric Hammond (Ed.,) *'Abdu'l-Baha in London*, p.53, Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, pp.131-145 and Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p.140 and p.154.

and was a subject of interest for mainstream and sectional newspapers.[648] His travel arrangements were generally quite fluid and there is no indication that he anticipated a 'public' dimension to the visit. Abdul Baha had never before addressed a public audience and when asked in his first newspaper interview why he had come to Britain the interviewer recorded that "he wishes to gain strength and see his friends."[649] The day after his arrival the editor of the *The Christian Commonwealth,* Albert Dawson, sought him out to conduct an interview and met "several times"[650] with Abdul Baha during the first week of his stay. On one of these occasions, R. J. Campbell also visited with Abdul Baha and a report of their discussion, along with the Dawson interview, was carried over two pages in the newspaper the following week.[651]

Dawson's reflections on what Abdul Baha said accents the operation of the filtering process on the part of the newspaper editor. As well as irenic and universalist themes, Dawson emphasises the simplicity of teaching, the absence of organization and that one can be Bahai without forswearing former religious allegiance. But the article does preface the interview with historical details of the Bahai movement, including the fact of its emergence from an Islamic milieu and the inclusion of the founder of Islam as one of "the prophets whom God has sent"[652] to be honoured alongside Jesus in its canon of teaching, but these factors received no further consideration in Dawson's synopsis and conclusions. There was no effort to tease out what, if any, relationship existed between Bahai and Islam.[653] Likewise, there was no further elucidation of what was meant by the 'renovation' of the teachings of previous prophets or, if the teachings of all the prophets are the same, why then is renewal necessary and what could the outcome be if not to maintain the status quo. Perhaps, no further explanation was required as focus on just certain aspects of Bahai teaching neatly matched the modern liberal Protestant paradigm.

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[648] See, Eric Hammond (Ed.,) *'Abdu'l-Baha in London,* Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá,* pp.140-168, and Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* pp.59-92. Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*, pp.131-148, summarizes the content of Abdul Baha's presentations while in Britain.

[649] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, pp.849.

[650] Dawson, writing in *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.849.

[651] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, pp.849-850. The entire transcript appears in *Star of the West,* Vol.2, No.10, September 1911, pp.1-8.

[652] Abdul Baha, cited in, *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.849.

[653] Though there is no overt reference to Islam in the materials of the New Theology, the question of how it might be viewed by Muslims does surface in the course of a meeting between Abdul Baha and Campbell. In general, the central figures of the New Theology movement regarded Islam much like Max Muller and Carpenter. There is little interest in Islam apparent in their work. Carpenter considered that Islam provided nothing new and was less interested in religious movements that did not show an inclination, theologically, towards Christianity. See, D.V. Marshall, *The Work of Joseph Estlin Carpenter,* p.97 and p.173. Of the fifty volumes Max Muller's *Sacred Books of the East* (not all of which he edited of course but which are intimately associated with his memory), only two are devoted to Islam, namely E.H. Palmer's two volume translation of the Quran. All fifty were published by the Oxford University Press between 1879 and 1910.

Interesting also in this light, and in the context of emerging Protestant theodicies and their encounter with a religious figure from Asia, is the dialogue conducted between Campbell and Abdul Baha during their first meeting, recounted in full in *The Christian Commonwealth*. Dawson described how Abdul Baha rose to receive Campbell on his arrival, both men warmly greeting each other. "Standing face to face, linked hand in hand, in the centre of the room," Dawson continued, "these two spiritual leaders of world-wide fame – Eastern and Western, but essentially one in their outlook on life- formed an impressive picture that is stamped on the mind's eye of all who were privileged to be present."[654] Campbell began the conversation by saying that he had long looked forward to "this opportunity,"[655] and after some formalities expressed his happiness that Abdul Baha had come to England, even if only for a short period of time. "I know many of your friends who are also mine," Campbell added. "I have read your sermons and speeches" Abdul Baha continued, "[a]nd I have read yours", responded Campbell.[656] He proceeded to ask Abdul Baha about the status of the Bahai movement "as compared to the faith out of which it came."[657]

This question led to some discussion concerning the Bab and Babis, their contemporary standing and numbers though it is not clear that Campbell was asking about the relationship between the Bab and Bahai or whether he intended the movement's initial emergence from an Islamic background. When the conversation closed, one of those present (a lady not identified) commented that "Mr. Campbell's movement in Christianity is helping the world of Islam. The attitude of the New Theology is one Moslems can understand; they cannot understand the divisions of Christianity." To which Campbell responded, "I have some evidence of that."[658] But there was no further development of the discussion along these lines which instead drifted to whether the number for Bahais worldwide then stood at three million which elicited the response (from the interpreter), "[t]here are no statistics."[659] In the course of the discussion, Campbell issued an invitation for the visitor to speak at the City Temple which was positively received, with Abdul Baha commenting on the role of the City Temple as "a centre of progress in the religious world."[660] "As you have been a promoter of unity in the Christian world I hope you will strive to bring about unity in

[654] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.850. Also cited in Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.62.
[655] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, pp.850.
[656] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, pp.850.
[657] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, pp.850.
[658] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, pp.850.
[659] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, pp.850.
[660] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, pp.850. Campbell's invitation and its acceptance is the first indication of a 'public' dimension to the visit.

the whole world",[661] he concluded. Campbell replied, "[w]e are doing what we can. We believe that religions are many, but Religion is one."[662]

Here again we see the expression of a polyreligious paradigm, allowing for a heterogeneity of interpretation, allied to the operation of an epistemological filter. Abdul Baha's statements had multiple possibilities for interpretation, highlighted themes such as peace and religious unity, and often characterised the founders of religions as prophets or messengers "who have come from One Holy Spirit and bear the message of God, fitted to the age in which they appear."[663] Campbell's assertion of the oneness of religion in his remarks echoes Abdul Baha in what was accepted as a key Bahai precept. Unstated was Campbell's sense that 'the many in the one' would necessarily retain a 'Christian' core. His assertion (cited previously), that "anything that tends towards universal brotherhood is Christian"[664] connotes more than a sense that progressive thought resonates with the essential Christian message but articulates the possibility to categorize any idea or movement, however subsequent in origination, as 'essentially' Christian, thereby placing the teaching of Abdul Baha (thus understood) within an accepted grid. Indeed, Campbell's assertion, during his discussion with Abdul Baha, that he had some evidence that the New Theology was "helping the world of Islam,"[665] illustrates that Campbell considered the New Theology could bring a 'Christian' sensibility to bear on a religion that was generally regarded as backward and dogmatic. He may also have considered that in Abdul Baha and Bahai he had found a likeminded 'Christian' oriented reform movement, one which was emerging from an Islamic purlieu that he could connect with.

Abdul Baha attended the evening service at the City Temple on the following Sunday.[666] The church was full as per usual and most of the central figures concerned with Abdul Baha's reception in Britain were in attendance.[667] Inviting Abdul Baha to speak, Campbell suggested that his guest was the leader "of one of the most remarkable religious movements of this or any age which includes, I understand, at least three million souls."[668] Campbell went on to describe Bahai as "identical with the spiritual purpose of Christianity,"[669] a movement which "stands for the spiritual unity of mankind; it stands for universal peace amongst nations." Continuing, Campbell

[661] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, pp.850.
[662] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, pp.850.
[663] From a talk of Abdul Baha at St. John's Westminster, September 17th, 1911. Cited in Hammond, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London,* p.24.
[664] Campbell, *Christianity and the Social Order*, p.149.
[665] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, pp.850.
[666] September 10th, 1911.
[667] We know that Tudor Pole was present as his role on the evening is recorded in *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.851. Lady Blomfield accompanied Abdul Baha to most of his engagements and was a regular attendee at the City Temple. The same can be said for Alice Buckton and others.
[668] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.850.
[669] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.850.

described how Abdul Baha was on a "private visit" to Britain but wished to see the City Temple and would be addressing a public gathering for the very first time. "He does not preach sermons," he went on, "he is just a religious teacher" and as Christians, viewing "with respect and sympathy every movement of the spirit of God in the experience of mankind […] we give greeting to Abdul Baha."[670] After the introduction, Abdul Baha spoke to the packed congregation "for eight minutes"[671] in the Persian language, after which a prepared translation was read by Wellesley Tudor Pole. In his address, Abdul Baha focussed on the unity of 'East' and 'West', stating that this is a time for unity "and a drawing together of all races and all classes."[672] When Tudor Pole finished reading the English translation, Campbell rose to close the service. "I think you will agree with me," he said, "that this is an interesting as well as a unique occasion, and that what we have been listening to, in that brief message uttered by a spiritual teacher from the East, is in spirit the same message that you are listening to on the authority of Jesus week by week. It is a great time, a time of drawing-together of all people. East and West join hands in the City Temple to-night."[673]

Campbell's assertion that the presentation of Abdul Baha was, in essence, the same message promulgated weekly at the City Temple "on the authority of Jesus,"[674] that this was a "great time of drawing together of all people"[675] from East and West, underscores the acceptance of Bahai teaching as 'essentially' Christian and emphasises the same irenic and universalist precepts as cited by Dawson in his interview with Abdul Baha. Beyond that, comments made during the course of his presentation by Abdul Baha that "There is one God; mankind is one; and the foundations of religion are one"[676] can be understood in different ways, but there is no attempt to seek further clarification. For Campbell, no doubt, the one God as he understood it was the 'Christian God', the one religion was fundamentally Christianity now moving towards its destiny to be the harbour for all humankind. By all accounts, Campbell was sincere in his affection for and cordiality to his visitor from Asia. Still, given the contemporary cultural backdrop, the position of Britain at the apex of empire, and the sense that Christianity (the apex of religious experience) was intrinsically intertwined with this golden era of 'progress', it is hard to imagine that Campbell actually saw his guest as his 'equal'. It is not feasible that Dawson's

[670] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.850.
[671] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.850.
[672] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.851.
[673] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.851. On leaving Abdul Baha paused in the vestry to write an inscription in the pulpit Bible and left expressing himself (in English) happy with the evening's proceedings. "It seemed to us," Tudor Pole later wrote, "as if a new page in history was being turned over and as if a new religious and spiritual epoch was being outwardly launched upon an expectant world before our very eyes." See, *Star of the West,* Vol. 2. No.11, p.8. Cited in Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.70.
[674] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.851.
[675] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.851.
[676] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.851.

description of the initial meeting, that of one great religious leader from the 'West' being welcomed by a comparable figure from the 'East', was the totality of how Campbell and those at the *Christian Commonwealth* experienced the encounter. Whether Campbell was fully conscious of the fact or not, the relative power relations were far from equal and Campbell's somewhat curious remark in introducing his guest, "[h]e does not preach sermons, he is just a religious teacher,"[677] raises the question as to how he viewed that distinction and what he intended to communicate in highlighting it. We might well discern an element of utility in the manner in which Campbell and his friends received their notable visitor. To what extent, we may ask, was the warmth of reception a function of the strategy to present as a core facet of the New Theology Protestant theodical framework an approach and connection to religions in the 'East'? Certainly, Campbell's liberal Protestant worldview was affirmed by his visitor from Asia, at least in what he chose to filter and highlight from the teachings of Abdul Baha. That the proponents of the New Theology considered interaction with Abdul Baha provided a safe portal of ingress specifically to the Islamic world, if not overtly stated, could be considered an underlying thematic orientation.

At Westminster

Another of those to meet Abdul Baha early in his stay was Archdeacon Wilberforce. Wilberforce was an ardent supporter of Campbell and the New Theology project, and a centre of connection for many seeking a broader religious experience. Though St. John's was an Anglican church, the congregants were drawn from a wide spectrum of those interested in new ideas and philosophies and Wilberforce's services drew large crowds. According to one of his biographers Wilberforce had developed "an interest in Eastern philosophy"[678] as well as in psychic phenomenon. He had closely followed the visit of Vivekananda to London in late 1895 and entertained the Swami at his Deans Yard residence on more than one occasion. He was regarded by Vivekananda's followers as "a good man, a kindly friend […] a serious student of the Vedanta philosophy,"[679] who regarded the Swami as a "missionary to the Church of England."[680] He once declared himself, during one of his sermons at St. Johns, "an honorary member of all religions."[681] Perhaps, for Wilberforce, his understanding of Vedanta, its philosophy of the unity of all existence and the esoteric unity of all religions, paved the way for his interest in the Bahai teaching on the unity underlying the diversity and difference of religions.[682] During their discussion Wilberforce invited

[677] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.850.
[678] C.E. Woods, *Archdeacon Wilberforce*, p.20.
[679] Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West*, Vol.3, p.278.
[680] Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West*, Vol.3, p.278.
[681] C.E. Woods, *Archdeacon Wilberforce*, p.34.
[682] On Vedanta, see, for example, notes taken from a talk given by Vivekananda in London by one of his English admirers, cited in, Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West*, Vol.4, p.501.

Abdul Baha to speak at St. John's, Westminster[683] and arrangements were made for this engagement to take place on the Sunday following the City Temple presentation, on September, 17th, 1911.[684]

Under the heading "The Vanishing of the Veil", *The Christian Commonwealth* correspondent described how Wilberforce placed the Bishop's chair on the chancel's steps at the front of the alter for his guest and "told of the teacher-'Master' he called him- who had come to London to emphasize unity, and who was present that evening at St. John's to proclaim the meaning of it."[685] Wilberforce asked that his congregation unite in warmly welcoming a man who was a prisoner for forty years. "Abdul Baha is not an orator or even a preacher," he concluded his introduction, "but, in view of all he stands for, we are keenly interested in everything he has to say."[686] This introductory formulation, echoing a similar phrase used by Campbell in his welcome of Abdul Baha at the City Temple, does point to a distinction Wilberforce wished to emphasise. It was generally remarked that Abdul Baha, though he spoke in Persian which was then translated, was an impressive, engaging orator and when he came into a room, according to Peter L. Berger, "its reality was changed. It became a place of peace and quiet, in which his words received a tremendous importance."[687] Perhaps Wilberforce was making clear how he perceived the relationship; that however wonderful a 'teacher', Abdul Baha was not a 'preacher' in the sense of an ordained priest in receipt of holy orders.

