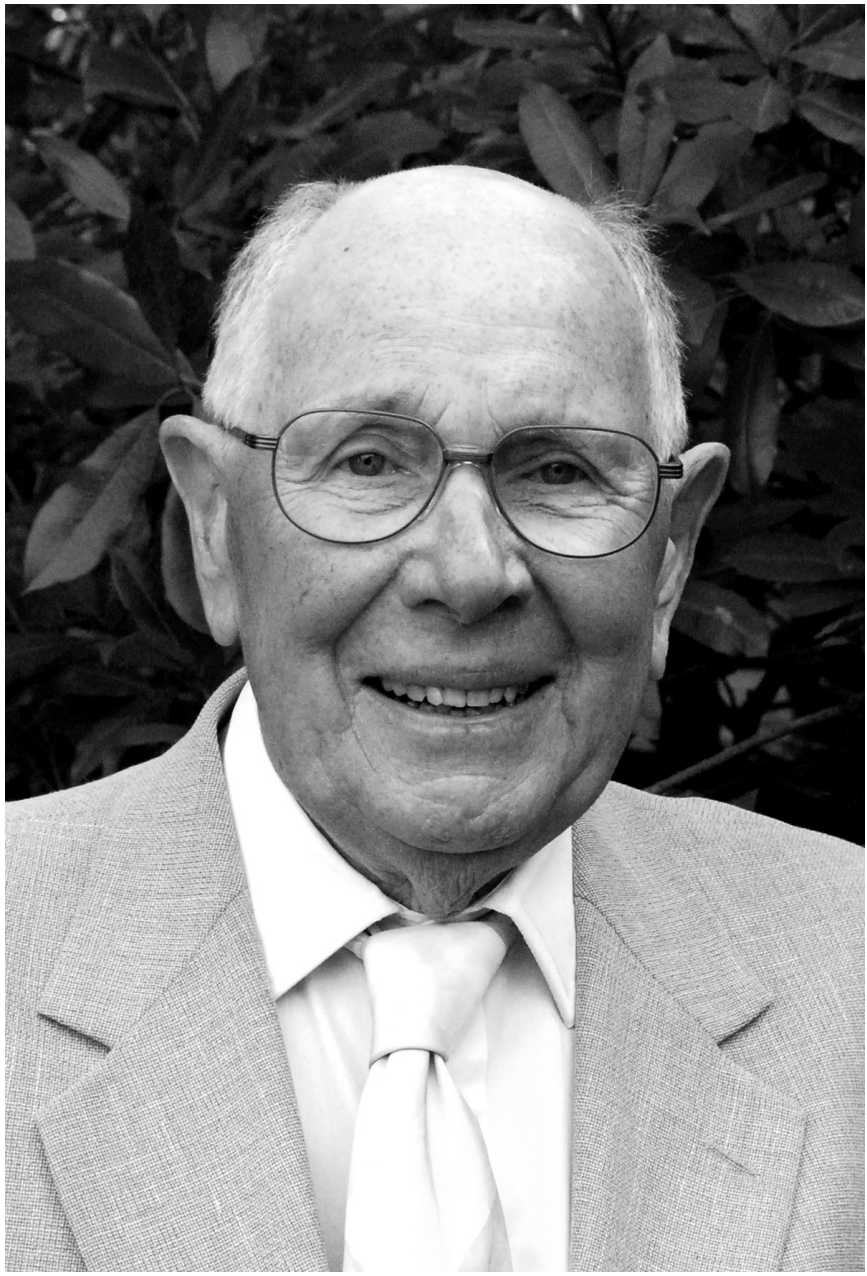

REG WARD

William Reginald Ward
1925–2010

William Reginald Ward, the scholar of British and European history, and especially religious history, was born on 23 March 1925 in Chesterfield, Derbyshire, into a family of Primitive Methodists. His paternal grandfather was a Primitive Methodist minister and missionary, who served for a time in Nigeria. His father was a local Primitive Methodist preacher who also worked for the Inland Revenue. Primitive Methodism, its religious practices and traditions, would have a profound and lasting influence on the historian's life and work. As his friend, the Oxford historian John Walsh, would later observe, Ward's Primitive Methodism instilled in him a dislike of hierarchy and pretension, a healthy distrust of authority, and a readiness to speak his mind.[1] He would also remain teetotal throughout his life. Ward's mother was the granddaughter of a Peak District quarryman and the daughter of a miner. She felt a certain pride in having married a civil servant, and was determined on making her only child into a proper 'gentleman', emphasising good manners and reminding him, even when he had reached the giddy heights of a professorship, that he take his hat off when indoors. The family moved from Chesterfield to Plymouth on account of his father's civil service job in about 1935. Reg (as he would be known throughout his life) attended Devonport High School for Boys, which at that time was very strict, with demanding academic standards. Here he studied Latin and developed the highly disciplined work habits that would stay with him throughout his life. Devonport

[1] J. Walsh, 'Profile: W. R. Ward: Methodist historian and historian of Methodism', *Epworth Review*, 22 (1995), p. 41.

Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy, XIII, 439–462.

was heavily bombed during the Second World War, and the school was evacuated for a time to Penzance, Cornwall, which Reg had loved.

Defined as Medical Grade 4 on account of a bad ear, he was kept out of military service during the war. Instead, with the help of several scholarships, including a college open scholarship, he was able to matriculate at University College, Oxford, in 1943. He had intended to read Philosophy, Politics and Economics, but on the advice of his father (who was convinced there would be no post-war jobs for economists), Ward switched to Modern History, studying at the austere war-time Oxford with its depleted academic staff and a nearly empty Bodleian Library. He attended the Wesley Memorial Church under the ministry of Frederic Greeves. Ward graduated with a 'congratulated' First Class Honours in Modern History—the best in his year—in 1946. On the nomination of the future Labour prime minister, Harold Wilson, then a research fellow at University College, Ward was appointed as a tutor at Ruskin College, an independent adult education college in Oxford, where he taught for three years. While at Ruskin, he began working towards the Oxford D.Phil. with a thesis on the eighteenth-century English land tax. His supervisor was the distinguished historian of eighteenth-century Britain, Miss Lucy Sutherland, who had recently been appointed Principal of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. Sutherland, who later became Dame Lucy Sutherland, would have a major influence on all his subsequent work.[2]

At the end of the war, Ward met his future wife, Barbara, while they were both serving in a Christian harvest camp at Hove, organised by the evangelical Bishop of Rochester, Christopher Chavasse. The harvest camps brought together students and other young people to assist with bringing in the harvest while so many farm labourers were still away on military service. Barbara was helping as a cook, and Reg had the exalted title of 'quartermaster'. Their first romantic encounter took place while peeling potatoes. Barbara was a teacher, who had taught at a school for infants in Brighton and then at a school for physically disabled children in Sussex before meeting Reg. They shared a warm sense of humour and love of long country walks. Barbara would continue part-time teaching after her marriage. In their early years together, they would take a bus or train into the countryside on a Saturday, exploring much of the Peak

[2] W. R. Ward, 'Statement on Election as a Fellow of the British Academy' (2009), deposited with the Academy, available at <https://www.britac.ac.uk/fellowship/elections/ward.cfm> [accessed 3 April 2014].

