

Tim Grass, 'John Bate Cardale, Bloomsbury Apostle'

As an ecclesiastical building, the so-called Church of Christ the King in Gordon Square, which opened for worship in 1853, looks anything but radical today; from the outside, there is nothing to distinguish it from a Roman Catholic or Anglican building of the same era. Yet it was the best known church of a movement which in its day was seen by many as radical and as a threat to the peace and stability of the existing religious landscape. That movement became known as the Catholic Apostolic Church (CAC), although it has always disclaimed exclusive rights to a title which, it acknowledged, was applied in the ancient creeds to the whole body of Christian people. The CAC claimed (i) that the Second Coming of Christ was imminent; (ii) that the Christian Church was woefully ill-prepared for the events believed to be associated with that great day and ripe (along with the nations of Christendom) for divine judgement; and (iii) that God in his mercy had restored the office of apostle to the church, giving twelve apostles to perfect it at the end of the age as he had given twelve to found it at the beginning. On the strength of these convictions, the CAC, led by its apostles, bore witness to the heads of church and state; to Christian clergy; and to all Christian people, calling on them to accept its message as the answer to the shortcomings of the contemporary churches of which many were partly aware, and as the only way to safety in the face of impending judgement and tribulation. Needless to say, there is a fascinating story to be told, and Manfred Henke has provided a paper for the website which outlines the history behind the church's building and its diaconal and educational work. At the heart of the story of this movement, however, is a quintessentially establishment figure, the solicitor John Bate Cardale. This paper sketches his life and work, and considers his role within the CAC. It draws on my own research (have been interested in the CAC for many years, and am writing a history of it) and on that of others, for Cardale has been recognized in academic circles as a scholarly liturgist who is not to be written off as a leader of some fringe religious group.¹

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John Bate Cardale was born on 7 November 1802 at 28 Lambs Conduit St, off Gray's Inn Rd, and was baptized at St Andrew's, Holborn. Educated at Rugby School, he was articled to his father William in 1818, at the family's legal practice in 2 Bedford Row. He appears to have been serious about religious matters from a fairly early age, for by 1822 he was wanting to take holy orders in the Church of England, and telling his cousin that only a sense of duty would induce him to be admitted as an attorney once his articles had expired.² However, his father appears to have disapproved and his cousin advised him to remain in the legal profession as a person of integrity.³ Thereafter John applied himself to his work, being admitted to the Court of King's Bench on 9 July 1824. His father immediately made him a partner in both his firms, Cardale and Buxton, of 14 Holborn Court, at Gray's Inn; and Cardale and Bramley, at 2 Bedford Row. William himself promptly retired, an indication of his confidence in his son's ability.⁴

¹ My writing has been greatly facilitated by the assistance I have received from members of his family.

² Cardale to James Melville, 3 October 1822; quoted in John Lancaster, 'John Bate Cardale: The Quest for Catholicity' (B.Phil. thesis, University of St Andrews, 1977), 46.

³ G.C. Boase to Mrs Cardale, 16 February 1885 (in private hands); Melville to Cardale, 22 October 1822, quoted in Lancaster, 'Cardale', 47. Other members of the family did enter the ministry, however. Among them was his brother Edward (1810-93), who became Rector of Uckfield.

⁴ Lancaster, 'Cardale', 48, citing J. C. L. Sweet to John Lancaster, 16 February 1977.

John was now in a position to marry, and he accordingly did so, to Emma Plummer (1804-73) at St Clement's, Hastings, on 9 September 1824. She was the daughter and co-heiress of T. W. Plummer, who had briefly been MP for Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, and may therefore have been a woman of not inconsiderable means.⁵ Between 1826 and 1849 the couple had seven boys and seven girls.⁶ In 1826 the Cardales appear to have been resident in Clapham, where their first daughter was born, but the baptism of their next child, in December 1827, took place at St Andrew's, Holborn, so they could well have been living in Bloomsbury by then.⁷ By 1830 they were attending St John's, Bedford Row, an Anglican proprietary chapel.⁸ As such it did not form part of the regular parochial set-up but had been founded for the propagation of a particular form of Anglicanism – in this case, Evangelicalism; so it represents another aspect of local religious ferment. Its minister from 1827 was the Hon. Baptist W. Noel (1798-1873), a leading Evangelical in the making, who would cause a sensation when in 1848 he lived up to his Christian name by seceding from the Church of England and being immersed as a believer. The congregation under Noel was large and eminently respectable.

