
A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

Nottinghamshire Baptists Their Rise and Expansion

The 17th Century Old Connexion General Baptists

THE EARLIEST Baptist churches in Nottinghamshire appear before the middle of the 17th century. They were General Baptist churches of the Old Connexion and the evidence suggests that they spread into the county from Lincolnshire. The fact that almost all these early churches were near the Lincolnshire border supports this view. These early Nottinghamshire churches fell into two main groups, both of them large and active.[1] One was in the south-east of the county, centred round the village of Rempston and with adherents in many surrounding villages such as Normanton, Widmerpool, Wysall, East Leake, Plumtree and Bunny. The other was in the north-east extending over a number of Trent-side villages including Collingham, Serlby, Kneesall, Flintham, Sutton-under-Edge, Manlip, Carlton-on-Trent, Norwell and Muskham. Collingham was the principal church in this group. There were also General Baptist groups at Skegby, near Mansfield, at Arnold and in Nottingham.

The leader of the Rempston church was Elias Boyer, a man of strong character and of good social standing and probably a relative of the rector, Thomas Boyer. The Compton Returns of 1669 record that the Rempston group met "at a Meeting House every Sunday, Tuesday and Friday . . . oftentimes they meet in the house of Elias Boyer, Anabaptists, sometimes 200, seldom under 100". Elias Boyer was also the leader of another Baptist group at Normanton-on-Soar where twenty to thirty "Anabaptists" met once a week at the house of George Peak, mostly "mechanics and poore women", as the incumbent disdainfully described them. During the lifetime of Elias Boyer the Baptist cause in south-east Nottinghamshire flourished.

The Collingham church, the leading church in the north-east group, is the only Baptist church in existence in Nottinghamshire today that has an unbroken history back to this period, though there is reason to believe that two other surviving churches in the county may have been founded even earlier than Collingham. These are Friar Lane, Nottingham (now represented by the Thomas Helwys church, Lenton), and Sutton-in-Ashfield, Zion. They are discussed below.

The Collingham church has a strong tradition that it was founded by a group which moved out of Newark as a result of the oppressive legislation in the 1660s under the Clarendon Code. Another tradition is that Collingham was founded by a group of former Cromwellian soldiers who settled in this then obscure village. If it is true that a group did move to Collingham from Newark they would certainly have found a tradition of Nonconformity in the village, and possibly even some of Baptist views already there. Documents in the Archdeaconry Records show that Richard Scrimshaw and members of the Milnes and Storr families, shortly to emerge as leaders of the Baptist

conventicle, were excommunicated from the parish church in 1663 and 1664.[2]

It is possible to make a rough estimate of the number of Baptists in the county about 1670. The various Episcopal Returns about that period indicate the number of Baptists in certain villages, e.g., two hundred at Rempston and sixty at Collingham. Registration of a Conventicle was required when five persons in addition to the family were meeting together. Assuming therefore the average size of a conventicle to be ten unless otherwise stated, we arrive at a figure of about four hundred Baptists in Nottinghamshire out of a population of about 80,000. This means that about one in two hundred was a Baptist. The estimate of four hundred is likely to be an under-estimate. It is based on figures supplied by the clergy who were under no temptation to over-estimate the number of dissenters in their parishes. Some clergy indicate their dislike of dissenters by including derogatory comments. The incumbent at Clayworth, for example, says "Nor are there (thanks be to God) any other dissenters who obstinately refuse . . . the communion of ye Church of England."[3] Furthermore, some conventicles registered themselves as "Independent" even though they held Baptist views. Only those described as "Baptists" or "Anabaptists" have been included.

With regard to Nottingham itself, the three earliest references to Baptists are well known—that in George Fox's *Journal* in 1646 or 1647 to a company of "shattered Baptists", the reference in Lucy Hutchinson's *Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*, recording how she and Hutchinson, Parliamentary Governor of Nottingham Castle, adopted Baptist views after reading literature confiscated from Baptist soldiers, and the reference in Adam Taylor [4] to a meeting of the General Baptist Association at Stamford in 1656, when a messenger was sent to "stir up" Nottingham to contribute to the support of two men sent on a mission to the West. In 1646, therefore, there had been Baptists in Nottingham long enough to have formed a society and for the society to have been "shattered", and in 1656 they were strong enough to be expected to help Association evangelism. The first indication of their meeting place is the registration, after the Toleration Act, of a conventicle meeting in the Swan Inn, High Pavement. The Swan Inn probably stood on the site of the present Unitarian chapel.[5] Thereafter there seems little doubt but that Baptist life in Nottingham has been continuous until the present day.

