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Our North American contributors to this debate are by no means the first from that continent to have taken a keen interest in the early theological debates of English Baptists, as is evidenced by Stanley Grenz's article on Isaac Backus of New England, who looked for exemplars in early Baptist life in this country in expounding his own position. For all his significance, extraordinarily little has appeared on Backus in this country, certainly as far as the *Quarterly* is concerned, and we hope that by introducing many readers to the major Baptist figure of New England in the 18th century, Dr Grenz will be making good the inadequacy to a substantial degree. It would, of course, be an interesting question to pursue, as to how long and in what circumstances American Baptists have regarded the early English Baptists as definitive and authoritative in church order.

Two other articles reflect what is probably an increasing interest in the secular and commercial interests of Baptists and other conformists. D. A. Richards reminds us of Thomas Newcomen and of the link between religious dissent and scientific inventiveness in 18th century England. But Newcomen, in opening up the possibilities of steam technology, could hardly have dreamed that a century and a half later, a famous London Baptist would owe his commercial success and eventual ruin to the most significant development of the steam engine: the railway. Brian and Faith Bowers do more, however, than trace the rise and fall of Sir Morton Peto. They give us an illuminating view of the life of a leading church in Victorian London, in which what we today loosely call 'fellowship' then meant a considered blend of discipline and compassion. The Victorians, it is sometimes alleged, were given to sentimentality. Not so, here.

Much writing on social history in recent years has indeed emphasized the importance of the Protestant, and more especially the Puritan, ethos in the origins of the industrial revolution in Britain, and the commercial attitudes which typified it. Wealth-producing effort on the part of entrepreneur and labourer alike were seen as a divine calling. But the present economic climate and the new technology are calling in question the relevance of the 'work ethic'. In *Work in Crisis: Dilemma of a Nation* (St Andrew Press, 1982), Roger Clarke adds a persuasive Christian voice to the call not only for new patterns of working life, community, income and leisure, but for the deeper transformation of attitudes which will be necessary to motivate such changes effectively. If we accept the necessity for this, it will present us with interesting questions as to how we evaluate our tradition. Are we now to witness a search for elements in our ancestry other than those which bore fruit in the ideology of industrial expansion, and hitherto neglected? It may be that the next few years of dissenting historiography will provide new instances of how the contemporary context and interests of the historian lend particular perspective to his recreation of the past. The editor of a journal such as this admits his own interest, in hoping that it may be so.