From the late 1820s Cardale would have been aware of the ministry of the maverick Evangelical Edward Irving at the National Scotch Church, which was stirring up controversy over several theological issues, notably the human nature of Christ and the interpretation of biblical prophecy. As part of the ferment, some began to expect that before the Second Coming the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as tongues, prophecy and healing, would be restored to the church. When in March 1830 such phenomena appeared near Helensburgh in Scotland, it became a place of pilgrimage for inquirers and ogglers of all religious persuasions and none. Cardale and his wife were among a small group who visited the area in August, and on his return he wrote a sympathetic account entitled 'On the Extraordinary Manifestations at Port-Glasgow' for the quarterly associated with Irving's circle of fellow prophetic students, the *Morning Watch*.⁹

Although Irving has traditionally been seen as the pioneer in restoring such phenomena as tongues and prophecy in church life, it can be argued that Cardale's role was, if less public, more significant, indeed seminal. He convened drawing-room meetings for invited guests at which he and others bore witness to what they had seen in Scotland. Among those invited were Spencer Perceval, MP and son of the

⁵ The Plummers had been resident at 6 Lambs Conduit St; had John known Emma from childhood, therefore?

⁶ Six married spouses from other Catholic Apostolic families, including three who married Pecks from Bath; the Pecks were related to the Awdrys, from whom came the author of *Thomas the Tank Engine*. George (1839-84) ran away from home as a teenager to join an Indian regiment, staging his disappearance on a beach on the Isle of Wight. He overcame this unpromising start and his deafness to become a conveyancer and a widely respected evangelist in the CAC. Charles (1841-1904) spent his life in the Navy, rising to the rank of Vice-Admiral. In 1868 church gossip reported that 'Harry' (apparently a family name for Charles, Henry having died in 1865) was engaged to marry Fanny Carlyle, daughter of the apostle Thomas Carlyle, but that they would not marry until he had been made an admiral: S. R. Gardiner to Martin H. Irving, 10 September [1857], 3 October [1857]; Cardale to Martin H. Irving, 25 September 1867; Isabella Gardiner to Martin H. Irving, 2 October 1868 (all in private hands). Edward also became a solicitor.

⁷ A family Bible inscribed with his name has '2 Bedford Row' crossed out and replaced by '4 Endsleigh St', and the date '13th Novr. 1833'.

⁸ It was closed in 1856 when the roof fell in, and demolished in 1863.

⁹ *Morning Watch* 2 (1830), 869-73. For more on these gifts, see my *The Lord's Watchman: Edward Irving* (Bletchley: Paternoster, forthcoming 2011), chs 16, 17.

assassinated Prime Minister; Henry Drummond, partner in the family bank at Charing Cross; and Edward Irving himself. It seems to have been as a result of hearing this testimony that Irving was finally convinced not only that the gifts should be expected but – more importantly – that these were to be identified with them.¹⁰ Clearly Cardale was happy to mix with those in high places, and I cannot help thinking that Beatrice Webb's reference to 'the class that gives orders' could be well applied to him. This undoubtedly helped to equip him for leadership in the movement which was to become the CAC. Furthermore, his wife was the first to speak 'in the power' in London, at home in April 1831. She and his sister Emily (1806-79) soon became influential members of a small circle of 'gifted persons' associated with Irving. Although Cardale invited Noel as their minister to come and test the utterances for himself, he refused, and after he preached against the gifts, the family joined Irving's congregation.¹¹ Irving, however, was evicted from his pulpit by the trustees of his church in May 1832, Cardale being his legal advisor (his first ecclesiastical case). He therefore founded a new congregation, whose first meeting place was the former Horse Bazaar in Gray's Inn Road, where one of Cardale's daughters was baptized. After a few months they moved to premises in Newman St, off Oxford St, which Cardale had been offered in the course of business.¹²

