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# Congregational Historical Society

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## Transactions

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GEOFFREY F. NUTTALL, M.A., D.D.

VOL. XV. No. 4.

APRIL 1948

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## EDITORIAL

ONE disadvantage of visits from learned and distinguished scholars to our Society is that so often their papers are already promised for separate publication or as parts of books, and so we cannot print them in our pages. Prof. Norman Sykes's lecture, *The Church of England and Non-Episcopal Churches in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, duly expanded, has now been published (S.P.C.K., 1s. 6d.), and is causing considerable perturbation in some Anglican circles. Last year at the Annual Meeting, Dr. E. F. Jacob, of All Souls, Oxford, spoke on "Lollardy and the Reformation" to a goodly audience. The officers were re-elected, with thanks for their services, and Dr. Grieve was persuaded that members would not allow him to relinquish the office of President until the Society's jubilee in 1949.

\* \* \* \* \*

This year at the Annual Meeting we shall have one of our own members, the Rev. K. L. Parry, an ex-Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, to speak on a subject he has made his own, Isaac Watts. By that time it will probably be possible to give more precise details of the various plans for commemorating the bicentenary of Watts's death. The Stoke Newington Library will probably arrange an exhibition, meetings are being arranged in Southampton and by the Hampshire Congregational Union, and it is hoped that there may be a national commemoration in Westminster Abbey. Watts belongs to all the Churches, and many besides Congregationalists hold his name in honour.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the Annual Meeting we should be able to discuss fully the best manner of celebrating the Jubilee of the Society. One way is in anticipation—by the provision with this number of a Subject Index to the *Transactions* for the fifty years. This is the work of Miss Phyllis Brunsdon, who has been trained in the way she should go by our Secretary, the Rev. C. E. Surman, and we are greatly in her debt. She has in hand too an even more colossal task, the preparation of a full Index. So much have Mr. Surman and Miss Brunsdon done for the Society that it is right that they should have the lion's share of this issue. There will be great pressure on our pages until we can get back to the old two issues a year. Enough Elizabethan material has been unearthed in recent months to fill many pages.

\* \* \* \* \*

These are days of frustration and discouragement for scholars. Everywhere we hear of fine pieces of work in various stages on the long road to publication. Too often they have not even passed the first stile, acceptance by a publisher. And even when a manuscript has been accepted, it has to wait its turn, and sometimes even when printed it has to wait months for binding. As yet there seems no prospect of improvement: labour and materials are still in short supply, and costs show no sign of diminishing.

It is hoped that by the end of the year there will be improvement in the paper situation at any rate. Meanwhile students can only continue their labours, make their work as perfect as may be, and hope for better days.

\* \* \* \* \*

That the editorial staff has not been idle may be gathered from Mr. Surman's forthcoming book, *As Silver is Tried*, and from the Editor's *The Noble Army of Congregational Martyrs* and *Alexander Stewart*, reviewed within. *The Congregational Two Hundred* is at the binder's, and *Cartwrightiana* at the printer's. The latter is the first of seven volumes to be published with the aid of the Sir Halley Stewart Trust, and it is hoped that conditions will allow the rest to appear at regular intervals. They are:

*The Writings of Robert Browne and Robert Harrison.*

*The Writings of Barrow and Greenwood* (2 vols.).

*The Writings of John Penry.*

*A parte of a register* (2 vols.).

By the time these are out of the way it is hoped that *Elizabethan Puritanism and Separatism* will have taken shape; but in any case the other volumes will provide material for historians which has hitherto been difficult of access.

As usual, however, when intensive research begins, the number of points demanding investigation multiplies: the detective has to decide which clue to follow first, and sometimes the following, though exciting, takes a long time. At the moment many clues lead to Bury St. Edmunds: but that story must wait.

\* \* \* \* \*

As these pages go through the press, the Rev. A. G. Matthews's long-awaited *Walker Revised* (Clarendon Press, 40s.) sees the light of day. A review will appear in our next number, but those who have found *Calamy Revised* a help in many a time of trouble will not need to be assured that Mr. Matthews has made another fine contribution to learning. Meanwhile Prof. T. W. Manson, in the *Manchester Guardian*, after calling Dr. C. F. Nuttall's *The Holy Spirit and Ourselves* (Blackwell, 5s.) a book "full of profit for the attentive reader", goes on:

"Dr. Nuttall has written a larger and learned work on the Holy Spirit in Puritan faith and experience. In the present work he writes for Church members, teachers of religion in schools, students of theology. He offers simple and direct thinking about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, basing himself on the Bible, and particularly the New Testament. The work is admirably done. It has the simplicity that comes from hard and honest thinking, and the reverent freedom that springs from a firmly grounded Christian faith. It is a book to have and to hold".

For ourselves, we only wish the book had been one-fifth the price, to ensure a wide circulation among those for whom it is designed.

\* \* \* \* \*

We offer apologies and regrets to readers for the size of type used in this issue. We have been driven to the expedient by the paper situation and the desire to give our readers as much matter as possible: they can be assured, however, that we shall be "easier on the eyes" as soon as conditions permit.

\* \* \* \* \*

Members will have been glad to read in the *Bulletin* the names of those who have joined the Society since the issue of our last number, most of them through the efforts of our indefatigable Secretary. This trickle will perhaps

in our Jubilee year become a spate, and then our activities, already increasing, will become worthy of the Society.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the Introduction to *A Hundred Eminent Congregationalists* we remarked how some years seemed to be prolific of genius and others amazingly barren. Major Brett-James sends some remarkable facts about the boys who were at Mill Hill from 1894 to 1898. Eight of the number have made contributions to literature in its various forms: they are Coningsby Dawson (20 books); Percival Gibbon; A. G. Matthews; A. J. R. Roberts; R. A. Scott-James; Martin S. Briggs; T. H. Robinson; N. G. Brett-James (14 books). All the eight are sons of the Manse, and seven of them came from Congregational Manses. Can any other school-generation, or college-generation for that matter, furnish a similar list? Among other contemporaries were such distinguished Congregationalists as the Rev. H. C. Carter and Sir C. C. Paterson, Sc.D., F.R.S.

\* \* \* \* \*

We have referred more than once to the fortunate position in which American scholars have found themselves during the last decade, and our envy was not diminished by the arrival of the third and fourth volumes of Prof. W. C. Abbott's *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (Harvard University Press; London: Geoffrey Cumberlege. Vol. III, 27s. 6d.; Vol. IV, 42s.): Vols. I and II were reviewed when they appeared. Vol. III deals with the years 1653-5, and with Vol. IV—a stout volume of over 1,000 pages—Prof. Abbott brings his great task to a conclusion, a triumphant conclusion, for the volumes exemplify all that is best in American scholarship. In Vol. IV Prof. Abbott adds further bibliography to that which has already appeared, and the thoroughness with which he has gleaned the field is suggested by the appearance in it of articles from our own pages—such as those of F. J. Powicke and Dr. Nuttall. That kind of thoroughness marks the whole work: Prof. Abbott may have discovered few new Cromwell papers, but never before have all those extant been gathered together as they now are.

It is perhaps immersion in the mass of detail of Cromwell's day-to-day administration which leaves one with the impression that Prof. Abbott sees the warts rather than the man. He admits—he cannot but admit—Cromwell's greatness in this field and in that, and the might of his achievement—but: and there is almost always a but.

With full appreciation for the industry and competence of Prof. Abbott's work, which will long be indispensable for students of the period, we cannot but think his summing up suffers from two causes. The first is his reaction from Carlyle's hero-worship. While not going back to the pre-Carlylean abuse—"damned to everlasting fame", "lived a hypocrite and died a traitor", and all the rest—yet he wants us to see the back of the tapestry, the tired, ill, weary, irritable old man, compromising here, pulling strings there, intent on maintaining position and power, rather than a "chief of men", champion of toleration, set on avenging God's slaughtered saints.

The second arises from the period in which this work has been done—a period in which the evils of dictatorship cry aloud to heaven. We cannot help but wonder whether the writing of history should be so much influenced by the history which is contemporary with the writer: would Prof. Abbott's judgment, we found ourselves asking, have been the same, with the same facts before him, had he reached it fifty years ago?

And of one thing we are sure: the power of religion in Cromwell's life

cannot be assessed by suggesting him as a suitable subject for William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*! If a man believes he is an instrument in God's hands—and Cromwell did so believe—and gives himself wholeheartedly to doing God's will, he will only be understood when that fact is given due weight.

There are many interesting points raised in the two volumes; to some of them we shall no doubt return later. Meanwhile this criticism will, we hope, not be deemed captious: it is associated with immense admiration for the American scholar's work, work which our Cromwell panegyrists would do well to take into account before they deliver their next oration.

\* \* \* \* \*

This issue should not appear without some reference to the death of Dr. W. T. Whitley, the historian of the Baptists, a keen and enthusiastic student, for long the mainstay of the Baptist Historical Society, and a not infrequent contributor to our own pages, Dr. Whitley's work will stand the test of time, and it was good that he retained his mental alertness to the end of his long life; he will be greatly missed, and not only in his own denomination.

\* \* \* \* \*

Several enthusiastic members have suggested that our membership subscription should be increased. There is much to be said for this, for the present fee does not meet the present-day cost of printing the *Transactions*, and the matter should be discussed at the Annual Meeting; there is obvious justification for raising the price of the *Transactions* to non-members to 6/-, an increase which takes effect with this issue. Meanwhile we trust readers will do something to increase the number of *corporate* members: many churches, we find, are unaware that such a membership is possible.

## Background to Reading Congregationalism\*

**R**EADING, County, Assize and Quarter Sessions town, 38 miles from Hyde Park Corner according to the *A.A.*, important junction on the Great Western Railway system, and standing at the confluence of the Kennet and the Thames, has a long, rich and varied political and ecclesiastical history.

The earliest known records tell of a Danish occupation of land "between the Thames and the Kennet at a point where their waters mingle" in 871, and of an engagement between them and Ethelred and his brother, Alfred (The Great), at near-by Englefield. The "town" was burnt by the Danes in 1006, and the early settlement, undoubtedly on the Kennet and not on the Thames, was evidently of some importance even at that period.

Tradition has it that Queen Elfrida (945-1000) founded a nunnery here in 979, on a site claimed to be that on which the parish church of St. Mary the Virgin now stands. In the Domesday survey, 1086, the town, despite its double devastation by the Danes, was second in wealth to Wallingford among the Berkshire towns; a King's manor, possessing four mills, and already a burgh. The Abbots of Battle (Sussex) held estate in Reading under grant from William the Conqueror, including a church, mills, and fisheries. Their association is preserved in the modern town in the names of Battle Farm, Battle School, and Battle Municipal Hospital.

The Benedictine Abbey, now in ruins, was founded by Henry I in 1121 and provided him sepulture in January 1136. For nearly 400 years the Abbots of Reading ruled the town, with some severity but with increasing celebrity, from the time of the first Abbot, Hugh de Boves, until Hugh Cook Faringdon, the last Abbot, was executed before his own gateway on a charge of high treason, on 15th November, 1539. The Abbey Church was "hallowed" by Thomas à Becket, in the presence of Henry II supported by his nobles and ten suffragan bishops. The Abbey was visited by King John in 1216, by Henry III at Christmas 1227, and by Edward III at the same season of 1364; in 1359, John of Gaunt was married there to Blanche, daughter of the Duke of Lancaster, in whose right he later succeeded to the Lancaster estates; Richard II held council there in 1389, and Parliament was convened to meet there in 1454 and 1467. Some of the great walls of the Abbey buildings, indicating its former vastness, abut on the Forbury Gardens, residue of its grounds, where the burgesses of today stroll among the municipally-kept flower beds and listen to band concerts. A small restored chapelry in the precincts (St. James's) is occupied by the Roman Catholic communion, and the Abbey Gateway, restored in 1861 by Sir Gilbert Scott, is now used as an extension to the municipal art gallery and as a lecture centre.

A religious house of the Grey Friars, established *c.*1233 on land east of the present Caversham-road, was subsequently removed on account of flooding to New-street (now Friar-Street),† and, after some religious and

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\* See *Some Berkshire Notes and Queries*, by the Rev. C. E. Surman, in *C.H.S. Transactions*, XIV, 35. To him the writer is indebted for valuable help and data for this article.

† This land suffered severely in the inundations of 1947!

political vicissitudes, and consecutive use as workhouse, orphanage, and "place of correction", was eventually restored as Greyfriars Church in 1863.

The church of St. Mary the Virgin, in The Butts, with its conspicuous flint and ashlar chequered tower, goes back to before 1550, and was rebuilt from materials taken from the Abbey at its demolition: St. Laurence's, the Municipal church, in the Market-place, was probably part of the Abbey foundation (some retained sections of the building are 12th century), and St. Giles's, Southampton-street, another 12th century church (although almost all trace of the original building was obliterated in restoration of 1872/3) are the three "ancient parish churches." The Vicar of St. Mary's was created Bishop of Reading (Suffragan to Oxford) a few years ago, and there have been numerous parochial adjustments consequent on the growth of the Borough.

In *temp.* Henry VIII, Reading "stood by clothing", and for some four centuries this remained its most thriving occupation. Its distinctive modern products are biscuits (Huntley & Palmer, Ltd., founded 1826, and Serpells, Ltd., both have extensive factories), seeds (Sutton's Trial Grounds, still maintained by the family of the founder of 1806, provide one of the minor attractions for passengers from London to the West by G.W. Railway), breweries, foundries, and engineering works (including Thornycroft's marine shops). Development in roads and other communications, especially in the 18th century, gave it new strategic importance as a junction town and increasingly in the 20th century as a "dormitory" for professional and business men working in London. The G.W.R. first pushed its tentacles from London in mid-19th century and now links Reading with Bristol and the West, with Oxford, Birmingham, and the North, and with "London in 40 minutes": the Southern system gives good service to Waterloo, to Surrey, and to Basingstoke, Southampton, Portsmouth, and the South. The main Bath (Great West) Road, and the old highway from Oxford to Winchester and the sea, pass through, but the Kennet-and-Avon Canal is falling into desuetude.

Reading School, a pre-1486 monastic foundation, was revived in the time of Henry VIII, and flourishes; a Blue Coat School, whose scholars retain a "habit" similar to the Horsham one; a "Green Girls" Foundation of 1782, and, more recently, Leighton Park School of the Society of Friends; numerous elementary and secondary schools, provide a useful preparation for advanced study at Reading University, incorporated in 1926 but established as a University College in 1892. Closely associated with its specialized Faculty of Agriculture is the National Institute for Research in Dairying at Shinfield.