Somewhat theatrically, Wilberforce left the pulpit to fetch his guest from the vestry, returning divested of his surplice and accompanied by Abdul Baha, he in "[i]n his customary Eastern robe and head-dress, walking hand in hand with a leader of the West."[688] In his further introduction, Wilberforce highlighted the 'East' meets 'West' motif, commenting,

> Rudyard Kipling has said 'East is East and West is West and they twain shall never meet,' - but I say they can and do meet on the common ground of Love and here is the proof. Look at our wonderful guest of tonight who has suffered

[683] St. John's, Smith Square is a masterpiece of English Baroque architecture, designed and built by Thomas Archer in 1728. After extensive bomb damage during the Second World War it was sold to a charitable trust and restored as a church and concert hall. See, the official website of St. John's at http://www.sjss.org.uk/about-us, accessed on 13/1/14 at 21.00.
[684] See, Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Bahá,* p.144.
[685] Abdul Baha had long been known amongst Bahais as the 'Master'. See, Edward Granville Browne (Ed.), *A Travellers Narrative*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891, Vol.11, xxxvi.
[686] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 20th 1911, cited in *Star of the West,* Vol. 2, No. 12, October 16th, 1911, p.2, and in, Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Bahá,* pp.146-148.
[687] Peter L. Berger, *From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Bahai Movement*, pp.178-179. Cited in, Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* p.10. In his assessment, Berger juxtaposes the "spell cast" by Abdul Baha's powerful personality with what he considers the repetitious nature of his remarks.
[688] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 20th 1911, cited in *Star of the West,* Vol. 2, No. 12, October 16th, 1911, p.2, and in, Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Bahá,* pp.146-148.

> forty years imprisonment for the sake of humanity […] Oh! Pray that God's blessing may descend upon him; send out vibrations of love to meet this Spirit of God who is in our midst.[689]

Abdul Baha addressed the congregation in the Persian language, "[s]peaking very clearly, with wonderful intonations in his voice and using his hands freely,"[690] and when finished, Wilberforce read the English translation. In summary, Abdul Baha's theme was (as reported in *The Christian Commonwealth*),

> [T]he character of the Manifestations of God. He said that God the Infinite could not be comprehended of man; that whatever man understands of God is born of his imagination. For illustration he pointed to the mineral, which does not comprehend the vegetable, as the vegetable does not understand the animal. So the animal cannot reach the intelligence of humanity. Neither, he said, is it possible for man, a created being, to understand the Almighty Creator. Nevertheless, the perfection and qualifications of God are seen in every created being and in the most perfect beings in the most perfect manner. In the manifestations of God, Abdul Baha likened these qualities to the rays of the sun focussed in a mirror. If we claim that the sun is seen in the mirror, we do not mean that the whole sun has descended from the holy heights of heaven and entered into the mirror, that is impossible. The Eternal Nature is seen in the manifestations, and its light and splendour are visible in extreme glory. Therefore men have always been taught and led by the prophets of God. All the prophets and messengers have come from one Holy Spirit and bear the message of God, suited to the age in which they appear.[691]

In closing, Wilberforce invited Abdul Baha to give a blessing and "[t]hen the Archdeacon took him reverently by the hand and conducted him down the aisle, saying as he did, '[w]e do not speak his language, nor he ours, but for the angels of God there is no Babel.'"[692]

Indirect Admonishment

Wilberforce, a committed supporter of women's suffrage, attracted a large female following among his congregation which included, amongst others, Lady Blomfield and Alice Buckton.[693] Buckton penned a moving poem in Wilberforces's memory after his death and Blomfield attended St. John's every Sunday, holding the

[689] From a report in, *Star of the West,* Vol. 2, No. 12, October 16th, p.12. Cited (partially) in, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield,* p.71.
[690] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 20th 1911, cited in *Star of the West,* Vol. 2, No. 12, October 16th, 1911, p.2 and p.11.
[691] From a report in, *Star of the West,* Vol. 2, No. 12, October 16th, p.12.
[692] *Star of the West,* Vol. 2, No. 12, October 16th, 1911, p.12.
[693] Osborn, R*eligion and Relevance,* pp.55-56.

Archdeacon in even higher esteem than Campbell for his "interpretation of Christianity." [694] Indeed, Wilberforce had a deep personal involvement with many of the Bahai sympathisers and, as has been noted previously, was also a central figure in the New Theology movement. It is, therefore, puzzling that he played no public part in Abdul Baha's second visit to Britain which began in December, 1912. Osborn postulates that this may indicate that Bahai was just not that relevant for him as it first appeared from accounts of his earlier contact with Abdul Baha.[695] A theory of relevance, as detailed by Osborn with respect to figures like Wilberforce and Campbell (who likewise is not prominent during the second visit), would seem to be redundant if applied to the discourse under review after the commencement of the First World War, as all major discourses at that juncture experienced a critical 'turn'. Given the shift in the discursive paradigm it is simply not possible to read back the diminution in relevance in the light of the extraordinary changes wrought with the onset of war.

Osborn's contention does raise an interesting conundrum when considered against Abdul Baha's return to Britain at the end of 1912. Why were Campbell and Wilberforce anonymous during the second visit? Campbell's anonymity is easily explained and was almost certainly for reasons of ill-health. He paid a visit to Abdul Baha on his return to Britain (on January 2nd, 1913) and it appears from notes taken at the time that it was common knowledge that he was unwell, living quietly in the country.[696] During this meeting, plans were made for Campbell to host a lunch for Abdul Baha in his home, after which "young Church Ministers"[697] were invited to meet him that evening. [698] It is clear, from the details recorded with respect to these two events, that Campbell was avoiding the limelight and in fact about to embark on holiday to Italy and Spain.[699] Even given those circumstances, the amiable character of conversation carried on by both Campbell and Abdul Baha's on these occasions does not betoken a wavering of interest on either part.

Some explanation as to Wilberforce's absence from events in late 1912 and early 1913 can be discerned if we recall his reaction to criticism directed towards him after hosting the Deans Yard meeting around the claims of Tudor Pole for the Glastonbury Cup, when he pointedly observed a public silence on the matter thereafter.[700] Wilberforce may have been stung by a critique of Abdul Baha's

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[694] Blomfield's daughter, Mary Hall, cited in, Osborn, R*eligion and Relevance,* p.57.
[695] Osborn, R*eligion and Relevance,* p.56
[696] See, the diary of Ahmad Sohrab, *Abdu'l- Bahá in Britain, 1913,* http://www.paintdrawer.co.uk/david/misc/sohrab-diary-uk-1913.pdf, p.106 and pp.174-176. Sohrab recounts that Campbell had suffered a "nervous breakdown."
[697] See, Sohrab, *Abdu'l- Bahá in Britain, 1913,* p.175.
[698] Sohrab has the lunch taking place on January 18th and Balyuzi the 19th. He does not mention the encounter earlier in January. See, Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá,* p.371.
[699] See, *Abdu'l- Bahá in Britain, 1913,* pp.174-176. During their conversation over lunch, Abdul Baha invited Campbell to his home in Haifa.
[700] Wilberforce did visit Tudor Pole's home in Bristol to view the vessel after the Deans Yard gathering.

reception in New York at the time of his first public appearance in America, in April of 1912, prior to his return to Britain.[701] For this event, Abdul Baha was the guest of the Reverend Percy Stickney Grant (d.1927), the rector of the Episcopalian Church of the Ascension on Fifth Avenue and Tenth Street in New York.[702] Grant was a clergyman in the same mould as Wilberforce, deeply interested in social issues and religions outside of traditional Christianity and friendly with early American Bahai sympathisers.[703] His welcome for Abdul Baha, down to the words he used, his actions in escorting Abdul Baha from the vestry room and seating him on the Bishop's chair, mimic curiously the details of how the event at St. Johns, Westminster, unfolded. Grant introduced Abdul Baha, to an audience estimated at around two thousand people, as a "Master of things of the Spirit […] who may help the material fervour of the Occident to gain a new peace by the infiltration of the harmonies of the Orient."[704] Grant's introductory remarks represent a perfect example of 'affirmative' or 'romantic' Orientalism at play. He concluded the preliminaries describing his guest as, "[a]n exile from his native land from the age of nine, a prisoner for forty years; these are the badges of Abdu'l Baha's sincerity."[705]

Abdul Baha's appearance at the Church of the Ascension precipitated an immediate flurry of critical comment from clergymen in America, some railing that Abdul Baha, not even a Christian, was not entitled to speak from the pulpit in an Episcopalian church. They were particularly scandalised that he had been invited to occupy the chair reserved for the Bishop. A stinging editorial in the Episcopalian Church newspaper, *The Churchman,* followed which rounded on Abdul Baha and castigated Grant, accusing him of "a flagrant breach of the law of the Church."[706] It was May before news of the incident had crossed the Atlantic, an article appearing in the Anglican newspaper, *The Church Times,* under the heading, "A Shocking Affair."[707]

> On the Sunday after Easter the rector of the Church of the Ascension, New York, shocked Churchmen generally by welcoming to his pulpit Abdul Baha, son of the founder, and present head, of the Eastern Bahai cult. He is said to have praised the moral teaching of Christ, but spoke primarily in the interests

[701] Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* May 24th, 1912, p.732.
[702] The account that has the most complete information on this episode is in Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* pp.70-75. The Episcopalian Church is part of the Anglican Communion of Churches which includes Wilberforce's Church of England.
[703] He was a friend of the prominent self-professed Bahai and well-known portrait artist, Juliet Thompson. Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* p.70.
[704] Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* p. 71.
[705] Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* p. 71.
[706] "Bahaism in the Pulpit," editorial in *The Churchman, A National Church Weekly,* April 27th, 1912, p.550. Cited in, Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,* p.74. The controversy was short lived. Though Abdul Baha did not speak from an Episcopalian pulpit for the rest of the duration of his travels in the United States and Canada, he did address large audiences in a host of Congregationalist and Unitarian places of worship and at least two synagogues during a nine-month sojourn.
[707] *The Church Times,* May 24th, 1912, p.732.

> of world-wide peace. The object of his cult is the establishment of a universal religion which shall secure "inter-religious, inter-racial, and international brotherhood and peace." It is in reality a Mohammedan movement, emphasizing morality, mysticism and peace. Abdul Baha is travelling through America to preach a universal brotherhood and professes to occupy a standpoint which transcends the provincialisms of the different religions and of Christianity. His invitation to preach, as the *Churchman* points out, was a glaring defiance of Christian order, accentuated by its occurring when the appointed Epistle for the day contains the passage, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life."[708]

This critique would no doubt have registered with Wilberforce whose reception of Abdul Baha at St. Johns had gone publicly unremarked by the Anglican establishment. Perhaps, his standing within the Church, the high offices he held, his popularity, as well as the longstanding reputation of his family, may have made him immune to outright criticism in this case and with respect to his open support, in print and from the pulpit, of Campbell and the New Theology.[709] It may have been that criticism of 'one of its own' in public would have seemed impolitic to the Church establishment and, as in the case of the Deans Yard gathering in 1907, a private censure may have issued. However resolved, Wilberforce would have been left in no doubt from the appearance of the 'shocking affair' piece in *The Church Times,* that his support for Abdul Baha was considered "a glaring defiance of Christian order."[710] Though the episode, perhaps, reveals more about the internal dynamics within 'official' Christianity between orthodox and liberal constituencies, that Bahai was characterised as a 'Mohammedan movement' was a particularly pointed slight and this depiction in the news organ of the established church was a severe, if indirect, admonishment. It was important for those promoting Abdul Baha's public progress through Britain that Bahai be seen as distinct, though emanating from a Muslim milieu with reforming intent. All this together may have influenced Wilberforce from risking any public involvement in Abdul Baha's return visit to Britain.

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[708] *The Church Times,* May 24th, 1912, p.732

[709] Wilberforce's father, Samuel Wilberforce, was Bishop of Oxford and later Winchester. His grandfather was William Wilberforce, the abolitionist. See, A.R. Ashwell (Ed.) *Life of the Right Rev. Samuel Wilberforce D.D., Lord Bishop of Oxford, and afterwards of Winchester, with Selections from His Diaries and Correspondence,* (Vol. 1.), London: Murray, 1880. Vols. 2 and 3 edited by Reginald Garton Wilberforce, Oxford: A.R. Mowbray, 1905. His brother, Ernest, was also an Anglican bishop. See, Russell, *Basil Wilberforce*, p.9.

[710] *The Church Times,* May 24th, 1912, p.732.

Whatever internal rumblings ensued around Wilberforce's reception of Abdul Baha at St. Johns, there was no official church comment or criticism. Abdul Baha continued to be invited to speak in Churches of different denominations, though not Anglican. However, in effect, Wilberforce had moved to the side-lines of the discourse while there were still many leading Anglicans who continued their involvement. There is no doubt that Wilberforce suffered for his interest in and support of a variety of ideas and philosophies. For example, he never rose to be a bishop of his church as his father had before him. Though he was the subject of biographers and eulogised by commentators after his death (just three years later), a short, unattributed, one-paragraph obituary in his memory is all that subsequently appeared in *The Church Times.* Taken as a reflection of the 'official' line of the Anglican Church, it was short on laudation and included a final barb describing Wilberforce as "a rule to himself, his swift sympathy placing him at the mercy of plausible doctrinaires."[711]

Missionary Reaction

On September 21st, 1911, subsequent to the City Temple and Westminster presentations, the Reverend Peter Z. Easton (d.1915) who was passing through London visited Abdul Baha. Afterwards he penned a strident critique which appeared in the *English Churchman*, followed subsequently by an equally critical piece in the pages of *Evangelical Christendom.*[712] There is no evidence that Easton's commentary affected Wilberforce's attitude in any way and nothing to suggest it caused any of those promoting Abdul Baha's public programme to suspend their support. His reaction can be seen in the context of an evangelical Protestant constituency castigating the doyens of liberal Protestantism, themselves dismissive of evangelical fervour, as much as a diatribe against Abdul Baha. Yet, his familiarity with Bahai and its background highlights interesting aspects of the discourse in train.