Gradually during the 1830s the expectation crystallized that apostles were about to be restored to the church, though as yet there was no clear understanding of their role.¹³ Cardale was the first to be called, through a word of prophecy, and for some months the only one.¹⁴ It was therefore he who as apostle ordained Irving as angel of the new church on Good Friday 1833.¹⁵ From that point on, the movement began to change direction; whereas at first it was the prophets who had in effect held supreme sway, increasing emphasis came to be placed on what was seen as a divinely revealed pattern of church order, corresponding to the structure of the Tabernacle in the Book of Exodus, as the means through which the Christian Church would be perfected in preparation for the Second Coming. Crucial to this structure was the apostleship, and crucial to the developing understanding of that office was Cardale. Indeed, as John Lancaster commented in his thesis on Cardale, 'it could almost be said that the Catholic Apostolic Church was Cardale's church'.¹⁶ As so often happens, there was tension between what one might characterize, without prejudging the question of divine inspiration, as the charismatics and the institutionalists. This was compounded by the fact that Irving's background was Presbyterian while Cardale's was Anglican; each therefore brought with him a different understanding of ministerial office and orders. This tension continued for a number of years, producing occasional crises within the young movement, but it seems

¹⁰ Cf. Grass, *Irving*, 223.

¹¹ C. W. Boase, *The Elijah Ministry in the Christian Church* (Edinburgh: R. Grant, 1868), 785.

¹² Grass, *Irving*, 269.

¹³ Cardale's sister recalled regarding the trip to Port Glasgow: 'myself and some of my companions were struck to hear these people, (when in mighty power), praying to God to have pity upon His weary heritage (His poor Church scattered and divided), utter this petition – "O Lord send Apostles in Thy compassion, none else can heal the schisms of Thy Church" and like expressions, and, Miss Cardale adds, "we used to say 'Apostles! What can it mean?'"': [Edward Trimen], 'Rise and Progress of the Work of the Lord' (typescript, [c.1904]), 46.

¹⁴ However, by 1852 he had come to deny the need for prophecy in the calling of apostles; this was because they were the only ministers to be ordained directly by God, who unlike the apostles had no need of prophetic light to indicate to him whom to ordain: Cardale to Thomas Dowglasse, 14 November 1852.

¹⁵ Grass, *Irving*, 277.

¹⁶ Lancaster, 'Cardale', 44.

to have been Cardale's combination of clear leadership with pastoral tact which averted serious schism - in Britain, at any rate (there was a major schism in Germany early in the 1860s). Light from the prophets was highly valued, but in Cardale's thinking it was for apostles to rule; thus the CAC avoided falling into chaos and became marked for the disciplined and orderly spirituality of its members.

I think it also fair to say that Cardale's own thinking was changing during the early 1830s. We noted that his background was Evangelical, and although Evangelicals at this stage were often sympathetic to aspects of what might be termed high church thinking,¹⁷ it is clear that his thought and practice was advancing well beyond anything which Evangelicals would be happy with – and Evangelicalism, too, was changing. It is also worth pointing out that in adopting increasingly high church views, Cardale was not a mere follower of the early 'Oxford Movement' associated with Keble and Newman, for the CAC under Cardale's guidance was known to introduce ritual practices which Anglicans introduced only later if at all.

In 1835, therefore, the twelve apostles were 'separated' to their work, being relieved of all other duties in the church. Cardale was designated 'Pillar of Apostles', in other words the first among equals. Each apostle was allotted one of the 'Twelve Tribes of Christendom', corresponding to those of Israel. Cardale's was Judah, which equated to nineteenth-century England, along with its 'suburbs' of America, Australia and India.