During the Arian controversies of the 18th century, in which the Lincolnshire General Baptist Association was closely involved, the General Baptist churches of that county diminished greatly in number and strength. The Nottinghamshire churches also shared the regression though to a lesser extent. Gamston, an off-shoot of Collingham, retained its orthodoxy and continued an active church. The Rempston group of churches ceased to be clearly Trinitarian and practically disappeared. In the early part of the 18th century the General Baptist church at Nottingham moved from the Old Connexion into the

Calvinistic camp. It was represented at the General Baptist Assembly in 1700 but it was clearly a Particular Baptist church in 1724 when the trustees of the Friar Lane Meeting House were appointed, as is shown by the deeds. The "preacher" at that period, Samuel Eaton, seems to have become a Particular Baptist between 1713 and 1720. He dedicated a book to the Baptists of Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Cambridgeshire in 1713, which suggests that he was then a General Baptist, and ordained a Particular Baptist, Josiah Thompson of Shrewsbury, in 1720, which he would hardly have done unless he had himself become a Particular Baptist.[6] The Collingham church had become a Particular Baptist church, possibly by 1778, as in that year it called a minister from a Calvinistic church, William Shaw of Shipley. It appears in Rippon's *Annual Register* of 1790 as a Particular Baptist church.

The records of the Sutton-in-Ashfield church begin in the 1760s. Abraham Booth was its pastor between 1765 and 1768. It was then a well-established church. Its earlier records have disappeared and there is no tradition relating to its foundation. It is, however, tempting to link it with the General Baptist church at Skegby, less than two miles away, which had met in the house of Mrs. Lindley in 1669, "a hotbed of Anabaptists and fifth monarchy men". Descendants of Mrs. Lindley were still in the district in the 1740s, still evidently of Baptist convictions, and they supported the rising New Connexion church at Kirkby Woodhouse. Elizabeth Lindley of that family married George Hardstaffe, minister of the Kirkby Woodhouse church, 1799-1842.[7] If we can link the Sutton-in-Ashfield church with the Skegby society, it would mean that three Nottinghamshire Baptist churches moved from Arminianism to Calvinism during the Arian controversy and preserved their orthodoxy. Thereafter further inroads of Socinianism among the Nottinghamshire Baptists were stayed by the arrival of the New Connexion.

The Retford church probably dates back to the 17th century. The will of Richard Brownlow, dated 1691, provided an endowment for the dissenting meeting house in that town. The particular brand of dissent is not specified but the Retford Old Connexion church received this endowment. This church virtually disappeared in the mid-18th century but it was revived by the efforts of the Gamston church about 1763 and retained the endowment. The Gamston church, now closed, is interesting. It was founded early in the 18th century by Aaron Jeffrey, a footman of the Earl of Clare and a member of the Collingham church.[8] He and his son Joseph provided the ministry of this church until 1795. Gamston and Retford remained a united church, with some intermissions, for over a century, Retford eventually taking over the leadership. It was in the River Idle at Gamston that Dan Taylor, who was to become the dynamic leader of the New Connexion, was baptised in 1763. The Retford church seems to be the only former Old Connexion church in the county still in existence which did not move into Calvinism.

The New Connexion General Baptists, originating in Leicestershire, penetrated Nottinghamshire at two points. The first was at Kirkby Woodhouse, West Nottinghamshire, in the 1740s, when some of its preachers formed a small society there. From Kirkby Woodhouse it spread to half a dozen neighbouring villages and towns within the next sixty years and the churches so formed are in existence today. The other point of entry was in the South. A line of churches was pushed out by the New Connexion church at Kegworth. East Leake was the first of them and it drew hearers from many villages with the result that societies were formed and chapels built at Wysall, Widmerpool, Rempston, Wymeswold, Hose, Long Clawson and Upper Broughton. In this area the New Connexion was building among the ruins of the Old Connexion church which Elias Boyer had led the previous century. There is evidence to suggest that the Old Connexion church had succumbed to Socinianism but that there were still people in these villages who regarded themselves as General Baptists and were drawn into the New Connexion when it appeared. Not all were in sympathy with its evangelicalism, however, and in 1813 a number of members made a determined effort to introduce Socinian doctrines at Wymeswold. After a lengthy dispute about a dozen were excluded.[9]

The new movement reached Nottingham in 1773 when William Fox, a framework knitter, a former member of the Kirkby Woodhouse church, came to the town and licensed his house for preaching. Fox was a man of unstable character and the society had fluctuating fortunes. The work was almost abandoned until a strange event changed the situation. In 1779 a man named Cooper Hall was convicted at the Nottingham Assize of robbing the mail and was sentenced to death. Two Baptist ministers, Pollard of Loughborough and Tarratt of Kegworth, visited Hall in prison and he showed signs of conversion. At the execution a large crowd gathered. The two ministers accompanied Hall to the scaffold. The condemned man gave out a hymn and joined in the singing of it "more cheerfully than anyone", after which Pollard addressed the crowd. The execution then took place, the body was placed in a coffin on a cask. Tarratt mounted another cask and preached a second sermon on Ps. 86:12, 13 "For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from lowest hell." Surely a service unique in Baptist history! As a result the Nottingham church became well known and grew rapidly in numbers and influence.