Easton, an American Presbyterian missionary based in Tabriz,[713] strongly rebuked Wilberforce who must choose, he wrote, "whom he will serve, whether the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ or the Antichrist, Bahá. He cannot serve both."[714] Having laboured for many years in the missionary field in Persia, Easton was

[711] *The Church Times,* May 19th 1916, p.470.
[712] Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Bahá,* pp.149-152. The *English Churchman* describes itself as "a family Protestant newspaper" and as decidedly evangelical. See, the official website at http://englishchurchman.com/about-us/, accessed on 15/1/2014 at 21.55. *Evangelical Christendom* was a missionary monthly published by the Evangelical Alliance. See, the website of the Missionary Periodicals Database, at http://divdl.library.yale.edu/missionperiodicals/viewdetail.aspx?id=506, accessed on 15/1/2015 at 22.10.
[713] Easton was the author of, *The Scripture Doctrine in Reference to the Seat of Sin in the Regenerate Man,* New York: Anson D. F. Randolph and Co., 1872 and *Does Woman Represent God,* New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895.
[714] Peter Easton, "Bahaism: A Warning", in, *Evangelical Christendom*, September 1911. Reproduced as an appendix in, Mirza Abul Fazl, *Brilliant Proof*, Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1998, first published in 1911 as a refutation of Easton's arguments. Easton was known to accuse his opponents of pantheism as he

well acquainted with Bahais. In fact, the relationship between Bahais and Christian missionaries in Persia had for long been amiable and extensive, but became somewhat strained.[715] Protestant Christian missionaries were making considerable efforts to proselytize in Persia, by agreement, American missionary societies in the north of the country and British organisations to the south. Results had been poor. Islam already included a belief in Jesus as a prophet, Muslims feared being accused of apostasy if they showed interest in Christianity (for which the punishment was death) and missionaries themselves were constantly bickering, Catholic and Protestant societies attempting to negate each other's efforts. Missionaries were known to be condescending towards the local population and expended most of their efforts in converting Nestorian and Armenian Christians, in effect endeavouring to persuade one sect of Christianity to go over to another. Conversion of Muslims was rare but in the Bahais the missionaries encountered a group who were amiable towards them, evinced an interest in Christianity while the missionaries occasionally offered succour during periods when the Bahais were being repressed.[716]

For the most part, missionaries considered what they sometimes termed 'Behaism' would be "a solvent for Islam, which will eventually assist materially in breaking down the resistance of that stubborn and unyielding system of error, itself then perishing also in the ruin it has helped to bring about."[717] When it became clear that Bahais were themselves successfully making converts, even amongst those attending the Christian missions, there was a rupture in the relationship. Whereas the British missionaries in the south remained on friendly terms with Bahais in their region, the break in the north was bitter and American missionaries began to publish anti-Bahai material in their journals.[718] One of Easton's main criticisms was the warm reception for Abdul Baha was in effect making the missionary work amongst Muslims more difficult. "That work, as is well known," he wrote, "is not easy."

> So difficult indeed is it, that men like Lord Curzon are utterly incredulous that anything can be accomplished. Surely, then, men who profess to be followers of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ — above all, those who are looked upon as

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does here. For example, see, "Mr. Eastons Allegory," *The New York Times,* April 10th 1895, for a report of an altercation with a fellow Presbyterian.

[715] See, Moojan Momen, "Early Relations Between Christian Missionaries and the Bábí and Bahá'í Communities," in, Moojan Momen (Ed.), *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History: Volume 1,* Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1982, pp.49-85.

[716] Information gleaned from, Moojan Momen, "Early Relations Between Christian Missionaries and the Bábí and Bahá'í Communities," pp.49-85. On these points, Momen cites, George Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question,* Vol.1, London: Longman, Greens &Co., 1892, 508 and Denis Wright, *The English Amongst the Persians,* London: I.B. Tauris, 2001, p.199.

[717] G.W.Holmes, an American medical missionary in Persia, writing in 1904. Cited in, Momen, "Early Relations Between Christian Missionaries and the Bábí and Bahá'í Communities," pp.71-72.

[718] Information cited in, Momen, *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History: Volume 1*, pp.72-73. Such missionaries included, R.H. Jessup, S.G. Wilson and Easton. See, Momen,*The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts,* p.57.

> leaders in the Church, should do nothing to make that work still more difficult. Whatever else may be said of the Bahá'ís, it cannot be said that they are not wise in their generation, quick to use every means, fair or foul, which will advance their interests. That Abdul Bahá has been greatly encouraged by what he has seen and heard here in England to persevere in his scheme to make Bahá'ísm "the universal religion of the world, and the basis of the great universal civilization that is to be," is evident from his own words. That it will have a like effect upon his followers, to whom the news will be transmitted, not in cold English, but in the glowing phrases of Oriental imagination, cannot be doubted. Like Paul, on the road to Rome, they too will be encouraged; but it will not be to advance the kingdom of God, but the reign of Antichrist.[719]

Easton's attitude echoes that of missionaries in the field, as discussed earlier, when considering views around Islam at the time of the Third International Congress for the History of Religion at Oxford. His condescending reference to the 'Oriental imagination' is a clear statement of his Orientalist credentials. The zealous nature of his critique highlights just how sensitivities were heightened around missionism as a component of the colonial enterprise. Even then, Easton, expressed some sympathy for Abdul Baha, "[b]rought up in this terrible system, he is entangled in its meshes."[720] Tudor Pole responded to the criticism in the pages of *The Christian Commonwealth* the following December, in an article detailing the core principles of Bahai teaching as peace and brotherhood.[721] Whilst acknowledging that he could not describe the Bahai teachings in full (the foundational texts still to be translated), Tudor Pole described published criticism of Abdul Baha (most likely Easton's) as betraying "such a fundamental ignorance of the historical facts underlying the Baha'i movement as to be unworthy of even passing notice."[722] In the end, Easton's warnings caused no particular controversy and, to a great extent, fell on deaf ears. The same central characters (aside from Wilberforce) continued to facilitate Abdul Baha's progress in Britain.

Conclusion

The chief promoters of the New Theology welcomed Abdul Baha to London with some fanfare in September, 1911. Even though he came from an obscure situation of exile over long years, Abdul Baha had already forged links with a number of leading figures, mainly from the Protestant intelligentsia, individuals who were part of a web of organisations, philosophies and beliefs endeavouring to traverse traditional religious boundaries. Abdul Baha's induction into this discursive space was

[719] Easton,"Bahaism: A Warning", in, *Evangelical Christendom*, September 1911.
[720] Easton, *English Churchman,* cited in, Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Bahá,* p.150.
[721] *The Christian Commonwealth,* December 6th, 1911, p.169.
[722] *The Christian Commonwealth,* December 6th, 1911, p.169.

publicly endorsed when he responded to an invitation to speak at the City Temple in London at the invitation of one of the chief architects of this augmentation of the religious field, R.J. Campbell. The characterisation of their first meeting together in newspaper coverage as that of a leading religious reformer from the 'West' embracing a similar numinous figure from the 'East', and their subsequent dialogue underscores the desire of the new Protestant theodicy to broaden the dimensions of their religious framework to incorporate an approach to religion in Asia. But it was specific aspects of the Bahai teaching which interested the proponents of the New Theology, irenic and universalist elements in particular. Abdul Baha's ability to portray a 'polyreligious world', where the polyvalence of religious terminology allowed for different meanings to be inferred by different people, allowed for this inter-communication to proceed in an interplay of polyvalent presentation and filtered interpretation, all sharing a genuine interest in principles and ideas under consideration, while still retaining the possibility for a distinct heterogeneity in their valuation.

The prominent establishment figure, Archdeacon Basil Wilberforce, a senior cleric of the Anglican Communion, facilitated Abdul Baha's reception at the heart of the British religious establishment. He was an avid supporter of the New Theology project and connected, in a web of relationships, with other key figures pursuing a variety of religious ideas. His approach was from the perspective that Christianity was the point of departure for religious journeying and also the terminus. Given his earlier characterisation of Vivekananda, he may have considered that Abdul Baha had a particular mission to regenerate the Church of England. In the end, Wilberforce found himself side-lined from further public involvement in the discourse on Abdul Baha's return to Britain in late 1912, probably as a result of internal Anglican dynamics concerned with how to coadjute with new ideas or movements, whether Christian or otherwise. In this context, the contention that Bahai was "a Mohammedan movement,"[723] as described in *The Church Times,* was particularly pointed. Bahai could be seen to be an approach to Islam but definitely not identified as an elemental component. Further attempts to characterise Bahai in these terms were later on publicly contested by another prominent Anglican figure, Professor T.K. Cheyne, Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford, an ordained priest of the Anglican Church.[724]

It could be said that the attitude of Easton and other evangelical missionaries in Persia shared aspects in common with that of British, reforming churchmen. Easton's characterisation of the difficult work in gaining converts amongst Muslims, and his views on the feting of Abdul Baha in important centres of Christianity, reflects the fallout following the rupture in connection between American missionaries and Bahais in Persia. Prior to that, the missionaries saw Bahai as an approach to Islam, a

[723] *The Church Times,* May 24th, 1912, p.732
[724] *The Christian Commonwealth,* January 29th, 1913, pp.324-325. See Chapter 3.

way to make a connection they found mostly impossible, in their efforts to gain converts to Christianity. To the promulgators of the New Theology, engaged as they were in an endeavour to fashion a new religious framework, one which was liberal and universal in its appeal but nonetheless with Christianity at its core, Bahai might also have seemed, if not 'a solvent', an entrée, a means for connecting this new theodicy with religion of the 'East'. In the end, the strident criticism emanating from a fellow Christian (albeit an American one) labouring in the missionary field did nothing to dampen the close connection of the architects of the New Theology with a religious reformer from Persia. What is interesting is that the disposition of missionaries in Persia and figures such as Wilberforce and Campbell approximates while being subtly distinct. It could be said their viewpoints each issued from a position where no other religion could be regarded as on a par with Christianity while 'filter' and 'grid' operated in subtly different ways to highlight different aspects of Bahai teaching to suit different agendas.

That Easton's outburst of criticism went mostly unremarked is testimony that Abdul Baha's supporters in Britain would not accommodate the extremity of criticism. It also points up that the new liberal Protestant theodicy was not minded by criticism emanating from an evangelical constituency. The visit proceeded, punctuated by a number of prominent public appearances, a pattern repeated during Abdul Baha's second sojourn in Britain from the end of 1912. Newspaper coverage, led by *The Christian Commonwealth,* kept pace and Abdul Baha's days were filled with interviews and private and public meetings. One of his final public appearances was at the opening of Woking Mosque when he was invited to give an address to a broadly diverse group of supporters as the mosque was opened for public worship for the first time.[725] Yet these events, and more importantly the nature of the discourse underlying these encounters, the figures that promoted it and their reasons for doing so, have been elided from memory or are remembered in a particular way. Why and how this has transpired will form the core of the concluding chapter of this thesis.

[725] January 18th, 1913. See, Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield*, pp.155-156. The circumstances surrounding Abdul Baha's invitation to this event have not previously been investigated and will be the focus of a future paper.

Chapter 7- The Elision of Memory; Forgetting Aspects of Early Twentieth Century Discourse

The reception in Britain of religious figures from Asia at the turn of the twentieth century presents as a vibrant engagement with new ideas and philosophies. Yet, when considered in the light of subsequent scholarship bearing on this period and these figures, this discourse is either forgotten to history or appears as a footnote appended to accepted narratives describing the period's religious ferment. Why has the experience of prominent religious reformers in Britain been sublated and, in most cases, obscured in accounts of what was a rich and complex milieu? How is it that the visits of Abdul Baha to Britain, or indeed the visits of other prominent religious reforming figures from Asia, are rarely investigated in histories of this period? In this concluding chapter, I will endeavour to contextualize this elision from memory by juxtaposing the figures and events that have been examined in this thesis against ideas and theories developed around memory and 'forgetting'.

While seeking to draw on insights from a range of scholarly work connected to understanding history and historiography, I do not intend to enter into (at least directly) the contemporary debate relating to the study of religion and social memory. Allied to a growth in a general interest in 'memory', the study of religion has been influenced by a 'mnemonic turn'[726] in interpretation of the contested landscape of 'the past'. Daniele Hervieu-Leger's theory of religion as a chain of memory epitomises a very popular area of contemporary research.[727] A vibrant contestation of ideas around memory as a social phenomenon and its usefulness as a tool in the study of religions has ensued, mainly around the question of 'how religions remember' or "how religious communities are constructed through remembrance, and how they act in the process of remembering."[728] My focus will be on how and why particular, popular discourses around religion fell out of memory or have been 'forgotten', the complexities around how distinctive interactions between religious reformers have

[726] Borrowing from Stephen Heathorn and the title of his paper, "The Mnemonic Turn in the Cultural Historiography of Britain's Great War", in, *The Historical Journal*, 48, Issue 4, December, 2005, pp.1103-1124.

[727] Daniele Hervieu-Leger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory,* (Translated from *La religion pour memoire* by Simon Lee), New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000. See also, Maurice Halbachs, *On Collective Memory,* (Trans. by Lewis A. Coser), from *Les Cadres sociaux de la memoire* and from *La topographie legendaire des evangiles en terre sainte: Etude de memoire collective* (1941), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992. Hervieu-Leger is critiqued in Ron Geaves, "Forget Transmitted Memory: The De-traditionalised 'Religion' of Prem Rawat," in, *Journal of Contemporary Religion,* 24 (1), pp.19-33.

[728] A useful discussion can be found in, Tuula Sakaranaho, "Religion and the Study of Social Memory", in, *Temenos,* Vol. 47, No.2 (2011) pp.135-158. This quotation is from p.150.

garnered little attention.[729] This does not amount to a treatment on the fragmentation of the 'chain of religious memory' but, rather, that of memory around religion. The onset of the First World War, the contribution made to the construction of their own history by the chief protagonists themselves, the legitimation by repetition of incomplete assessments in later treatments; all were factors which contributed to 'forgetting' what transpired around particular discourses prior to the outbreak of hostilities.[730]

'Now Time' and 'Afterlife'

The work of Walter Benjamin (d.1940), and to a lesser extent that of Aby Warburg (d.1929), presages the contemporary interest in 'memory studies', the concept of remembrance and its link to history, the mnemonic aspect of history and historical aspects of memory and (closely connected) the act of 'forgetting'.[731] Though

[729] Sakaranaho argues that, though it goes hand in hand with memory, 'forgetting' as a concept is in need of further study. See, "Religion and the Study of Social Memory," p.151. Grace Davie examines religion as collective memory and its 'mutation' (following Hervieu-Leger). Though her analysis of secularisation and quest for new frameworks for analysing new religious realities in Europe is indeed interesting, her focus is mainly on institutions and traditions. See, *Religion Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Paul Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, is also a useful examination of how modern society affects our ability to remember events and places. The work of Pierre Nora, Paul Ricoeur and Marc Augé is often cited in the area of memory studies.

[730] I have in mind Campbell's autobiography, biographies relating to Wilberforce, Cheyne's writings, Tudor Pole's output (as well as their actions and pronouncements concerning the war), along with theological and religious histories of the period. All cited previously.