The earliest Nonconformist cause in Reading is the now King's-road Baptist Church, whose records exist from 1640 incl., but there are distinct traces of Lollardy in the area in the late 15th century†. Traditionally, Broad-street Congregational Church occupies the only site where Dissenting worship has been uninterruptedly maintained since the Ejection of 1662, though it is fair to observe that there is no proof that the original congregation met there and some grounds for believing that it did not (see below). Although the first deed of the building is dated 1707, extant records of the "Church" unfortunately go back no farther than 1796, when the Rev. Archibald Douglas became its minister.

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† Eight cases of Lollard persecution in Reading, c. 1498, are quoted by W. H. Summers, *Our Lollard Ancestors*, 91; on p. 49 reference is made to a Lollard ordination (the first?) at adjacent Sonning in 1390.

CHRISTOPHER FOWLER, M.A. (1614?-1678)<sup>1</sup>, Vicar of St. Mary's, Reading, from about 1643 until ejected in 1662, "a busy turbulent man," according to his adversaries, was probably the founder of the Presbyterian-Independent Dissenting interest in the town. In December 1662, the Mayor of Reading notified the Lord-Lieut. of Berkshire that "numerous sectaries in the town meet every Sunday at Christopher Fowler's, who instructs them . . . and by these meetings the audiences in the churches are made very thin", from which it is apparent that some months after ejection he was still actively ministering in the town. He was imprisoned in Windsor Castle in November 1663, and released in February 1664 on promising to remove his dwelling "in a quarter of a year" and to hold no more such meetings. In 1669 he was reported as preaching at Ramsbury, Wilts, and at Aldbourne. (Mark Fowler, of Aldbourne, had presented him to his first Rectory, at West Woodhay in 1640, and there was an evident family connection with the place). He was licensed as Presbyterian Teacher at his house in Kennington, Surrey, on 25th May, 1672, but a licence for Reading was apparently refused.

It seems possible that he was also granted a licence for Chesham, Bucks. A licence is calendared by Prof. Lyon Turner as issued to Chris. Towler for Chesham, which he locates at Cheshunt, Herts, but the Rev. C. E. Surman suggests that this was possibly for Fowler, and at Chesham, much nearer his old sphere of interest. It might, however, equally well have been issued to the Christopher Towler, son of Henry, of Settle, Yorks, reported by Calamy as ejected from a Fellowship at St. John's, Cambridge (see *Calamy Revised*, 208). A son of Fowler's became chaplain and tutor in the family of Lord Wharton, and "Christopher Fowler of Hackney" elected a Manager of the Common Fund in May 1692 (Gordon, 267), might have been another son, for he had four. A funeral sermon for him was preached by William Cooper, the ejected Rector of St. Olave's, Southwark, in which parish he evidently spent his closing years.

In 1669, three conventicles were reported in Reading—the Anabaptist one in Pigney-lane; a meeting in the house of "one Burren, formerly Cromwell's butler"; and one at the house of a Mrs. Farnham. Which, if either, of the last two represented the Presbyterian-Independent community is not apparent. One of the preachers was John Pordage (*D.N.B.*), the eccentric Rector of Bradfield, Berks, ejected by Triers as "ignorant and insufficient", and for Behmenism in 1654 (Richard Baxter called him the chief of the Behmenists), but restored in 1660. These would be something a little ironic in this connection, as Christopher Fowler had been particularly active in attacking and writing against Pordage's astrological practices!

The records of Broad-street Church claim THOMAS JUICE, B.A., as first pastor of the church, from 1662, but this is manifestly incorrect. As suggested above, the initiator was more probably Fowler, possibly followed by Pordage, or more probably by the RICHARD KING who was licensed as Presbyterian Teacher in Reading in 1672, and one STUBBS, similarly registered, of neither of whom is anything ascertainable.

<sup>1</sup> *D.N.B.* gives 1610-1678, but A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, 209, says he matriculated at Magdalen, Oxford, 14 Oct., 1631, aged 17, and also says he died 15 January, 1676/7, but notes that letters of administration were granted to his widow on 1 February, 1677/8, which probably supports *D.N.B.* and indicates a year's error in the death-date ascribed.

Juice was ejected from the Rectory of St. Martin's, Worcester, in 1660, but was still keeping school in that city in 1664/5, when he was presented for non-attendance at church by the wardens of St. Nicholas's parish. The licence which apparently relates to him was that granted to Thos. Juice, or Jayce, in 1672 as Congregational teacher in Gracechurch-street, London. There is no reference to him in Reading up to this time, and he probably settled in the town about 1674, dying *c.* 1705/6, though reputed to have ceased his active ministry some years before his death. By 1690 he had between four and five hundred hearers, "considerably rich" people (Gordon. *Freedom after Ejection*, 6).

His successor was possibly JOHN MEADOWS, who in 1690 was preaching at Binfield, Berks, and who received grant for Reading from the Fund in 1702 (so Gordon, 7, 311). No more is known concerning him. "Officially," however, the next minister was SAMUEL DOOLITTLE, son of Thomas, the ejected minister of St. Alphege, London Wall. He was in Reading before 1707, when he was named in the earliest deed of the property, and W. H. Summers, *Hist. Berks, S. Bucks & S. Oxon Congl. Churches*, 161, says he settled in 1700, which is difficult to reconcile with other reports concerning him, or with the presence of Meadows, above. By 1715, according to the Evans MS, the congregation had grown to 800, including 10 "gentlemen," 47 County and 144 Borough voters—some indication of the rank and importance of the community.

Doolittle died 10th April, 1717, at the comparatively early age of 55<sup>2</sup>, and was succeeded by GEORGE BURNET from Andover, from whom the Presbyterians seceded to form a separate congregation in Sun-lane in 1718, a cause which became extinct about 1775<sup>3</sup>.

The subsequent history of Broad-street Church need not be traced in detail, being given by W. H. Summers, *op. cit.*, by Mr. W. J. Brain, *Broad-street Chapel, Reading, 1862-1912*, as well as in the *Historical Memorials* by William Legg in 1851.

George Burnet died in 1740, having been many years afflicted with the gout and frequently forced to take crutches into the pulpit. His gravestone in the meeting-house, like that of Thomas Juice, has long since been lost, alas. JOHN BURNET, who succeeded his father, was charged with plagiarism, especially in preaching his father's (recognized) sermons, and removed to Rendham 1748-52 (Browne, *Hist. Congregatm. in Norfolk and Suffolk*, 483), then to Witham, Essex, in 1752 (not in 1746, as Summers states), and finally to Dagger-lane, Hull, 1767-1782. EVAN JONES, after a somewhat stormy pastorate, passed on in 1764 to Little Baddow, and was followed by THOMAS NOON, a convert of George Whitefield's, from Mile End Academy, ordained on 13th Oct., 1764, by Dr. Thomas Gibbons, his tutor. During Jones's and Noon's pastorates the Sunday evening "lecture" was conducted at Broad-street alternately by the minister and by the pastor of the Baptist church in Hosier-lane. Noon's celebrated grandson, Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd, M.P. (1795-1854), educated at Reading and Mill

<sup>2</sup> A funeral sermon by Rev. Jas. Waters, of Uxbridge, referred to "his decayed and sickly constitution" and to "the unhappy and unreasonable feuds which arose among yourselves"—possibly leading up to the secession.

<sup>3</sup> Their building, Salem Chapel, Minster-street, was subsequently occupied by a Congregational secession from Castle-street 1808-20, and then became Primitive Methodist and is now incorporated in the premises of Messrs. Heelas, Ltd.

Hill School, author, tragedian (*Ion*, 1835, etc.), and Justice, figures in *D.N.B.* A characteristically "judicial" summing-up of his grandfather's life and work is quoted in a letter which Mr. Legg published in his *Memorials* (pp. 32-36).

Many changes were now affecting the town. An interesting entry in the 11th edition, 1760, with "new descriptions of the several Market Towns in England and Wales," of the Rev. Thos. Dyche's *New General English Dictionary*, says:—

REDDING, or READING, in *Berkshire*, is a very ancient town, and formerly very famous for its fine abbey; it is now a very large, wealthy and handsome-built town, situate on the river *Kennet*, but so near the *Thames* that the largest barges come up to the town-bridge, where are wharfs to load and unload all sorts of goods, by means whereof a great trade in malt and meal is carried on with *London*, and all sorts of commodities with the inland counties which are brought from *London*; the town has three large churches, and two meeting-houses; the *Kennet* is exceedingly stored with pike, eel, dace, and particularly trout; it was formerly very much inhabited by clothiers, but now there are but few. . . .

Against this may perhaps be set a description of Reading about 1890:

The old town of Reading, with its still quaint-looking houses, its ruined abbey and priory, its memories of mediæval Congresses and Roundhead sieges, sleeps, as my memory paints it, in the summer sun. It is a very quiet place. The mail coaches travelling on the Bath road at the marvellous rate of twelve miles an hour change horses at the Crown and the Bear. So do the travelling carriages and post-chaises of the wealthier wayfarer. The watchman calls the hour of the night. From the tower of old St. Laurence's Church the curfew is tolled. My nurse lights the fire with the tinder box. Over at Caversham a man is sitting in the stocks. The Quaker dress abounds. It is worn by Huntley and Palmer, who keep a little biscuit shop in London Street, where a little boy buys cakes. . . .

*Reminiscences of Goldwin Smith*, 612 (ed. 1910).

But before we leave this early background to consider what is our particular concern, the hundred years from 1846 to 1946 which saw the growth, and something of later decline in the history, of Trinity Congregational Church—another secession from Broad-street, strangely enough occasioned in large measure by a second charge of plagiarism, levelled and renewed against *WILLIAM LEGG* by the sermon-tasters in his congregation who not only heard but remembered sermons—we may glance at some interesting pages in the Borough *SESSIONS DIARY*, Anno Dm. 1681-1682-1683 which record proceedings against Conventiclers in the town.

It is unfortunately impossible at this distance to identify the persons proceeded against, or to glean whether they were Anabaptists, Presbyterians, Independents, or even "Popish recusants". The first relevant entry, with its hybrid Latin-English, records:

Burgos de Reading: Ad Generalem Quartoriale Session Pacio in Regio tent in et pro Burgo ptd. vecimo tertio die January Anno dm. 1681. Present I, Mr. Michael Reading, Maior, I, Mr. Thomas Coates, I, Mr. Ffrancis Terrell, Justices; Noia Grand-Jur.

The said Juros doe present a true Bill agt Joshua Westwood, clothworker; Thomas Bull (or Hull?), mercer; John Wilder, apothecary; William Potter, barber; Thomas Chesterman, clothworker; and William Wilder, clothier, all of this Borough wth many others to the number of 40ty prsons, p.ut indictat sunt.

Which said persons being called upon their Recognizance all of them appeared & heard the said Bill read, it being for a Riotous & Unlawfull assembly, and they being asked severally whether they are guilty or not [the persons previously named] answered they submitted to the Court, whereupon the Court fined each of them Twenty Nobles & bound them to be recogn. . . . and in the meantime to be of good behaviour, &c.

Abraham Ward de Read., maulster, Edward Clark, maulster, Jones Rowlands, yeom., were also fined 20£ each, with Johes Willmott, clother and Johes Bavington, cutler, both of Reading, in a like sum.

Several of the aforementioned reappeared on 8th April, 1682, upon Traverse and were again bound over in "Twenty Nobles a peice." Recognizances were returned on 4th July, 1682, for three of the same. On 16th October, 1682, the Justices certified three several records "agt. divers persons convicted of being present at severall Conventicles"—no names quoted.

At the adjourned Sessions on the same day, Mr. Justice Reading was sworne according to an Act of Parliament entituled, An act to prevent dangers wch may happen by Popish Recusants, and then delivered (sic) his Certificate proved by two Witnesses that have received the Sacramt, & that the Minister and Churchwarden signed the same.

On 13th January, 1682, the Justices certified "three sev.all Informacns agt sev.all psons for being present at sev.all seditious Conventicles in order to their Conviction(!) as by this Court file may appeare.

Richard Cowdry one of the Serjeants at Mace of this Borough makes a due Retourne of the writt of *e iure fac.* to him directed to warne and summon Twelve free and lawfull men of this Borough who are not of affinity to William fferley Tailor and Margery Seymore spinster to ( ) for the King &c nor to Charles Calverley Mercer to make a certen Jury of the Country to try a certen appeale made by the said Charles Calverley at the same Sess. by virtue of a certen Act of Parliamt made in the Two & Twentieth yeare of the Reigne of his now Ma'ty intituled an Act to prevent & suppress seditious Conventicles.

Whereupon the said Charles Calverley did plead and putt the matter upon Tryall by the said Jury and made a full defence and thereupon a verdict passed against him the said Charles Calverley the Appellant.

On 17th January Calverley is sentenced to pay the sum of Twelve Pounds "for Treble Costs for his unjust appeale" and the Court awards a *scire* against the Appellant to satisfy the said costs.

On 6th April, 1683, Calverley is again before the Justices for having refused to pay the Twelve Pounds required, and

this Court declared publicly to the said Charles Calverley that hee stands remitted to the prison in and for this Borough (called the Counter) there to remaine untill hee should pay the same, or be from there delivered by due course of lawe.

There follows the order for his committal, to "Richard Cowdry, keeper of the said prison and to his sufficient deputy and deputies there," but there is no reference to his release.

The story is not dissimilar to those of many other towns, but the local details serve to remind us of the price of freedom even in such pleasant places as Reading.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

PHYLLIS V. BRUNSDEN.

# Presbyterianism Under The Commonwealth

The Wirksworth Classis Minutes, 1651-1658

CLASSICAL Presbyterianism, and still less Synodical Presbyterianism, was never fully developed in England, despite *The Form of Presbyterial Church-Government and of Ordination of Ministers agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster* as "A Part of the Covenanted Uniformity in Religion betwixt the Churches of Christ in the Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland" in 1645<sup>1</sup>. This section of the work of the Assembly, which also incubated *A Directory for the Publique Worship of God*, the "Westminster" *Confession of Faith*, and the two *Catechisms* (Larger and Shorter), did not receive the formal ratification of Parliament, although the *Directory*, their first work, together with an *Ordinance for the taking away of the Book of Common Prayer* and establishing the *Directory* in its place, was ordered to be printed and published, under the direction of Henry Roborough and †Adoniram Byfield<sup>2</sup>, the Scribes of the Assembly of Divines, "by the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, Die Jovis, 13 Martii 1644."