District. Although raised an Anglican, she joined Reg in the Methodist Church. Theirs would be a long and happy marriage.

The University of Manchester and the political historian of institutions

In 1949, Ward was appointed to an assistant lectureship in the Department of History at the University of Manchester. The History Department was then under the formidable influence of Lewis Namier, who Ward later described as 'a presence equally instructive and perplexing'.[3] Barbara recalled needing to be 'very serious' in Namier's presence, but she also remembered that he was most supportive to Reg. Namier encouraged Ward's strict work habits, and under his influence Ward developed as an historian of eighteenth-century English politics and administration. Of Namier, Ward wrote in 1957 that 'his patience with young students grows no less with the years, and the archive of the *History of Parliament* has become a bottomless well of information'.[4] Ward's early work was greatly influenced by the Namierite approach, with its emphasis on detailed studies of human interactions, the importance of patronage and personal connections, and the role of institutions in elevating essentially venal human actors to achieve higher, collective aims. Ward completed his Oxford D.Phil. in 1951, and two years later he published a revised version of his thesis in the Oxford Historical Series, under the title of *The English Land Tax in the Eighteenth Century*.[5] The book provided a meticulous analysis of the local administration of the land tax, the difficulties in the assessment and collection of the tax, the administrative laxness and financial weakness of the mid-eighteenth-century state, and the role of debates over the land tax in sharpening party differences. It was, he argued, largely the ability of the British state to borrow so freely that allowed the increasingly inefficient land tax system, which had been formulated in the seventeenth century, to survive into the later eighteenth century. Only the acute financial pressures of the American war and the war with Revolutionary France finally forced significant fiscal reform. In what would be characteristic of all Ward's later scholarship, the book was based on extensive archival research, including work among the Treasury

[3] Ibid.
[4] W. R. Ward, *Georgian Oxford: University Politics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1958), p. v.
[5] W. R. Ward, *The English Land Tax in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1953).

Records, minute books of the Land Tax Commissioners, and a number of collections of family papers.

For his second major project, Ward turned to the history of Oxford University during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first volume of this project, *Georgian Oxford: University Politics in the Eighteenth Century*, appeared in 1958, and reflected Ward's Namierite approach. It provided detailed accounts of the political manoeuvres among the Oxford dons, including their pursuit of patronage and favour from the Crown and political grandees, their interventions in the contests for the two university parliamentary seats, and their efforts to adjust their political positions to the political crises associated with the Revolution of 1688–9, the Hanoverian Succession, and the early years of George III's reign. The dons struggled to adjust to changing political realities, but on the whole they were loyal to the governments of the day (as reflected in the university sermons); indeed, Ward rejected the then prevalent notion that Oxford was a 'hotbed of Jacobitism for more than half a century after the Revolution'.[6] The book closed with a sustained discussion of religious movements, including the failed challenges to the orthodox Anglican hegemony in the 1770s associated with latitudinarianism and rational Dissent. There was an account of the failure of the Feathers Tavern Petition of 1771–2 to end the requirement of clerical subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith in the Church of England, and of the unsuccessful movement in the 1770s to ease the terms of subscription to the Anglican articles required from Oxford dons, especially those not directly involved in theological teaching.

The second volume of his history of Oxford University, *Victorian Oxford*, appeared from Frank Cass publishers in 1965.[7] Again, the emphasis was on university politics, with accounts of the efforts of university dons to gain political patronage and support, and of the contests for the university's parliamentary seats, but now in the changing context of intensified religious beliefs, emerging liberal and democratic politics, and increased public calls for university reform. Moreover, while *Georgian Oxford* had focused on the role of the university in supporting the established order in Church and State, *Victorian Oxford* explored the development of Oxford University into a secular institution for promoting specialised research and educating a professional elite to serve the needs of an industrial, urban and imperial nation. It was the story of the

[6] Ward, *Georgian Oxford*, p. 55.
[7] W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford* (London, 1965).

intensified religious feeling during the Oxford Movement, followed by declining Anglican influence, liberal reforms, calls for increased efficiency in teaching and research, university commissions, and the waning political importance of the university. While *Georgian Oxford* closed with the debates over religious tests in the 1770s, *Victorian Oxford* ended with the reforms of the 1870s and early 1880s, including the repeal of most remaining religious tests. Both books were based on exhaustive research among a vast array of primary sources, and demonstrated an impressive grasp of historical detail. But the written style was dense, and one American reviewer of *Georgian Oxford* complained of feeling 'cast adrift on a sea of detail' and searching 'anxiously for a spot of synthesis from which he can observe what he has covered'.[8] Ward remained very much a disciple of Sutherland and Namier, and an historian's historian; he held the highest respect for the discipline and profession of history, and he could be as demanding on his readers as he was on himself.

During their early years in Manchester, Reg and Barbara shared a flat and then a small house, while Barbara did some teaching. Following the birth of their second child, they bought a house in Bramhall, to the south of the city, and Reg would commute to the university on a motor bike. By the end of the 1950s, there were three children, a daughter, Faith, and two sons, Aidan and Neil. Reg and Barbara travelled for Saturday excursions or holidays around Britain with the children in a sidecar attached to the motorbike; this included travel for holidays in Scotland, which they loved. Barbara recalls that the children were always well behaved in the sidecar, as they knew they would be going somewhere interesting. But Reg's daily commute from Bramhall to the university by motor bike was proving difficult, and there were financial pressures on the young family.