In 1784 Robert Smith became minister and under his leadership expansion was rapid. In July 1786 no less than thirtytwo were baptised in the Trent in the presence of eight to ten thousand spectators and such occasions were not uncommon. In 1799 a new chapel was erected in Plumtre Place, Stoney Street, and in the next generation the membership of Stoney Street and its branch churches reached over 1,400. This one church included about one seventh of the denomina-

tion and was referred to by a contemporary writer as "the glory of the New Connexion."

At the beginning of the 19th century the Industrial Revolution was well under way in Nottingham. Hosiery and lace manufacture, the traditional local industries, had expanded and were gradually becoming mechanised. The factory system was developing and steam was rendering factories independent of water power. Coal mining in Nottinghamshire was extending, especially around Nottingham, and ancillary industries were coming into being, among them the manufacture of machinery and other equipment. Bleaching and dyeing developed in Basford and brick making in Sneinton, both shortly to become suburbs of Nottingham. The population grew at an unprecedented rate; that of three central parishes, St. Mary, St. Nicholas and St. Peter, grew from under 30,000 in 1801 to nearly 114,000 in 1881. The area now included in the town and suburbs had a population of about 36,000 in 1801 and about 260,000 in 1911, the greatest growth being in the centre and in the suburbs of Basford, Lenton, Radford and Sneinton.

This presented a tremendous challenge to the churches and most of the denominations responded to a greater or less extent, though in a somewhat haphazard way, seldom taking into consideration the work of denominations other than their own. Many factors, however, entered into the situation and it was not always simply a case of church leaders becoming conscious of an increasing population in a new suburb and taking steps to commence church work there. Sometimes, indeed it was a deliberate outreach, the commencing of a house meeting in the new district, or, more often, a Sunday school from which a service for adults would develop. This is how new work began in Carrington, Daybrook and Radford. Sometimes the new work began when church members moved to a new suburb and commenced a local meeting in their own house while still retaining their membership with the central church. This happened at Bulwell, Ripley and Mansfield. The latter was particularly interesting in that W. Taylor, a framework knitter, moved out to Mansfield to escape the Luddite riots and began meetings in his workshop. Such new groups were at first branches of the parent church. Their members were on the roll of the parent church. They had no separate diaconate, though they might have special deacons to represent them. The minister of the parent church was their minister. When such a branch church grew strong enough there would be a formal separation, the branch church would then appoint its own deacons and, if large enough, call its own minister. Separation however might not take place until a generation or more after the original foundation. It thus transpires that many of the dates given in the Baptist Handbook for the foundation of Nottinghamshire churches are the date of separation from the parent church and not the date the work was commenced.

Some Statistics

At the beginning of the 19th century there were two Baptist

churches in Nottingham and district with a total membership of about four hundred in a population of 36,000, i.e. about one in eighty eight. In 1911 there were twenty-four churches with about 3,500 members in a population of 260,000, the proportion now being one in seventy five. Usually in the 19th century church membership in Nottingham seems to have amounted to about one-third or one-fourth of the actual congregation. The Baptist churches were therefore in regular contact with about 5% of the population, the proportion increasing slightly during the century. About 1905 there were signs that the tide was beginning to turn and today the corresponding figures are: twenty churches with a total membership of about 1,700 in a population of about 300,000, about one in one hundred and seventy. Congregations today are also nearer the actual membership, though if we include the members of the various church organisations, the number of persons with whom the Baptist churches are in regular touch is increased.