*The Form of Presbyterial Church-Government* declared that "there is one general church visible, held forth in the new testament", and "particular visible churches, members of the general church", also held forth in the N.T., made up of "visible saints, viz., of such as, being of age, professed faith in Christ, and obedience unto Christ, according to the rules of faith and life taught by Christ and his apostles; and of their children." The claim of this last clause was the matter of considerable polemic, as, for example, in †\*Richard Baxter's controversy with †\*John Tombes, Anabaptist vicar of Leominster, published as *Plain Scripture Proof of Infants Church-membership and Baptism* (1651), and it remains a point whereon in theory Congregationalists, as well as Baptists, differ from Presbyterians.

The Congregational theory "Of the Institution of Churches" in the Savoy Declaration of 1658 reads:

Besides these particular Churches, there is not instituted by Christ any Church more extensive or Catholique entrusted with power for the administration of his Ordinances, or the execution of any authority in his name.

Herein lies the fundamental ground of difference from which emerge, e.g., THE Presbyterian Church of England; represented by "particular visible churches, members of the general church", and Congregational Churches, particular visible churches, independent and autonomous, Christocratic but not hierarchic.

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<sup>1</sup> On earlier, incipient, Presbyterianism, see Dr. S. W. Carruthers's article *The Presbytery at Wandsworth, 1572*, in *Trans.*, XII. 297ff; Usher, *The Dedham Classis* (1908); A. Peel, *Seconde Partie of a Register*, 1. 157 etc.; Browne, *Congregationalism in Norfolk & Suffolk*, 20; Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism* (1939).

<sup>2</sup> Names marked † appear in *D.N.B.*; those marked \* in A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, in *loc.*

The officers of the Church are then enumerated: some extraordinary (being apostles, evangelists and prophets, "which are ceased"); others ordinary and perpetual (as pastors, teachers and other church governors, and deacons), and there are set forth the duties belonging to each of these officers. Then, more particularly, are stated the reasons for, officers of, and ordinances in, each particular congregation, followed by an outline of the special Presbyterian structure and the "several sorts of Assemblies for the same".

THE ASSEMBLIES are (i) *Congregational*—the meeting of the Teaching and Ruling Elders of a particular congregation, for the government thereof (*Scottice*, kirk session or parochial consistory), (ii) *Classical*, and (iii) *Synodical* Assemblies, though in neither of these cases is the special function of the Assembly defined, the sections purporting merely to justify their scriptural basis and lawfulness. The powers and duties of the Classical Presbyteries are more fully dealt with hereafter. (i)—Each congregation or parish had its own officers and was a spiritual republic, "a body politic for its own domestic government"<sup>3</sup>, the pastor and elders (preaching and ruling presbyters) being responsible for the oversight of the local church, the admission of members, the maintenance of discipline, and the administration of the "censures" (admonition, suspension, and excommunication). But in all matters pertaining to their joint and several offices the minister and elders were accountable to the higher Synods. To this, again, the Savoy Declaration of the Congregationalists excepts (Sect. XXII):

The Power of Censures being seated by Christ in a particular Church, is to be exercised only towards particular Members of each Church respectively as such; and there is no power given by him unto any Synods or Ecclesiastical Assemblies to Excommunicate, or by their publique Edicts to threaten Excommunication, or other Church-censures against Churches, Magistrates, or their people upon any account, no man being obnoxious to that Censure, but upon his personal miscarriage, as a Member of a particular Church<sup>4</sup>.

And again (Sect. XXVI): In cases of Difficulties or Differences, either in point of Doctrine or in Administrations . . . it is according to the minde of Christ, that many Churches holding communion together, do by their Messengers meet in a Synod or Council, to consider and give their advice in, or about that matter in difference, to be reported to all the Churches concerned; Howbeit these Synods so assembled are not entrusted with any Church-Power, properly so called, or with any Jurisdiction over the Churches themselves, to exercise any Censures, either over any Churches or Persons, or to impose their determinations on the Churches or Officers.

This is clinched, to settle any dubiety, in Sect. XXVII:

Besides these occasional Synods or Councils, there are not instituted by Christ any stated Synods in a fixed Combination of Churches, nor their Officers in lesser or greater Assemblies nor are there any Synods appointed by Christ in a way of Subordination to one another<sup>5</sup>.

(ii) The *Form of Presbyterian Church-Government* sets alongside the congregational or parish presbytery, and superior to it, the *Classical Assembly*, formed of delegates from the parochial presbyteries in a defined area—in theory not more than four nor less than two elders from each congregation, in addition to the minister. These Classical Assemblies of "Classes"

<sup>3</sup> J. B. Marsden, *Hist. of Puritans*, II. 58.

<sup>4</sup> See A. Peel, *The Savoy Declaration . . .*, 1658 (1939), 74.

<sup>5</sup> *ib.*, 75.

(singular, Class or *Classis*) were: (a) To exercise general oversight in relation to the character and conduct of ministers and elders; (b) To examine candidates for the ministry and to ordain them<sup>6</sup>; (c) To enquire into the state of congregations; (d) To decide cases (of discipline, *etc.*) too difficult for parochial settlement, or from which there was appeal, and (e) Generally to discharge such other legislative functions as did not clash with higher authority. They were to meet monthly.

(iii) *The Superior Synods*, which "may be lawfully of several sorts, as provincial, national and oecumenical", were to be courts of appeal from the decisions of the Classes, and of adjudication on matters concerning the welfare of churches in a whole province or county, or on a national basis. The *Provincial Synods* were to meet twice in each year, but only two are known to have been definitely and regularly constituted—those for London and Lancashire. It is more than probable that others were organized, although no Parliamentary legislation confirms their existence and no records survive. It seems fairly certain, for example, that there was a Provincial Synod of Devon, for †\*John Flavel was its Moderator about 1650, and an Ordinance was passed by Parliament, 29 January 1647/8, "for the speedy dividing and settling of the several counties of the Kingdom into distinct classical presbyteries and congregational elderships", and the Provincial Synods should logically have supervened. The Classical system operated in Berkshire, Cheshire, Dorset, Essex<sup>7</sup>, Somerset, and as will be specially shewn, in Derbyshire, so well as in London and Lancashire. Specific mention is made in an ordination certificate, copied by Calamy, of a Provincial order in Derbyshire. "For as much as Samuel Ogden, B.A., hath Address'd himself to the Classical Presbytery of Wirksworth, in the *Province of Derby*, according to the Ordinance, *etc.*"

The *National Synod*, or General Assembly, which should have been constituted of delegates from the Provincial Synods, but was only to meet when summoned by Parliament, never functioned.

This elaborate form of Church government was far more perfect on paper than in reality. There are only extant two Ordinances establishing Classes, but there is no perfect record of these Ordinances, and it may be remembered that numbers of the staunchest Presbyterians were all the better pleased if they could establish what they deemed a true theocracy and ecclesiastical system without the aid of the civil power. The known records of Presbyterian Assemblies are doubtless far from exhaustive, but include the Minutes of the London Provincial Assembly 1647-1660 (in Sion College Library, London); those of the Manchester Classis (belonging to the trustees of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, with a copy in the Chetham Library);

<sup>6</sup> It is noteworthy that the *Form of Church-Government* merely states that Ordination "is the act of a presbytery", not restricted to the Classes, though it is stressed that "no single congregation that can conveniently assemble do assume to itself all and sole power in ordination." Dr. Stoughton, *Church of the Commonwealth*, and other historians, erred in affirming that candidates for ordination had to appear before the *Provincial Synods*. Apart from the Parliamentary Ordinance of 1646, which definitely conferred on each *Classis* the power of examination and ordination, we find the Classes whose records have survived regularly exercising the power—as will be exemplified.

<sup>7</sup> T. W. Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in Essex*, 255 ff. gives the full organization of the 14 Classes for that county. See also W. A. Shaw, *History of the English Church 1640-1660*, 2 Vols. (1900) and the same author's *Manchester Classis* (1890/1) and *Bury Classis* (1896/8).

a copy of the minute book of the Bolton Classis, the second of the nine in the Lancashire Province, is in the *Walker MSS* at the Bodleian, though the original is not extant; and the Minutes of the Exeter Assembly, 1655-1659 (transcribed by R. N. Worth for the *Trans. of the Devonshire Association* in 1877). These last records should be distinguished from the Minutes of the Exeter Assembly 1691—(Dr. Williams's Library) which, like the *Cheshire Classis Minutes 1691-1745* (published by Alex. Gordon in 1919 from the original belonging to the trustees of Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford), do not really refer to Classical Presbyterianism, but to the voluntary Ministerial Associations which arose in various parts after "The Happy Union" of 1690: these Associations included Independents as well as Presbyterians but excluded lay representatives, and had no formal powers or duties, although they sustained many of the traditions of the earlier Classes<sup>8</sup>.

The failure to constitute a *National Synod* was no doubt largely due to political feeling. As Halley points out (*Lancashire Puritanism & Nonconformity*, I, 379):

... there never was convened on the face of the earth an ecclesiastical assembly more thoroughly Erastian in its constitution, whatever may have been the opinions of its constituent parts, than was that which all orthodox Scotchmen regard with so much veneration and to whose authority they concede so great respect. Although the avowed Erastians in the assembly were very few, the assembly itself was the creature and the servant of the parliament. . . .

Not only was the early work of the Assembly done with a view to enlisting Scottish support and the drawing together of the two kingdoms, to be united by the cement of the Solemn League & Covenant, but in the result

... there was one point on which the house of commons was inexorable, and its firmness was fatal to the rigid presbyterian party. From the inferior courts there must be a last appeal, and the question was whether it should lie to a secular or a purely spiritual court. The presbyterians maintained that in spiritual things it was a dishonour to Christ himself, the church's sole head and king, to permit a secular body to sit in final judgment on its own previous decisions. The parliament was of another mind: it contemplated with little satisfaction the setting up of a spiritual tribunal independent of itself. No arguments could move it here. If presbyterianism meant a supreme spiritual court, over which it could exercise no control, a pure presbyterian church in England it would tolerate no more than prelacy itself. An accommodation, a modified presbyterianism, was the consequence; and the mortification of the extreme presbyterians was undisguised<sup>9</sup>.

In trying to trim on the other side the Westminster Assembly, and the Parliament, lost more ground. Attempting to enforce the "divine right of presbytery" as against the divine right of king or prelate, and to influence political support, it accepted *The Solemn League and Covenant* in September 1643,

<sup>8</sup> The first Cheshire Classis, 1653—(of which no records survive) seems also to have been a mixed and voluntary association. See Urwick, *Nonconformity in Cheshire*, xxxii, f. 423. Strictly no Classical Presbytery existed in England after 1660. The Exeter Assembly was revived in 1691 as *The United Brethren of Exon and Devon*.

<sup>9</sup> Marsden, *History of the Puritans*, II. 58.

a disastrous measure. With unquiet spirits it became unpopular because it was enforced. A rigorous conformity, such as the prelates had been unable to command, was bound upon their necks with the additional torment of an oath<sup>10</sup>.

Presbyterianism was the only true and scriptural form of church government: it existed, they said, *jure divino*, asserting on its behalf the very dogma Bancroft had argued in support of prelacy, and "it was on this rock that presbyterianism split and foundered".

The Assembly continued to sit until 1649, when it became merely a committee for the trial and examination of ministers: it was finally dissolved in 1653 by Cromwell, simultaneously with the Long Parliament.

*The Confession of Faith* which it produced, rigidly ultra-calvinistic and confidently dogmatic, nevertheless had a far-reaching influence: the *Directory* of public worship provided careful and detailed rules for ministers: "So much good sense and deep piety, the results of great and diversified experience and of a knowledge so profound, have probably never been gathered into so small a space on the subject of ministerial teaching". The *Catechisms*, especially the Shorter, influenced later Dissent to a marked degree: "Not even a Congregational Declaration of Faith like that of Savoy could displace them among Congregationalists themselves"<sup>11</sup>.

DERBYSHIRE PRESBYTERIANISM: It has been apparent to the writer for some years that the Classical organization of Presbyterianism in Derbyshire was well-established during the Commonwealth period, but only recently has he secured a transcript of the *Minute Book of the Wirksworth Classis* in that county, covering the period from 16 December, 1651 to 17 November, 1658. This MS (of which details are given in an appendix to this article) was printed by Dr. J. Charles Cox in the *Journal* of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society, Vol. II, January 1880, pp. 135-222, and an annotated edition, on the lines of Gordon's *Cheshire Classis Minutes* might very profitably be made available to students.

Theoretically, Derbyshire was organized with a Classical Assembly for each of the six Hundreds of the county—for the Hundred of the Low Peak (or Wapentake of Wirksworth), known as the Wirksworth Classis after the town in which it usually met; the Chesterfield Classis, for the Hundred of Scarsdale; for the Hundred of the High Peak, which met either at Bakewell or Glossop; for the Hundred of Morleston and Litchurch, which met at Derby; for the Hundred of Repton and Gresley, meeting sometimes at Repton and sometimes at Melbourne; and for the Hundred of Appletree, a Hundred with no town of importance in it, which is believed to have met generally at Breadsall. There are no known records of the operation of some of these Classes, but the Wirksworth Classis met consistently through the seven years covered by the book now under consideration, and there are external evidences that the Chesterfield and High Peak Classes also functioned. There is only, by implication from the reference given above, a belief that a Derbyshire Provincial Assembly also functioned, but that London and Lancashire were *not*, as is so frequently asserted, the only two areas in which Classical Presbyterianism was regularly established, is quite apparent.

Representation at the Classical Assembly, as evidenced by the Wirksworth Minutes, seems to have been fairly general on the part of ministers, but very unequal in respect of lay-elders. The livings in the area seem to have been closely controlled by the Classis, and ordinations performed by its

<sup>10</sup> *ib.*, 59.

<sup>11</sup> A. Peel, *Savoy Declaration*, 12.

appointed ministers. There are, however, references to ministers in the area who never seem to have attended Classis meetings, and it is implied that membership of the Classis was not an *ex officio* right, but subject to an approving vote of the Classis. On this point special cases will be quoted later.

The main concerns of the Classis were: (a) the examination and ordination of candidates for the ministry; (b) the arrangements for the "Classical fasts" or "monthly lectures", representing one of the anomalies of the *Directory* system, which ridiculed the observance of special seasons and saints' days as things of "man's invention", but, inconsistently, decreed the observance of a monthly fast, requiring total abstinence from all food "unless bodily weakness do manifestly disable of our holding out till the Fast be ended", and from all bodily delights, rich apparel, ornaments and the like. Fasting was also rigidly observed by ordaining presbyters and candidates until the conclusion of ordination services: it was argued by some that breach of this rule was sufficient to invalidate the ceremony. The Classical Fasts of the Wirksworth Presbytery were held on the second Tuesday of each month, for which the preachers of two long sermons or lectures were chosen at the previous meeting. These monthly fasts were held up and down the district, whereas the "Classical" meetings were almost invariably held at Wirksworth. There are three exceptions noted in the minutes out of nearly ninety meetings—one each at Ashbourne, Crich, and Kniveton, determined upon because an ordination was to be held in the church at those places on the same day.

