

## NEWS OF WORK IN PROGRESS

**Revd William Reid M.A. (1822-1881)**  
**(a biographical sketch)**

**Edwin N. Cross**  
**95 Genesta Road, London, SE18 3EX, UK**

William Reid was a capable and active servant of Christ, whose achievements have hitherto missed the biographer's pen. Born in 1822 at Forfar, educated at the parish school and for some time served as a monitor (i.e. a pupil teacher). In 1839 he went to King's College, Aberdeen, graduating with an honours degree. His first post was assistant at Blairgowrie Free Church. For nine years he was editor at the Drummond's Stirling Tract Depot. His best known book was written at this time: *The Blood of Jesus*. James Nisbet of London published it in 1865. The preface shows Reid as living in 23 George Street Edinburgh in 1863. He states that he had 'been religiously inclined from my earliest years. When quite little I was wont to say my prayers many times over.'

At about this time he married Mary Laird. She was to survive him by over a quarter century. She died on 11 February 1900 aged 78 years. They had two daughters, one of whom married William Gibson (1828-1899), who was minister of the Free Church of Scotland in Craigeric, Juniper Green, Edinburgh.

In 1867 Reid became the minister of the Warwick Road Presbyterian Church, Carlisle, which at that time was in a struggling condition. He was then an able exponent of the word of God and his fidelity and ability soon drew numerous individuals from various denominations, many also being remarkably converted. A clearly defined line of apostolic teaching marked his ministry. His correspondence with Dr Tonna, editor of *The Christian Annotator* magazine, in 1856 led to three contributions being published in volume three. In Carlisle he also preached in a Wesleyan chapel, where, a century before, John Wesley had himself preached. But he eventually found that his ecclesiastical position was inconsistent with what he believed and taught. After further help from correspondence with William Kelly (1821-1906), he determined to go outside the camp and gather among the Brethren. A letter by William Kelly<sup>1</sup> to the editor of *The British Herald* entitled 'Presbyterianism Tested by the Word of God' was a brief but sufficient answer to three articles entitled 'Rule in the Church', 'Local Charges' and 'Power the Ground of Office' in the April 1870 edition of *The British Herald*. So after eight years in Carlisle he severed his connections with the Presbyterian church and went to the Hebron Hall meeting

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<sup>1</sup>. William Kelly had been until 19 years old himself among the Presbyterians. See also *Bible Treasury*, vol. 11 No 248 (1877), p.206, where Kelly answer Reid. See also Kelly on *Presbyterianism*.

of Brethren in Bank Street, Carlisle.<sup>2</sup> During all this time he had been a busy publisher of magazines. Among those he edited were the following: the *British Messenger*, a religious newspaper founded about 1857, with a tremendous circulation of 120,000 in print. This periodical continued long after his death, until at least 1948! The *British Herald* was issued between 1864 and 1875. William Reid also edited the *British Evangelist* from 1869 onwards with W. P. Mackay (the author of *Grace and Truth*). He also wrote several books. One of his publishers was R. M. Cameron who was well known as a school text book publisher at the turn of the nineteenth century in Scotland.

Reid's magazines show he had an appreciation of the ministry of the Brethren, in particular an interest in the work of the able classicist and expositor, Clarence Esme Stuart (1823-1903). Besides a very extensive literary work he also made a notable contribution to the collection of songs and hymns for use by the church of God. His *The Praise Book* is a comprehensive collection of over a thousand hymns, the compilation of which took him ten years. It was first published in 1872. (C. H. Spurgeon reviewed it favourably in his *Sword and Trowel* magazine, though he had some reservations about some of the hymns which he regarded as unsingable!).

Shortly after transferring to the Brethren in Carlisle, which I judge to be about 1875,<sup>3</sup> he went to live in Edinburgh, his home address in March 1876 in that city was No. 1 Cambridge Street. It was then that he felt free to show his colours in *The Literature and Mission of the so called Plymouth Brethren*. Here he attempts a just estimate of their testimony to the revealed truth of God. The book had been written in 1873 but it was not published until 1876. It demonstrates his deep acquaintance with the literature of the Brethren and it is clear that these books had a thorough going effect on his course.