The Expansion of Stoney Street

By far the greatest part of Baptist expansion in Nottingham in the 19th century was the work of one church, the Stoney Street General Baptist church. Almost every Baptist church in and around Nottingham, except those of the Particular Baptist tradition, is a daughter or grand-daughter church of Stoney Street. The expansion of this church falls into four fairly well defined periods, the first of which ended in 1817. In this first period work was established in Bulwell, Beeston, Mansfield and New Basford, and evangelistic work was also done in many other districts which did not result in the establishment of an organised church. The progress of Stoney Street, however, was not unimpeded. In 1817 a disruption took place of such a magnitude that it completely split the church and caused a scandal in the town. A young minister named Catton was engaged for a trial period. He was accused of an act of serious indiscretion toward a woman staying as a guest in the same house as he at Newark. Catton's approaches were indignantly repulsed but rumours of the incident spread. They were denied and the Stoney Street congregation took sides. The trustees dismissed Catton and advised Smith to take possession of the pulpit with the aid of magistrates and two constables. The attempt was resisted with a show of force and Smith desisted, though not before the street outside was crowded with curious spectators. Eventually Smith withdrew from the church, about a third of its members going with him to found a second large General Baptist church, the Broad Street church.[10] Although the incident with Catton was the immediate cause of the disruption, the real cause probably lay in a growing cleavage of outlook in a church which was growing large and unwieldy. A division had become inevitable, though the circumstances under which it occurred were unhappy. The second period of expansion falls between 1818 and 1836 when work was established, first at Arnold, resulting in a chapel being opened in 1823, then at Hucknall where meetings were commenced in 1818 or 1819 and a room rented for worship in 1823. Carlton and Ruddington were entered about the same

time. At Hyson Green a meeting was commenced in the house of Ann Broughton about 1825, and a Sunday school, later to become a branch church, was opened in Prospect Place, Radford in 1829. About 1830 work was established in Lenton, though when a church was eventually constituted it was made up of members from the General Baptist churches of Stoney Street and Broad Street and from the Particular Baptist church in George Street. Work opened at Ripley in Derbyshire in 1833, while the daughter church at Mansfield established branches at Mansfield Woodhouse and Warsop. With the exception of Prospect Place and Warsop, the churches founded at this period still exist.

A period of about ten years elapsed without further spectacular advance and it is not euphemistic to call it consolidation. Branch churches built or enlarged their chapels and some of them called their own ministers. In the inner city successful "missions" were held in co-operation with the other Baptist churches and the Congregational churches in 1839 and 1840[11] and membership continued to grow.

The third period of expansion occurred between 1845 and 1866. It is not so marked as the earlier periods, though three viable churches were established which are still in existence. These were Carrington, where meetings were commenced in 1846,[12] Stapleford, where work commenced about 1850,[13] and Mansfield Road, founded in 1849. The establishment of the Mansfield Road church, however, like that of Broad Street, was the result of another unfortunate schism.[14] It arose over the question of whether a deacon, a butcher by trade, who had been guilty of using unequal weights, should be suspended. As in 1817 this disagreement brought to light cleavages which had already been forming. A former Scottish Free Church minister, George Syme, had been invited to assist the older minister, Hugh Hunter. Hunter, who had served the church well for twenty years, did not find it easy to accept the new outlook and new methods introduced by Syme, and in this situation, tendered his resignation. Syme then resigned in order to ease the position. His resignation was accepted but many members now felt that he had been treated unfairly. They were obviously drawn to him with the result that they seceded and formed a new church, inviting Syme to be their minister.[15] A second disruption had resulted in the formation of still another strong church and which again seemed to have done little to weaken Stoney Street. Hunter withdrew his resignation and Stoney Street continued its evangelism, opening preaching stations at Keyworth, Ratcliffe and Cinderhill during the next six years, though none became viable churches. The Stoney Street chapel was enlarged and four of the branch churches either built or enlarged their chapels. A large Sunday school for poor children was also opened in Bath Street. The old zeal had by no means disappeared.

Still another disruption divided this period from the final period of the life of Stoney Street. In 1854 James Lewitt was invited as co-pastor,[16] reproducing a situation which had so often proved disastrous

in the life of Stoney Street. The gulf which now appeared between Hunter and Lewitt was, if anything, even greater than that which had existed between Hunter and Syme. Under Lewitt's ministry the congregation "made strides to adapt itself to the altered times of modern intelligence". Lewitt arranged public lectures on scientific, historical and literary subjects and commenced a Mutual Instruction Society and a Bible Class from which several young men offered themselves for the ministry. Not all the members approved of these innovations and the gulf between the two sections of the church came to a head when in 1865 about one hundred and thirty seceded and commenced services elsewhere. Lewitt had moved to another church and James Greenwood was invited as minister to the seceding group. This further secession caused Hunter to feel that he no longer had the confidence of his congregation. He therefore resigned and undertook the pastorate of the daughter church at Basford. The breach at Stoney Street was healed the following year when the parties re-united under the ministry of Greenwood and the fourth period, which lasted until 1888, commenced. This period was also a period of expansion. Services were commenced in Sneinton and, through its lay preachers, Stoney Street established churches at Kimberley, Willoughby and Netherfield. The daughter church at Old Basford founded a mission at Southwark Bridge, later to become the large and active Queensberry Street Church. Broad Street established a mission in Edwin Street. A new lively church, the "Tabernacle", unconnected with Stoney Street, was founded by E. J. Silverton, a student of Spurgeon's, and took under its wing a number of other churches and missions. Ten new chapels were built by daughter churches of Stoney Street and Stoney Street itself enlarged its chapel. The total of Baptist expansion in this fourth period remains impressive but much of it, as was right and proper, was the expansion of the daughter churches. A lot of it indeed was done in areas where the central church could have little direct influence.