In 1959, Ward accepted the position of Warden of the newly built Needham Hall at the University of Manchester. The university had purchased a Victorian property off Spath Road in West Didsbury, and constructed three blocks of student residences. The family had a pleasant flat in one of the residences, which enabled them to sell the house in Bramhall. But the new position was not without its difficulties. As Warden, Ward was responsible for overseeing the buildings, student events and student behaviour, while he also spent long hours meeting with individual students and providing guidance. He ate his evening meals with the students in the hall, which was hard for his family. Endeavouring to

[8] L. L. Tucker, 'Review of W. R. Ward's *Georgian Oxford*', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 16 (1959), 271.

balance the demands of the Wardenship, his teaching, his research, and to find time for his family, placed considerable strain on Reg. Although he was promoted to Senior Lecturer, the financial pressures continued. It was at this time that he and Barbara seriously considered moving with the family to Australia, where there was a prospect of an academic appointment for Reg. Although the job prospect did not get as far as an interview, there was an exchange of letters and Reg and Barbara were very serious about the move although, as Barbara recalls, their parents were not at all pleased about the prospect. Then came the offer of the Chair of Modern History at the University of Durham and in 1965, the same year that saw the publication of *Victorian Oxford*, Ward accepted the Professorship and moved to Durham with his family. The years at Needham Hall had enabled them to save for the purchase of a substantial house in Durham.

Ward's move to the history of Christianity

While he was working on his *Victorian Oxford* book, Ward had also grown increasingly interested in religious history. This interest would, by the mid-1960s, lead to a major shift in the direction in his work—with the historian of the politics of national institutions (Parliament, the land tax, Oxford University) becoming the historian of British, and then of European Christianity. In part, this change was the result of Ward's engagement with religious themes in writing his book on nineteenth-century Oxford, and in part it reflected his involvement, as a committed Methodist, in the controversies in the early 1960s concerning proposals for the union of the Anglican and Methodist Churches. As he described the transformation:

> It was impossible to write about nineteenth-century Oxford without paying heed to the religious stance of the parties involved; and in the later stages of that work [*Victorian Oxford*] another group of questions of religious belief and practice came rather closer home. The proposals for Anglican-Methodist union inevitably raised sharp differences of opinion on both sides, and on the Methodist side were marked by appeals to Methodist history which amply compensated in stridency what they lacked in illumination. But there was no mistaking the fact that what Methodism *had been* was part of the question of what Methodism was and ought to be. A situation characterized by so much heat and so little light almost required of a working Methodist historian that he examine some of the questions for himself.[9]

[9] W. R. Ward, 'Introduction', in *Faith and Faction* (London, 1993), p. viii.

There was probably another reason for Ward's move to religious history, and this was simply his appreciation, as a research historian, of the vital importance of religion for an understanding of British history, especially during the final decades of the eighteenth and first decades of the nineteenth centuries. Britain was at this time experiencing the upheavals of early industrialisation and urbanisation, while the entire North Atlantic world was in the throes of what the American historian, Robert Palmer, described as 'The Age of the Democratic Revolution' in his influential two-volume work on this subject (the first volume was published in 1959 and reviewed by Ward in *Parliamentary Affairs* in 1960).[10] There was new interest in the role of popular religion in the political upheavals of these years—an interest sparked by one work in particular. In 1963, E. P. Thompson, the son of Methodist missionary parents, and a Marxist humanist who was then teaching at the University of Leeds, published *The Making of the English Working Class*, in which he explored the development of a political consciousness among the labouring orders between the 1790s and 1830s.[11] A key theme of Thompson's work was the crucial role of Evangelical Dissent, and especially Primitive Methodism, in shaping a working-class identity, and also in diverting the energies of the labouring orders from revolutionary activity in this world to striving for salvation in the next life. Thompson's work revived interest in the thesis of the French historian, Élie Halévy, who had famously argued in his *England in 1815* (published in French in 1913 and in English translation in 1924), that Evangelicalism in general, and Methodism in particular, had insulated Britain from revolution between the 1790s and 1820s.[12] The early 1960s witnessed, in short, a growing interest in both the revolutionary decades and the role of religion in popular politics.

Ward became active in the Ecclesiastical History Society from its foundation in 1961, publishing his first article on the history of Christianity, 'Oxford and the origins of Liberal Catholicism in the Church of England', in the Society's journal, *Studies in Church History*, in 1964. Through regular attendance of the meetings of the Ecclesiastical History Society, and later of the *Commission Internationale d'Histoire et d'Etudes du Christianisme*, or CIHEC (on which he served on the British

[10] R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: a Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ, 1959 and 1964); W. R. Ward, 'Review of R. R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, vol. I', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 13 (1960), 263–4.

[11] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963).

[12] É. Halévy, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century I: England in 1815*, trans. E. I. Watkin and D. A. Barker (London, 1924).

Sub-Commission) he developed an impressive knowledge of the history of Christianity since the Reformation.

He served as President of the Ecclesiastical History Society in 1970–1. He delivered a memorable presidential address to the annual meeting of the Society, speaking rather incongruously, as he later remembered, from the top of a pile of beer crates. Professor Hugh McLeod, FBA, recalled the powerful impact of the opening sentence of Ward's address on the audience, as he spoke of the generation of 1790–1830:

> The generation about which I wish to speak was, I make no doubt, the most important single generation in the modern history not merely of English religion but of the whole Christian world. For . . . there seems no doubt that the effectiveness of the Church throughout Western Europe was undermined by the same forces which were everywhere sapping the *Ancien Régime*, the whole institutional complex of which the religious establishments were part.[13]

Ward then proceeded in his address to develop a bold argument concerning English Christianity during this period. In the 1790s, he maintained, in response to the social upheavals of early industrialisation, the prospect of violent revolution, and the failings of the established Church to minister to a growing population, a wave of revivalist popular religion swept across much of England. This popular religion was largely non-denominational in character, rooted in cottage prayer meetings and itinerant lay preaching, reflecting a belief in the equality of souls and the moral capacities of common men and women, and including apocalyptic visions, exorcisms, and special gifts of the Spirit. Many labouring people deserted their parish churches or the staid chapels of old Dissent, and the traditional social order they represented. Instead, they hankered after visions of a new world to be born through the actions of the Spirit. 'The uninstitutional movements of God's grace so dear to the revivalists', Ward observed, 'evoked a powerful echo in men who were at the losing end of institutions and chilled the marrow of those with a stake in institutional stability.'[14] But the vision of a free, just and egalitarian society permeated by a genuine Christianity—and the dreams of a true people's Church, or *Volkskirche*, that would be popular, non-denominational, free of institutional constraints—did not long survive. The itinerant revivalist preachers began to long for family life, secure incomes and settled ministries; cottage meetings developed into institutional churches, and then into denominations. New clerical hierarchies emerged, with defined theological positions and the

[13] W. R. Ward, 'The religion of the people and the problems of control, 1790–1830', in Ward, *Faith and Faction*, p. 264.
[14] Ibid., p. 269.

imposition of authority. By the later 1840s, the *Volkskirche* ideal was fading, and, Ward suggested, Christianity began to lose much of its popular appeal.