In Edinburgh he continued his work for the Lord. More booklets and magazines were published (a full list is given below), the latter being of especial worth and interest. *The Bible Herald* was a monthly magazine published by W. B. Horner of London from 1876 until 1881. *The Bible Witness and Review for the presentation and Defence of Revealed Truth* was published occasionally during this time from 1877-81 in three volumes.

In the Brethren meeting at Edinburgh he met a Swedish girl who aroused his interest to visit Sweden and look for Christians there who might be won for the truth. He went to Sweden with his wife in about 1876. His literary and pastoral labours among the Swedish Christians resulted in the establishment of two dozen assemblies in that country.

He was competent in some modern languages as well as Greek and Latin. Although unable to correspond in Swedish he could read it. In a letter to the renowned Swedish evangelist, Dr Paul Peter Waldenstrom, he offered to correspond

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<sup>2</sup>. This assembly was then among the Exclusive Brethren, though it has now changed allegiance to the Open Brethren.

<sup>3</sup>. This fact is recorded in the book, *Plymouth Brethrenism Unveiled and Refuted* by another Rev. William Reid DD of the United Presbyterian Church, Edinburgh, 3rd edn. 1880 (our W. R. is not mentioned in the first edition of 1875). W. Reid DD reports that his namesake, W. Reid M.A., had gone over to the Brethren and that he regularly ministered in Edinburgh.

in Latin. These letters still exist and show his endeavour to win Waldenstrom for the Brethren's way of gathering. He also entered upon correspondence with Waldenstrom on the subject of the atonement. These were subsequently published in *The Bible Witness and Review*. The second volume (1878) has 'The Atonement, with a review of Dr. P. P. Waldenstrom's 'Om Försoningens Betydelse' ('On the Significance of Atonement'). The third volume of 1881 has a letter by Reid on 'The Multifariousness of Sectarianism and the Unity of the Spirit, written to a Swede in the Lutheran Christian Mission' (Swedish title: 'Andens Ennhet'). Reid laboured until his death to get Waldenstrom to get adjusted as to the truth on atonement and to come amongst Brethren.

J. N. Darby, whose high regard for Reid is shown in the *Letters of J.N.D.*, continued this correspondence in print.<sup>4</sup> The Swedish work continued after Reid's death in the hands of others, particularly the Hedman couple. In the last will and testament of Lord Adelbert P. Cecil (drowned 1883 aged 48) he left funds for poor Christians in various countries including those then in Sweden.

William Reid died prematurely worn out on 8 August 1881 and was buried on the afternoon of 11 August at Grange Cemetery (plot No. 823), Edinburgh. Walter Scott says that 'Reid never excelled as a preacher, nor was he specially fitted to address large congregations, but of his godliness in private life, his self denying labours of love, and devoted service to his Master, we might speak, and that too in terms of highest praise.'<sup>5</sup> In later years David Beattie in his *Stories and Sketches of our Hymns and their Writers* (1931) wrote that William Reid was 'a humble man' with 'a gracious disposition' who 'ever sought to honour God by his implicit faith.' The text on Reid's gravestone is from Titus 2:18: 'Looking for that blessed hope.'

It is clear that more research into Reid's life needs to be done. His labours, correspondence and literature work in both English and Swedish (with some Norwegian) and the influence he had, both before the time he was with Exclusive Brethren and for the very brief time among them, are largely unexplored history.

### Bibliography of William Reid's writings

#### 1. Magazines edited by William Reid

*British Messenger*—a religious newspaper c.1857, 120,000 in print. Stirling Tract Enterprise. This periodical continued until at least 1948.

*British Herald*—1864-187? (presumably 1875) publisher unknown. In 1865 two successive volumes were advertised in *The Blood of Jesus*. Price one shilling each.