The Classis further dealt with: (c) The defence of orthodox doctrine; (d) examination of complaints and matters of discipline and order from the Congregational presbyteries.

**ORDINATION:** The business of the Classis in relation to the examination and ordination of candidates was conducted in accord with the provisions of the Parliamentary Ordinance

... for the Ordination of Ministers of the Classicall Presbyters within their respective Bounds for the severall Congregations in the Kingdom of England. Die Veneris, 28 August, 1646. London, printed for John Wright at the Kings Head in the Old Bayley, 31 Aug. 1646.

This Ordinance develops the relevant sections of the *Form of Church-Government*, setting forth in its Preface that Presbyter, Elder, and Bishop are all equal. Each Presbyterian Classis is to examine, approve, and ordain "presbyters" within its bounds—but does not seem to have had any part in the ordaining of *ruling* presbyters (*i.e.*, elders): only of the *preaching* presbyters.

Candidates for ordination must be at least 24 years of age<sup>12</sup>, and must bring testimonials of (i) having taken the "Covenant of the Three Kingdoms", (ii) diligence and proficiency in studies, (iii) his degrees at the university and time of residence there, and, especially (iv) of his pious life and conversation<sup>13</sup>. The Presbytery is to enquire particularly of the grace of God in each candidate, of his holiness of life, his learning, the evidence of his vocation to the ministry, and concerning "his faire and direct calling to that place to which he is designed". The candidate is

<sup>12</sup> "a day above twenty-three was then called twenty-four current, and allowed sufficient for matter of age, if other things concurred for the admission of young scholars to ordination"—*Life of Adam Martindale*, iv, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Halley, *Lancashire Puritanism*, II. Appendix, gives examples of these certificates.

to be examined "in a brotherly way" and with "mildness of spirit", in his skill in the original tongues "by reading the Hebrew and Greeke Testaments and rendering some portions of them into Latine", and in "Logick, Philosophy, and other learning"<sup>13a</sup>. He is to be asked what authors in Divinity he has read, what knowledge he has of ecclesiastical history, and what skill in the chronology of the scriptures. Trial is to be made of his ability to defend orthodox doctrine against error, of his skill in exposition of the scriptures, and of his "judgment in cases of Conscience". He is to preach before the presbytery on a given text, provided he is not already a proved preacher: he is to frame a thesis in Latin on some controversial topic of theology fixed upon by the presbytery, and be prepared to maintain a dispute on it. Finally, "the proportion of his gifts in relation to the place unto which he is called" shall be considered.

Subject to his satisfactory emergence from this testing, the candidate is to be sent to the place to which he is "called", there to preach three several days, and to converse with the people. On the last of those days, the Presbytery is to send a public instrument in writing to be read before the people and then affixed to the church door, calling on the said congregation (*Si quis*) to submit any exceptions they may have against him (*Scottice*, "Serving the Edict"). No objection being raised, a day is appointed for ordination, which must be performed in the church where the candidate is to serve "if it may be done with safety and convenience". A solemn fast is to be kept by the congregation, the ordinand, and the Presbytery. At least five ministers of the word come to the place, a sermon being preached by one of them on the ministerial office and duty, after which the preacher catechises the candidate before the congregation on his faith, calling, diligence, *etc.* Then the Presbytery, or the ministers appointed by it, lay their hands on the head of the ordinand whilst a "short prayer or blessing", solemnly setting him apart for the office and work of the ministry, is said. Finally, an exhortation is addressed to the new minister and his congregation, concluding with prayer, the singing of a psalm, and blessing<sup>‡</sup>.

Any man who had been ordained "according to the forme of Ordination which hath been held in the Church of England" need not, if his testimonials were satisfactory, be further examined, but was to be tested in his preaching and by further examination, "if necessary", before being accredited to a particular congregation. There arises one such instance in the Wirksworth Classis Minutes of a minister who had formerly been ordained episcopally submitting himself for re-ordination by the Presbytery.

The Registrar or Scribe, elected by the Presbytery, was to keep careful record of the names of persons ordained, with their testimonials, and of the charges to which they were appointed. No money or gift must be paid to the Presbytery except an entry fee to the Registrar for the record, instrument, and testimonials of Ordination, for which the fee must not exceed ten shillings.

It is apparent that considerable care was bestowed by the Presbytery to

<sup>13a</sup> The Manchester Classis Book indicates that candidates were examined in "logic, philosophy, ethics, physics, metaphysics, Greek or Latin", and that "the call of the people and the consent of the patron (*where there is one*)" were also requisite. It must be remembered that although the Classis might ordain, the actual "living" was frequently controlled by lay donors or by the sequestrators, over whom the Classis had no power.

<sup>‡</sup> Cf. *Trans. C.H.S.*, VII. 380, "Ordination, Primitive & Congregational", by T. G. Crippen.

ensure that candidates were "sound" men, with an expectation of considerable learning, and that the act of ordination was carefully performed, with the laying on of hands. While this carefulness doubtless drew to the Presbyterians some measure of support from Episcopalian who shrank from the seeming isolation of Independency, it also brought down on them the raillery of the extreme Independents, who declared themselves unable to see any difference between episcopal and presbyterian ordination.

'Twixt milk and milk the likeness is not greater,

No egg from egg distinguished lesse in feature,

wrote an Independent pamphleteer in 1648, adapting Plautus to his purpose. The Wirksworth Minutes record the rejection of one "expectant" or candidate, notwithstanding good birth and repeated application, on account of scandalous life; two were referred back for insufficient learning, and one (apparently) rejected for unsound doctrine.

Halley (*Lancashire Puritanism*, I. 446f.) accepts the position that

As the presbyterian discipline was regularly established only in these two districts (*i.e.*, Lancashire and London), the ordinations in them were numerous. In London, the Westminster assembly as well as the classical assemblies conferred ordination, and in Lancashire every classis was authorized by parliament to ordain ministers for the counties in which the presbyterian discipline was not organized. From all parts of the north of England candidates for the ministry resorted for ordination to the Lancashire classical assemblies.

But it is clearly manifest that the ordinations by the Wirksworth Classis were also numerous, and a large proportion of them were of candidates who were settled or settling in charges outside its area and jurisdiction, the range being quite as wide as that quoted for ordinations by the Manchester Classis (*op. cit.*, 447). The practice of conducting "extra-territorial" ordinations was covered by an appendix to *The Form of Church-Government*:

*Thus far of ordinary Rules and Course of Ordination, in the ordinary way; that which concerns the extraordinary Way, requisite to be now practised, followeth.*

This declares that in "these present exigences" presbyteries cannot be formed up to their whole power and work, and there is demand for ordination of ministers to serve the armies and navy, as well as the numerous destitute congregations. When, therefore, there "can be no presbytery near unto them, to whom they may address themselves", then certain godly ministers in or about the city of London were to be associated "by publick authority" simply for the work of ordination, and like associations were to be made "in great towns, and the neighbouring parishes in the several counties". In practice the terms of reference seem to have been much broadened, and the Wirksworth Classis is found ordaining ministers to charges in the counties of Leicester, Notts, Stafford, Warwick and Worcester, and as far north as Dewsbury, much as Halley quotes the Manchester Classis ordaining for Lincolnshire, Shropshire and Yorkshire as well as for Blackburn in the north of the county. In some cases the applications were from men of Derbyshire birth, or personally acquainted with members of the Presbytery, but it can only be presumed that this general extension of function was due to the non-operation of Classes in the districts concerned. Gordon (*Cheshire Classis*, 105) notes that Adam Martindale, appointed vicar of Rostherne, Cheshire, in 1649, had to apply to the Manchester Classis for ordination (although there was a Cheshire Classis then existent, apparently), and was actually ordained by the Eighth London Classis. No strict analogy can be pressed here, however, for the Cheshire Classes, both early and later, were not strictly Presbyterian, but were voluntary associations of ministers.

both Presbyterian and Independent, possibly Episcopalian too, more on the lines of Baxter's Worcestershire Association. Nevertheless, at the first ordination by the Cheshire Classis in 1692, four ejected ministers from Lancashire were requested to render assistance, and did so; and the Classis was attended by ministers from Derbyshire, Lancashire, Shropshire and Staffordshire.

Full particulars of the ordinations by the Wirksworth Classis are given at the end of this article.

**SPECIAL CASES:** The following extracts are given *in extenso*†, as shewing the procedure of the Classis in cases where the credentials of candidates for ordination were not considered to be adequate:

17 Feb., 1656/7—Mr. Ffrancis Lowe, Bachelor of Arts, late Student of Brasenose Colledge in Oxford, having desired to be ordained a preaching Presbyter produced two certificates in order thereto, gave an account of the worke of Grace upon his Soule, of his call to the Ministerie, of his skill in the Originall tongues & in the Arts Logicke & philosophie, likewise of his knowledge in divinitie; in all which he gave satisfaction.

The said Mr. Ffrancis Lowe preached (this day) before the Classis, and his sermon being orthodox was approved.

21 April, 1657—Mr. Ffrancis Lowe this day exhibited his Thesis which was approved; but because there was a report to the Classis, that the said Mr. Ffrancis Low was scandalous in his life and conversacon, therefore it was ordered that intimacon should be forthwith sent unto Marple Chappell in the Parish of Stockport the place of his residence that if any person or persons could object any thing against him, they might exhibit the same unto the above-named Moderator.

19 May, 1657—This day Mr. Ffrancis Lowes business was taken into consideracon, his intimacon brought in & William Hollinworth excepted agt him, whereupon it was resolved that his ordinacon should be for the presnt suspended, that his accusers may (if they can) make further proofs of their accusations otherwise he is to be proceeded with, the next Ordinacon.

16 June, 1657—. . . it was ordered that the Scribe should bring . . . the papers of Mr. Francis Lowe's testimoniall that the said . . . Mr. Lowe might have them.

17 Nov., 1657—This day Mr. Ffrancis Lowe made a further addresse to the Classis for ordination; and was dismissed.

20 Jan., 1656/7—"Mr. Mathias Hill, bachelor of Arts and late Student in Catherine Hall in Cambridge" applies for ordination, his sermon being orthodox is approved, and he is given a Thesis to defend, "vizt Utrum impetratio Christi consistere possit cum omnium damnatione".

21 April, 1657—Mr. Abraham Smith Student in Divinitie desiring ordination had this Thesis given him "uppon the producing of his certificates) vizt Utrum successio ministrorum sit ecclesie veræ essentialis?"

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† In quotations from the Minute Book the text is preserved: most abbreviations will be obvious, although it is not possible to reproduce superior lettering. Marks of interrogation are frequently missing from Latin thesis titles.

- 5 May, 1657—Mr. Matthias Hill and Mr. Thomas (*sic*) Smith being examined concerning their ministerial abilities were desired to give further satisfaction to the Classis the next Classis meeting.
- 19 May, 1657—Mr. Matthias Hill being examined the second time was not approved at present, but desired to endeavour after more sufficiency.  
Also Mr. Tho. Smith exhibited his Thesis but was not approved.
- 16 June, 1657—Mr. Tho. Smith being suspended from ordination desired that his certificates might be delivered back agn to him, whereupon it was ordered that the Scribe should bring them to Wirkesworth upon Tuesday next. . . .
- 19 Oct., 1658—Ordered that Nov. 2 be kept as an extraordinary meeting of the Classis for the re-examining of Mr. Matthias Hill and Mr. Abraham Smith.
- 2 Nov., 1658—This day Mr. Matthias Hill and Mr. Abraham Smith were examined concerning their ministerial abilities and were ordered to give further account unto the Classis at the next Classis meeting. The said Mr. Matthias Hill had this Thesis given him, viz.: An roginutio (*sic*) gratia totaliter deficere possunt?  
Mr. Abraham Smith had this thesis given him, viz., Utrum non obstante Christi merito justificatio nostra sit gratuita?
- 16 Nov., 1658—Mr. Matthias Hill exhibited his Thesis was examined but not approved.  
Also Mr. John Sanders, Mr. Thomas Stanhope & Mr. Abraham Smith exhibited their theses maintained disputes upon the same & gave satisfaction.
- 17 Nov., 1658—Abraham Smith ordained at Wirksworth<sup>14</sup>.
- 21 July, 1657—Mr. Thomas Gilliver, B.A., late Student of Maudlin Hall in Oxford, desiring ordination, was ordered to give an account to the Classis of his ministerial capabilities the next meeting of the Classis and to bring his Certificates.
- 16 Feb., 1657/8—Mr. Thomas Gilliver this day made further addresse to the classis for ordination, but was not examined because of the small appearance.
- 20 April, 1658—Mr. Thomas Gilliver having formerlie made his addresses to the Classis for ordination and appearing again this day upon the same accounts gave an account of the worke of Grace upon his soule, of his skill in the Originall Tongues, & in the Arts, Logicke & Philosophie, also of his knowledge in Divinitie & having likewise received a Thesis, vizt: An vocatio & missio sit necessaria ijs qui Evangelium docent—did exhibit the same and was in all these approved.  
Whereupon the Classis went into the Parish Church at Wirkesworth where the Congregacon being gather (*sic*) Mr. Robert Porter preached the ordinacon Sermon which ended, the questions were demanded of the said Mr. John Kay & Mr. Thomas Gilliver required to be demanded by the

<sup>14</sup> No charge mentioned for either this man or Thos. Gilliver, *infra*. Mr. Smith, silenced in Warwickshire in 1662, might be this man, but doubtful (see *Cal. Rev.*). Despite the thrice repeated *Thomas* it seems apparent that these entries all refer to the same man.

ordination of Parl: of the 20 of Aug 1646 who severally answered to all the said questions & then were ordained by praier & imposition of hands, then the said Mr. Robert Porter gave the exhortation, concluded with praier & the blessing.

After the congregacon dismissed the Lres of ordinacon were signed by the ordainers & delivered to them by the Scribe.

**DISCIPLINE:** The following case of discipline is also quoted *in extenso*, as showing the work of the Classis in relation to a minister concerning whom complaints had been made.

20 April, 1652—Whereas complaint was made this day to the Classis of Mr. John Wiersdale<sup>15</sup> a member of this Classis for administering the sacramt of the Lord's Supper to some Parishionrs of Wirkesworth not only to ye offence of the Minister and Godlie people there but also to the great hinderance of Reformacon &c. It is therefore ordered that the Scribe of this Classis give special notice to the said Mr. Wiersdale to make his appearance before the Classis at their next meeting &c.