[731] Benjamin's work is now well known in English translation after many years of obscurity. Primary sources include; Hannah Arendt (Ed. - Trans. Harry Zohn), *Illuminations,* New York: Schocken Books, 1968, Howard Eiland & Kevin McLaughlin (Trans.), *The Arcades Project*, Cambridge, MA. & London: Belknap Press, 1999, Howard Eiland (Trans.), *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, Cambridge, MA. & London: Belknap Press, 2006, Howard Eiland et. al. (Trans.), *The Writer of Modern Life: Charles Baudelaire*, Cambridge, MA. & London: Belknap Press, 2006, Gershom Scholem (Ed.), *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem*, Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1989, Henri Lonitz (Ed.), *Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin: The Complete Correspondences 1928–1940*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, Gershom Scholem & Theodor W. Adorno (Eds.), *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin: 1910–1940*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1994, Gary Smith (Ed.), *Walter Benjamin: Moscow Diary*, Cambridge, MA. & London: Harvard University Press, 1986, John Osborne (Trans.), *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, London: Verso, 1998, J. A. Underwood (Trans.), *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2009, Howard Eiland & Michael W. Jennings (Ed.), *Selected Writings*, Cambridge, MA., & London: Harvard University Press, 1991–1999, Anna Bostock (Trans.), *Understanding Brecht*, London: Verso, 2003. There is an enormous secondary literature, amongst which the following have been referred to; T. W Adorno, 'A Portrait of Walter Benjamin', in *Prisms*, Cambridge, MA.: MIT., 1983, pp.227–242. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origins of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute*, Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, Cambridge, MA. & London: MIT Press, 1989, Jurgen Habermas, 'Walter Benjamin: Consciousness-raising or rescuing critique', in *Philosophical-Political Profiles* (Trans. Frederick G. Lawrence), Cambridge, MA. & London: MIT Press, pp.129–163, reprinted in Osborne 2005, I. pp.107–136, 1983, Ronal Beiner, 'Walter Benjamin's Philosophy of History' in, *Political Theory,* Vol.12, No.3 (Aug., 1984), pp.423-434, Tomoko Masuzawa, 'Tracing the Figure of Redemption: Walter Benjamin's Physiognomy of Modernity', in, *MLN,* Vol. 100, No.3, German Issue (April, 1985), pp.514-536, H.D. Kittsteiner (Trans. By Jonathan Monroe and Irving Wohlfarth), 'Walter Benjamin's Historicism', *New*

Benjamin is widely read across diverse academic contexts, there are very few treatments from the perspective of the study of religions. This is all the more remarkable given his influence and the controversy that at times surrounds his reception with respect to his religious and political ideation.[732] It is not necessary, in the context of this chapter, to attempt an exhaustive explication of the various aspects of the humanities with which Benjamin was concerned or the "plurality of methodological approaches"[733] that characterise his oeuvre. There are, though, some concepts arising from his work that can usefully be referred to here. Perhaps more illuminating will be an analysis of how these ideas have been dealt with in more recent scholarship by writers such as Jan Assmann, Wouter Hanegraaff and Koku von Stuckrad.

Benjamin's conception of 'now-time', as detailed in his short but influential *On the Concept of History*,[734] owes much to the Jewish tradition which emphasises remembrance. His gaze is directed very much towards the past for "nothing which has ever happened is to be given as lost to history."[735] In the guise of 'historical materialist', Benjamin rejects Leopold von Ranke's (d.1886) dictum on historiography; that it is possible to fully uncover the past, to articulate "how it really was."[736] Rather, we must take "control of a memory, as it flashes in a moment of danger,"[737] a moment when an authentic historical picture emerges, dissolving the notion that "history is uninterrupted 'progress'."[738] The task is to "brush history against the grain,"[739] conscious that the past is not a body of knowledge awaiting our discovery when we

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German Critique, No. 39, Second Special Issue on Walter Benjamin (Autumn, 1986), pp.179-215, Rolf Tiedemann, 'Historical Materialism or Political Messianism? An Interpretation of the Theses "On the Concept of History"', in, G. Smith (Ed.), *Walter Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics History,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, pp.175-209, Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin; An Aesthetic of Redemption*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994, Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience,* London: Routledge, 1998, Margaret Kohlenbach, *Walter Benjamin: Self Reference and Religiosity,* Basingstoke: Palgarve Macmillan, 2002, Michael Löwy (Trans. Chris Turner), *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'*, London & New York: Verso, 2005, John Lardas Modern, 'Walter Benjamin's 115th Dream', in , *Epoché: The University of California Journal for the Study of Religion,* (24) 2006, pp.113-160, and Samuel Weber, *Benjamin's-abilities,* Cambridge MA.: Howard University Press, 2008. For an interesting, unpublished, study of Benjamin and remembrance see, Adrian Wilding, *The Concept of Remembrance in Walter Benjamin*, PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1996. Accessed at, http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/4334/, on 4.7.2015 at 21.25.

[732] One study is, S. Brent Plate, *Walter Benjaminin, Religion, and Aesthetics,* Routledge: New York and London, 2005. Apart from Brent Plate's study, see also, Tomoko Masuzawa, *In Search of Dreamtime: The Quest for the Origin of Religion,* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993 and Margaret Kohlenbach, *Walter Benjamin: Self Referenance and Religiosity,* New York: Palgarve Macmillan, 2002. The Journal of the University of California, *Epoche,* devoted a special volume to Benjamin's memory. Richard J. Callahan Jr, (Ed.), Vol, 24, 1996.

[733] Wolin, *An Aesthetic of Redemption,* p.108.

[734] Sometimes referred to as, *Theses on the Philosophy of History.*

[735] Benjamin, *On The Concept of History,* p.4 (Thesis III).

[736] Ranke, quoted by Benjamin, *On The Concept of History,* p. 7 (Thesis VI).

[737] Benjamin, *On The Concept of History,* p.7 (Thesis VI).

[738] Löwy, *Fire Alarm,* p.44.

[739] Benjamin, *On The Concept of History,* p.9 (Thesis VII).

decide to direct our attention to it but is precarious and "whizzes by."[740] Concerns of the past intersect with those of the present, and both the past and the present are given life, for, as Benjamin avers, "it is an irretrievable picture of the past, which threatens to disappear with every present, which does not recognise itself as meant in it." [741] Lost fragments, forgotten "renderings of individuals that litter the past,"[742] must be accounted for in the present.

A corollary to the idea of 'now-time' is the notion that cultural artefacts have an 'afterlife' (*Nachleben)*.[743] The German art historian, Aby Warburg, first began to use the term in his writings to refer to the survival of a work of art, not necessarily in another 'life' but rather in the form of a 'continuation' or even a revival.[744] Benjamin developed his own specific iteration of the concept to underpin a radical new reading of history and historiography that posits "a symbolic afterlife of the past which continuously influences our own historical imagination and understanding."[745] Once removed from its moment of production, a work can find effect in different eras as it is reinterpreted, politically appropriated or drawn up in memory. It represents a discrete survival or continuation in history, where, in this paradigm, 'life' is considered as fundamentally historical and cultural.[746] The premise can also be interpreted as encompassing not only cultural artefacts but events and individuals, and the afterlife of their appearance within history in an ephemeral soteriology.[747] Benjamin was most concerned with the forgotten and marginalised in history, with their 'redemption' in order "to make whole what was shattered."[748] If we are to stretch the concept and juxtapose it against his theses on history, what Benjamin is suggesting is that those

[740] Benjamin, *On The Concept of History,* p.6 (Thesis V).
[741] Benjamin, *On The Concept of History,* p.6 (Thesis V).
[742] John Lardas Modern, "Walter Benjamin's 115th Dream", p.133.
[743] As evidence of the 'unfinished' quality to Benjamin's work, his study of nineteenth-century Paris, *The Arcades Project*, which occupied his attention during the 1930's, and the English edition of which runs to 925 pages, was left uncompleted. See, *The Arcades Project,* (Ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin), Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press, 2002.
[744] Warburg may not have been the originator of the term. For a discussion on Warburg and his espousal of the concept of afterlife, see, Aledia Assmann, "Theories of Cultural Memory and the Concept of 'Afterlife'," in, Marek Tamm (Ed.), *Afterlife of Events: Perspectives on Mnemohistory,* Basingstoke: Palgarve Macmillan, 2015, pp.79-84.
[745] Marek Tamm, *Afterlife of Events,* p.11.
[746] See, Daniel Weidner, "Life after Life; A Figure of Thought in Walter Benjamin", conference paper, Afterlife: Writing and Image in Walter Benjamin and Aby Warburg, Universida Federal Minais Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, October, 1912. Accessed at, http://www.zflberlin.org/tl_files/zfl/downloads/personen/weidner/life_after_life.pdf, on 9.6.2015 at 21.10.
[747] On Benjamin's use of the term in his later work, see, Daniel Weidner, "Life after Life; A Figure of Thought in Walter Benjamin", p.2. The case of Benjamin himself and the emergence of his reputation in the later decades of the twentieth century is an interesting example in itself of the principle articulated here. As well as appearing as a separate publication, Benjamin's 'Theses' can also be found in, Arendt, *Illuminations.*
[748] Beiner, "Walter Benjamin's Philosophy of History", pp.424-425.

who are lost to history, whose "fame" [749] has not been recognised, have been deprived of their afterlife. Just as a good translator will endeavour to ensure the text being translated should inflect its meanings and nuances in the translator's own language, rather than visa-versa, any assessment of historical events and figures requires that the historian inflect within the present a powerful rendition of the past, which is never finalised or finished but is constantly constructed or reconstructed in the present.[750] Benjamin alerts us to the vagaries of reception history though it is still not possible to draw on him in order to produce a complete rendering of what has happened in the past. Nor is it my concern here to articulate an 'holistic account' but rather to recover aspects of this discursive terrain that have been forgotten.

Mnemohistory and "A Dialectic of Rejection and Fascination"[751]

Building on theorists such as Benjamin, more recent scholarly treatments on memory and forgetting offer insights towards assaying the manner in which the afterlives of the events and figures featured in this thesis have been constituted. Jan Assmann coined the term 'mnemohistory' to articulate a way of examining how history "has lost its autonomy and derives its meaning increasingly from the present."[752] For Assmann, the separation of the past from the present is not simply related to the passage of time but is a matter of choice and transaction.[753] History is an ongoing process, active in the present, exercising a haunting, persistent influence. Assmann defines mnemohistory as follows;

> Unlike history proper, mnemohistory is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered. It surveys the story-lines of tradition, the webs of intertextuality, the diachronic continuities and discontinuities of reading the past. […] It concentrates exclusively on those aspects of significance and relevance which are the product of memory - that is, of a recourse to a past - and which appear only in the light of later readings.[754]

In Assmann's construct, "[m]nemohistory is reception history applied to history,"[755] but not simply how the past is received in the present but how it is influenced and reconstructed by what is happening in the here and now. The past has

[749] Benjamin, cited in, Gary Smith (Ed.), *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, p.47. The term is used in this instance ironically.
[750] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations,* p. 81.
[751] Von Stuckrad, "Esoteric Discourse and the European History of Religion", p.229.
[752] Marek Tamm, *Afterlife of Events: Perspectives on Mnemohistory,* London: Palgarve Macmillan, 2015, p.1.
[753] Tamm, *Afterlife of Events*, p.2.
[754] Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism,* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, p.9.
[755] Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian,* p.9. Cited in, Tamm, *Afterlife of Events*, p.3.

become more and more central in modern thinking, "a key concern for Western societies."[756] The future has lost something of its attraction and the past demands attention, no longer the province of specialists and historians; "[m]emory has leaked out of the domain of specialists and become everybody's business."[757] From the perspective of mnemohistory key questions concern knowledge of the past in the present, why one historical recounting is favoured over another, the use of the past to confer legitimacy on present or future plans, and, instead of attempting to discover what actually happened, to explore how "ways of construing the past enable later communities to constitute and sustain themselves."[758] Aleida Assmann uses the example of a 'suitcase' to describe cultural memory, a receptacle of narratives and images which groups and individuals dip into in order to choose specific items as required. The 'selection' of narratives or images from this reservoir bestows upon them their afterlife.[759]

Assmann's theoretical approach has attracted a great deal of comment, some from scholars working in the area of the study of religions, and this discussion can be juxtaposed against the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter.[760] Hanegraaff, for one, is anxious to make the distinction between 'historiography', to describe what happened in the past, as against 'mneomohistoriography', which endeavours to detail "the genesis and historical development of what a given culture *imagines* has happened."[761] He questions whether Assmann conceives mnemohistory as the *object* or the *method* of historical research. Von Stuckrad goes further in querying the utility of the 'mnemohistory' schema, critiquing "the vague differentiation, inherent in Assmann's interpretation, between historical data and tools of interpretation."[762] Citing another of Assmann's detractors, von Stuckrad

[756] Andreas Huyssen, "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia", in, *Public Culture,* 12, 1, 2000, p.21. Cited in, Aleida Assmann, "Theories of Cultural Memory and the Concept of Afterlife", in, Tamm, *Afterlife of Events*, p.80,

[757] Aleida Assmann, "Theories of Cultural Memory and the Concept of Afterlife", in, Tamm, *Afterlife of Events*, p.80,

[758] Marek Tamm, *Afterlife of Events,* p.4. Tamm is relaying ideas that originate in Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory", in, *Social Research* 75, 2000, pp.49-72 and, Alon Confino, "History and Memory", in, Axel Schneider and Daniel Woolf (Eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing. Vol 5. Historical Writing Since 1945,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp.36-51.

[759] Aleida Assmann, "Theories of Cultural Memory and the Concept of Afterlife", in, Tamm, *Afterlife of Events*, pp. 79-94. See, also, Peter Burke, "Afterthoughts on Afterlives", in, Tamm, *Afterlife of Events*, p. 262. Aleida Assmann further develops the concept of 'afterlife' to consider a shift of focus from afterlife to 'aftermath'. She explores how 'national memory' (now formulated) centres on 'trauma' instead of triumph, discusses the Holocaust as a paradigmatic 'impact event' and introduces a third concept, that of 'historical wounds', to support her contention.

[760] For one survey see, Eliza Slavet, "Review: A Matter of Distinction: On Recent Work by Jan Assmann" in, *AJS Review,* Vo. 34, No. 2 (Nov. 2010), pp.385-393.

[761] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Western Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p.375. Italics in the original.