Ward developed these arguments at greater length in his next book, *Religion and Society in England 1790–1850*, which was published in 1972 by Batsford, as part of its 'Fabric of British History' series.[15] In this book, he maintained that the weakness of the eighteenth-century British parliamentary state had left it unable to respond adequately to the popular radicalism of the 1790s. In response to its own weakness, the state looked to the established Church of England to help provide social control through the parish system, clerical influence in the old Poor Law, and a growing body of clerical magistrates. But this attempt to increase the authority of the established Church came at the same time as large numbers were being stirred up by revivalism and radical social visions, often rooted in apocalyptic and millenarian enthusiasms. Nonconformists, fired by revivalism, strenuously resisted the state's efforts to revive the established Church. Some, moreover, went on the offensive, attacking church rates and tithes, and calling for disestablishment. This warfare with the established Church, however, created divisions within the Nonconformist denominations, with some embracing the popular political agitation, and others insisting upon a more otherworldly spirituality. There was intense religious strife and instability during the 1830s and 1840s. In the event, the divisions within Nonconformity ensured that Nonconformists failed in their attempts to disestablish the Church of England. Moreover, the Nonconformist leadership, most notably the Methodist leader, Jabez Bunting, imposed order on the unruly elements within their denominations, often at the cost of schisms. Popular dreams of a new Christian social order of liberty and equality ended, and mid-nineteenth-century England settled into a denominationalism, dominated by institutional Churches, orthodox creeds, clerical elites and middle-class influence. The ideal of a popular, informal, non-institutional, non-denominational Church—a *Volkskirche*—faded, and with it, Ward suggested, the hopes of a Christian England. His account was based on extensive research among largely neglected Nonconformist primary sources, including Methodist Church archives and Nonconformist periodicals.

The book was on the whole well received. Sheridan Gilley, for example, was impressed with the power of Ward's historical thesis, and his achievement in evoking the rich diversity of religious and civic life in the urban

[15] W. R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England 1790–1850* (London, 1972).

Midlands, especially Manchester.[16] However, for Owen Chadwick, FBA, who had written so eloquently on the Victorian Church, Ward's book, though 'excellent', described only one aspect of the early nineteenth-century English religious life, that is, the Midland urban unrest set against 'the roll of drums and thunder of distant tumbrils'; while it ignored the more quiet devotion and respect for tradition that characterised religion in much of England. Chadwick was also unconvinced by Ward's efforts to show close connections between revivalism and urban radicalism. Nor did Chadwick agree with Ward that the failure of radicalism and the growth of denominationalism were 'bad things'. 'By reading Ward', he continued, 'the reader would hardly understand the "Halévy-truth", the civilizing order of Victorian society with the various churches as integral to the civilizing process.'[17] Some readers, meanwhile, continued to have difficulty with Ward's written style. 'His prose style', observed an American reviewer, 'is so dense and turgid as to make reading his book actually unpleasant.'[18] The distinguished historian of nineteenth-century Britain, Ursula Henriques, Sheridan Gilley later recalled, expressed to him 'her bafflement about *Religion and Society in England*'.[19]

Ward continued his work on early nineteenth-century Methodism with a two-volume edition of the correspondence of Jabez Bunting, the figure who had played the leading role in imposing denominational order on early nineteenth-century Methodism. *The Early Correspondence of Jabez Bunting 1820–1829* was published in 1972 by the Royal Historical Society, and *Early Victorian Methodism: the Correspondence of Jabez Bunting 1830–1858* was published in 1976 by Oxford University Press, with financial assistance from the Publications Board of the University of Durham.[20] 'Although', as Ward observed, 'Bunting was never a man to everyone's taste, and certainly not to every Methodist's taste,'[21] Ward none the less recognised the value of this large body of correspondence for an

[16] S. Gilley, 'Review of *Religion and Society in England 1790–1850*', *Catholic Historical Review*, 59 (1974), 698–700.

[17] O. Chadwick, 'Review of *Religion and Society in England 1790–1850*', *Historical Journal*, 16 (1973), 870–4, quotations on 873–4.

[18] L. F. Barmann, 'Review of *Religion and Society in England 1790–1850*', *Journal of Modern History*, 47 (1975), 556.

[19] Sheridan Gilley, letter to the author, 29 Sept. 2013.

[20] W. R. Ward (ed.), *The Early Correspondence of Jabez Bunting 1820–1829*, Camden Fourth Series, vol. 11 (London, 1972); W. R. Ward (ed.), *Early Victorian Methodism: the Correspondence of Jabez Bunting 1830–1858* (Oxford, 1976).

[21] Ward, 'Preface', *Early Victorian Methodism*, p. v.

understanding of the changes in early nineteenth-century British religious life.

Growing interest in German religious history

During the 1970s, Ward began receiving successive invitations to attend the *Deutscher Historikertag*, a major German national conference held every other year in historical studies, and also invitations to participate in workshops at the Georg Eckert Institute at Brunswick, a research institute specialising in the improvement of educational textbooks. He was initially invited to interpret English social Christianity to German and Continental scholars, but he soon developed an interest of his own in the history of German social Christianity. He began studying the German language at about the age of 50. While he did not master conversational German, he did learn to read the language to a sufficiently high level to be able to conduct manuscript research. Henceforth, he spent more and more time on the Continent, and Barbara recalled that they increasingly spent their holidays in Germany or the Low Countries, with Reg spending long hours in the archives.

Ward wrote his next book on German social Christianity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: *Theology, Sociology and Politics: the German Protestant Social Conscience 1890–1933* was published in 1979 by Peter Lang of Berne.[22] It was a study of Christian social engagement in industrialising and urbanising Germany. While Ward's work on English social Christianity had, up to this point in his career, focused on the social tensions resulting from early industrialisation, the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, his book on German social Christianity moved forward in time, exploring the social tensions of mature industrialisation, the First World War and the Russian Revolution. Following a review of the social Christian movement after the Revolutions of 1848, including the contributions of Johann Wichern and the Inner Mission, Ward focused on the challenges posed to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social Christian movement by the German Social Democratic Party, which was then dominated by an atheistic, anti-religious Marxist ideology. The Social Democratic Party, with its vision of the coming classless society of justice and equality, held the high moral

[22] W. R. Ward, *Theology, Sociology and Politics: the German Protestant Social Conscience 1890–1933* (Berne, 1979).