18 May, 1652—This day Mr. John Wiersdale Ministr of Bradley upon summons according to formr Ordr appeared before the Classis; where it was Layd to his charge that he had (contrarie to the Forme of Government established) admitted not onlie only his owne people pr'miscouslie to the Sacrament of the Lords Supper but also some others of the Parish of Wirkesworth who were not thought fitt to be received in their own Congregacon. And also that he had spoken disgracefully of some private meetings of Godly & peaceable men & women who joyning wth the publicke Congregacons in all Ordinances did yet desire to meet together in the weeke days for their mutuall edifications spending the time in fasting and prayr.

The said Mr. Wiersdale did ingenuously confesse and acknowledge yt the said charges were true. That being importuned by his people he had administered the Sacrament of the Lords Supper without tryall of the Communicants being destitute of Congregational Eldrs & having forgotten the form Ordr of the 20th of August, 1650. But that he was surprised by those of other Congregations who intruded into their Communion without making him at all acquainted before wth their desire so to doe; & that he being straitened in that exigent did too suddenly and inconsiderately admitt of them, for wch he was sorrie yt he had therein offended promissing for the future to be more carefull.

Likewise he (upon conviction of the lawfulness & usefulness of such private meetings) declared his mistake in the second offence pr'missing hereafter that he would both think and speake more charitable of such meetings, desireing (as he said) that they would call him into their number; whereupon the Classis taking the promises into consideracon ordered (he being withdrawne) that Mr. Peter Watkinson

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<sup>15</sup> John Wiersdale (or Wyersdale) was vicar of Bradley, Derbys, and seems to have held the living until 1669.

should, in the behalfe of the Classis in all Brotherlie manner *give him some gentle reproof for his formr miscariage in the premises*<sup>16</sup>, earnestlie exhort him accordingly to his promise to act more carefully and regularly in the administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper & to have a more tendr respect to Godly people in reference to their private meetings being no wayes in contempt of or prejudice to the publicke.

Which was done accordingly; and he was dismissed.

Mr. Wiersdale evidently accepted admonition with grace equal to his candour in admitting his faults, and became a member of the Classis which censured him and attended the next four meetings of it, though not again in the period covered by the minutes.

His request, "that they would call him into their number", again draws attention to the seemingly elective and not representative membership of the Classis. In defining Classical Assemblies, *The Form of Church-Government* lays down that

A presbytery consisteth of ministers of the word, and such other publick officers as are agreeable to and warranted by the word of God, to be church-governors, to join with the ministers in the government of the church.

This somewhat vague delineation of Classical constitution, paralleled by the following statement regarding Synodical Assemblies, namely that

Pastors and teachers, and other church governors (as also other fit persons, when it shall be deemed expedient) are members of those assemblies which we call synodical, where they have a lawful calling thereunto,

nevertheless seems to imply that *all* ministers of the Word should have been members of their appropriate Classes, *ex officio*. But not only do we find special votes of admission of ministers to the Wirksworth Classis, but many parishes never seem to have been represented thereon (as Atlow, Ballidon, Brassington, Elton, Hognaston, Parwich, Tissington, Thorpe-by-Ashbourne, Turnditch), although the Classis from time to time evidenced interest in them<sup>17</sup>. Some of these parishes were possibly represented by holders of pluralities (see Martin Topham, *infra*, for example), but others seem to have had "Ministers of the Word", if not separately beneficed clergy. Moreover, in practice, the Classis seems to have been very much the concern of about half-a-dozen ministers and the same number of regularly attending Ruling Elders. Was this due to refusal on the part of some incumbents to participate in the Presbyterian scheme, except in so far as its imprimatur was necessary to letters of ordination? Or is there implicit an indication that in this Hundred, as in many other parts of the country, there were "many congregations where there is no minister at all"?<sup>18</sup>. Hognaston provides a case in point, however, where ministers were ordained by the Classis who do not appear to have taken a seat at its meetings.

The Wiersdale case also draws attention to the jealous concern of the Presbyterians against the interference of the minister of one congregation or presbytery with the members of another. Excommunication pronounced by the minister and elders (Parish Presbytery) of any congregation held good

<sup>16</sup> Words in italics are cancelled in the MS.

<sup>17</sup> Classical Fasts were kept at Atlow (1), Ballidon (3), Brassington (3), Elton (1), Fenny Bradley (1), Hognaston (6), Parwich (2), Thorpe (1), Tissington (1), Turnditch (1).

<sup>18</sup> *Form of Church-Government, Appendix* (The Extraordinary way, requisite to be now practised, Sect. i).

for all other presbyteries unless the condemned person appealed successfully before the Classis or a higher Assembly. Moreover, before any person could communicate it was necessary for him or her to obtain a certificate of fitness from the local Presbytery, in the granting of which the minister required the assistance of at least two other presbyters, properly elders of his own congregation but, failing them, from another. Hence Wiersdale's fault lay in that, having no Congregational Elders, he had acted *solus*.

The complaint against Wiersdale seems to have called attention to a generally lax state, for on the same day as he was first charged, 20 April, 1652, we find:

It is this day voted that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (being long neglected in most Congregacoons within this Classis) be therefore seriously considered by the Classis, &c.

The *Directory* laid it down that the Lord's Supper was "frequently to be celebrated", after the morning sermon—"the Table being decently covered and so conveniently placed that the Communicants may orderly sit about it or at it . . . the Bread in comely and convenient vessels . . . the Wine also in large Cups."

Evidently arising from the minutes of the previous meeting, we get: 18 May, 1652—Upon the request of Mr. Thomas Shelmerdine pastor of the Church att Marlock Mr. Edw: Pole pastor of the Church att Bonteshall & Mr. John Otefield Pastor of Carsington That whereas they were not in a capacitie to admitt to the Sacramt of the Lords Supper such of their Congregations as desired to communicate because they had no Congregationall Eldr (they & others of their said Congregations being desirous to enjoy that Ordinance in their respective Churches) & it being formly ordrd by the Classis August 20 1650 that the Classis should upon such request assigne two or more of their members to assist the ministrs of any such Congregation (being a man approved by the Classis) in that worke. It is this day ordrd that Mr. Martin Topham Pastor of the Congregacon or Church att Wirksworth Mr. Henrie Buxton Eldr of the Church att Bradbourne & William Storer an Eldr of the Church att Wirksworth shall assist Mr. Otefield aforesaid in tryall & examination of such of that Congregacon as desire to be received to the Sacrament. Also that Mr. Pole Pastor of Bonteshall & Mr. John Sclatr an Elder of the Church att Hognaston be assistants to Mr. Shelmerdine aforesaid, and the said Mr. Shelmerdine and Mr. Slater shall in like manner assist the said Mr. Pole in the said worke when they shall be thereunto called by the ministers of those Congregations respectively.

**RULING ELDERS:** According to the paper constitution, these (lay) Elders ought to have considerably outnumbered, if not doubled in number, the ministers at classical meetings. Failure to secure this lay participation and to keep up the numbers of "Ruling Elders" seems as much as anything to have militated against the working of the Presbyterian system in England. The minutes of the London Provincial Assembly contain numerous complaints of the absence of competent men to act in this capacity, some of the largest churches being "without anie"—a characteristic also of the Wirksworth Classis, as the foregoing "Wiersdale Case", and its seeming stab to other uneasy consciences, reveals. The ministers of this Classis generally outnumbered the "Others", and towards the end of the period the lay element was very small. The Classis ordered, 17 May, 1653, that

every congregation presbyterated within this Classis shalbe desired to send to every classical meeting two (or one at least) of their congregational elders to joyne with the Ministers in managing the affaires of the Classis

but without noticeable response. Halley asserts that this was largely due to the influence of the Episcopalian ministers, to whom the admission of lay authority in spiritual matters was abhorrent: the concerns of the laity were strictly confined to the temporalities of the building and the benefice. He adds:

Complaints were made to the (Lancashire) Classes that on account of the contempt into which the elders had fallen through the disparagement of them by the episcopalian clergy, they had lost their authority in exercising discipline, in reprovng sin, in examining candidates for communion, and in discharging other duties of their office. A general neglect of religious ordinances was observed wherever the elders were obstructed in the discharge of their important duties. Congregations evidently inclined to the restoration of Episcopacy became, under the circumstances, practically Independents<sup>19</sup>.

Was not a measure of this lay reluctance, if not indifference, due to timidity in identifying themselves openly and officially with those upheld by an uncertain political party which was already making troubled headway against the Independent element, as well as to underlying loyalty to the older episcopal ways of their fathers? The lay element, "the right arm", is essential to the working of the Presbyterian system, and this arm, never strong in England, became more and more enfeebled. The principle of eldership, with its exercise of discipline, was not too palatable to the generality of the people, nor sought after by those who might find censure of neighbours a sore trial and source of offence. In England, unlike Scotland, the laity held more and more aloof, and the Classical meetings dwindled into little more than clerical gatherings for prayer, consultation, and theological discussion—in short, to Ministers' Fraternal—except where they wielded the power of admission to ordination.

(TO BE CONTINUED).

CHARLES E. SURMAN.

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<sup>19</sup> Halley, *Lancashire Puritanism & Nonconformity*, II. 49 ff.

## The Diary of a Deacon at White Row Chapel, Spitalfields

**B**Y the kindness of the owner, Miss Annie Mottram, of Manchester, I have recently examined a manuscript diary of some hundreds of pages, bearing on the inner front cover the words, "A Book of Remembrance, April 1769", with two cures for rheumatism written underneath. There is no writer's name, but from internal evidence it appears that the writer became a deacon in 1778; the accounts (many of them for casks and barrels) and price-lists (they include the prices paid for hops in 1771 to 1773) suggest that he was a brewer. As he prospered in business he rose in the esteem of the church; towards the end of the diary he is evidently Treasurer, paying the minister quarterly and sending on the money collected for the Congregational Fund.

Before attempting to identify him, it may be best to identify White Row—and here, as so often, acknowledgment is due to the Rev. C. E. Surman. Some account of it may be found in Wilson's *Dissenting Churches*, IV. 425 and the *Evangelical Magazine*, 1836 (p. 509). The church originated, c.1700, in the work of Richard Paine, who preached in the Embroiderers' Hall, Gutter Lane. Once a Baptist, he became a Congregationalist in 1710, and before he "unhandsomely left" in 1734, the congregation met in three different Halls before settling in Petticoat Lane. After the short pastorate of John Hulme, and a seven years' vacancy, revival came under Mordecai Andrews in premises in Artillery Lane. On his death in 1750 at the age of 32, he was succeeded by Edward Hitchin, or Hitchen, minister when the diary begins, at a chapel erected in 1755 in White Row. When the lease expired in 1836, the church moved to the recently vacated Bury St. Meeting in St. Mary Axe until Bishopsgate Chapel was built and opened in 1838. There worship was continued until 1933 when the building was closed<sup>1</sup>.

It is easier to reconstruct the character of the writer than to discover his name. The book has been in Miss Mottram's family for some time. Her grandmother, a daughter of the Rev. Robert Harper, of Leeds, married James Mottram in 1837. She had a brother, Thomas Smithson Harper,

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequent ministers were: Nathaniel Trotman (1775-93).  
John Goode (1794-1827).  
Henry Townley (1828-49).  
James Charles Galloway (1849-55).  
Edward Mannering (1855-71).  
Thomas Sissons (co-pastor, 1868-71).  
Arthur Griffith (1871-73).  
John Jones (1874-77).  
Robert Stratten Holmes (1877-79).  
Arthur Griffith (1879-81).  
Andrew Mearns (1882).  
Thomas Gear (1884-1922).  
William Richard Harvey (1923-26).  
Herbert Hooper (1926-30).  
William Langdon Lee (1930-33).

who was born in 1812 at Northowram in Yorkshire, where his father was then minister. This lends significance to the visits of Hitchin and the writer of the diary to Yorkshire and Northowram (see below, pp. 180, 185). Thomas Smithson Harper probably was the person who opened a school in Hatherlow in 1881<sup>2</sup>.

On 30th July, 1839, he was ordained (from Blackburn Academy) at Ormskirk, those taking part being J. Kelly and Thomas Raffles, of Liverpool; R. Fletcher, of Manchester; and G. Wardlaw, of the Academy. In the same year he married Ellen Jackson, and between 1841 and 1855 eight children were born to them at Ormskirk.

The Smithson in Harper's name no doubt comes from Ann Smithson, whose mother in 1799 gave her a copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress* now in Miss Mottram's possession. A John Smithson, born in Yorkshire (n.d.)—perhaps the student Smithson in Moorfields Academy in 1744—was minister at High Wycombe from 1749 to his death in 1789; he several times shared in ordinations with Thomas Gibbons. The possibility of the name of the diarist being Smithson must not be ruled out, but the registers of White Row (at Somerset House) and inquiries in Northowram (where there seem to have been relatives) have so far failed to help. The writer's use of "Brother" for fellow-members of the church—and probably for brothers-in-law—may cause confusion. The entry of 17th December, 1779, about the death of "Our Hond. Parent", with its references to Brothers Joseph and Thomas suggest he was one of three brothers named Rust, but again he might have married their sister: there are many references to Brother and Sister Thomas Bentley.

Perhaps the ingenuity and industry of readers will prove whether the diarist's name was Smithson, Bentley, Rust, Asquith, Harper, or none of these.

The main body of the diary is a record of preachers and their texts, generally with a prayer or aspiration added after the text has been written out in full. These preachers are in the main easily identifiable, so notes

<sup>2</sup> The printed prospectus reads:

HATHERLOW SCHOOL

T. S. Harper

Having been appointed by the Trustees, Master of the above school, begs leave most respectfully, to inform his Friends and the Public, that he intends opening his Seminary, on Monday, 28th March, 1831, and hopes by unremitting attention to the morals, and general improvement of his Pupils, to give perfect satisfaction to those parents and guardians who may honor him with the care of their children.