In 1875 there were still five hundred and fifty-one members of the Stoney Street church, a figure which may have included Carlton, but it included none of the other branch churches. There was a Sunday school with a membership of about three hundred and sixty and the church was still looking to the future with confidence. But that year trouble broke out again in the form of still another secession, the fourth and last in the history of the church. On this occasion eighty-seven members left and commenced services in the People's College.[17] Why they seceded is not clear. The Stoney Street minutes themselves have disappeared and no other record has been found to shed light on this point. There is certainly no suggestion of a disagreement with the minister, Thomas Ryder. This time, however, the result was not the formation of two strong and flourishing churches each going their way into a promising future. Stoney Street had divided once too often and this was to be its last division. With the changing nature of the district in which the chapel was situated—it was rapidly becoming a

commercial and industrial area—the doom of the old chapel was writ and the 1875 division only served to hasten it. But all was by no means lost as will now be shown.

The seceding party joined with another group which had seceded from the Scotch Baptist church in Circus Street (that one section came from an Arminian church and the other from a Calvinistic church made not an atom of difference). Under the ministry of F. G. Buckingham, they purchased land in Woodborough Road and, in due course, built a chapel in that growing district, which already had a population of 25,000. Stoney Street carried on for a few more years with diminishing glory. By 1885 there were only two hundred and ninety members served by a talented minister, Ffoulkes Griffiths of the Middle Temple. When Ffoulkes Griffiths left in 1885 the church took a wise and courageous step. It united with Woodborough Road with the intention that the old premises should be sold and the proceeds devoted to paying for the Woodborough Road building and for another chapel to be built in Arkwright Street near Trent Bridge. This was actually done in 1888 and the membership figures of the churches concerned indicate that Stoney Street divided itself almost to a member between Woodborough Road and Arkwright Street. It was a fitting conclusion to the glorious record of Stoney Street that its last act should be to expend its resources in establishing still another daughter church and should continue its life in the two churches, Woodborough Road and Arkwright Street.

The Particular Baptist Churches

The expansion of the Particular Baptist churches in Nottinghamshire in the 19th century was nowhere near as impressive as that of the General Baptist churches. In the country as a whole Particular Baptist churches formed about four-fifths of all Baptist churches. In Nottinghamshire the situation was reversed, about four-fifths of the churches were General Baptist churches, no doubt because Nottinghamshire was so near the centre of origin of the New Connexion and therefore participated to a large extent in its early expansion. The Particular Baptists however also engaged in church extension work. At the beginning of the 19th century there was one Particular Baptist church in Nottingham and two in the rest of the county. In 1890, just before the union of General and Particular Baptists, there were four Particular Baptist churches in Nottingham and six in the county. There was also in Nottingham a Strict and Particular Baptist church which remained aloof from the main stream of Baptist life.

The church in Nottingham, the Friar Lane church, outgrew its premises and moved to George Street. Sunday school work was commenced and extended to Arnold in 1808 with the result that in due course a church was founded and a chapel erected there in 1825. In the first decade of the century Friar Lane undertook evangelistic work at Southwell and a church was formed in 1811.[18] The villages of Woodborough and Calverton were entered in 1831 and 1832 respectively and chapels were built shortly after.[19] In the town of Notting-

ham, George Street maintained preaching stations at Lenton and Independent Hill, while, in the first decade of the century, Collingham gave support to work in Sutton-on-Trent, a church which had already been established by Alexander Jamieson with the support of the Haldane brothers of Glasgow. The Haldanes were wealthy men who sold their large ancestral estates to devote their money to missionary and evangelistic work. Why they chose to initiate work in Sutton-on-Trent is obscure.[20] Collingham, in co-operation with Friar Lane, also helped to establish the church at Newark in the first decade of the century.