[762] Koku von Stuckrad, "Esoteric Discourse and the European History of Religion: In Search of a New Interpretational Framework", in, *Western Esotericism*, Vol. 20, 2008, p.228.

plainly asks whether, in accepting mnemohistory as separate or independent from history, there is in fact enough 'historical evidence' to support the existence of such memory.[763] Western culture, he argues, has been shaped by the presence of 'alternative' religious experience and problematic formulations are not necessary in order to gain an understanding of the "polemical structure"[764] of the discourse around memory and forgetting. Von Stuckrad's goal is similar to Hanegraaff's in seeking "to break the power that traditional 'mnemohistorical' constructs exert over historiography, in the interest of a more neutral, less prejudiced, and factually more accurate perspective."[765] If they do not share exactly the same theoretical approach, both consider that the historical complexity of western culture embodies evidence of a rich religious dialogical interplay, a "pluralistic field of competing religious and ideological identities,"[766] which requires rediscovery.[767]

There are, as von Stuckrad intimates, challenges in applying these intellections to a given period, for example, how can we separate out data from methods of interpretation?[768] Accepting there is a mnemohistorical figuration describing the past invites us to oppose it with historiographical endeavour. Problematic is deciding where one ends and the other begins. This panoply of conceptual exploration, drawing from Benjamin and his pioneering focus on memory and remembrance, as well as Assmann's compelling discussion around mnemohistory, aids in drawing out some of the complexities at the heart of an appraisal of this era. A tentative summation, as applied to our specific theme, might be found in von Stuckrad's contention that Western culture "is characterized by a dialectic of rejection and fascination,"[769] a discursive movement employing "strategies of distancing" [770] to delete disesteemed narratives or images. This, he argues, has been the case in a European context over the last three hundred years. He rejects the commonly held perception that the history of religions in Europe is essentially the story of Christianity and its effects, its high points and low points. Rather, he discerns a more complex past mosaic of pluralist religious experience countering the hegemonic meta-narrative where religions, prominent or otherwise, only find their place in European history with respect to Christianity. Consideration of the discourse analysed in these pages in these

[763] Von Stuckrad, "Esoteric Discourse and the European History of Religion", p.229. Von Stuckrad is referencing, Peter Schafer, "Geschichte und Gedächtnisgeschichte: Jan Assmanns 'Mosaische Unterscheidung'", in, Birgit E. Klein & Christiane E. Müller (Eds.), *Memoria— Wege jüdischen Erinnerns. Festschrift Michael Brocke*, Berlin: Metropol, 2005, pp.19–39.
[764] Von Stuckrad, "Esoteric Discourse and the European History of Religion", p.230.
[765] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "The Trouble with Images", in, Olav Hammer and Kocku von Stuckrad (Eds.), *Polemical Encounters: Esoteric Discourse and Its Others,* pp. 111-112.
[766] Hanegraaff,"The Trouble with Images", p.109.
[767] Von Stuckrad considers Hanegraaff's approach imprecise in how it distinguishes between historical reality and mnemohistorical construction. For me, both theorists' commentary is illuminating as applied to this discourse. See, "Esoteric Discourse and the European History of Religion", p.229.
[768] Von Stuckrad, "Esoteric Discourse and the European History of Religion", p.229.
[769] Von Stuckrad, "Esoteric Discourse and the European History of Religion", p.229.
[770] Von Stuckrad, "Esoteric Discourse and the European History of Religion", p.229.

terms allows us to challenge its mnemohistorical reception while being mindful that it is not possible to arrive at an historical reading that depicts this period 'as it really was'. A nuanced review is suggested where historical narratives that have been forgotten or de-emphasised, for various reasons, are brought into focus.

There is a distinct 'memory' concerning what took place around the discourse under scrutiny in this thesis which does not accord with the new evidence presented here, an understanding which has been perpetuated and re-constituted in subsequent accounts and commentaries. This research seeks to capture those 'lost images and fragments' which cast the experience of figures such as Tudor Pole, Campbell and Wilberforce into sharp relief, especially as it relates to the discursive environment around the reception of Abdul Baha in Britain. The passage of time has privileged narratives around religious enquiry from around this period to depict those involved as idiosyncratic, quirky and peripheral figures, whose contribution to the mainstream (as with Campbell and Wilberforce) is acknowledged but with the necessary qualifier as to their 'extra-curricular' activities.[771] They are regarded mainly as 'troublemaking' liberal Protestant functionaries, pursuing contacts with different religions and philosophies while still maintaining their core beliefs as the 'status quo'. Campbell and Wilberforce are only recalled within the purlieus of the history of the Christian perturbation of the period. Cheyne is mostly unremembered. Though Tudor Pole went on to establish a career as a promoter of a New Age worldview, he is still considered as having acted within the context of a Christian paradigm. Likewise, the visits to Britain not only of Abdul Baha but also, it can be argued, Dharmapala, Vivekananda and Inyat Khan, are generally unremarked. More telling, the extent of the discourse being fashioned at that time remains unappreciated.

There are obvious pitfalls in endeavouring to recover a balanced and qualified assessment of this particular religious field at this remove. We must be cognisant that (as Benjamin argues) the past is subject to alteration as it is interpreted in the present.[772] "[H]istorical events are written in terms of what comes after them"[773] and it is the political reality of the present that can determine what is 'exploded' out of the past allowing for the recovery of "the lost other."[774] The motifs and themes at the centre of this study are all familiar and resonate in the present. Given the current environment where religions in the world and religious encounters are the focus of serious interest, retelling the story of these reformers may attract more interest today than it would heretofore. In pointing up how fertile a discursive milieu prevailed in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century, around the subject of religious thought, we may be tempted to blur focus in categorizing this discourse as retrospectively

[771] One could also argue similarly in the case of Carpenter and, to a lesser extent, Max Muller.
[772] Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience,* xi.
[773] Susan Bucks-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing,* p.338.
[774] Brent Plate, *Walter Benjamin, Religion, and Aesthetics,* p.37.

occupying an 'alternative' space. It was not that such a space then existed, counter-posed against conventional understandings, rather that ideas around religious and cultural interactions were attracting more and more attention (in many cases progressed by establishment figures pushing out the boundaries of the mainstream) and somewhat later became cast as 'alternative', more a figuration emerging in the 'here and now' of the 1960's. Care must be taken, therefore, that cultural sonority does not skew our view towards 'reading' into this narrative intentions and meanings that simply are not there. In terms of 'now time' and 'afterlife', this brief review of pertinent scholarly work may serve to deepen our enquiry to allow further exploration of the complexities surrounding why and how memory is constructed, as it applies to religious journeying in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century.

All of this commentary can be related to the re-evaluation of historical representation and the examination of competing religious discourses which over time produce 'contested' memories, central themes of this chapter. It is undeniable that a vibrant religious discourse was ongoing prior to the First World War, one which involved a wide range of reforming religious figures. The onset of war is the climacteric, the occasion for the disruption of this religious field. What is important now is to consider how the preceding arguments relate to 'remembering' events around the onset of the First World War such was the dramatic influence of that conflagration in collapsing worldviews and disrupting discursive causes. The war is the moment for the activation of von Stuckrad's dialectic leading to 'rejection' as applied to this discursive event. It is when these religious protagonists and their activities were ushered into their 'afterlife'.

Religion and War

The onset of war brought a jolting halt to many of the processes and discourses that promoted universalism and religious enquiry as the 'long nineteenth' century came to a dramatic conclusion. How this seminal event is reviewed and remembered is much debated and hotly contested. Apart from being regarded in catastrophic terms, questions have been raised as to the war's influence on European culture, its effect on modernism, whether it should be seen in terms of continuity or discontinuity, and (more lately) how the memory of war is shaped and received to promote representations that have political utility in the present.[775] While we will not

[775] As there is a vast literature around the outbreak, prosecution and aftermath of the war, I have limited my review mainly to issues of memory. The origins of the war is discussed in, Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War; Explaining World War One*, London: Basic Books, 1998, and Holger Helwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria Hungary, 1914-1918,* New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1998. Paul Fussell's, *The Great War and Modern Memory,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975, is the first discussion of 'memory' and the war, particularly how those who fought remembered and wrote after the event. Roland N. Stromberg, *Redemption by War; The Intellectuals and 1914*, Kansas: The Regents Press, 1982, is a critique of the cultural and intellectual connection to conflict, which, without reference or citation, has an almost 'Benjamin' type approach. See also, Richard Wohl, *The Lost Generation,* Cambridge MA:

be able to inquire as to the political priorities that exploded various understandings of the conflict out of the continuum of history, what we can say is that one of the legacies of the conflict and the reconstitution of its reception in various contexts is to obscure the nature of the fertile religious discourse that preceded it.

Roland N. Stromberg argues that it was the onset of modernity that inspired a reaction to anomie which became the basis for, if not the actual outbreak of hostilities, then the general enthusiastic support with which the war was initially greeted.[776] Powerful movements, he further argues, around the development of technology, urbanisation and capitalism, led to a dystopia where war was welcomed as a "moral substitute"[777] embraced in place of what was lost.

> The war had psychic explanations, but these are not of the order of hidden springs of malevolence; they involve, rather, a powerful thirst for identity, community, purpose- positive and, in themselves, worthy goals, perverted and misdirected but not poisoned at the springs.[778]

Stromberg's is but one contribution to the constitution of memory around 'the war to end all wars', to gaining acceptance for a universalizing narrative that reduces a very complex rupture in human affairs. But his analysis does point up that the

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Harvard University Press, 1979, and for more recent treatments, Stephen Heathorn, "The Mnemonic Turn in the Cultural Historiography of Britain's Great War", and, Daniel Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory,* New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007. In advance of the centenary of the War a number of new monographs have appeared (as well as a tremendous amount of print and digital media cover) concerning remembrance and the experience of war. Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, London: Penguin, 2013, is an insightful examination of the political reality in Europe before the war. There is, though, scarcely a reference to 'religion' or the culture of religion as it prevailed ante bellum in any of these volumes, apart from Stromberg and his detailing of Christian and Jewish support or otherwise on either side of the conflict. See, Stromberg, *Redemption by War,* pp.54-57. Only Philip Jenkin's dramatically titled, *The Great and Holy War: How World War 1 Changed Religion for Ever,* Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2014, examines the event from the perspective of religion and I will refer to that volume later. Much about the historiography of the war is contested. See, Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

[776] This point is made both by Stromberg, *Redemption by War,* p.198, and Todman, *The Great War*, p. 221. For Clark, his book title, *The Sleepwalkers* is self-explanatory. Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, posits that the reaction to war was more nuanced and complex and changed over time and Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, challenges the assertion that there was general enthusiasm for war in Germany in 1914. What seems to be common in all accounts is that most intellectuals, politicians, artists and clergy gave initial support on both sides. The reaction amongst the general public can be gauged, perhaps, in the large numbers of young men who immediately signed up to 'do their duty'. There was growing opposition as the war progressed but it was, at least at the outset, marginal. Even the vehemently anti-war Second International, the foremost pacifist grouping of the era, capitulated and supported the conflict. See, George Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War; The Collapse of the Second International,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972 and, R. Craig Nation, *War on War: Lenin, the Zimmerwald Left, and the Origins of Communist Internationalism*, Chicago, IL. : Haymarket Books, 2009.

[777] Stromberg, *Redemption by War,* p.191.

[778] Stromberg, *Redemption by War,* p.191.

contemporary view of the period before the war has been somewhat distorted. The reality is, that though certainly different, 'that' world was much more 'modern' than later constructions of that epoch might suggest. It was an age of transnational exchange, we might say 'globalisation'.[779] Yet, the sense abides that those who embroiled their age in a disastrous enterprise were inhabitants of a vanished, alien world of "effete rituals and gaudy uniforms,"[780] a quaint and eccentric period, ultimately fatuous. The perception of the prevailing cultural scene in 1914 is still, one hundred years later, a 'work in progress'.

The First World War is rarely considered from the perspective of the study of religions and its effect on various discourses around religions in vogue beforehand. In his monograph, *The Great and Holy War; How World War 1 Changed Religion Forever,* Philip Jenkins contends that the war utterly altered the world's religious landscape.[781] It was, he writes, "a thoroughly religious event in the sense that overwhelmingly Christian nations fought each other in what many viewed was a holy war, a spiritual conflict."[782] In effect, according to Jenkins, Christian leaders on both sides gave "an absolute religious underpinning to warfare conducted by states that were seen as executing the will of God,"[783] and this was mostly positively received by a populous highly religiously orientated. His research displays the interweaving and utilization of Christian imagery and millenarian expectation in the prosecution of the war and its use to maintain morale on the home front and in the trenches. If his overall argument is somewhat overstated, Jenkin's does highlight that although the main combatants were Christian nations each convinced that God was on their side, there were also consequences for religions in the world in general, and adherents of other religions became involved.[784] Yet, his characterization of pre-war interest in esoteric ideas and religious movements as "a golden age for the fringe"[785] is hardly nuanced nor is his assertion that "alternative currents collectively represented a rival orthodoxy to the mainstream faiths."[786] Portraying Theosophy as an "Anglo American concoction"[787]

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[779]For example, economic interactions were so progressed that, measuring the world integration of real economies, the export ratio of production peaked in the year 1913 at a level still not matched all these years later. See, Ankie Hoogvelt, "Globalisation, Exclusion and the Politics of Resistance" in, *Ante Podium,* an Antipodean electronic journal of world affairs published by the Department of Politics at Victoria University of Wellington [2/97]). Accessed at, http://www.victoria.ac.nz/atp/articles/ArticlesWord/hoogvelt-1997.doc, on 16.7.2015, at16.50.

[780] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, Introduction, xxv. Clark cites Barbara Tuchman's, *Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914,* London: Macmillan, 1966, as an example of a "distancing approach to the pre-1914 world."

[781] New York: Lion Hudson, 2014.

[782] Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War,* pp.4-5.

[783] Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War,* p.14.

[784] Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War,* p. 5.

[785] Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War,* p.16.

[786] Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War,* p.16.

[787] Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War,* p. 151.

and Blavatsky as "yet another Russian guru"[788] is hackneyed and does not do justice to the rich cultural and religious coaction that prevailed before the war. To describe the war in Jenkin's terms as fundamentally a 'Christian' event is likewise somewhat simplistic. It does hint at the gravity and enormity of the crisis from an institutional Christian perspective. That it was primarily a strife between rival Christian powers represented a tremendous psychological blow to those who espoused an interest in a broader religious worldview and who also held a vision of a future 'super-Christianity' eventually ushering in a peaceful world. Simultaneously, we might view their support of the war effort as a continuity of religious fervour where resolution of the ills of the age were seen to require a 'religious' solution which, though, involved foreswearing past allegiances.