Accordingly, most if not all of the apostles settled in Albury, and Cardale made this his first home for much of the rest of his life. Before 1841 the *Post Office Directory* for London did not include a residential listing (its Court section), but from then until 1845 John was listed as resident at 2 Bedford Row with his brother Edward. Presumably John kept a *pied á terre* 'over the shop', but we do not know whether this was for religious or business reasons. From 1846 to 1855, however, he was recorded as living at 2 Tavistock Villas, in Tavistock Square (also known as Bedford House); we know he spent much of his time here rather than at Albury. His next-door neighbour was Charles Dickens; they appear to have got on quite well, although Dickens's undogmatic form of Christianity would not have been to Cardale's taste. At least the CAC did not suffer the indignity of being caricatured in the way that Evangelical interest in mission was, in the person of Mrs Jellyby! Between 1856 and 1863 Cardale was listed as resident at 2 Bedford Row and at Albury (presumably a reversion to the arrangement of the early 1840s), ceasing to be listed in the London directory from 1864, which would tie in with the end of his partnership as a solicitor.

As an apostle he exercised direction of the church in various ways. In 1838-9 the apostles scattered to visit their charges, Cardale remaining in Albury. When tensions regarding the relation of apostles to the church's councils threatened to explode, he and those at Albury recalled their colleagues. Careful investigation of the discontent was undertaken, and Cardale was authorized by the apostles to lay down what they had agreed. It says much for him, especially when we take into account that he alone of all the apostles had not previously served as an angel or elder, that there was very little dissent expressed.

¹⁷ This may explain why Catholic Apostolic sources sometimes describe the young Cardale as having high church views: e.g. Ernst A. Rossteuscher, 'The Rebuilding of the Church of Christ upon the Original Foundations: An Historical Narrative of its Commencement. A free translation' [by Miss L. A. Hewett], (MS, [1871]), 230 (in the British Library, shelfmark 764n13).

His residence in London was intended to enable him to fulfil his presidential responsibilities more easily. In particular, he made himself available for interviews with ministers seeking advice on problems. When he returned to Surrey, therefore, he planned to spend a day a week in the capital so that ministers could make appointments to see him.¹⁸ His legal as well as pastoral expertise proved invaluable at various points, as in 1855 when a procedure had to be evolved for dealing with the bankruptcy of deacons. In such matters, his analytical skills enabled him to weigh up alternative options and to settle on that which best harmonized with the church's understanding of ministry and of ethical conduct.

But Cardale also proved to be a gifted liturgist. A printed liturgy for the eucharist was introduced in 1842, which was primarily Cardale's work. He was responding to a widespread sense that the church's worship should be liturgical, and he drew upon the researches and experiences of the apostles in visiting their areas of jurisdiction. This, coupled with his own researches, equipped him to produce a liturgy which sought to bring together the 'gold' found in the worship of various Christian traditions, Eastern and Western, in a manner which reflected the apostles' sense of their calling to reunite the divided parts of the body of Christ. As part of his work, he continued to produce further services and to revise those already issued. When innovations of rite or vestment were introduced, it was Cardale who had thought things through – often on his own initiative rather than as a member of the college of apostles. Always he prepared the way by providing timely teaching on them, which was often published or otherwise circulated, and he seems to have had a well developed sense of when the time was right, pastorally speaking, for a move to be made. A prime example of this was the rite of sealing, introduced in 1847, which played a major part in a renewed surge of confidence and growth following some years of internal tension. This rite was seen as conveying a special gift of the Holy Ghost intended to fit members reaching the age of twenty to play a mature part in the church's ministry, and also to mark them out as belonging to the 144,000 who would be caught up to heaven before the coming Great Tribulation. Cardale was the first to administer the rite, and the same year he gave a course of lectures which offered a theological rationale for it. So he was a thinker as well as a doer. But his work on the liturgy gave the church an additional bond to hold it together in belief and practice, a classic example of the adage from the early centuries of the Church, *lex orandi lex credendi*. And his belief that God had given much light concerning the right order of worship did not result in a liturgy which was set in stone; the English liturgy went through no less than seven editions during his lifetime, each larger and more comprehensive than the one before.

