

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

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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

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 th

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

A particular example, he wrote, was the development of the church's fourfold pattern of ministry and