It would be expected that Arminianism would be more conducive to active evangelism than Calvinism. This was certainly true in many cases but by the end of the 19th century many Particular Baptist churches had been influenced by such men as Andrew Fuller whose book *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* put forward a very modified Calvinism. Friar Lane showed few signs of an extreme Calvinism and no doubt Fuller's opinions had considerable influence there. Fuller was one of those to whom Friar Lane appealed for help in a disagreement with its minister in 1804.[21] Collingham also came within the same sphere of influence. Among the Collingham papers is a letter from Andrew Fuller, and two of its ministers, James Lomax, 1740-1764, and William Nichols, 1807-1835, became Friar Lane members (though only the latter could have been influenced by Fuller) and Collingham's Calvinism was doubtless similarly modified. The other Calvinistic Baptist church in Nottinghamshire at the beginning of the century, Sutton-in-Ashfield, seems to have been more narrowly Calvinistic, as a document compiled by its minister, Clement Nott and recorded in the minute book in 1826, suggests. It lays much more emphasis on the internal life of the church than on external evangelism, but in spite of this, Sutton-in-Ashfield founded one daughter church, opening a chapel a mile or two away at Forest Side in 1832, and a Sunday school giving religious and secular education the following year. The new branch church eventually became the stronger and worship was transferred entirely to it in 1881.

At the middle of the century the large George Street Particular Baptist church had a disruption comparable in size and effect with that experienced by Stoney Street about the same time. Reasons for the disruption, according to the minute books, amounted to criticisms of the minister whose attitude suggests more extreme Calvinism than some of the congregation were able to accept. Yet it is fairly clear that the underlying reason was similar to that which divided Stoney Street. This was the development of a more lively outlook both intellectually and practically on the part of the able men who formed a large part of the membership of the church. Secession became inevitable and the seceding party formed a new church in 1847 and within a year or two erected a chapel and called a minister, J. A. Baynes.[22] The new church, the Derby Road church, quickly grew in strength and became for the rest of the century the most influential Baptist church in the

town. In due course, it too formed a branch mission church, in Independent Street, Radford. George Street also continued as a strong and influential community.

The fact which stands out clearly in comparing the General and Particular Baptists in Nottingham is the part the latter played in civic life. The Particular Baptists were of the "Old Dissent". After two centuries they had achieved a recognised place in the religious life of the country. Industry and thrift had raised many of the Nottingham Particular Baptists to affluence and to civic leadership. Many of the town's leading citizens were Particular Baptists and at times the town council might almost have been the diaconates of the Derby Road Baptist church and the Castlegate Congregational church combined. A mildly satirical pamphlet preserved in the Nottingham Public Library gives more than a hint of their prominence. It is entitled "Who is to be Mayor?" and the scene is a meeting of the Whig group to discuss policy. The "speaker" is Richard Birkin, founder of the lace manufacturing company which still bears his name.

"Alderman B-k-n.

There are men present who have filled the chair
When bustling commerce wanted them elsewhere.
These people now have time enough to spare,
A life of energy has been repayed
And many princely fortunes have been made.
Such are them men I'd have you now elect,
("Twere well if they belonged to the Baptist sect") . . ."

Birkin's grandson went to Eton and became Sir Richard Birkin, Bart., though by then the family had moved out of Baptist circles. Several knighthoods came the way of the Particular Baptists, mostly to members of the Derby Road church, and for about a third of the 19th century a Baptist, first of the Friar Lane/George Street church, and then in the latter half of the century, of Derby Road, occupied the mayoralty. It is hoped to discuss the contribution these men made to civic life and how far they carried their Christian principles into industrial life in another article, but it is sufficient to say at this point that the energies of the Nottingham Particular Baptist leaders were channelled in this direction more than in direct evangelism (though evangelism was not excluded). This was the opportunity which lay before them, they accepted it and it is hard to say they were not right in their choice.

Baptist Expansion in other Areas

In certain other areas of Nottinghamshire Baptist expansion took place through agencies other than the Particular and General Baptist churches in the centre. One of these, the south Nottinghamshire group, has already been referred to. Although many villages were penetrated in the early days of the century, only in certain of them was a viable church planted. The reasons are doubtless that many of these villages were small and, for much of the century their population was actually decreasing. Most of them supported one or more Methodist

churches as well as the parish church, and there simply was not room for a third denomination. People who held strong Baptist convictions could always travel to the Baptist church in another village but when the strength of such convictions diminished there was little incentive to make a journey of some miles every Sunday. Hence, where no chapels were built, it was not more than a generation or so before Baptist views ceased to be represented. The East Leake chapel was built in 1757 and the Wymeswold chapel in 1790.[23] In 1802 the East Leake and Wymeswold societies formed a single organised church which included groups at Rempston and Wysall and also families from other villages. Rempston built a chapel in 1852 and Wysall in 1858, in both cases having used a rented room for over 50 years. Broughton and Hose formed another group, drawing members from Stanton, Widmerpool, Dalby, Grimston and Saxelby, and in the middle of the century, from Harby and Long Clawson. A chapel was built at Long Clawson in 1845. In 1852 the organisation was changed again, Broughton and Widmerpool forming one church and Hose and Long Clawson another. All these villages had their own chapels and it is interesting to note that in spite of this they were almost always ready to combine with Baptists in other villages to form united churches. This did much to preserve their strength and for much of the century enabled them, especially the East Leake/Wymeswold group, to maintain a minister. When the churches fell apart they became weaker with the result that only in East Leake, Long Clawson, Hose and Upper Broughton is there now a Baptist cause. Similarly a continuation of grouping in the Trent-side area around Newark might have saved the Baptist church in villages where it has now died out.