It was part of his duty as 'Pillar of Apostles' (*primus inter pares*) to write on pertinent religious issues, though almost all his works were published anonymously. When it was decided to issue 'Testimonies' outlining the movement's convictions and appealing to ecclesiastical and political leaders to heed its message, it was Cardale who took a leading role in drafting these. A fairly early work of which he was sole author, based on the 'Great Testimony' to the heads of Christendom, was the *Manual or Summary of the Objects of Faith and Hope in the Present Times* (1843), expounding the fundamentals of the young church's faith. But his chief literary production, apart from the Liturgy itself, was his 1100-page *Readings upon the Liturgy and other Divine Offices of the Church*. This was partly based on courses of lectures given in London over several years from 1847, the rest being produced in the few years before his death,

¹⁸ 'Minutes of Conference 1854-73', 1st series, 8 (28 February 1855).

and represents an extensive commentary on the church's liturgy. It is significant that the most important theological work of the CAC was one of liturgical theology: this was not a body with a cerebral conception of Christianity, but one believed that a primary aspect of its calling was to offer worship. Many other works came from his pen. Some were sermons and teachings reprinted for a wider audience; some were commentaries on contemporary religious events and trends, or on the state and particular responsibilities of the CAC; and some were apologetic works, responding to publications critical of the CAC or defending aspects of his faith and hope.

To prime the pump of his writing, Cardale possessed an extensive library. A secondhand booklist issued by the CAC around 1970 included a number of bound volumes of tracts from his library, and these indicate not only wide reading concerning current political issues but also theological interests beyond those of most who are written off as 'millennarians', notably in the early eighteenth-century controversies about church-state relationships. And I cannot omit mention of *A Short and Sure Guide to Railway Speculation: A Few Plain Rules how to speculate with safety and profit in Railway Shares, by a Successful Operator* (1845)! This was a man who recognized that not the least part of his work as an apostle was thinking and reading.

As well as writing, he vetted the works of others. The evangelist Thomas Dowglasse, whose daughter Catherine would marry Cardale's son Edward (1834-73), produced an early and important outline of the church's origins and development, *A Chronicle of Certain Events* (1852). In its published form it owed much to Cardale's painstaking peer review of the manuscript; indeed, some phrases in the finished product are Cardale's. Other works by Dowglasse received like scrutiny.

I had always assumed that Cardale effectively retired from the legal profession on becoming an apostle; the Holborn office was closed and that partnership dissolved in 1833, and Cardale's retirement the following year was certainly stated in his obituary in the *Law Times*, but it appears that this may not have been so.¹⁹ We can trace what happened to the Bedford Row partnership through the annually issued *Law List*. In 1833 and 1834, two partnerships between John and his brother Edward were listed, one including William Bramley. Edward (who became an Anglican clergyman) ceased to be listed after 1846, but other partners were added, including John's son Edward in 1859. However, in 1863 the *London Gazette* carried a notice dissolving the partnership of Cardale, Iliffe and Russell.²¹ Since debts outstanding were to be paid to Iliffe and Russell, it seems that the Cardales were pulling out – or perhaps being pushed, although by 1880 the firm was trading as Iliffe, Russell, Iliffe, and Cardale, John's son George having become a partner in 1877.²²

In any case, John's legal habits of precision would have proved invaluable in drafting the *General Rubrics* (1852 and later editions), governing the conduct of worship, and the *Regulations as to the Building and Repairing of Churches* (1863) and its successor the *Book of Regulations* (1878, probably completed after

¹⁹ *Law Times* 63 (1877), 273, 297, cited in Lancaster, 'Cardale', 49.

²¹ *London Gazette*, 11 August 1863 [online].

²² Lancaster, 'Cardale', 71.

he died by his coadjutor, James Leslie).²³ The latter, which developed from a brief section in the earlier work, dealt not only with buildings but also with such matters as the keeping of church records. The other apostles may well have contributed, but since these were intended first of all for England, Cardale as apostle for that country would doubtless have had final responsibility for their contents.

Shortly after the end of his legal partnership, the CAC experienced a fresh spurt of evangelistic outreach. Prophecy had indicated the urgency of this in the face of coming judgement, and it was Cardale who gave a coherent rationale for undertaking it in *The Character of our Present Testimony and Work* (1865). Significantly, he insisted that the formation of separate congregations was not the primary objective of their mission, and was only undertaken where it was not possible otherwise to care for those accepting the apostles' message. Apostles were intended to be the centre of the church's unity on earth, but the CAC was not.