ground for many German labouring people, while the Churches were viewed as overly connected to the governing elites in the Bismarckian state. The German Churches were thus placed in a difficult position. If they opposed the anti-religious Social Democratic Party, they would risk alienating further the labouring classes. But there seemed no way that Christian churches could establish a common ground with Marxism. In the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland, the Religious-Socialist Movement of Leonhard Ragaz, Herman Kutter and Karl Barth did attempt after 1906 to bring Christianity into alignment with Marxism but, despite some innovative writing in their journal *Neue Wege*, the movement became divided by the pressures of the Great War and Russian Revolution. Ragaz eventually left the Church for social and educational work in a working-class district of Zurich, while at the Tambach conference of 1919 Barth famously denounced efforts to 'secularise' Christianity by linking it to political movements. Another effort to define a social Christianity was that of Friedrich Naumann and Max Weber, who sought from the 1890s to gain working-class support by identifying Christianity with a German cultural nationalism. However, with the growing influence of extremist racial nationalism in the 1920s, this approach also foundered, as many German Christian cultural nationalists embraced the German Christian movement that would seek alignment with National Socialism after 1933.

This was the first English-language book on German social Christianity during this crucial period, and it was based on an impressive array of German primary sources. The book was, in many senses, an exploration of the idea of the *Volkskirche*, or non-denominational, non-institutional popular Church, now in the German context. Wichern had boldly proclaimed the ideal of the *Volkskirche* in a celebrated address to the first German Church congress, or *Kirchentag*, in late 1848. But, as Ward's historical account demonstrated, the *Volkskirche* ideal was no more successful in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century than it had been in England at the beginning of the century. Ward's scholarly connections with Germany and modern German religious history, meanwhile, would continue, and he became a member of the editorial board of the journal *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* from its founding in 1988.

Professor of Modern History at Durham

As Professor of Modern History at Durham University, Ward was a formidable intellectual presence, a highly committed academic leader and a supportive colleague, although to some he could also be at times perplexing, even acerbic. During his twenty-one years at Durham, he played an active role in the University Senate, served frequently as Head of the Department of History, and also served as Dean of Arts from 1972 to 1974. In the 1960s and 1970s, as one colleague recalled, being head of department was no 'dawdle', as there was no reduction in teaching load and very little secretarial support. By the 1980s, moreover, universities were experiencing cuts to their state funding, and were obliged to compete with one another for their share of the declining state resource. As a head of department, Ward stoutly defended the interests of History within the university. At the same time, he was concerned about what he believed were low levels of publication at Durham, and he felt that the department had to change its priorities and nurture more of a research culture. Nor was he wrong in his analysis. When he arrived at Durham, there was a sense in many quarters that it was a provincial university, which should be content to focus on teaching, and send those students wanting to do doctoral research to Oxford, Cambridge or London. Some lecturers were given to believe that research was a rather low-level adjunct to their undergraduate teaching. As a result of Durham curricular reforms in the 1960s, moreover, there was an attempt to combine an 'Oxbridge' tutorial system with a 'redbrick' system based on lecture courses. The result was a very heavy teaching load, with lecturers struggling to teach within both systems. Ward encouraged his colleagues to publish more, but he also understood the demands on their time. He became convinced that undergraduate students at Durham were being given too much attention in comparison with other universities, and he argued that Durham could 'no longer afford to give all students the Rolls-Royce treatment' and also be competitive as a research university.

He struggled personally to carve out time for his research on top of his heavy administrative and teaching loads or, as he once put it, to achieve research outputs in 'a life largely devoted to sustaining academic institutions placed under increasing strain, and to meeting the demands of students of various levels to be taught things of quite other sorts'.[23] To some junior colleagues, he could seem to be asserting his professorial

[23] Ward, 'Introduction', *Faith and Faction*, p. viii.

privilege, and they could resent what they suspected were attempts to minimise his teaching. To be fair to Ward, they were not fully aware of the amount of time he gave to administration. His efforts to address all points of view in meetings, and his delight in detail, could lead to failures to communicate clearly with his colleagues. He sometimes made convoluted statements in departmental or Senate meetings, which few could understand or appreciate. His colleagues, one observed, 'used to joke about "Reg questions" at departmental seminars and job talks, which were often so long and syntactically and otherwise complex that he lost most people somewhere before he was half-way through'. Nor were his relations with colleagues helped by his waspish wit. He once described a rather self-important cleric and fellow historian as 'the stupidest man in the Church of England'. He had an appreciation for the absurd in life, enjoyed good-humoured banter and was in many respects modest about his own abilities but, as one colleague observed, he was 'sometimes not very thoughtful about the effect his words might have on somebody else'.

He could be demanding as a teacher and examiner, and he worked very hard at his teaching. In lecturing, he would usually take off his jacket, pace about a bit and try to create a relaxed mood. Yet, with his challenging sentences, frequent allusions, assumptions of background knowledge and demanding standards, it is not clear how effective he was as a teacher of undergraduate students. Professor Jane Dawson recalled how as a second-year History undergraduate she had once asked Ward a point of clarification about the doctrine of predestination, and was directed to Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*! At the same time, however, he could exude great warmth, generosity of spirit, and lack of pretentiousness. Dawson also remembered coming by his office as an undergraduate to ask for some sort of permission from him as head of department. Arriving at his door, she was greeted by a 'Good, Jane, come and stir this and don't stop.' She was then 'handed the spoon for a pan of sauce cooking on the little double ring in his room', while Ward attended to another part of the cooking. 'After the initial surprise', she further recalled, 'it was nice to realise I was being treated as a person and not as a "student".'

This small two-burner stove in his room was entirely illicit, and would not have survived the tougher fire regulations of a later period. He enjoyed the daily ritual of cooking a hot lunch and sharing it with others. One of his academic colleagues recalls Ward's lunch-time culinary efforts:

> He invited colleagues to share with him, two by two, and we all meekly accepted. It was pure Austerity Cookbook. One colleague recalls repetitive . . . red kidney beans; my special memory is of stewed prunes. There was always a pudding, and

> it was always stewed prunes. Took you straight back to the 1940s, even if you had never been there. He was such a generous man in many ways, but this was a form of hospitality you didn't want too often. The best thing about it was the washing-up.