Memory of the war has been reconstructed and reconstituted at various points in time and in the light of subsequent happenings, such that it's afterlife is at onetime more and at another less relatable to the factuality of what occurred. But amongst the casualties, in a maelstrom where all discourses were disrupted and all proponents greatly affected, memory of the pre-War universalist, irenic worldview, which welcomed interaction with religions from Asia (albeit from the viewpoint that Christianity was always in the ascendancy), was tempered. It is not simply that this discourse and its protagonists were purposefully written out of the religious history of the period by later commentators who employed their own 'filters' and 'accepted grids', though that was a contributory factor. The combination of how the cultural memory of the entire period was negotiated is much more a mosaic of interlacing crises and their effect. How strategies were employed to distance or delete this discourse is not straightforward. One such complicating factor is the behaviour of the protagonists of this discourse themselves who suffered what might be termed a 'crisis of values' with the onset of war.[789] Ideals of world religious unity and peace as part of liberal Protestant advancement, which included an approach to religions in Asia, were easily subordinated to nationalist credos of 'king and country'. The optimism around hopes for world peace, achieved through a reconciliation of religions, was well and truly extinguished.

The consequence was that these figures, through their subsequent actions and pronouncements, slanted the construction of their own historical afterlife. That these accounts were repeated uncritically in later assessments prejudiced acknowledgement that there was a much broader discussion in train and consigned to historic footnote not only the contribution of the proponents of this worldview, but also those who had collaborated with and supported them. Ironically, therefore, though Abdul Baha was often referred to as the 'Peace Prophet' and in many of his presentations warned

[788] Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War,* p.151.
[789] I am grateful to Dr. James Kapalo for his insights on this aspect in the course of a number of helpful discussions.

against impending conflict, in most cases the champions of his reception in Britain transferred their fervour to the war effort, its objectives and raison d'être.[790] The experience of Campbell, Wilberforce and Tudor Pole with respect to the war may be instructive in elucidating how their own actions and reactions lent much to the constitution of a new narrative to describe the era.

Religious Reformers at War

Most of those home-grown religious figures considered here took a leading part in supporting Britain's participation in the war.[791] Their involvement with that great upheaval overshadowed later assessments of their previous work and suppressed the continuation of the type of discourse as represented in the Deans Yard gathering at Westminster (in 1907) concerning the Glastonbury Cup. The host of that gathering, Archdeacon Wilberforce was quick to promote the idea of a 'just war'. Having conducted the daily devotions in the House of Commons as chaplain to the Speaker of Parliament over many years, and been centrally involved in the ceremony at all great state occasions, Wilberforce could hardly do otherwise and he no longer spoke in terms of peace and unity. Like so many in the establishment, family members quickly volunteered for military service and within a short time his only son and two nephews were on active duty on the western front. A few days after the declaration of war he preached at Westminster Abbey to a large gathering of soldiers and officers, one thousand in number, and just how narrow his vision had become can be gauged from the sermon he delivered that day. "There is such a thing as a righteous war," he opined,

> If there ever was a righteous war it is the present conflict with Germany […] It may sound like a contradiction in terms, but in such a struggle as that before us now, you are positively obeying God by killing men.[792]

Wilberforce's death during the early years of the war deprive us of a later perspective of how he may have viewed the conflict and the effect it had on his abandonment of irenic and cross-religious interests. Consequently, his life has been assessed purely in terms of mainstream Christianity given his high ecclesiastical and political positions within the established Church. His pursuits outside of Christianity are rarely mentioned and only then when characterised as evidence of idiosyncrasy and

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[790] See, for example, Balyuzi, *'Abdul-Bahá,* p.349 which cites a report in the London *Weekly Budget* of December 8th, 1912, which announces his return to Britain and relates that "Abdul Baha is known the world over as the Peace Prophet."

[791] Cheyne's qualified support for the war is detailed earlier. Carpenter's view of the war can be gauged by his description of the conflict as "horrible" in a letter to a friend, though he does intimate that this characterisation is one that he would not openly articulate. Cited in, Hereford, *Joseph Estlin Carpenter,* p. 89.

[792] Sermon at Westminster Abbey, "The Battle of the Lord", August 9th, 1914. Cited in, Russell, *Basil Wilberforce,* p.163.

quirkiness. In this way, Wilberforce is part constructor of his own 'fame', his own afterlife. But it is only a successful construction in that this life-version has been accepted uncritically over time as the complete story, without reference to the broader field of religious enquiry with which he was engaged. His involvement in events and activities before the war merits scant analysis.

Similarly, Campbell resiled from his central involvement in the New Theology reform movement and the positions he had taken in his avant-garde role in reaching out to religions from Asia. His fragile constitution came under acute stress as the war began, reaching a crisis with his defection from Congregationalism in 1915. Though ill, Campbell took up the British cause with energy and gusto as war was declared. Even if some of his acolytes from the New Theology movement considered its tenets to be essentially pacifistic, Campbell proceeded to encourage Free Church support for the war. Pointedly, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer (and future Prime Minister), David Lloyd George, chose Campbell's City Temple as the venue for his first public statement on the war.[793] Campbell put pen to paper to lend the force of his reputation to the British war effort and actually went to the western front in France to observe the conflict at first hand. He, reportedly, exercised a profound effect on the troops he ministered to during this and subsequent visits, and "became convinced of the need for Christian unity."[794] That Christians should be joined in such a conflict was deeply disturbing to him and his focus became fixed on intra-Christian relations. It was during the war that Campbell re-joined the Anglican Church, taking up ministry, never again to seek the limelight or occupy a prominent public position as before. Abjuring all past interests, and committing to the Established Church at this time, can be seen as an expression of nationalist fervour and the culmination of the unwinding of his previous persona. To what extent this was mediated by illness is difficult to assay but the horrors of war must have diminished his hope in a future world characterised by religious unity. In his autobiography, published in 1916, he expounded on his religious journey omitting mention of all past interests and allegiances.[795] It is no surprise that his work is considered almost exclusively in terms of a contemporary Christian discourse, without any attention given to his efforts to reach out to religions and philosophies from Asia, as a component of his 'New Theology'.[796] In this way, Campbell also contributes greatly to the construction of his own afterlife.

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[793] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* p.146. On the career of Lloyd George see, Travis B. Crosby, *The Unknown Lloyd George; A Statesman in Conflict*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2014. Lloyd George became a central figure in Britain during and after the First World War.

[794] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* p.146. For Campbell on the war see, *With Our Troops in France*, London; Chapman & Hall, 1916, *The War and The Soul,* London: Chapman & Hall, 1916, and *A Letter to an American Friend,* New York: George H. Doran, 1918.

[795] R.J. Campbell, *A Spiritual Pilgrimage*.

[796] As cited in Chapter 5, almost all treatments of Campbell exclude his wider interests. Exceptions are, Osborn, *Religion and Relevance,* Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield* and, Balyuzi, *'Abdul-Bahá*.

Tudor Pole had been spared direct involvement in the war as his company supplied ration biscuits to the army and he was deemed to occupy a 'reserved occupation'. His lectures and writings from this period express optimism that the conflagration would lead to a better, more peaceful future but also accent the application of his 'spiritualist' inclinations to the matter of war dead and their journey to a higher consciousness.[797] When asked about the transition of the souls of those who gave their lives for their country, Tudor Pole responded that "[t]he way is undoubtedly being made simpler and less tragic for those who are giving up their lives for a great ideal."[798] Such pronouncements indicate support for the war but Tudor Pole went further and, in late 1916, gave up his special employment status to enlist in the army, convinced he could better assist as a 'spiritualist' on the front line. Training first as a regular soldier and then transferred to officer training, he was assigned to General Allenby's army in Egypt. He saw action, was wounded and in 1918 transferred to an administrative position as Director of Occupied Enemy Territory administration, with intelligence and administrative duties, based in Cairo.[799]

During the early 1930's, Tudor Pole again promoted the idea of three different spiritual centres in Britain and Ireland (Avalon, Iona and the 'Holy Isle of the West'), spending time on Devenish Island on Lough Erne which he had identified as the great spiritual centre of Ireland.[800] He embarked on further quests to authenticate the Glastonbury Cup and published extensively on 'spiritualist' matters. [801] During the Second World War he achieved some public recognition for his association with the 'Big Ben Silent Minute' campaign, where the BBC broadcast the chimes of Big Ben at nine each evening followed by a silent minute of prayer for peace.[802] Appreciation of Tudor Pole's work rests on a longer continuum of production, given his longevity, through a variety of periods. His importance to the New Age movement has been earlier remarked and it is perhaps only in this 'here and now' that we can more fully appreciate the scope and depth of his contribution to discourse around religion at the turn of the twentieth century. He played a central role in the purchase and development of the Chalice Well pilgrimage centre in Glastonbury. Extensive gardens now surround the chalybeate well on a site resting between Glastonbury Tor and Chalice Hill. The main building contains an 'Upper Room' reflecting a core Christian

[797] See for example his book, *The Great War; Some Deeper Issues,* London: G. Bell, 1915.
[798] Cited in, Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole,* p.70.
[799] Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole,* p.94. There is no evidence that Tudor Pole chose the Middle Eastern theatre of operations. It was in Egypt that his path again crossed with that of Abdul Baha. Ibid., p.83.
[800] Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole,* pp.171-176.
[801] For a list of publications see, Fenge *The two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole,* pp.227-231.
[802] See, Villiers, *Wellesley Tudor Pole,* pp. 16-18 and Steven J. Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices*, London: Routledge, 2003, pp.91-92. The practice only concluded in 1961.

orientation and it is here that the Glastonbury Cup was on view for many years.[803] It has become a popular centre for eclectic religious expression and attracts thousands of visitors each year.[804]

Conclusion

The question as to why these significant religious encounters have been eclipsed is important to address. For Benjamin, those lost to historical memory must not be forgotten. But there are complicating factors that bear on any assessment of their afterlife. If we can agree with Benjamin that it is not possible to fully uncover the past to articulate exactly how it was, we are still faced with numerous complexities in theorizing the recovery of lost aspects of the history of religions from around this period. Exploration of the vagaries of historical remembering from Benjamin through Assmann to Hanegraaff, points us to Von Stuckrad's contention that Western culture has witnessed a dialectic of 'rejection and fascination' with respect to certain discourses and events, casting some into obscurity. Von Stuckrad argues for a more nuanced interpretation of history, highlighting the complexities of interlocking trends and themes, the imbricated nature of historiographical output with respect to religions and culture. From this vantage point, it is not necessary for us to be concerned that we arrive at an outcome that fully captures how 'it really was'. More illuminating is the effort to unravel 'why' and 'how' certain facets of the narrative relating to this religious field are legitimated and others rejected. The actions of the protagonists themselves, allied to later legitimation through repetition, went a long way towards fashioning the narrative of what transpired. Still, 'fascination' with this discourse did not beget 'rejection' without the intervention of a climacteric of enormous proportions. The impact of the onset of war created a 'crisis of values' for those engaged in transnational religious encounters. A growing wave of nationalist fervour overtook them.

It would not have been easy, if at all possible, to counter the national mood that swept Britain into war. At the outset, conscientious objectors numbered but a few and most of the leading intellectuals of the day, poets and novelists, religious leaders and clergymen on both sides of the conflict (at least initially), considered the war a necessity for "the moral regeneration of Europe."[805] Even the British suffragists, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst "switched their formidable wrath from native

[803] The Cup is not on open display as threats to its security have been received by the Trust authorities and its location is now kept secret. In July, 2013, the Chalice Well custodians kindly arranged for me to have a private viewing of the Cup.
[804] See, Fenge, *The Two Worlds of Wellesley Tudor Pole,* p.235 and Chalice Well Trust, *Chalice Well: The Story of a Living Sanctuary*.
[805] Max Scheller, cited in, Stromberg, *Redemption by War,* p.2. No reference given.

targets to the Huns, and became themselves the most chauvinist of all."[806] If peace activism and conscientious objection did begin to attract support, in 1914 this was decidedly a minority view. By 1915 there were still more men voluntarily joining up to go to war than could be equipped.[807] At the war's end the overarching sense was one of pride in the heroism of soldiers, satisfaction with a victory finally achieved (on the British side), and to propose a counter view would have merited opprobrium, though of course the world and its political situation had changed for ever.[808]

Most of the religious reformers who received Abdul Baha in Britain, and engaged in a universalist and irenic discourse, took active roles in supporting the war effort. For them this involved very public support for king and country, acclaiming the conflict a 'just war' underwritten by Christian principle and belief. Wilberforce, abnegating all previous interests, called young soldiers to arms from the pulpit of Westminster Cathedral. Such pronouncements may have been common place for religious figures in 1914 but in Wilberforce's case represents something of a *volte face*. The conflict took on the guise of a moral imperative, a quest for 'redemption' and spiritual catharsis with religious leaders giving the enterprise their full support. In that sense, there is a recognisable continuity in the activities of religious reformers in Britain as the war began, even if their religious fervour and pioneering spirit was now transferred to the service of an unbridled nationalism.

Campbell's retreat from public life and lack of any discoverable comment or reflection on his part, aside from his 1916 autobiography, presents a difficult conundrum. He lived until 1956 having instructed that all his personal papers be destroyed after his death. There is much evidence which points to his deep engagement with various elements of a broad contemporary discourse on religious and social ideas, other than traditional Christianity, though these aspects of his activities and interests are rarely mentioned in histories. It can be argued that Campbell's New Theology movement sought to affirm aspects of new philosophies

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[806] Stromberg, *Redemption by War,* p.3. Stromberg fails to mention that Emmeline's daughter and Christabel's sister, Sylvia, a close suffragist collaborator was an active opponent of the war. See, Barbara Winslow, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Sexual Politics and Political Activism*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. Another prominent suffragist, Charlotte Despard, was also a leading pacifist and helped found the Women's Peace Crusade. See, Mulvihill, *Charlotte Despard.*

[807] See, A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War: An Illustrated History,* London: Penguin, 1963, p.114. "The most startling political development of the year [1915] was the move towards compulsory military service in Great Britain. This was not due to any shortage of men. On the contrary, more volunteers were coming forward than could be equipped. Parliament and the politicians wanted to do something active to aid the war; and conscription seemed the way to do this." War opposition by Quakers, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, socialists and others has been well documented. See, for example, Vera Brittain, *The Rebel Passion: A Short History of Some Pioneer Peacemakers*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964, Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Tims, *Pioneers for Peace: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1965*, London: WILPF, 1980, and Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism 1860-1920- The Transformation of a Religious Community,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

[808] Todman, *The Great War*, p.222.

and other religions as essential components of its evolving perspective, and this in effort to become the new overarching Christianity foreshadowed by Max Muller. In this context the newly fashioned theodicy was not adverse to operating its own 'epistemological filter', or applying an 'accepted grid' with respect to philosophies, ideas and movements to which it sought to be connected. Robbins considers Campbell's autobiography important as it casts an "interesting light on the cross-currents of Edwardian religious life,"[809] which of course it does not. A cursory look at the period before the war with respect to the 'cross currents of Edwardian religious life' tells a different story, a story with Campbell as one of its central figures. Accepting his retrospective analysis of the epoch in his autobiography, subsequent commentators have marginalised his role and at the same time diminished the importance and scope of the discourse he engaged with. Privileging a narrative which locates Campbell as a failed reformer within a purely Protestant context not only distorts appreciation of his influence (even if that was his wish) but also diminishes the contribution of his co-agents who pursued a universalist religious discourse. The idea that he had been the epicentre of a putative reform movement that rose and fell in line with his fortunes has become the received view of the entirety of what transpired. In this way, not only is Campbell's afterlife skewed in its representation but the rich interplay of religious ideas involving many others is distanced.