By the 1860s, Cardale appears to have become a much-respected member of the community in the village of Albury. Reports in the local newspaper, the *Surrey Advertiser*, refer to him presiding at the annual dinner of the local benefit society, joining the annual excursion of the Surrey Archaeological Society, and judging the exhibits at the village's flower and produce show. They also record the death of his son Henry, who was a lieutenant aboard HMS Gibraltar, in 1865, from the effects of an accident while on duty in Malta.

At the assembly of the so-called 'Seven Churches in London' in Gordon Square on 14 July 1877, there was a sense of expectation, since prophecy had already indicated that it represented the completion of a period of time which was symbolically significant, 42 years (12 x 3½) since the separation of the apostles. Cardale arrived the previous evening in apparent good health, but began to feel ill after sustaining an accidental blow to his leg, and was unable to officiate next morning. Indeed, although present he had to leave the service through illness and he returned to Albury. A prophecy was uttered that 'Behold! Ye have arrived at the fullness of time as regards the Apostolic work which the Lord hath given his Twelve to do'.²⁴ On the 17th he received the anointing for the sick, blessed each member of his family, and died (of erysipelas) the following morning.²⁵

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Why did Cardale continue to believe in the divine origin of the work which manifested itself in the formation of the CAC?

... it has always appeared to me that the most striking proof that this work is from God is the wonderful connexion & relation which has been developed between facts isolated in time. ... the gradual development of one connected whole proving an unity of design, and yet the absence of design on the part of the instruments employed ...²⁶

²³ Lancaster, 'Cardale', 77, 78, citing K. W. Stevenson to J. Lancaster, 4 March 1977.

²⁴ Bradford, West Yorkshire Archive Service, ref. 53D95/5/2, 'Apostles' Determinations', Albury, August 1877, 72.

²⁵ [W. F. Pitcairn], *Address by the Angel to the Flock at Edinburgh, on occasion of Mr. Cardale's Removal, and of the Celebration of the '14th July 1877'*, Lithographed, 22nd July 1877.

²⁶ Cardale to Dowglass, 10 May 1852, on p.15 of the latter's manuscript (in family hands).

A particular example, he wrote, was the development of the church's fourfold pattern of ministry and its perfect adaptation to human needs in a way which none of those involved could have foreseen or planned; 'I am [he asserted] perhaps the only party who can testify, "This is not the work of man".'

For all his conviction regarding the truth of the work, however, there is some evidence that he was not always at ease in responding to new trends in religious thought, especially those which appeared from about 1859 onwards. We may speculate that he did not feel the full force of the objections being raised against traditional Christian teaching, perhaps because his own theological interests lay elsewhere as a liturgist. When asked in 1873 what the apostles taught regarding early human history, his response was that the book of Genesis must be capable of honest interpretation consistent with the facts, and that the apostles refused to say whether the six days of creation were literal. It was, he considered, regrettable that Christians, especially ministers, should be disturbed by such questions. Apostles sought to give the doctrine of Christ rather than critical or scientific expositions of the word of God. Since all humans were descended from Adam and Eve, it was speculative to ask about pre- or non-Adamic humans; other speculative questions included whether the account of the Fall was to be interpreted as literally true or as history under allegorical form, and the extent of the Flood. By contrast, he offered an unambiguous affirmation of the doctrine of eternal punishment, which was coming under fire in the Church of England at that time.²⁷

In conclusion, what might we say about his legacy? We could point to the Liturgy, whose merits have been quite widely recognized by scholars; to his writings, which have continued to nourish succeeding generations of CA members; to the structures of government and ministry for which he was so largely responsible. But I would suggest that possibly his chief legacy was that spirit of firm conviction graciously held, a spirit which marked the outlook of members for many years after the death of the last apostle in 1901, during the church's gradual dismantling. Several newspaper articles on the church appeared during the 1930s, and one was headlined 'Church Peril of Extinction: "We are not alarmed," says London minister'.²⁹ It was not inappropriate as a summary of their attitude.

²⁷ 'Minutes of Conference', 10 December 1873, 413-16.

²⁹ *Evening Standard*, 22 October 1930, 15.