In the mid-1970s, Ward contributed a recipe to a Methodist cookery book for a Chicken Curacao, which included the following guidance: 'Make up the white sauce (rich cooks may use a large can of evaporated milk; idle cooks may use a packet of savoury white sauce; the idle rich may use both).' 'West Indians and Dutch add curacao', he continued, 'sober Methodists achieve an acceptable result without injury to soul or body by adding a little rum flavour.' Ward certainly remained teetotal throughout his life. Although he was not evangelical about it, he did make it a point when he hosted departmental parties at his home, as one colleague recalled, to have 'lots and lots of different soft drinks' and no alcohol on offer, and then to encourage his guests to try different concoctions. (John Walsh recalls that at the bibulous dinner hosted by the dons for the undergraduates at Oxford University to celebrate VE Day in 1945, Reg was compelled to drink eight pints of orangeade: perhaps it was this memory that lay behind his determination to offer his guests a wide choice of soft drinks.)

During his Durham years, he strenuously opposed the union negotiations between the Methodist and Anglican Churches which had begun in the 1960s. He had a strong, almost visceral aversion both to the idea of an established Church and to bishops; and he viewed the proposal for union as an abandonment of Methodist principles. He joined with his fellow Methodist, Kingsley Barrett, Professor of Divinity at Durham University,[24] in resisting the union, objecting in particular to the notion of Methodists accepting the historic episcopate and the apostolic succession of bishops, which Barrett insisted was an idea based on 'very bad history and worse theology'.[25] Ward also harboured scepticism about the entire ecumenical movement, which he felt was dominated by church hierarchies and large institutional Churches. He personally believed that a revival of Christianity, were it to come, would emerge at the level of individual believers, and not through institutional unions and clerical hierarchies. There was, indeed, an anti-clerical tendency in Ward, and an abiding commitment to the Reformation ideal of the priesthood of all believers. Although he had

[24] On Barrett see J. D. G. Dunn, 'Charles Kingsley Barrett 1917–2011', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy*, XII (2013), 3–21.
[25] 'The Reverend C. K. Barrett', *The Daily Telegraph*, 6 Sept. 2011.

Catholic friends, he harboured a prejudice against the Catholic Church, with its papacy, prelacy and magnificence.

In 1986, after forty years of teaching—at Ruskin College, the University of Manchester and Durham University—Ward retired from full-time teaching, and became a Professor Emeritus at Durham. He was only 61, so his retirement was a little early, though no one was surprised by the decision. He was experiencing arthritic pain in his knees—'bad enough', one colleague recalled, 'to make him grimace with pain at times'—though not so bad as to keep him from the country walks that he and Barbara loved. He was perhaps feeling a little out of tune with university life in the 1980s, and there were good retirement packages on offer. But probably most important was his commitment to research. He retired, as John Walsh has observed, in 'style, with a magnificent, symbolic celebration of his Nonconformist inheritance' held in the historic Elvet Methodist Church in central Durham. There was an evening of hymns, led by choirs and bands, with Ward interpreting the hymns from the pulpit with 'affection, eloquence and learning'.[26]

On his retirement, Reg and Barbara left Durham, and moved to Petersfield, an attractive market town in the south of England. The decision to move south was largely Barbara's. She knew that her husband tended to become absorbed in Durham University politics and she felt certain that he would continue to do so in his retirement. If he were really to have the time he craved for his research and writing, she felt there needed to be a complete break. She also wanted to move south, which would place her closer to her own roots in Brighton and Hove. In Petersfield, Reg could travel in an hour and a half to London for visits to the archives, lectures and seminars (and he regularly did so). They had a pleasant house, and enjoyed their walks in the surrounding countryside. Indeed, one colleague in Durham suspected that one of the attractions of the move for Reg was that he had exhausted all the country walks in the Durham area. He became active in the Petersfield Historical Society, and eventually became its President. He not only continued his historical research and writing, but became more productive than ever in his retirement.

[26] Walsh, 'Profile: W. R. Ward', p. 42.

The Protestant Evangelical awakening and the 'Ward Thesis'

In 1992, six years after his retirement, he published what is arguably his most important work, the fruit of his years of research in the history of early modern politics and religion. *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* was published by Cambridge University Press, and was almost immediately recognised as a seminal reinterpretation of the religious revival movement which transformed the North Atlantic world between the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.[27] For the late Professor Jerald C. Brauer of the University of Chicago, a respected scholar of revivalism, Ward's book was 'the first comprehensive history of the rise, development, and spread of . . . what we call revivalism' and a 'superb history of the total picture of the evangelical awakening from central and eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Great Britain and North America'.[28] For another leading scholar of the history of modern Christianity, Professor David Hempton, now Dean of Havard Divinity School, the book was 'a display of quite breathtaking scholarship'.[29] The inspiration for the book, and what would become known as the 'Ward thesis' (as John Walsh has observed) came from Ward's reading of Will Herberg's *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* of 1955, a sociological account of immigration to the United States. Herberg had observed how religion served to preserve a sense of identity among vulnerable immigrant communities, in opposition to a dominant civic religion which made few demands but represented assimilation and conformity.[30] For Ward, Herberg's analysis helped him to reconceptualise the origins and nature of the Protestant Awakening.

In *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* Ward located the beginnings of modern revivalism among vulnerable, displaced, powerless and often poor peoples in Central and Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the Wars of the Reformation, and especially the furious bloodletting of the Thirty Years' War of 1618–48. As he observed, the treaties making up the Peace of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years' War in 1648 confirmed the

[27] W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge, 1992).
[28] J. C. Brauer, 'Revivalism revisited', *The Journal of Religion*, 77 (1997), 272.
[29] D. Hempton, 'Review of *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*', *The Linen Hall Review*, 10 (1993), 28.
[30] Walsh, 'Profile: W. R. Ward', p. 44; W. R. Ward, 'Will Herberg: an American hypothesis seen from Europe', in Ward, *Faith and Faction*, pp. 358–73.

principle that rulers were to determine the established form of Christianity—Lutheran, Reformed or Catholic—within their respective states, while certain guarantees were given to permit some religious minorities to worship in designated churches. However, there was no general religious toleration, and religious minorities were always vulnerable, distrusted and subject to the sudden withdrawal of even their limited ability to worship—while for decades after 1648 there was the constant danger that the fragile Westphalia Settlement would break down and there would be a renewal of religious warfare. According to Ward, it was among the threatened and marginalised Protestants in Central Europe, especially those who found themselves on the wrong side of the religious boundaries and subject to persecution by the civil and religious authorities—including being deprived of the ability to worship in church buildings—that people developed the practices that would become characteristic of revivalism. These practices included cottage meetings, prayer meetings, lay preaching, private Bible reading, the circulation of tracts, establishment of schools (to educate people to read their Bibles and tracts), fervent hymn singing, open-air meetings, and on occasion—especially during periods of acute danger—emotive, charismatic outbreaks, including convulsions, trances, visions, speaking in tongues, and apocalyptic dreams. Through the revivalist practices, minority Protestant communities in Central Europe resisted assimilation into the established religion, and preserved their identities.