Tudor Pole joined up and saw action in North Africa and Palestine. He continued to have a connection with the Bahai leader after the war, while still pursuing his quest to authenticate the Glastonbury cup. Involved in ensuring Abdul Baha's safety when British forces took Haifa (where Abdul Baha lived) at the end of the First World War, his connection waned after Abdul Baha's death and the provisions for discreet Bahai organisational development were implemented by his successor.[810] Before he died, in 1968, he wrote about his connection to Abdul Baha in response to queries from a new generation of Bahais who were only then becoming aware of the extent of his involvement.[811] His reflections are modulated by his many years of experience as a religious 'specialist', moving in a now more sharply defined 'alternative' milieu. He did not consider, he reflected, that Abdul Baha was establishing a separate 'religion', though establishment of Bahai agencies of administration was "not incompatible with what Abdul Baha conveyed to me."[812] The period before Abdul Baha's passing he likened to early Christianity when the distinction between old and new schemes of organisation and adherents was not yet apparent. Tudor Pole's recollections, while reflecting on his understanding of Abdul

[809] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain,* p.133.
[810] On Tudor Poles relationship with Abdul Baha, see, *Writing on the Ground,* pp.140-171. On the development of the Bahai Faith after Abdul Baha's passing in 1921, see, Ruhiyyih Khanum, *The Priceless Pearl*, London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1969.
[811] *The Writing on the Ground,* pp.135-166, published in the year of his death.
[812] Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground,* p.172.

Baha's position as a religious figure, direct us back once more to the starting point from which he struck out on his quest; he considered "Jesus' advent in our midst was and is a unique event in world history, an event that is as real and availably present today as it ever was."[813] This statement reflects once again the application of 'filter' and sets out the parameters for an 'accepted grid', the theoretical thread linking the 'learned' and the 'curious' as they fashioned a field of religious enquiry at the turn of the twentieth century in Britain. Even given his broad and eclectic life-interests, Tudor Pole also contributes to blurring focus while reflecting on the discursive event by characterising it in retrospect in terms of how 'everything' relates to central themes in Christianity.

It is, therefore, challenging to properly assay the contribution of these personalities and their legacy. Though they were at the heart of a dynamic process of investigation and debate, progressive thinkers and fully engaged in a vibrant intellectual, social and religious milieu, they were also of their time, their minds "formed by the culture of their age and previous ages […] interpreting what they [had] extracted from their sources, principles of selection, emphasis and arrangement derived from the ideas and convictions their lives [had] taught them."[814] This does not explain why they have, for the most part, been consigned to mention only in the footnotes of history. We must admit that, to a great extent, these supporters of an irenic and universalist worldview did much to create their own afterlife, even if later observers chose not to look behind the construction of new personas forged in the face of their 'crisis' as the worst conflagration the world had hitherto experienced caught them in its maelstrom.

[813] Tudor Pole, *Writing on the Ground,* p.144.
[814] Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*, p.1. Hourani is referring to scholars working during this period but his comments, I think, are generally applicable.

Conclusion - "Not to Hold On To What We Already Know Well Enough"[815]

While in Britain, various celebrated religious figures from Asia engaged in a discourse on religion and its relevance in the modern world. As reforming leaders, they stood outside the conventional religious framework of their own traditions. They presented a critical analysis of the role of religion in relation to the dominant themes in the discourse of the day and reflected at least some of the intellectual and ideological concerns of those who hosted them. Except for Abdul Baha, all emerged from a British colonialist setting and configured their religious self-identification, precarious with respect to their traditions of origin, to present an imbricated representation of the 'mystic East'.[816] To people in Britain at this time, the East meant predominantly India and this 'East' meets 'West' was not a straight forward preliminary encounter between eastern mysticism and modernity but had more complex undertones of a re-visitation of orientalist constructions of eastern religion in a new, differentiated formulation, tied to politicised conceptions of nationalist identity.[817] Abdul Baha emerged from a different background, hailed from Persia, and prior to coming west was a detainee for most of his life in an Ottoman penal colony. If the other mentioned religious reformers, Vivekananda, Dharmapala and Inyat Khan, are at least well known and their activities documented, little has been written outside of Bahai circles about Abdul Baha's time in Britain, though his visit attracted a great deal of attention and leaders of thought sought him out. The reception of Abdul Baha, while undoubtedly discrete, may still exemplify a category and support the claim for significance for other like interactions. My study points up approaches that might usefully be adopted in the analysis of those encounters which have yet to be fully investigated. In particular, the role played by home-grown religious reformers, who facilitated similar engagements, could usefully be assessed.

Given my own Bahai background and affection for the history of religions, Abdul Baha's travels west have long been a personal interest. It has hitherto been factors associated with the genesis and development of a group or community of Bahais, subsequent to these visits to Britain, which have been the focus of my attention.[818] In presenting this survey I have endeavoured to analyse the broader discourse being prosecuted around religion which welcomed the participation of one

[815] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Western Academy,* p.379.
[816] See, Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and the Mystic East,* London: Routledge, 1999, p.142.
[817] See, Terence Thomas, "East Comes West", in, *The British; Their Religious Beliefs and Practices 1800-1986*. Thomas remarks that in general terms, at this time, the 'East' pre-eminently referred to India.
[818] For a treatment on the development of the Bahai community in Britain see, Lil Osborn, *Religion and Relevance*.

of the first missionary travellers to arrive from Asia. The aim was to consider the matter through the eyes of those 'journeying outside of traditional Christianity' and to recover a more complex and nuanced remembering of events, interests and activities. In one sense, as per Benjamin, this can be described as an exercise of translation.[819] Even to the extent that language norms, word usages and meanings, concepts and their understanding, are all greatly altered over time within a common language, reading the past in the present necessitates going back to "primal elements […] to penetrate to the point where work, image, and tone converge."[820] These reflections advise caution in my own attempted 'exercise in translation' in the course of this thesis. I have sought to depict an accurate and fair representation of a discursive milieu and a particular field of religious enquiry, conscious that 'memory' of this period is complex and contested. Endeavouring to capture the cadences of this discourse, and 'inflect' them into a contemporary account, I am cognizant that this 'translator' will have performed his work from out of his own experience and perspective. As such he is subject to all the attendant pit-falls so that this work cannot be considered as 'complete'. I have been encouraged to proceed by the realisation that this analysis has not previously been attempted.

The picture that has emerged is one of a vibrant field of religious enquiry promoted by a number of key, influential figures and involving many others in a web of connections across religious ideas and philosophies. These events, these figures and the epoch they inhabited, I have argued, require reassessment. My research has found that this religious journeying was mediated through the application of an 'epistemological filter' and 'accepted grid' and from the perspective of 'affirmative Orientalist' inclinations. It is my contention that this same overall, intellectual underpinning was carried through to undergird most if not all the 'East-West' encounters under review, whether consciously or otherwise, as a common assumptive approach. Even so, this period is much misunderstood as is the nature of the field of religious enquiry then fashioned, a construct that resonates with contemporary interests and pursuits. There has been no investigation of these actors' esoteric pursuits, the articulation of an irenic and universalist worldview which collapsed at the outbreak of the First World War. Nor have the reasons for this 'distancing' in the historical record been parsed to consider why these events and personalities were cast into a liminal obscurity.

Understanding the Intellectual and Religious Context

The journeys of Abdul Baha took place against the backdrop of two interconnected crises; the 'Victorian crisis of faith' and the crisis of colonialism in

[819] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", in, *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt (Ed. - Trans. Harry Zohn), New York: Schocken Books, 1968, pp.69-83.
[820] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations,* p.81.

Asia.[821] Understanding the intellectual and religious context against which these events played out was centrally important in the development of my thesis. At the outset, I problematized what is generally understood about the 'crisis of faith' to outline how responses to evangelical fervour in the midst of a religiously charged milieu resulted in the articulation of new 'theodical' frameworks. These new religious schemas welcomed encounters with a range of philosophies and ideas outside of traditional Christianity. Indeed, for some commentators, one prominent response to an overarching period of intense religiosity was a distinct effort to fashion a new 'reformation', a radical paradigmatic shift for Protestant Christianity, the dominant religious context. It was a framework which actively sought contact with other religions.

It has been important, allied to an explication of the period's 'crisis of doubt', to inquire into the pioneering work of scholars who at that time were attempting to clarify a tentative 'scientific' approach to the study of religions, elaborating intellections which greatly influenced religious enquiry. This period marks the birth of the academic interest in the study of 'comparative religion' and the engagement of scholars with religions and philosophies other than Christianity. The work of Friederich Max Muller and Joseph Estlin Carpenter has been surveyed as both contributed to establishing a basis for encounters with religions from Asia, the promotion of a putative 'dialogue of religions' and interfaith links. The work of Max Muller is well known, if his reputation has somewhat faded. Even so, his enormous contribution to the earliest forays in the field of the study of religions is highly regarded. For his part, Carpenter is almost totally anonymous in the present, though the breadth of his learning and his contribution to the new discipline of 'comparative religion', across publications and in his role as Principal of Manchester College, Oxford, was unique and won him much respect in his own time.[822] Max Muller was dead before Abdul Baha arrived in Britain, though his writings and work no doubt influenced those who were prominent during the visits. Carpenter was an admirer of Bahai and welcomed Abdul Baha to Manchester College, Oxford, in late 1912.

Max Muller, in articulating a respectful and academically grounded approach to religions outside of Christianity, still considered that the religion of the future would approximate to some form of 'super-Christianity'. Carpenter likewise, while producing new and avant-garde materials around Buddhism and other non-Christian religions, regarded Christianity as a pleroma. Their theoretical framework becomes

[821] See, David L. McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, p.113. McMahan is speaking specifically about the development of the discourse on scientific Buddhism and the role of Angarika Dharmapala. Sydney Eisen describes the 'crisis' thus; "Science and religion, more precisely science and theology, were deemed to be 'in conflict', the battle lines clearly drawn […]" See, *Victorian Faith in Crisis*, p.1.

[822] The Carpenter Papers archive is held at Harris-Manchester College, Oxford and through the kind hospitality of the authorities there I have been able to consult this resource.

clear when set against their contributions to the World's Parliament of Religions, and the operation of constructs such as 'epistemological filter' and 'accepted grid' during that seminal event. Another theoretical concern to emerge from the occasion of the Parliament was to what extent these encounters could be seen through an 'Orientalist' lens. Fox's argument that theories of Orientalism can depend upon "an exaggeration […] of cultural differences and separate histories"[823] seemed particularly apt, and his assertion that by the turn of the twentieth century this 'separation' of histories was less a factor, appropriate to these encounters. Cultures were becoming more intersected, yet still predicated by what he terms 'affirmative Orientalism'.

Attitudes to Islam reflect the selectivity of the new 'comparative' approach. This particular 'fault line' in the elaboration of the new discipline has particular resonance with respect to the reception of Abdul Baha who hailed from an Islamic background but whose religion was identified as being separate and independent. The Third Congress on the History of Religion, convened during 1908 with Carpenter as chief organiser, presents a relevant case study pointing up tensions associated with the new discipline and its interface with religions from Asia. This was the first academically oriented conference dealing with 'comparative religion' to take place in Britain, held in Oxford in honour of the memory of Max Muller and attended by most of the era's leading scholars concerned with religions. In parsing the contributions of participants and the composition and emphases of the programme, it becomes evident that a complex of filter and grid permeated the organisation of this seminal event. Approaches to Islam and the inclusion of a presentation on Bahai are also indicative of attitudes held in common by actors across the field. Various views prevailed centred around two distinct attitudes with respect to Islam. It was considered in some circles as a 'false religion', feared as a competitor of Christianity, containing nothing new or innovative. Conversely, the idea that Islam demanded respect as a force in history, that Muhammad was "a great man" [824]and an important historical influence, also held sway. Interest in Bahai at this time was, to some extent, mediated by attitudes to Islam and the impression that it provided a 'safe' approach to religion in Asia.

If examination of the intellectual milieu yields a tripartite theoretical armature of 'epistemological filter', 'accepted grid' and 'affirmative Orientalism', analysis of two further related responses to the religious ferment of the age has allowed for important points of reference to be scoped out. One is the birth and efflorescence of a 'Celticist' movement and the other a liberal Protestant popular agitation for reformation led by the most well-known and charismatic religious figure of his

[823] Richard G. Fox, "East of Said", p.146.
[824] D.S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam,* New York: G.P. Putnam's and Sons, 1906, Introduction, p.vii. Cited in Aida Yared, in, "Introducing Islam in Finnegans Wake: The Story of Mohammed in VI.B.45", in, *Genetic Joyce Studies*, Issue 1, Spring 2001, p.6.

generation, R.J. Campbell. These movements were connected to each other and to Abdul Baha's reception in Britain. Both were represented in the attendance at the Deans Yard gathering in the residence of Archdeacon Wilberforce at Westminster, convened to test the claims of Tudor Pole for a dark blue bowl found in Glastonbury. Indeed, that conclave exposes a nexus of relationships between a broad range of the 'curious' searching out strands of new religious meaning, and which intersected with the innovative work of newly emerging scholars of religion.

Abdul Baha in Britain

The chief promoters of the New Theology welcomed Abdul Baha to London in September, 1911. R.J. Campbell, the movement's leading light, hosted him at the City Temple and invited him to speak to his large congregation. *The Christian Commonwealth,* the newspaper controlled by Campbell, described their meeting in terms of one great religious leader from the 'West' hosting a leading religious figure from the 'East'. The broadsheets coverage exemplifies the thrust of interest and desire on the part of those leading the New Theology project to reach out to Bahai, seeing it as an entrée to a connection to religions from the 'East'. Abdul Baha's reception at the heart of religious orthodoxy at Westminster by Archdeacon Basil Wilberforce, as well as his appearance at Manchester College, Oxford, connotes a deepening engagement with promoters of the New Theology. It has been crucial to highlight application of the theoretical yardsticks of 'filter' and 'grid' in the course of examining these encounters while at the same time exploring what these home-grown protagonists understood or chose to focus on from Bahai teachings in an interchange of polyvalent presentation and filtered interpretation.