In the west of Nottinghamshire the line of penetration of the New Connexion came direct from Leicestershire. In 1780 the widespread church of Barton-in-the-Beans which formed the nucleus of the New Connexion, divided into five smaller units. One of these was centred at Kegworth and one of its constituent societies was that at Ilkeston on the Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire border. Ilkeston drew hearers from surrounding villages including the Nottinghamshire village of Newthorpe, about three miles away. By 1810 a regular preacher was travelling to Newthorpe and a dozen years later efforts were being made to find land on which to build a chapel. The chapel was erected in 1828. In accordance with the usual practice Newthorpe remained grouped with Ilkeston until 1875 when it became independent. Two other churches fall in the same line of descent. The first was at Babbington, a small mining hamlet in the same area. Here a chapel was built in 1844 at the expense of Thomas North,[24] a mine-owner rather loosely associated with the Baptists. Babbington remained small and never aspired to independence and did not long survive the 1914-18 war. The other church was Eastwood, founded in 1875 after members of the Newthorpe church had been holding services there for some time. Eastwood obtained its chapel in 1876 and both Newthorpe and Eastwood remain today as active churches.

Smaller Baptist Groups

Three smaller Baptist sects appear in 19th century Baptist church life in Nottinghamshire. One of these was the curious, rather unorthodox group called the Johnsonian Baptists.[25] They were an inward-looking community who refused to have fellowship with any but their own churches. A Johnsonian church existed in Newark from 1797 until about 1870 with a graveyard and rather elaborate buildings for carrying out baptisms in the village of North Muskham. Its surviving members were admitted into the Newark Particular Baptist church in 1877, the Johnsonian Church having become defunct. The Scotch Baptists reached Nottingham in 1793 through the Bayley family. The Bayleys founded a leather factory, which still exists, and, entering into several other industries, became rich. For three generations they were closely associated with Baptist life in Nottingham and, for two generations, Thomas Bayley, father and son, were honorary pastors of Scotch Baptist churches.[26] In the third generation the Bayleys (and the rest of the Scotch Baptists) moved into Particular Baptist life in Nottingham. The Scotch Baptists took over the Friar Lane chapel in 1815 when the Particular Baptists moved to George Street. They founded a branch church in Pepper Street (later Palm Street) and accepted the care of the Cross Street, Arnold, Particular Baptist church. An account of the Scotch Baptists is given in Underwood's *History of the English Baptists* and it is sufficient to say here that they were a Calvinistic group which broke away from Scottish Presbyterianism and accepted certain Baptist views. Richard Birkin, already mentioned, was a deacon of the Palm Street church. The Gospel Standard Strict and Particular[27] Baptist church, in Nottingham owed its inspiration to the well-known William Gadsby who strongly opposed any modification of the older Calvinism. Before the middle of the century there was a regular meeting in Thurland Street encouraged by Henry Smith, a member of the well-known banking firm of Smith and Co. which, of course, originated in Nottingham. Henry Smith's wife, Lucy, daughter of the 7th Earl of Levin and Melville, shared his views and engaged in widespread charitable works in the town. A Gospel Standard church was formally constituted in 1878 and in 1881 the community moved to the chapel in Chaucer Street it now occupies. Like other Strict and Particular Baptists it has remained outside the rest of Baptist life in Nottingham.

Summary

An examination of the total situation in the 19th century, taking into consideration the enormous increase in industry and population, especially around Nottingham, leads to the conclusion that the Baptists made use of their resources to meet the new situation very well. There is of course no indication of a planned strategy organised by a group operating from a denominational headquarters. This would have been unacceptable to many Baptists. Yet the denominational life of the General Baptists was always more closely organised than that of the Particular Baptists, and in Nottingham there existed the very

strong central leadership provided by the Stoney Street church. Stoney Street had the resources and the vision to take advantage of opportunities as they presented themselves, even though at times the advance seems haphazard and erratic. As has been shown, the General Baptists, led principally by Stoney Street, entered all the important suburbs as they developed, Arnold, Lenton, Radford, Carrington, Basford, Hyson Green and the St. Anne's district, also the towns springing up a little further away, Bulwell, Beeston, Ruddington, Hucknall and Mansfield. The only suburb in which they did not plant a viable church was Sneinton and even there an attempt was made.