Ward then traced the spread of revivalist beliefs and practices to poor or threatened minorities elsewhere in Europe, and then to Britain and its North American colonies. The beliefs and practices were communicated through the flow of religious refugees, itinerant preachers, private correspondence, the circulation of tracts, and concerts of prayer. As the movement spread, revivalist practices were formalised and networks were organised by a series of gifted leaders, including Spener in Frankfurt, Francke in Halle, Zinzendorf in Herrnhut, and the Wesleys and Whitefield in Britain and the North American colonies. The entire North Atlantic world was affected by what became known as the Protestant Evangelical Awakening. This movement, Ward insisted, must be understood as an international phenomenon, with its origins in popular resistance to assimilation into the religious establishments of the Westphalia Settlement and its support coming from common people determined to preserve their religious and cultural identities. 'Almost everywhere', he concluded, 'the revival began in resistance to a real or perceived threat of assimilation by the state in its modern shape, and the timetable of the revival, even in the

West, was set by the timetable of the Protestant crisis in Eastern and Central Europe where the threat was most raw and crude.'[31]

It was a work of monumental importance. Previous historians of modern revivalism tended to focus on the British and North American contexts. Ward was the first to develop a sustained account which traced the origins of the movement to central Europe, and demonstrated the causal connections between post-Westphalia political tensions, German Pietism, English Methodism, Scottish and Welsh revivalism, and the North American Great Awakening. While some might quibble with aspects of his account, or note omissions (for example, the lack of attention to Ireland), the 'Ward thesis' has become generally accepted. As the leading North American historians of modern evangelicalism, Mark Noll and Bruce Hindmarsh, later observed, 'Ward changed the historiography of early evangelicalism.' 'His scholarship', they continued, 'reconstituted 18th-century Anglo-American evangelical history in terms of 17th-century Central European history. This is one of the great contributions in all of modern historical scholarship.'[32] In 1990, meanwhile, Ward's contributions had been recognised with a Festschrift, *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and American c.1750–c.1850*, which was edited by Keith Robbins and published under the auspices of the Ecclesiastical History Society. As well as contributions from fifteen leading scholars, the volume included a valuable bibliography of Ward's publications.[33] Then in 1992 he was further honoured with the award of the degree of Doctor of Theology *honoris causa* by the University of Basle in Switzerland.

Ward followed *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* seven years later with a survey of European Christianity, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime 1648–1789*, published by Cambridge University Press as part of its 'New Approaches to European History' series.[34] While his book emphasised German and British Protestantism, especially Pietism, Methodism and revivalism, Ward also provided a sound discussion of Catholic Europe, and an excellent account of religion and the Enlightenment. The book suffered, as Ward explained to the author of this memoir, by needing to be cut by nearly a third to meet the required word limit for volumes in the series, and as a result the prose is probably

[31] Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, p. 353.

[32] M. Noll and B. Hindmarsh, 'Rewriting the history of Evangelicalism: W. R. Ward, 1925–2010', *Books and Culture* (March/April 2011), available at <http://booksandculture.com/articles/2011/marapr/historyevangelicalism.html?start=1> [accessed 11 November 2013].

[33] K. Robbins (ed.), *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America c.1750–c.1850*, *Studies in Church History*, *Subsidia* 7 (Oxford, 1990).

[34] W. R. Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime 1648–1789* (Cambridge, 1999).

too dense for a survey text. The following year, he published another survey text, this time a study of the history of the Churches in Great Britain from 1660 to the present, which was translated and published in German.[35] The book is also valuable both for the breadth of its coverage and the balanced assessments of the different religious traditions. In 1993, moreover, he published a collection of twenty-two of his essays in religious history under the title *Faith and Faction*.

He was also active in editing work. Between 1988 and 2003, he co-edited (with Professor Richard P. Heitzenrater of Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, and later of Duke Divinity School in North Carolina) John Wesley's *Journal* in seven volumes for the Bicentennial Edition of *The Works of John Wesley*, published by Abington Press in the United States.[36] Wesley's journal is nearly a million words in length, one of the longest printed sources of the eighteenth century, and editing the work was a mammoth task. The first volume included an Introduction of 119 pages, in which Ward explored the state of autobiographical religious writing in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, the nature and construction of Wesley's *Journal*, and then the nature of autobiographical writing in Wesley's later years. Among the delights of the volumes were Ward's extensive notes, which reflected his vast erudition, acerbic wit and sense of the absurd. One reviewer of the first volume applauded both Ward's 'elegant introduction' and 'meticulously edited text, with extensive biographical, topographical, biblical, and other notes'.[37] Ward also edited and published two volumes of the written replies of Church of England parish clergy in the diocese of Winchester to questions put to them by their bishops at Episcopal visitations.[38] During

[35] Reginald Ward, *Kirchengeschichte Großbritanniens vom 17. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, trans. Sabine Westermann (Leipzig, 2000).

[36] W. R. Ward and R. P. Heitzrater (eds.), *The Works of John Wesley*, *Vol. 18*, *Journals and Diaries I (1735–1738)* (Nashville, TN, 1988); *The Works of John Wesley*, *Vol. 19*, *Journals and Diaries II (1738–1743)* (Nashville, TN, 1990); *The Works of John Wesley*, *Vol. 20*, *Journals and Diaries III (1743–1754)* (Nashville, TN, 1991); *The Works of John Wesley*, *Vol. 21*, *Journals and Diaries IV (1755–1765)* (Nashville, TN, 1992); *The Works of John Wesley*, *Vol. 22*, *Journals and Diaries V (1765–1776)* (Nashville, TN, 1993); *The Works of John Wesley*, *Vol. 23*, *Journals and Diaries VI (1776–1786)* (Nashville, TN, 1995); *The Works of John Wesley*, *Vol. 24*, *Journals and Diaries VII (1787–1791)* (Nashville, TN, 2003).

[37] C. D. Field, 'Review of *The Works of John Wesley: Journals and Diaries I (1735–1738)*', *English Historical Review*, 109 (1994), 459.

[38] *Parson and Parish in Eighteenth-Century Surrey: Replies to Bishops' Visitations*, edited with an introduction by W. R. Ward (Guildford, 1994); *Parson and Parish in Eighteenth-Century Hampshire: Replies to Bishops' Visitations*, edited with an introduction by W. R. Ward (Winchester, 1995).

this time, he regularly attended seminars and conferences, wrote a steady stream of articles, contributed book chapters and book reviews, and was extremely generous in sharing insights, research and observations with his fellow historians.