*British Evangelist*—1869 onwards, three and a half volumes edited by W. Reid and W. P. Mackay. Published Edinburgh. Copies in British Library.

*Bible Herald\**—a monthly magazine published 1876 until 1881 (5 vols) + 2 posthumous vols, 1882 & 1883. W.B. Horner, London.

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<sup>4</sup> J. N. Darby (1800-1882) refers to the advancing work in Sweden in his published *Letters* from about 1878-1882, cf. *Letters of J. N. D.*, 3 (Kingston-on-Thames, n.d.), pp.46, 448.

<sup>5</sup> Obituary by Walter Scott in *The Bible Herald* (1881).

*Bible Witness and Review for the Presentation and Defence of Revealed Truth\** – 1877-81 (3 vols) Office of Publication, London. Volume 2 (1878) has 'The Atonement', with a review of Dr. P. Waldenstrom's *Om Försoningens Betydelse*. Volume 3 (1881) has a letter by W. Reid entitled 'The Multiformity of Sectarianism and the Unity of the Spirit, written to a Swede in the Lutheran Christian Mission'.

Also three contributions in *The Christian Annotator*, Vol. 3 (1856)\*, Nisbet and Co. London, by William Reid.

## 2. Hymn Books edited by William Reid

*The Praise of Jesus*—a collection of hymns, 168 pp., London, 1863, at least three impressions that year 19,000 in print.

*The Praise Book*—200 Hymns, James Nisbet, London, 1872.

*The Praise Book\**—1017 Hymns, James Nisbet, 22 June 1872.

*Songs of the Inner Life*—being translations of German hymns with their own tunes, publisher unknown, n.d. (but possibly c.1876).

*Musical Leaflets*—selection of sixty Hymns on sheets; publisher unknown; n.d. but c.1876.

## 3. Letters of William Reid

Letter in *Bode des heils* (Dutch Periodical)\* Spring 1876 re. Sweden & Norway. (English original at present not accessible.) This letter indicates that he was married and that his wife accompanied him on his journey to Sweden.

Various letters in The National Archives in Stockholm, Sweden, being correspondence with Dr Paul Peter Waldenstrom.

Items held in Bernt Lindberg (Storvreta) collection.

## 4. Books and tracts by William Reid

*Streams from Lebanon* (James Nisbet, London, 1857)\*—4,000 copies by 1860, 6,000 in print, preface written 24 February 1857 in Stirling, Scotland.

*Will ye weary my God also?*—a lecture in Glasgow, 1858, publisher unknown; in Christian Brethren Archive, John Rylands University Library, University of Manchester.

*Why will ye die?* (London, 1859)\*—(a sermon on Ezekiel 33:11).

*Revival Truth: being sermons hitherto unpublished by the late R.M. M'Cheyne* (London, 1860)—edited by W. Reid.

*The Friends of Jesus directed and encouraged* (London, 1860).

*The Spirit of Jesus* (London, n.d.)—on the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion; 3,000 in print by 1860.

*Letters about Jesus addressed to enquirers*—London, publisher unknown; n.d. 2,000 in print by 1860.

*Earth's Expedients and Heaven's Gospel: Dedicated to Young Men*—London publisher unknown; n.d. in print by 1860.

*The Glory Dwelling in our Land*—publisher unknown; n.d. 2,000 in print by 1860.

*The Great Change* (G. Morrish, London)\*—, 32 pp, n.d. (in print by 1860).

"Edinburgh Tracts", "Gracious Words series"—sundry tracts in print 1860 James Nisbet, London (none yet identified in my collection).

*Authentic Records of Revival, now in progress in the United Kingdom* (James Nisbet, London, 1860)\* – compilation by W. Reid and introduction by H. Bonar.

*The Blood of Jesus* (James Nisbet, London 1865)\* – by The Rev. Wm. Reid M.A.

*The Literature and Mission of the so called Plymouth Brethren* (James Nisbet, London, 1876)\* – written in Edinburgh in 1873, published in 1876 in response to the adversarial action of churchmen.