	<i>Terms per quarter</i>		£	s.	d.
Reading ... ..	...	...	...	4	0
Ditto with Writing ... ..	...	...	...	6	0
Writing, Arithmetic, and English Grammar ... ..	...	...	...	8	0
<i>Extra Charges</i>					
Geography, with the use of Globes ... ..	...	...	...	5	0
Composition and Elocution ... ..	...	...	...	5	0
Book-Keeping, &c. ... ..	...	...	...	5	0
Short Hand ... ..	...	...	...	5	0
Mathematics ... ..	...	...	...	10	6
Latin and Greek Classics ... ..	...	...	...	10	6
DAY BOARDERS ... ..	...	...	...	1	5

are not added. There are many references to church business, and occasional entries relating to family matters, the weather, or national affairs. Here are the first entries:

April 16. Heard Mr. Hitchen from John 10 and 10 verse (quoted) Morning. And Afternoon Genesis 17 and 1. And at Night heard Mr. Davis Branth. From first Peter second and 9 Verse. . . .  
Monday, 17 was at Mr. Asquith to eat Barbequed Pigg.  
April 23, 1769. Heard a young man at Mr. Boothes from Exodus 14 and 15. . . . And afternoon Mr. Hitchen from Gens. 17 and 18. . . .  
April 30. Heard Mr. Hitchen from John 10 and 10. . . . In Afternoon heard Mr. Hitchen from Gen. 17 and 1.

May 16. Went to take Leave of Father who set out for Yorkshire and see him in Coach about eight o'clock at Night and Mrs. Fawcet.

Friday 19. Went to Church Meeting. Mr. Rogers went to prayer and Mr. Stephens and two Persons was took in to our Church—Mrs. Chambers and Miss Pauson.

June 4. Sabbath Day. Margate. I went to Ramsgate—heard Mr. Bradbury from 7 Chapt. Romans 14 Verse.

The good man was clearly very faithful to White Row, though when the weather is wet he goes to "Mr. Booth's." When he sets out on a journey, either to Yorkshire or to his brother's "Country house at Hammersmith," he invariably gives thanks for a safe return.

Sometimes domestic and national events strangely intermingle: thus on 22nd May, 1770, "Mr. and Mrs. Hitchen dined at our house and the Queen Brot. to Bed. Friday May 25. Sister Richard Brot. to Bed."

Hitchen preached many funeral sermons and "improved the occasion", the deceased or his relatives frequently having suggested the text.

The diary is now followed chronologically with necessary comment on the extracts selected.

Sabbath, 14th April 1771. Heard Mr. Hitchin from Romans 5 and 4 and 5 Verses. Afternoon from Psalm 102 and 14 Vers. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones and favour the dust thereof—it being the Annual Collection for the ministers in the country and bringing up young students for the Ministers (*sic*).

Monday, 16th April. Evening Prayer at Mr. Stafford's, the exercise carried on by Doctor Stennet, Doctor Gibbons and Mr. Stafford concluded.

Tuesday, May 3, 1771 being Church Meeting before the Sacrament, Mr. Rogers and Mr. Flower Prayed and Mr. Hitchin preached from Psalms 144 and 1 vers.

Baptisms and reception of members seem to have taken place at the Church Meeting. On 17th May: "I think I never see Mr. Hitchen so affectionate as he was tonight in admitting his daughter". The minister often preaches at the Church Meeting and at the Communion Service. Burials are generally in "Bunyan Fields".

Often after a service "the Church staid" for a Church Meeting; sometimes proposed new members are "set aside" for a time: thus, 13th March, 1772, "Mrs. Badcock was Recvd. into full Communion after having been 3 years set aside". Members are "transplanted" from one church to another.

May 14, 1772. Brother Tho. Married to Mrs. Norris at Sant Giles

Church and went to the Star & Garter to Richmond Hill to Dinner and Staid supper there and was Very Agreeable, there was Six Coaches and a Charriott to carry us a Great Company.

May 22. At Church meeting Exterordnary when three Decons were Balloted for and the Lot fell upon Mr. Chapel, Mr. Chater, Mr. Jordan and four weeks was agreed upon to consider the charge afore they enter the Sollem work.

May 31, 1772. . . . A Funeral Sermon for a Man a Husband of a Sister of the Church who had Great Hopes in his Death. . . . Comments on sermons are:

"Very Excelent for I liked it much".

"It was a Choise Time". "A Most Sweet Opertunity it was to Me".

"A Heart Searching Discourse. Oh that I may be found at Last one of those whom Christ will own. Amen and Amen".

"A young man whose name is Jenkins, a Contry man. . . . A most Delyhtfull Discourse. I could have set all day to have heard for the Time was gone before I was aware. Oh that I may be. . . ."

There are frequent complaints of sleepiness, of heaviness of heart, and forgetfulness, but thanks for being "richly fed," such as, "Oh that I may be able to improve what I hear to the good of my Own Soul."

8th June, 1772. [A week's excursion described. (Cf. July 11—a day's excursion).]

5th July, 1772. Mr. Hitchen after the Ordinance took a Sollem Farewell of the Church for a Littel time as he and Mrs. Hitchen setts out for Yorkshire.

Friday, 7th Aug., 1772. Church meeting before the Breaking bread Day. Mr. Hitchen arived so tired that he could not Preach so Mr. Chater Praid and Mr. Crozer and then sung and Mr. Hitchen concluded with Praier.

Thursday, 13th Aug. I and my Hannah, Brot. and Sister Tho. Bentley and Jacky went to Renilaug and I think it is Vanity of Vannity.

18th Aug. . . . At Vauxhall, and had a Very Plesant Evening was carried out and Brt. in safe.

Thurs. 10th Sep. [The Monthly Meeting at White Row] and a Choise opportunity it was for I Liked much: afterwards I Din'd with the Parsons and Decons and Members as Many as Chose at White Hart, Bishopsgate Street.

16th Oct. [Minister reads Edward Mayick's "experience" before admission (this frequent). Bankruptcy of another member long considered. Some baptized before admission.]

21st Nov. [Fall from ladder, but hopes for blessing at home when can't go to church.]

1772. Dec. The warmest Winter so far I ever saw.

1773. 21st Mar. Nephew John Bentley was at our Meeting and came to let us know that his Sister was to be Baptis'd and desired our Company; we went and Drunk Tea and Dockter Gibbons Read his thoughts upon infant Baptisem which was very good and sound words and then Baptised the Child. . . .

28th Mar. I was Pleas'd to see and hear the young ministers come forth so sound in the faith. I hope for much good in this our day.

1st June. The most awful Night for Thunder and Lightning that I can remember. [Hitchin preached on it the next Sunday..]

and two Good Discourses we had and at the Table I think I can say it was good for me to be hear for I was Greatly harrist by the Tempter in the Day but I hope I can say Jesu is My Saviour and was lovely to me in the Ordinance. Grant it may always be.

22nd Aug. [At Mr. Booth's. . . . Hopper from Nottingham. . . .]: I think I could have set till Midnight to have heard him. I did not see one Noding head there. O that I may have that good thing in me [I Kings, 14-13] that I may be found at last safe for Eternity. Amen and amen.

7th Sept. . . . both couples married in the old of the moon; I wish them the greatest of happiness.

21st Sep., 1773. . . . Mr. Hitchen desired the Church to stay when he related a very Affecting Case of a Bad Member being in the Poultry Counter for Sodomy and was cut off from being a Member with us. 1774. 9th Jan. [Hitchen still very ill. Mr. Ryland from Northampton.]

11th Jan. [Hitchen dies.]

14th Jan., Friday. At our Church Meeting we sung then Mr. Wheatly and Mr. Eming and another Brother Praied and wee sung and another Brother Praied and concluded the Exercise and a Precious Oppertunity it was to me—and then Mr. Flowers told us about the Church Buring our once dear Pastare Mr. Hitchin for we shall see him no more.

20th. 20 mourning coaches.

23rd. [Aft. Funeral Sermon by Brewer. Almost a riot as they tried to keep out all but "the Church," others to shoe tops in mud—he got in, "but not my Hanne nor brother Joseph nor John nor hundreds more"—uproar, many women fainted—"a very Zealouse Discourse he gave and we had a Pleasant afternoon".!]

30th Jan. Sketch of Edward Hitchin, copied from a paper: 'He was a Scriptural Christian, he maintained the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, viz. the divinity of Christ, Original Sin, Justification by Faith in a bleeding Lord, and he invariably insisted on the necessity of personal holiness. He was Modrate in his principles. Never Rashly condemning any for being of a different Opinion to him; he was of a Catholick Spirit; he loved to think and let think. He deplored the unhappy devisions amongst the professors of Christianity, and lamented the raped and alarming progress of antinomianism which he saw was subverting the grand design of the Manifestation of Christ which was to "destroy the works of the devil". As a Minister, a Husband, a Father and a Master he was a pattern to all his Mournfull Survivors'. 1774. 7th Feb. Mr. Fisher . . . "a very good discourse but delivered in a heavy way". Aft., A young man, "Mr. Tappin, that Preaches at Portsmouth Common . . . and a most lively free grace sermon we had I think I could have liked to have heard him Longer'.

18th Feb. Church Meeting. Member re-admitted to full Communion after 3 years' suspension.

6th Mar. A young man from the Country, Briant—to me a very dry Sermon.

20th Mar. Mr. Winter. "Houlding from Deptford" (Ex. 33.14): "two very good sermons being richly fed today with the finest of the wheat—Oh that I may chew the Cud and be enabled to Injoy Thy Presence thro this Wilderness. Grant it dear Lord. Amen".

5th June. "We went to hear Mr. Trotman at Mr. Webb's meeting, Fetter Lane".

14th June. Pulls down storehouse in 2 days.

26th June. Trotman at White Row—for several Sundays.

16th Sep. Church Meeting, "when Mr. Trotman was to be desired to

Preach to us for Two Months in Order to Give him a call to be Our Pastur . . . as with one heart . . ." 61 Men Members.

16th Oct. "We dined at Mr. Pattison's with Mr. Trotman and we was much pleased with his conversation but he has got a bad cold and as he is to go through his Examination tomorrow he gave Mr. Pattison and me an invitation to go to hear it".

27th Nov. Trotman on 1 Cor. 2:2: "two very good Sermons, but I cannot say that I was so much edified as I could wish for. Mr. Trotman was very much upon what Ministers Ought to say and Preach from the pulpit and out of it to the hearers but I in myself was rather heavy so that it might be in my Case that I was not more alive in hearing".

4th Dec. Funeral Sermon for . . . one "who got his death by going on the water to see Lord Mayer show when John Wilks was" (As Ms.).

16th Dec. Church Meeting. After 2 Members Prayed then Mr. Flowers Proposed to give Mr. Trotman an Immedeat Call to the Pastoral Charge over as and after some time spent in pro and con the Question was put up, and it was Carried 62 for 6 Not for. Mr. Rogers Praid and Mr. Flower read the Order of the call and all the members that were for set their Names to it and the Business was concluded and a glad night it was and now I hope wee shall be soon settled with a Minister. Grant it, dear Lord. Amen and amen.

21st Dec. At Parsons Green My Horse Fly Laid Down with me in a Pond and I was very wet but through the goodness of my God I got no cold.

1775. 13th Jan. Church Meeting. Letter from Trotman . . . taking time to consider.

26th Feb. Church "was desired to stay". Acceptance read.

12th Mar. Trotman's letter of dismission from Webb's church in Fetter Lane read; he retires while received as a member, then called in, "and Mr. Flowers told him that the Church was willing to receive him into our Church when he had signed the Following Covinant—we do, etc." (Covenant is not given). Two deacons pray, he again retires, and call is ratified. Invited back, given right hand of fellowship and the call, which he accepts, and Mr. Flowers exhorts him "in a very Pretty Manner". Meeting adjourned until Sunday, when arrangements for ordination agree upon.

31st. Church Meeting. Trotman reads a letter for "all the Congregational Churches in London for to send their Pasture and a Messenger on the day of Ordination to behold Our faith and Order in calling Our Minister".

7th. Church Meeting. Flowers reads to Church what he is to read at ordination.

12th. Ordination. Prayer: Dr. Conder; Singing; then

"Mr. Towl opened the work of the day and examined the Church Concerning the Steps they took" in calling Mr. T. . . Flower replies. Towl asks Church to renew call then he examines Trotman concerning his faith. Singing, then Mr. Barber "went to Prayer." Webb gives Charge to Trotman, Prayer by Holden. Brewer preached. Singing. Gibbons concluding prayer.

May 3rd. Hottest weather ever known at this time of year.

5th. Church Meeting discusses whether to give all collections to the Fund, or use some to pay debt! Decided . . . all to the Fund.

1776. 7th Jan. Sometimes Trotman deeply moved; "at the Ordinance. . . Mr. Trotman was much Carried Out".

15th Jan. Frost and snow, bad walking and riding—fell at bottom Ludgate Hill.

18th Feb. A nephew disobedient to parents and sullen under Trotman's exhortation.

27th Feb. Trotman to lodge with them in 3 weeks' time (See 19th March). Is in poor state of health; the writer hopes air will do him good, and that they will benefit by his conversation.

24th Mar. Hottest weather ever known in March.

29th Mar. Church Meeting. Messengers reported that Uffington, long suspended, is still hardened, and said he would do same again. Cut off.

31st Mar. Mr. Martin's Lecture: "I can say but very little to this sermon because the preacher left out our Lord Jesus Christ and likewise the Spirit work in the heart. There was a very full house and was very attentive".

20th May. I and Mr. Trotman took a ride Round My Estate and to Stamford Hill where I left Mr. Trotman and the country looks Pleasant and delightful.

Monday, 3rd June. I and Mr. Trotman took a ride in the Chaise as far as the Roe Buck on the forrist. Mr. Trotman not being well the Air refresht him and we was returned better. Matter for thankfulness.

[Often takes Trotman for a ride.]

18th July. Excursion to Hampton Court (re the Maze) and Windsor, includes Mr. Walker, minister from Northowram.

25th July. A wedding. 74 went to Roe Buck to dine.

7th Aug. Ordination at Harford described—James Kello, brother of John Kello, of Bethnal Green.

18th Oct. Church Meeting. Mr. Arnold was withdrawn from as a member with us for professing contrary Principles to what he did when he first entered a member with us, viz. in Baptisem—afterwards it came out by Mr. Chater of one woman that had a Basterd child two and 3 quarters since and known to 3 of our members at the time, and not discovered to the church, so there is two Brethren deputed to go and convers with the woman, viz. Mr. Chater and Mr. Bell by what I can hear she greatly Laments her folly and has not set down with us since. O that it may be so and O Lord grant her true repentance for Christ sake. Amen and amen.

Friday, 13th Dec., 1776, being a publick Fast to beg of God a spirit of repentance for all Our Sins as a Nation and that Our American Colonies may return which at this time is in rebellion and that we may be once [more] a happy and an United people.

1778. Monday, 9th Feb. Died Mr. Johnson Bumboat Man which was a Very Good Custemer of Mine and a very honest man and has left a Wife and 4 Children helpless.

Likewise died Mr. Crozer a Tobacconist in the Minories. Many years a Deacon of the Meeting in White Row, Spittelfields. Aged above 80 years.