In the county, excluding the immediate Nottingham area, a study of the population statistics shows that out of forty-one places where a Baptist church existed at some time during the 19th century, thirty-five had a population which rose to over a thousand, and only in six places where there were over a thousand inhabitants, was there no organised Baptist community. Twelve places of less than a thousand inhabitants had Baptist churches, but of these, four had been founded before the beginning of the century and another four were branches of a larger neighbouring church. It would seem therefore that the 19th century Nottinghamshire Baptists distributed their resources over the more strategic parts of the county in true Pauline tradition. Only in one large town, Worksop, did they fail to establish a Baptist church. An effort was made even there, though it took place in 1902, after the century had closed,[28] but it did not lead to the formation of a viable church and it was not repeated.

A point worth noticing is that there was never any question of General and Particular Baptists competing. At Lenton the Particular Baptists surrendered their members to form the General Baptist church. At Southwell the General Baptists withdrew to allow the Particular Baptists to do the work. At Arnold, it is true, there were both General and Particular Baptists but their chapels were a mile or so apart. In the centre the situation was somewhat different. Two large Baptist churches could exist within a short distance of each other without interfering with one another's work. Broad Street in particular built very near to the George Street chapel, but even here the Broad Street minutes record that a letter of apology was sent to George Street because they were compelled by the exigencies of the situation to build so near. Other denominations, except perhaps the Congregationalists, may not have received the same consideration but perhaps that was too much to expect in the climate of the 19th century.

NOTES

[1] G. Lyon Turner, *Original Records of Early Nonconformity*, London 1911-1914, ii, pp. 722-24.

[2] Nottingham Archdeaconry Records C.152 Citations (Nottingham University Archives).

[3] *Ibid.* Returns of 1669. Archdeaconry Records Misc. 258.

[4] Adam Taylor, *History of the General Baptists*, London 1818, i, p. 159.

[5] J. C. Warren, *Biographical Catalogue of Documents Relating to High Pavement Chapel*. Nottingham, undated, p. 8.
[6] W. T. Whitley, "Early Baptists in Nottingham", *Baptist Quarterly*, 1931, p. 366.
[7] Original Mss. held by the Kirkby-in-Ashfield Church. Author unknown.
[8] Adam Taylor, *op. cit.*, ii, *p.* 245 et seq.
[9] East Leake Church Book, August 1813.
[10] Anon. *A Statement of Some Late Proceedings Relative to the General Baptist Church at Nottingham*, Nottingham 1817; R. Smith, *Plain Truth*, Nottingham 1818. (Both pamphlets relating to the controversy.)
[11] *Baptist Repository*, 1840, p. 22.
[12] *Baptist Reporter*, 1846, p. 303.
[13] *General Baptist Magazine*, 1875, p. 463.
[14] Mansfield Road Church Book. Opening account by the Church Secretary, 1849.
[15] *Baptist Repository* 1850, p. 480.
[16] F. Stevenson, Obituary of Hugh Hunter, *General Baptist Magazine*, 1871, p. 175 et seq.
[17] *General Baptist Magazine*, 1875, p. 431.
[18] Godfrey and Ward, *History of Friar Lane Baptist Church, Nottingham*, 1903, p. 43.
[19] *Ibid*, p. 245.
[20] Sutton-on-Trent Church Book. Opening Account (Notts County Archives).
[21] Godfrey and Ward, *op cit.*, p. 23.
[22] Friar Lane/George Street Church Book, Derby Road Church Book (Notts County Archives).
[23] East Leake and Upper Broughton Church Books.
[24] *Baptist Reporter*, 1844, p. 243.
[25] Newark Johnsonian Church Book (Gilstrap Library, Newark).
[26] W. H. Wylie, *Old and New Nottingham*, Nottingham 1853, p. 14.
[27] S. P. Paul, *Further History of the Gospel Standard Baptists*, Brighton 1958, p. 93 et seq.
[28] *East Midland Baptist Magazine*, 1903, p. 91.

F. M. W. HARRISON.

LCU Story. John H. Taylor. City Temple. 48 pp. 20p.

The Inaugural Meeting of the London Congregational Union was held on April 29th, 1873. This is therefore the time for a look back and for centenary celebrations. But the formation of the United Reformed Church means the end of the L.C.U. In the structure of the new Church, London is to be divided by the Thames into two areas. This makes some account of the past the more important.

The Rev. John Taylor, in spite of rather restricted space, has done his work well. His pages are lively and discriminating. He has found some excellent illustrations. His booklet has interest for Baptists as well as Congregationalists, indeed for all Londoners.

Could not Mr. Taylor now be induced to gather material for a full story of the London Independents and Congregationalists from the 17th to the 20th centuries? Much more of the story will soon be lost.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.