*Accusers of the Brethren\** – publisher unknown; n.d., probably between 1876-79, 32 pp.

*Looking unto Jesus* – a book on worship, publisher unknown; n.d., about pre-1876.

*The Church of God: a lecture on Acts 2:41-42* (James Nisbet, London) – 29 pp.

*The Great Open Meeting of Christianity* (R. M. Cameron, Edinburgh, 1898)\* – 16 pp.

*The Great Open Meeting of Christianity* (Gospel Tract Depot, London)\* – 32 pp.

*Jesus the Only Source of Joy in Grace and Glory* (R. M. Cameron, Edinburgh, n.d.)\* – 32 pp.

*The Stone of Salvation* (R.M. Cameron, Edinburgh, n.d.)\* – 32 pp.

*Christ once suffered for Sins, the Just for the Unjust: address delivered in the Freemason's Hall, Edinburgh, Sunday evening, August 29th 1875* (R. M. Cameron, Edinburgh)\* – 32 pp.

*Pentecostal Times being a course of expository lectures on the Acts of the Apostles* (W. B. Homer, London, March 1876)\* – 286 pp. + J. N. Darby's *Exposition on the Acts*, translated from Italian (total 335 pp.).

*Song of Songs* (W. B. Horner, London, 1st April 1876)\* – 247 pp.

*The Feasts of the Lord* (R. M. Cameron, Edinburgh, n.d.) – 32 pp.? in Christian Brethren Archive, John Rylands University Library, University of Manchester.

*The Holy Spirit as a Seal and an Earnest* (S.W. Partridge, London, n.d.)\* – An address by the Rev. William Reid, M.A. , 32 pp., 5,000 printed.

*The Holy Spirit as the Seal of Sonship and the Earnest of Glory* (R.M. Cameron, Edinburgh, n.d.)\* – 48 pp.

*A Break-down in Religion, a Want of the Times* (S.W. Partridge, London, [c.1870])\* – 32 pp.

*A Break-down in Religion the want of the times* (Alfred Holness, London, 1890)\* – by the late William Reid M.A. (a minister of the Gospel) – 36 pp.

Some Gospel tracts by 'R', believed to be W. Reid:

*The Dying Appeal*, G. Morrish, London, n.d. 31 pp.

*Prime Me Up to Die*, R. M. Cameron, Edinburgh, 1878, 20 pp.

*Waiting for Glory*, R. M. Cameron, Edinburgh, n.d. 30 pp.

#### Notes:

\* These titles are in the Chapter Two Archive, Plumstead; copies of some are available, dependent upon condition of original binding etc. The British Library has some of Reid's pre-Brethren publications.

None of William Reid's numerous Swedish or Norwegian tracts are listed above. See list from Bernt Lindberg, Storvreta, Sweden.

#### Material Sought:

- Any titles not yet held in Chapter Two Archive, Plumstead.

- Census records for 1831, 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881: where his address is known: occupation, household, exact birth-date (these are yet to be examined when next visiting Edinburgh and Carlisle).
- Photographs of Mr and Mrs Reid and family.
- Check out DNB.
- Records of English Presbyterian Church?
- Any resignation correspondence? etc.
- Newspaper obituaries: none yet discovered.
- Any oral history? None in UK as yet discovered.

**Charles Henry Mackintosh  
Edward Dennett**

**Edwin N. Cross  
95 Genesta Road, London, SE18 3EX, UK**

I am also working on a biography of C. H. Mackintosh (1820-1896) and Edward Dennett (1831-1914). As far as I can see there is scarcely anything on these. Mackintosh deserves a good deal of work in view of his international influence on the promotion of dispensational teaching etc. Dennett has a paltry half page in Henry Pickering's *Chief Men* (21931). He came in among Brethren around the same time as William Reid and also had some contact with Reid's Swedish assemblies. Dennett went with F. E. Raven but when James Taylor Snr arose to prominence he, it appears, was sidelined. Does anyone have any information on these two men? I would welcome some input and discussion from anyone who does have any data on these two men.