In 2006, at the age of 81, Ward published with Cambridge University Press what would be his last book, *Early Evangelicalism: a Global Intellectual History, 1670–1789*.[39] It was in many respects a companion volume to his *Protestant Evangelical Awakening* of 1992. If his *Protestant Evangelical Awakening* had been primarily a study of the origins, development, and spread of the devotional practices associated with Protestant revivalism, in *Early Evangelicalism* he explored the theological and philosophical thought which informed the emergence of Evangelicalism in early modern Europe. According to Ward, amid the crisis of the seventeenth century many Protestants, especially the vulnerable minorities in Central Europe, rejected the dominant Aristotelian system and the theological systems that had been erected upon Aristotelian logic. For them, Aristotelian logic and theological creeds were bulwarks of powerful social hierarchies, absolutist states, and authoritative institutional Churches. In rejecting Aristotelianism and Orthodoxy, some, among them Johann Arndt, were drawn to mysticism, including the mysticism of the Jewish Cabbala teachings. Some embraced the vitalism of Paracelsus, with its beliefs in a basic life-force in all living things, in secret codes in nature, and in arcane cures for illnesses. Some were drawn to theosophy, or a belief in a hidden wisdom to be found in all ancient religious texts. Or they were drawn to prophecy, embracing Jakob Böhme's view of history as the cosmic struggle of love and wrath, shaped by the Paracelsian vital elements of salt, quicksilver and sulphur, and unfolding through the successive ages of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Many searched the Scriptures for hidden messages and coded references to contemporary events, and were drawn to apocalyptic visions, including expectations of the Second Coming. Some, including Zinzendorf, believed in paranormal abilities, including telepathy and second sight, which they viewed as *charisma*, or gifts of the Spirit. This rich, strange and diverse collection of beliefs and ideas, Ward maintained, formed the intellectual content of early Evangelicalism.

Ward then proceeded to explore the development and influence of these radical mystical beliefs during the eighteenth century, giving

[39] W. R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: a Global Intellectual History, 1670–1789* (Cambridge, 2006).

particular emphasis to three figures: Count von Zinzendorf, John Wesley, and Jonathan Edwards. Zinzendorf, he argued, remained 'violently anti-system and anti-Aristotle' throughout his life, and held an eclectic set of beliefs.[40] In the case of Wesley and Edwards, however, Ward traced their growing discomfort with eclecticism and their efforts to impose 'systems' on the diverse beliefs within the evangelical movement, in the interests of bringing order to the movement. Wesley, in particular, although he had been greatly influenced by mysticism in his early years, came by the 1780s to downplay apocalyptic and millenarian enthusiasms. None the less, mystical and millenarian movements continued to surface, in the fervent piety of such figures as Swedenborg, Lavater, and Jung-Stilling, or in the popular evangelical enthusiasms that surrounded the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, or in the prophecies of Baroness von Krüdener, Edward Irving and the Albury circle. However, gradually the forces of order and rationality prevailed. By the 1850s, Ward concluded, with the development of denominationalism and the revival of Orthodox creeds, the radical mysticism of evangelicalism—like the ideal of the non-denominational, non-institutional, popular *Volkskirche* that he had explored in previous works—was largely marginalised.

Early Evangelicalism was extremely impressive for the wide range of its sources and coverage, although it lacked the analytical power of his *Protestant Evangelical Awakening*. As in most of his writings, there was a tendency to assume too much background knowledge on the part of his readers. He also described his varied collection of mystical, prophetic, charismatic and millenarian ideas without much effort to weigh and assess their relative importance within the larger evangelical movement. Indeed, he may have been unduly attracted by the strange and unusual in his account of influences. As the Reformed historical theologian, Kenneth Stewart, observed in reviewing the work, 'readers standing within even broad confessional Protestantism will have reason to wonder at the inclusivity of Ward's selection and treatment of leading persons'.[41] Certainly not all of the ideas discussed by Ward were of equal weight within the larger movement. None the less, *Early Evangelicalism* is a fascinating and evocative companion to the *Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, which fills out the larger 'Ward thesis' on the rise and diversification of evangelical

[40] W. R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: a Global Intellectual History, 1670–1789*, p. 118.
[41] K. Stewart, 'Review of *Early Evangelicalism*', *Calvin Theological Journal*, 44 (2009), 443–5.

piety in the North Atlantic world between the seventeenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries, and which is inspiring further work. In January 2008, the American Society of Church History held a special session at its annual conference in Washington, DC, honouring him as one of the most distinguished religious historians of the past half-century. It would be one of his last conference appearances and, with his 'droll sense of humour', 'vast erudition', and 'delight in the arcane', he was highly entertaining in his response to the panellists.[42]

Reg Ward died on 2 October 2010 in his home at Petersfield, after a nine-month struggle with cancer. He was working until nearly the end, latterly on a project involving Central European atheists. When he could no longer write, he worked on arranging his papers, so that others might carry on the work. He was survived by his wife, Barbara, his three children and his nine grandchildren. The year before his death, he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy. While some believed his election was long overdue, Ward was simply very pleased, and this is reflected in his warm personal statement on the occasion. This statement, significantly, highlighted the Primitive Methodist tradition and its 'long-term influences' on his life and work. For while Ward was a formidable European intellectual, he also remained firmly connected to his roots—Nonconformist, lower middle-class, teetotal, and provincial, with a strong Protestant work ethic and simple tastes. He was devoted to his family. He was kindly, well-intentioned and gentle in his manners. He also felt compelled to speak openly and candidly, and on occasion to play the 'Ranter'—in the Primitive Methodist belief that people are called to say honestly what they think and to correct one another, and sometimes simply to deflate pretensions. He had a sense of the absurd in life, and an ability to laugh at himself. His sympathies as an historian were with the poor and the marginalised, whether the embattled Protestants of seventeenth-century Central Europe or the struggling Methodist labourers in early nineteenth-century Manchester. He had a strong commitment to the historical profession, and was very much an 'historian's historian'—who had demanding standards in research and analysis, and who expected that his students, and his readers, should also work hard to follow his arguments. While the amount of work he produced is impressive, his greatest contribution was the 'Ward thesis' on the origins, development and diversification of Protestant revivalism and evangelicalism, from their origins

[42] Noll and Hindmarsh, 'Rewriting the history of Evangelicalism'.

in seventeenth-century German-speaking Central Europe to the larger North Atlantic world. It is a monumental achievement, which has reshaped our conceptions of the early modern history of European and North American Christianity.

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