13th. Died Mr. Flowers. Stationer in Cannon-st.—many years a Deacon.

Friday, 27th Feb. A Generell fast to beg of Our God that the unnatural Rebellion of our American Collonies may return to Love and Unity with this Country and to invert (*sic*) deserved judgments.

12th April. Annual Collection for poor Ministers in the Country and for bringing up Young Men for that important work. . . .

Morning we gathered 58-16-0

Afternoon 28-5-6

[The next Sunday brings up to 104-2-0]

Mon. 27th Apl. I have been packing and carring Mr. Trotman Book

etc. to his New house at No. 3 Beach Row, Hoxton and see Miss Hansworth that is to be Mrs. Trotman.

28th Apl. Mr. Trotman and Nancy Hainsworth was married at Hackney Church and Dined at Long room at Hamstead. Drank Tea. Returned to No. 3 Beach Row and Consumated the Marriage Nuptials. O grant them Happy.

18th May. I and my Hanne and Mr. Waldegrave [preacher from Bury St. Edmunds] Dined at Mr. Hanesworth at Clapton and was agreeably disapointed in Mr. Hainsworth had heard that he was a very morose ill natured man but is Quite Otherwise and very Sociable and Affiable.

7th Aug. At our Church meeting Exterordinary there was four Mem- bers Ballotted for and Sett aparte for Deacons the Lott fell on Mr. Bell, Mr. Dell, Mr. Griffith and Unworthy Mee who am the Least of all why Me O Lord O prepare me for thy whole will. Amen.

1779. 25th Mar. Mrs. Trotman is not brought to bed as yet.

1st Apl. I then went to deliver a Sad Messag to a Mr. Owen who was a Member at White Row Meeting but Cutt off for his disorderly walk and not filling up his place in the Church and when I tould him he seemed not to be much affected but said it was what he looked for but thought it would not have took place as yet. His wife who is a Member with us Cryed most bitterly it was a most affecting seen. O Lord grant that I may never be the Messenger of such another. . . .

8th Apl. Mrs. Trotman Brought to bed and has got a Lass and Matter for Praise and thankfulness.

11th Apl. Yearly Collection for the Fund—£94-14-9—“which is very Great”. (Lifted the next Sunday to £108-17-9).

21st June. “My Hannah” has been ill—and it is arranged for her to board and lodge in Homerton to see if the air will be any help: pay- ment to be 16/- a week.

17th Dec. The Church was staid to take into consideration the Expences of a dinner that has been a Great burden to almost all the Churches in this Great Metropolis for a long time, and as Our Church is poor and the Expence of that dinner Great and comes to Our Church once in 14 months we thought proper to alter the Moad of it not to take it intirely away—that is not to have it at a Tavern as usual [when sometimes 30 to 50 people] but to confine it to ministers taking part in the exercise at expense of Church in deacons’ houses.

17th Dec. Read a Letter which Brother Joseph sent to Brother Tho. to Lett us know that Our Hond. Parent was fallen asleep and Departed this life. Monday, 13th Dec. . . .

1780. 9th April. Collection £102-12-4½. I hope it was a freewill offering wholly acceptable to the Lord and done with a single eye to his Glory.

14th Apl. Samuel Bull, Homerton student, received.

1781. 5th Feb. Lord George Gordon acquitted.

[Now long intervals between the entries].

1782. 22nd Mar. Brot. Chater was cut off from the Church for Dis- orderly walk in borrowing mony and in not paying according to Promise in many aggravated instances.

1783. Jan. 17th. At Church Meeting. “Mr. Trotman baptised his son his name Nathanel. Oh may he be a Nathanel in deed without Guile”.

1784. July 29th. A Thanksgiving day for the General peace. . . .

Sep. 15th. . . . there was an Arc Balloon went up from the artillery Ground with a man in it.

1786. [Writing becomes shaky at times.]

Dec. 13th. High wind causes devastation on river—boats break away.



# Sidmouth Congregational Church

## The First Minute Book

THE original building, known as Marsh Chapel, was erected in 1810, Rowland Hill preaching at the opening services. The Church was formed in 1811: after a period of supplying by Matthew and Mark Wilkes, a pastor was found in Arthur Tidman, of Hackney College, who was ordained in 1813.

The first minute book was kept by D. S. Ward, who became minister in 1816. Opposite its first page is a "List of Books for the use of the Minister" as follows:

Watts' works	3 vol.
Leighton's works	4 vol.
Gurnall's works	4 vol.
Cases of Conscience	1 vol.
Townsend on prayer	1 vol.
Henry's Customs, etc.	1 vol.
Law's Call	1 vol.
Owen on 130 Ps.	1 vol.
— Grace and Duty	1 vol.
— Meditations	1 vol.
Two copies of Common Pray.	Quarto.
Bible and Apocrypha.	

The book itself though headed "Minutes" is really a summary history. It begins:

The Rev. D. S. Ward after spending nearly nine months in Sidmouth in the exercise of ministerial duties received from the Church and Congregation of Protestant Dissenters in the above-mentioned place an almost unanimous call to the Pastoral office, there being but one dissentient voice among the then existing members. The following is a correct copy of the Letter of Invitation and the signatures sent to Mr. Ward.

Rev. Sir,

*Sidmouth, June 8th, 1816.*

We whose names are undersigned after prayer to the Great Head of the Church for direction do most heartily concur in inviting you to take the charge of the Church and Congregation meeting for divine worship at Sidmouth Chapel, and as we deem it of great importance to our mutual advancement in the divine life do further request that your ordination should take place as early as possible in order that as a Church of Christ we may be privileged [*sic*] in participating [*in*] all the ordinances of his house which we trust under his blessing will be productive of our growth in grace and love one to another in maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace—and it is our earnest prayer to the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls that you as an under Shepherd may be useful in feeding the flock with spiritual provisions and that you will have the happiness at the great day of final accounts to present a numerous train to our glorious Redeemer and say "Here am I Lord and the children thou hast given me."

[There follow the names of 13 members (5 men and 8 women) and 10 "subscribers" (3 men and 7 women).]

After prayer for divine direction this invitation was complied with and Mr. Ward was publicly ordained to the pastoral office on Wednesday, the 18th of September, 1816, the following ministers being engaged upon the occasion—the Rev. J. Turnbull of Ottery St. Mary opened the service of the Day by prayer and reading, the Rev. R. P. Allen of Exeter delivered the introductory discourse and asked the questions, the Rev. J. Small of Axminster offered the ordination prayer, the Rev. G. Collison of Hackney delivered the charge, the Rev. T. Jackson of Stockwell preached to the people, and the Rev. J. Burder of Stroud concluded the solemnities of the day by addressing the Congregation in the Evening.

*March 5th, 1824.*

After spending more than eight years in the exercise of the pastoral office Mr. Ward appearing to be called by Providence to resign his present charge and to enter upon another field of labor, gave notice of his intention to quit Sidmouth and earnestly commended the Church and Congregation to God to send them a man after his own heart who shd. feed them with wisdom and knowledge.

Here the entry in Mr. Ward's hand ends; another hand adds:

The Revd. D. S. Ward resigned his Pastorate Charge at Sidmouth, May 3rd, 1824. And Sailed from Liverpool, May 14th, for St. John's, Newfoundland, and for whom the ardent Prayers of the Church were offered, that the Divine protection and Blessing might attend him, in that part of our Lord's Vinyard, to which, in Providence he was call'd.

After a list of members' names, 34 in number, the narrative resumes:

Revd. A. Good immediately followed on the removal of the Revd. D. S. Ward, after preaching several sabbaths was earnestly and unanimously invited to take the pastoral charge, which was accepted by him; his labours were continued to Dec. 25, 1826, when he retired, after having sent in his resignation at the close of the preceding quarter: during his ministry some accessions have been made to the Church, and the stated Congregation improved.

The list of members which follows (in Mr. Good's writing?) contains, however, only 21 names, with an additional "Occasional communicant of the Baptist Denomination". There is no further entry until a fresh scribe takes up the pen. The interest of John Angell James in the church was due to the fact that he married Miss Anna Maria Baker, one of the foundation members. There is a memorial tablet to Mrs. James in the present building, which was opened in 1846, James preaching on *Rom. 15<sup>29</sup>*.

At a Meeting of the members of the Church, convened by special summons in the vestry on March the 16th, 1827, the Revd. J. A. James of Birmingham occupying by request the chair, the following rules for the future regulation of the church were unanimously agreed to, and signed by the members present.

We the undersigned members of the Church of Christ assembling in the Marsh Chapel, Sidmouth, being of opinion that a scriptural system of Church Order and discipline should be maintained by us; and being at the same time aware that such a system, though partially acted upon, has never been formally adopted, have deemed it important at a Meeting called for that purpose, to invite the Revd. J. A. James of Birmingham, during his visit to this town, to assist us in "setting in order things that are wanting", and in whose presence we agree to the following resolutions for the future government of our church, believing them to be conformable to the principles of the New Testament.

I. The Church, as to the management of its internal affairs, shall be governed upon the principles of the Calvinistic Congregationalists.

- II. None are to be admitted as members but such as, in the opinion of the church, have been renewed in the spirit of their mind by the Holy Ghost—have received by faith the Lord Jesus as God-man Mediator, and the sinner's only justifying righteousness—are walking in all holy conversation and godliness—admit the validity of infant baptism—and are willing to submit to the rules of the church.
  - III. The Lord's Supper shall be administered according to the usage of Dissenting Churches, on the first Sabbath of each Month.
  - IV. A Church Meeting shall be held in the vestry on the Friday evening in every month preceding the Sabbath on which the Lord's Supper is administered, at which, in addition to devotional exercises, such business shall be attended to, as may from time to time transpire.
  - V. Every Church Meeting shall be publicly called on the preceding Sabbath by notice from the pulpit.
  - VI. All business transacted at the Church Meetings shall be introduced by the Pastor.
  - VII. When the church is settled with a Pastor, no Church Meeting shall be held without his presence, except by his appointment or consent, and whatever business may be done at Meetings called without his consent and held in his absence shall be invalid.
  - VIII. A majority of two-thirds of the members present shall be necessary for the adoption of any measure whatever.
  - IX. Persons wishing to become members shall be proposed at one Church Meeting and admitted the next. The candidates shall, on the evening proposed for their admission or rejection, appear personally before the Church to state verbally their views and experience, or shall send in a written account of it to be read by the Pastor, or shall state it through the medium of the Pastor.
  - X. Persons visiting the Town who are members of other churches may be admitted as occasional Communicants by the Pastor, without consulting the Church.
  - XI. Baptists, although not allowed to become members of the Church, may by consent of the Church be admitted to the table of the Lord: and the same rule shall be observed with respect to pious members of the Establishment.
  - XII. If any members should be guilty of immoral conduct, such as adultery, fornication, drunkenness, falsehood, dishonesty, evil speaking, malice, or any other thing that is contrary to godliness—or should be in the opinion of the Church troublers of its peace, by holding and propagating false doctrine, by exciting discontent against the minister, or indulging a factious spirit, they shall become the subject of discipline, their conduct shall be enquired into, and the accusation brought against them proved to be true, they shall be dealt with as the Church shall determine, and be either expelled at once from the Church, or be suspended from the table till they bring forth fruits meet for repentance.
- In cases of private offence, i.e. where unkindness, insult, or injury has been offered from one member to another, it is the bounden duty of the injured party to adopt the scriptural method and see the offender alone, to expostulate with him in a spirit of love, and not to mention the affair to any third person, or bring it before the Pastor and the Church until private means have been tried in vain.
- <sup>1</sup>Members absent from the Lord's supper six successive months without such a reason as shall be deemed satisfactory to the Church shall be no longer members.

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<sup>1</sup> This sentence written in later.

XIII. A collection shall be made after every administration of the Lord's Supper, which after defraying the expense incurred for the bread and wine, shall be distributed by the pastor among the poor members of the Church: and the Pastor's account of the distribution shall be examined once a year by two members appointed by the Church<sup>2</sup>.

XIV. Every person who becomes a member shall sign his name to these rules at the time of joining the church.

44 signatures follow, two of them by mark. The "minutes" are then resumed: W. Crowe, after preaching seven Sundays, was invited to the pastorate, and began his ministry in June 1827. Copies of the letters of invitation and acceptance are recorded. The following year, however, Crowe resigned, and the remaining entries, apart from another list of members, concern the coming and going of ministers. The names are:

David Parker. 1st Jan., 1829—to his death, 15th March, 1832.

G. Hunter. 1832—Michaelmas, 1834.

James Dean. 17th May, 1835—Michaelmas, 1838.

Thomas Sturgess. 1839—24th March, 1840.

Sturgess's letter of acceptance is recorded. After the reference to his resignation there is the entry. "See New Church Book," three-quarters of the pages in the present book remaining blank.

The full list of ministers to date reads:

1811	Matthew Wilks and Mark Wilks (supplied)
1813-14	Arthur Tidman, D.D.
1816-24	D. S. Ward
1824-26	Alexander Good
1827-28	William Crowe
1829-32	David Parker, M.A.
1832-34	George B. Hunter
1835-38	James Dean
1839-40	Thomas Sturgess
1840-42?	J. Wood(s)
1842-45	Frederick Smith
1846-68	James Lucas
1868-72	John Chetwode Postans
1872-78	E. H. Palmer
1878-83	James Deighton
1884-90	Donald MacDonald
1891-1910	Charles Rhodes
1903-06	Edward Bernstein, A.T.S., co-pastor
1906-10	Edward John Hawkins, B.A., co-pastor
1910-15	Humphrey Davies
1915-23	Arthur Lamb
1924-34	Joseph William Dickson
1935-37	Harold Frederick Cornish, B.A.
1938-44	Jeremiah Peill Cooper
1945-	John Edward Lynn, B.D.

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<sup>2</sup> There are several of these audited statements at the end of the book.

# The First English Congregational Church, Neath:

Wind Street (1846—1886), Gnoll Road 1886——).

*"A Mosaic of Memories, the result of team work of  
people bound together in love."*

**I**N order to appreciate the growth of English Congregationalism in the town of Neath, and the position today of Gnoll Road Church, it is necessary to go back to the day of small beginnings. Welsh Independency in the town traces its origin back to the days of Oliver Cromwell, but English Independency did not found a church till 1846. Wind Street and Gnoll Road Chapels represent a period of one hundred years. While we are chiefly concerned with the last sixty years we cannot be unmindful of the sowing that took place during the preceding forty. English Independents of marked personality founded the first church in 1846, but there were several people of our persuasion in the town who longed for facilities to worship God in their own language many years before that date.