Alongside my analysis of archives and published material, a survey of pages of *The Christian Commonwealth* provided a more complete picture of the overall discursive terrain, adding an immediate and diachronic dimension given the frequency of publication. This research is the first occasion on which this resource has been the subject of close interrogation. The very definite connection between the broadsheet and the visiting religious leader from Asia was energetically promoted by those in control at the newspaper. A close reading of the broadsheet (published weekly with an estimated circulation of circa 72,000) for the years preceding Abdul Baha's arrival in Britain, conveys a growing editorial interest in groups and philosophies outside of Christianity, as well as social and political movements, and points up aspects of the discursive landscape not previously investigated. Interviews, articles and reports on a wide array of groups, religions and philosophies were carried and contributors are recognisable actors pursuing religious enquiry including Tudor Pole and Wilberforce. T.K. Cheyne sat on the editorial board. Both Theosophy and Bahai, in particular, received substantial attention and practically all of Abdul Baha's public engagements were extensively covered. If the newspaper profiled many other religions and religious

figures with respectful reverence, the special pull-out features, photographs and promotion of the activities of both Theosophy and Abdul Baha (and their interaction with Campbell), particularly stand out. Campbell and the newspaper were pursuing these relationships with their own agenda in mind. His assertion that he had evidence that "the New Theology is one Moslems can understand,"[825] is in line with his desire to fashion an approach to Islam as another element of his conceptual framework.

Fascination and Rejection

In the concluding part of this study, I have surveyed why this discursive moment has been obscure in the historical record or is remembered in a particular way. Combining insights gained from application of concepts such as Benjamin's 'now time' and 'afterlife', amplified and developed in the work of Assmann and his elaboration of a theory of 'mnemohistory', I have endeavoured to isolate why and how aspects of this 'past' have been elided from historical memory. Consideration of the experience of the events and protagonists referred to here, in the light of this scholarship, exposes some of the complexities surrounding accounting for their obscurity in the present. Conscious of the conundrums around application of a purely mnemohistorical construct and the pit-falls inherent in assuming that through historiography we can arrive at an exact representation, I have found von Stuckrad's assessment of discourses being subject to a 'dialectic of fascination and rejection' particularly applicable when set against the entire discussion. Still, it is how these concepts are interpreted against the backdrop of the First World War, and the attendant 'crisis of values' which afflicted those leading promoters of an irenic and universalist worldview, that fills out our understanding of how the 'afterlife' of this discourse and its main actors was constituted. It is the occasion of the war that initiates the 'rejection' of this particular discourse and collapses the field. Thereafter, those centrally involved in the articulation of this field of religious enquiry contributed to the fashioning of their own afterlife, either by commission or omission, which later became the basis for the uncritical elaboration of an accepted narrative. These reflections illuminate, for the first time through this research, what was lost to 'memory'.

We cannot, I contend, recover this history as an expression of 'how it really was' in order to explicate what change was wrought. But we can through scholarly endeavour recover that past in the present to expose a broader perspective, a more nuanced appreciation of a vibrant, fecund period of religious thought. In concluding his celebrated monograph on Western esotericism, Wouter J. Hanegraaff points up what he considers is the 'golden rule' of academic labour.

[825] *The Christian Commonwealth,* September 13th, 1911, p.850.

> All I do know is the prime directive that should guide scholarly research and intellectual exploration: not to hold on to what we already know well enough, allowing it to dominate the whole of our vision and thought, but being ready to discard our prejudices and revise our preconceptions in the light of new knowledge.[826]

This study strives to exemplify this high standard. The 'thought fragments', the 'rich and the strange' as they now manifest themselves as the outcome of this work, can help us to appreciate how the themes, motifs and discourse trajectories of this particular discursive milieu before the war, appear in the present as contemporary concerns. The whole arena of inter-religious dialogue and the role of religion in society is a source of great perplexity in the early twenty-first century. We often hear that there is need for a "Copernican Revolution in inter-religious encounter and dialogue."[827] Yet, we are inclined to consider that diversity within societies is something new to be approached with caution, that borrowing and exchange between religious cultures is a relatively recent phenomenon, which of course it is not.[828] The experience of religious reformers in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century highlights this fact. The visits of a prominent religious reformer from Asia led to a dynamic interchange of ideas around religion which has merited little scholarly attention from the standpoint of the religious reformers who supported him. My thesis has concentrated on the little known and, in most cases, unheralded individuals who were central to his reception.

Their experience indicates a rich, transnational interchange of ideas around religion. That such notables as those described here are barely remembered, and even then mostly as idiosyncratic 'oddities' decontextualized from the prominent positions they occupied or the influence they exerted, is testimony to how misunderstood is the discursive habitat they populated. Perhaps, as we grapple with issues around religious conflict and interaction in our globalised world, the contributors to pre-First World War religious ferment might find a new lease of 'afterlife' where their contribution is more fully appreciated. We may learn from them how they proceeded to engage in their religious exploration, the application of their 'filters' and 'grids', what was noteworthy in their efforts and approach, and how those tendencies were constructed into religious frameworks. What should be clear from this work is just how immensely fecund was this period when pioneering scholars, clerics and 'the curious' struck out beyond the borders of religious thought, frontiers little before traversed. One expression of this journeying was the reception in Britain, to some acclaim, of a religious reformer from Asia.

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[826] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Western Academy,* p.379.
[827] Thomas, *The British; Their Religious Beliefs and Practices 1800-1986,* p.97.
[828] I am grateful to Professor Brian Bocking for his engagement in helpful discussion around this point.

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Appendix 1 – Significant Bahai dates

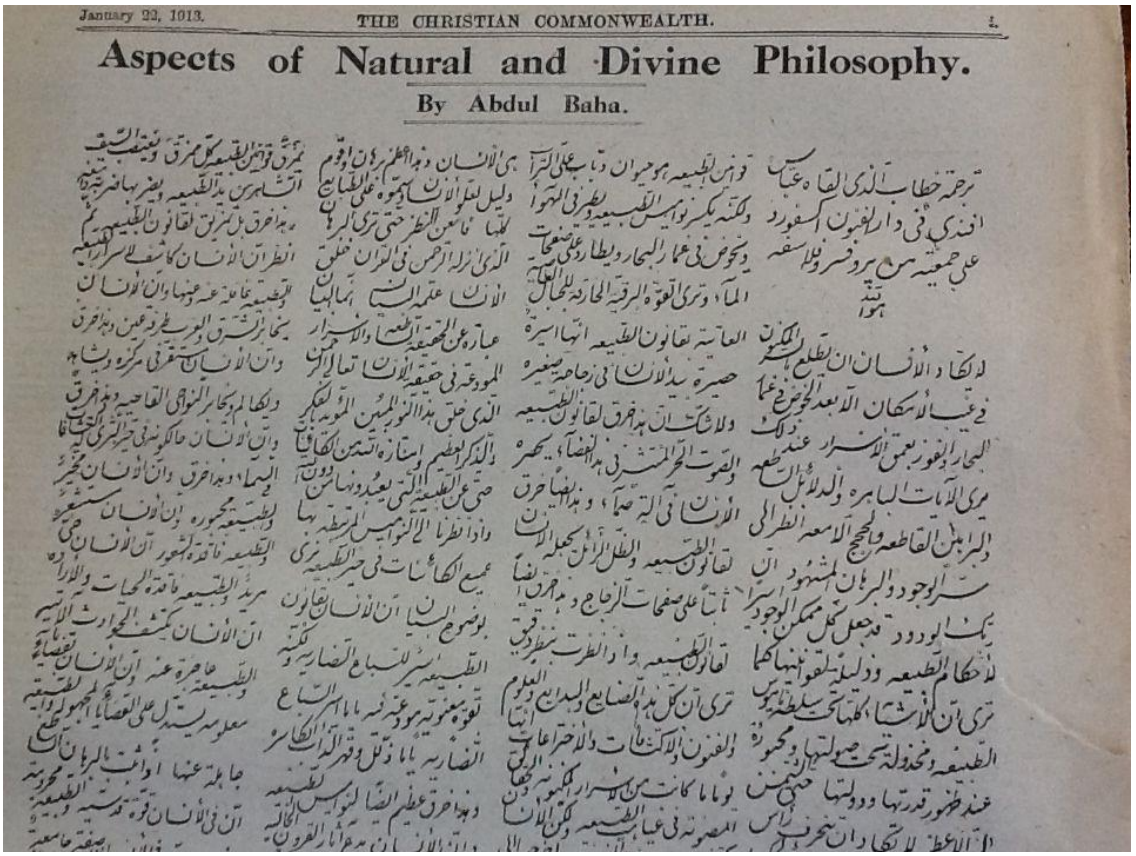
The following is a brief timeline of significant dates and events in Bahai history.

- November 12th, 1817. Birth of Bahaullah (Mirza Husayn-'Ali) in Tehran, founder of the Bahai Faith, to one of the wealthiest families in Persia.
- October 20th, 1819. Birth of the Bab (Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad) in Shiraz, regarded by Bahais as the forerunner to Bahaullah and a significant figure in his own right.
- May 22nd, 1844. Declaration of the mission of the Bab in Shiraz.
- May 23rd, 1844. Birth of Abdul Baha [Abbas Effendi], eldest son of Bahaullah.
- September, 1846. The Bab is arrested in Shiraz at the house of His uncle.
- July 9th, 1850. Execution of the Bab in Tabriz by a firing squad. The work of Orientalist writers ensure the Bab is well known in European circles.
- August 15th, 1852.Two young Babis attempt to kill Nasiri'd-Din Shah. A general pogrom against Babis is instigated. Bahaullah is imprisoned, banished and chooses Baghdad for his place of exile.
- April 22nd, 1863. Public declaration of the mission of Bahaullah in Baghdad, on the eve of his banishment to Constantinople
- August 16th, 1863. Arrival in Constantinople.
- December 12th, 1863. Further exiled to Adrianople.
- August 21st, 1868. Bahaullah and entourage leave Adrianople on foot of another order for exile, from Gallipoli by steamer for Haifa and then by sail to Akka in the Ottoman province of Syria.
- April 1890. Edward Granville Browne of Cambridge University interviews Bahaullah and meets Abdul Baha.
- May 29th, 1892. Death of Bahaullah.
- September 23rd, 1893. First public mention of the Bahá'í Faith in the West. In a session of the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, the Reverend George A. Ford, a Syrian missionary, reads a paper relaying information about Bahaullah.
- 1898. Society figure, Phoebe Hearst, organizes first visit of fifteen American Bahai sympathisers to meet Abdul Baha.
- 1899. First Bahai group in Europe established in Paris.
- 1908. Young Turk revolution results in Abdul Baha being freed from captivity.
- 1909. First renderings of works of Abdul Baha in English published in the West.
- 1910. Though in poor health due to his long imprisonment, Abdul Baha journeys to Egypt.
- August 11th, 1911. Abdul Baha departs for Marseille. In September he arrives in London and later travels to Paris. In December, he returns to Egypt.

- April 12th, 1912. Abdul Baha travels to New York and begins a nine month journey through America and Canada.
- December 5th, 1912. Abdul Baha sails for England, visits Liverpool, London, Bristol and Edinburgh. He subsequently visits Paris, Stuttgart, Budapest and Vienna.
- May, 1913. Abdul Baha returns to Egypt and, later in the year, to Palestine.
- April 27th, 1920. Having personally overseen agricultural operations on properties near Tiberias which helped thousands in the midst of famine in Palestine during the First World War, Abdul Baha is knighted by the British mandate authorities.
- November 28th, 1921. Abdul Baha dies after a brief illness in Haifa.[829]

[829] Gleaned from sources cited earlier.

Appendix 2 – Arabic notation in *The Christian Commonwealth*



January 22, 1913. THE CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH. 3

Aspects of Natural and Divine Philosophy.

By Abdul Baha.



Abdul Baha at Oxford.

Abdul Baha addressed a large and deeply interested audience at Manchester College, Oxford, on December 31. The Persian leader spoke in his native tongue, Mirza Ahmed Sohrab interpreting. Prof. Edwin Carpenter presided, and introduced the speaker by saying that they owed the honour and pleasure of meeting Abdul Baha to their revered friend Dr. Cheyne, who was deeply interested in the Bahai teaching. The movement sprung up during the middle of the last century in Persia, with the advent of a young Mohammedan who took to himself the title of the Bab (meaning door or gate, through which men could arrive at the knowledge of truth or God), and who commenced teaching in Persia in the year 1844. The purity of his character, the nobility of his words, aroused great enthusiasm. He was, however, subjected to great hostility by the authorities, who secured his arrest and imprisonment, and he was finally executed in 1850. But the movement went on, and the writings of the Bab, which had been copious, were widely read. The movement has been brought into India, Europe, and the United States. It does not seek to create a new sect, but to inspire all sects with a deep fundamental love. The late Dr. Jowett once said to him that he had been so deeply impressed with the teachings and character of the Bab that he thought Babism, as the present movement was then known, might become the greatest religious movement since the birth of Christ.

Appendix 3 – Tudor Pole, Campbell and the Glastonbury Cup

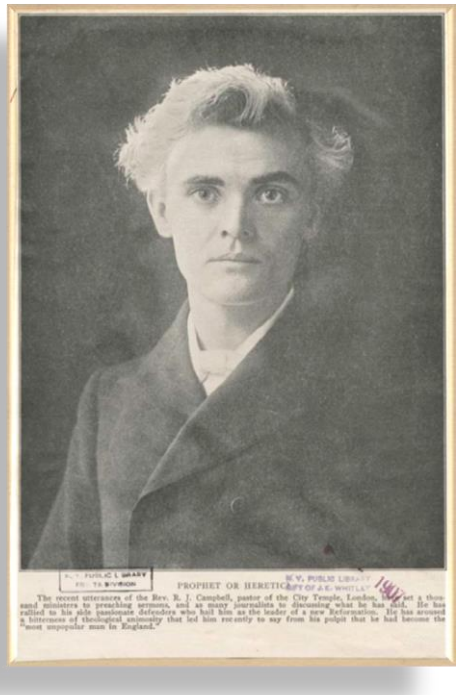


The Glastonbury Cup

Wellesley Tudor Pole



R.J. Campbell



PROPHET OR HERETIC

The recent utterances of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, pastor of the City Temple, London, have set a thousand ministers to preaching sermons, and as many journalists to discussing what he has said. He has rallied to his side passionate defenders who hail him as the leader of a new Reformation. He has aroused a bitterness of theological animosity that led him recently to say from his pulpit that he had become the most unpopular man in England.