In 1842 people belonging to the Independent, Baptist, and Countess of Huntingdon denominations, feeling the severe grievance of being without any place of worship of their own in which the service was conducted in the English language, and considering that many English residents absented themselves from the house of God who would attend if such a facility were afforded them, agreed to meet in a room for preaching and prayer. The neighbouring ministers co-operated most cordially in the arrangement, and the blessing of God appeared to attend it. The room was soon found to be too small, and the Mayor of Neath allowed the free use of the Town Hall for several months. Finding the congregation still increasing, it was resolved to build a chapel to accommodate 350 persons at an estimated cost of £770. Early in 1843 about two-thirds of the amount had been collected in various sums from sixpence to one hundred pounds, chiefly from persons residing in the neighbourhood. One of the largest subscribers was a churchman, who also gave a piece of land in an eligible situation for the erection of the chapel. While the building was in progress the English friends were allowed to use the Welsh Baptist Chapel, not without inconvenience to the Baptists, who altered the time of their own service in order to allow two English sermons each Sunday.

It might have been apprehended that some difficulty would arise from the union of the three denominations, but it was quite otherwise. All felt the painful position in which they were placed, and were convinced that not one of the three could separately overcome the obstacle. Mutual deprivation led to ready co-operation, and everyone was pleased to forget that he belonged to a party, when the recollection might have frustrated the benevolent plan. The exercise of Christian charity, concord, and union, and the exhibition of forbearance without any compromise of principle or of sentiment, proved productive of delight and benefit which party spirit cannot feel or communicate.

It was readily conceded that the pastor of the church should be a minister of the same denomination as the majority of those hearers who were mem-

bers of some Christian Church, and were desirous of connecting themselves with the new English cause. The Baptists were found to predominate, but the triumph of a denomination was not coveted by a society which originated in mutual want, and sought only the general good. The supporters of the united English cause desired to open the chapel free of debt, and therefore appealed for subscriptions far and wide. The case was peculiar, and presented more than an ordinary claim on the assistance of those who loved Christ and desired to cultivate Christian union. Twelve notable ministers of the three denominations strongly recommended the appeal. The treasurer of this united effort was W. H. Buckland, Cadoxton Place, Neath.

This chapel was opened on Thursday, 20th July, 1843, and was known as Dwryfelin Chapel. Later, the vicar of the parish, Cadoxton-Juxta-Neath, purchased the building and converted it into an Episcopal Chapel, and services were conducted there for many years. It was dismantled before 1893, and the site is now part of the lawn at "Westfield". The Independent section separated from Dwryfelin Chapel, and the need for an English congregational church was felt more than ever when the first experiment failed. The old Town Hall was taken for the holding of English services and the Rev. W. Jones, Castle Street, Swansea, officiated. The chief founders were Mr. W. T. Morgan and family, and Mr. Thomas Sims and Mr. David Davies, members of the Welsh Independent Church, Maesyrfhaf. Others from outside joined them, and the handful of people began to build a Chapel at Wind Street, 42 feet by 32 feet: the opening services were held in October, 1849.

The first minister was the Rev. E. S. Hart, M.A., whose ordination took place, 29th June, 1850. In April, 1851, he moved to St. Ives, and for two years neighbouring ministers supplied the pulpit. In September, 1853, David Davies, B.A., a student of Carmarthen College, began a ministry during which the £400 debt remaining on the new chapel was extinguished. In August, 1856, he removed to Therfield, Herts, where he laboured for many years. Without loss of time the church extended a call to Benj. B. Williams, B.A., a student of Brecon College, who remained till May 1858, when he removed to Pembroke Dock.

In July 1859, John Evans, B.A., also of Brecon, undertook the pastorate. He removed to Milford in April 1864.

In March, 1865, the Rev. David S. Jones, Hope Chapel, Cardigan, settled. He migrated to America in April 1869. His successor, Thomas P. Lyke, a Brecon student, had a very short ministry owing to ill-health.

The Rev. J. L. Phillips came to Neath from Tredegar, January 1871, and at that time the congregation was extremely small. He set about building up the church, and gave of his best. Mr. Phillips proposed at a special church meeting held 23rd May, 1871, that the chapel be altered, and that the existing gallery be removed, and the lower floor re-seated and side galleries constructed. This was agreed to and a committee consisting of the minister and Messrs. E. Gorvin, J. Williams, C. Abbott, T. R. Price, Henry Allen, William Dove, and J. L. Swash, was entrusted with the work of effecting the alterations. A Welsh Congregational minister, the Rev. T. Thomas, of Landore, Swansea, was appointed architect, and the contract was let to Mr. Joseph Rees at £198 5s. 0d. The chapel was reopened in October 1871, when the following eminent ministers officiated: Joseph Halsey, of Anerley; T. Thomas, Landore; J. Baldwin Brown, London; Llewellyn Bevan, London; and Thomas Jones (the "Poet Preacher"), Morriston.

An interesting leaflet then published has these words: "The Church is a Congregational Paedo-Baptist Church. At the same time its fellowship is open to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth."

The Rev. J. L. Phillips closed his ministry in April 1875, having accepted a call to Market Hill Chapel, Haverhill.

In December 1875, D. Foulkes Roberts of Brecon College began his ministry, the church then numbering 47. Dr. D. Roberts preached at the ordination service a memorable charge to the minister on "The pastor's fitness for his office", basing his discourse upon *John 21:15*, "Lovest thou me? . . . Feed my sheep". Its points were:

1. Love for the Master is the best preparation for His work.
2. The chief manifestation of love is work.
3. The strongest impulse to work is love.
4. The highest reward of love is more work, "Feed my lambs".

During the following year one hundred members were added to the Church. In September 1876, Mr. Roberts married Miss Mary Ann Morgan, of Orchard Place, Neath, daughter of W. Thomas Morgan. A long vacancy followed Mr. Roberts's departure for Beaufort in 1880, but the Rev. F. R. Skyrme, of Cardiff, was pastor from 1882 to 1883, during which time complaints were made that announcements upon matters not religious were made from the pulpit.

The Rev. T. Rhondda Williams, of Dowlais, was unanimously invited, and began his ministry in August 1884. From the start congregations improved, and soon the chapel became too small and the church began to talk about a new chapel. The old members did not relish the idea of giving up Wind Street Chapel, of which they were legitimately proud, but a plot of ground, part of an orchard, offered by Mr. Richard Bartlett, was accepted. Bartlett's Road was the original name, then Gnoll Road. Despite need for money the church resolved to subscribe £5 a year for three years towards the British Schools. From 1886 Wind Street Chapel was let to the Salvation Army for £30 per annum. Later the building was sold to them.

The church at Wind Street secured the service of Jos. Ll. Matthews, the son of the Rev. John Matthews, Zoar, Welsh Independent Church, Neath, as precentor, about the year 1857, and he continued to do great work till 1887, when he retired in order to make room for a younger man. The Matthews family were gifted musicians, also the Mills, Morgan, Evans, Williams, and James families. Wind Street Choir made a name for itself in the Town.

A notable worker in the Church was T. R. Price who became Sir Thomas R. Price, K.C.B. (1846-1916). His father served as deacon at Zoar Church, and young Price assisted enthusiastically in renovation work in 1871. He emigrated to Grahamstown, South Africa, about 1880 to take up an important railway appointment. He succeeded step by step and became the chief Commissioner of the South Africa Railway System. Such an important part was played by him in the development of railways that when the Railway policy or management is spoken of, the name of Price as pioneer is also mentioned.

Dr. Rhondda Williams, the last minister at Wind Street, the first at Gnoll Road, wrote this of his ministry for the Jubilee celebrations: "The material is meagre. If my ministry at Neath had been noteworthy, it would not be for me to say so. I can, however, very definitely say it was not. I held during that period (1884-1888) the orthodox evangelical position, and preached what other men preached. I went from Bethania, Dowlais, with its 700 members, to the little chapel in Wind Street, where the membership was 92, and the congregation not much more. I could not have left my congregation but for the fact that I had decided to enter the English ministry; and thought it best to begin in a small way.

"We soon grew sufficiently in numbers and daring to embark upon the

building of the present church in Gnoll Road, and that perhaps was the main achievement of the four years. It has conditioned the work that has been done since; it provided a worthy building in a good position for my successors, Edward Morgan and Mardy Rees, to conduct their more significant ministries. It was stated when I left that the membership was doubled and the congregation trebled in the four years, which, I am sure, was as much success as we deserved, perhaps more.

"We had a band of devoted men, among whom J. L. Matthews, Thomas Williams, and David James stand out prominently. Among the younger men I remember with special interest Harry Williams, B. W. Davies, David Henry, and Fred Williams. I was keen in those days on Logic, and I took a class of young men and women, to whom the subject was unfamiliar, through Jevons's *Primer*. It was great fun. I recall an occasion when I was dealing with the fallacy of "*Past hoc, ergo propter hoc*", and took as an illustration the belief that putting a poker against the bars of a grate would cause the fire to draw. To doubt the soundness of this sacred belief drew from Fred Williams a fierce declaration that he had seen the phenomenon, and there was no doubt about it, logic or no logic. Fred's fire burned up all right in defence of the poker, and while he appeared almost willing to die at the stake for his conviction, the class roared with laughter. I think the logic class sharpened wits, and won a larger place for reasoned thought.

"An institution which, I am sure, did good was our Mutual Improvement Society. It is absurd that the House of Lords is still in existence, for we abolished it in that Society long ago. We gave Ireland Home Rule in Gladstone's day; if others had been as wise, we should never have heard of the Black and Tans. Once in Paris I sat on one of Cook's coaches for a round of sight-seeing. A young couple, evidently newly-married, sat opposite. I noticed they looked at me a good deal, and presently the young man asked: "Are you not Mr. Rhondda Williams?" He told me his name was Nicholas, and that he was solicitor to the Rhondda miners, and much engaged in public work. He was glad of an opportunity to testify his great indebtedness to the Gnoll Road M. I. Society for having given him his first impulses to a public career, and his first practice in public speaking.

"On the whole, I had a happy time at Neath, but there is a deep sense in which my real ministry did not begin until after I left, and I am glad that the Gnoll Road pulpit has dealt in stronger stuff since that time".

*Ministers—*

- E. S. Hart, M.A., 1850-51. Removed to St. Ives.
- David Davies, B.A., 1853-56. Removed to Therfield, Herts.
- B. B. Williams, B.A., 1856-58. Removed to Pembroke Town.
- John Evans, B.A., 1859-64—Removed to Milford; opened Academy.
- D. S. Jones, 1865-69. Removed to America.
- T. P. Lyke, 1869-70. Retired owing to ill-health.
- J. L. Phillips, 1871-75. Removed to Haverhill.
- D. Foulkes Roberts, 1875-80. Removed to Beaufort.
- F. R. Skyrme, 1882-83. Removed to Tonystrad.
- T. Rhondda Williams, 1884-88. Removed to Bradford.
- M. Duffill, 1889-90. Removed to London.
- D. Glanant Davies, 1890-93. Removed to Bristol.
- Edward Morgan, 1894-1910. Literary work and peripatetic ministry.
- T. Mardy Rees, 1912-46. Retired after 50 years in the ministry.

T. MARDY REES.

## Old Time Criticism

**R**ICHARD WINTER HAMILTON (1794-1848), a student of Hoxton, settled at Albion Chapel, Leeds. He was a strong Calvinist, and of the Westminster Confession and the Shorter Catechism said:

"From these rudiments of speculative and practical theology we have never diverged. These have been our solace and our song when persecution raged; these have been our stay and anchor in the more dangerous period of the calm. They were the watch towers by day; they kept our forefathers secure when all around them frowned, and can only keep us spiritually minded now that all around us smile; they made our dungeon sweet, and can only make our palace safe".

Hamilton knew little of either dungeons or palaces, and the quotation shows the dangers to which he succumbed. Stoughton says that he "employed a rare combination of logical and imaginative faculties in the defence and illustration of his opinions. He was as daring as Augustine, and in some respects vehement like Martin Luther, only he expressed his thoughts in a more artificial form than the latter was wont to employ. He was fond of classical allusions, had keen wit, could pun with dexterity, and a story never lost by his way of telling it".

This verdict is the more interesting after reading in the *Eclectic Review* (Sept. 1815) the review of a sermon preached on 16th April by Hamilton, a young man of 21, at "the Execution of Mr. Joseph Blackburn, Attorney-at-Law, for Forgery; with Details of Conversations with him during his Imprisonment". This is the 4th edition of the sermon, and we wonder if Macaulay read the review before he set to work to pulverize Nares's *Burleigh*! Here it is:

"If this Sermon can be the means of doing any good, it will be, we suspect, in a manner very different from that which the Author intended. As a beacon to guard young preachers against a rock upon which Mr. Hamilton seems unfortunately to have split, it may, perhaps, prove a very useful discourse, and its Author may ultimately have rendered essential service to the religious public for having preached and published it; but in no other conceivable way can either reviewers or readers contract a debt of gratitude to the preacher. In this respect, indeed, the Sermon before us has no contemptible chance for immortality; for the English language certainly cannot afford so admirable a specimen of almost all the qualities which a sermon ought *not* to possess, in combination with so lamentable a dearth of all that it *should*. It is not characterized either by depth of reasoning, or by originality or beauty of illustration. It is not distinguished by the evangelical tone of its sentiment, nor by the fervour, or simplicity, or correctness, of its composition. It is essentially deficient in a display of that melting compassion for the souls of men, in those close and pungent addresses to their consciences, without which it may rationally be expected that all sermons will be preached in vain. It exhibits no sparklings of genius, in the best sense of the term; no taste but of the lowest and most vitiated kind; and no talent but an astonishing adroitness in crowding together a multitude of hard words, which many of his audience had never previously heard, and which the far greater proportion could not understand.

"The grand fault in the composition of this singular production is *obscurity*; arising, we conceive, from two causes; viz. the miserable and despicable pedantry to which we have just alluded, and the writer's own indistinctness of conception. He is too aspiring to tread in the common and every day track of thought, and too feeble to clear out a new path for himself, so that he loses himself, and his readers also. There are innumerable passages in the Sermon, which, even if rendered into plain English, would convey no distinct ideas to the reader's mind, and for the very best reason in the world, because the writer had no distinct ideas to convey. He has aimed at being original, and by pouring out obscurity and absurdity, has, unfortunately for himself in every sense of the word, adopted the worst method he could have devised for becoming so; for we beg leave to hint to Mr. H. that these qualities are by far too common in the present day to confer upon him any prescriptive claim to originality. But the characteristic defect [*sic*] of this discourse, are the barbarous and pedantic expressions with which it abounds. The Author has used such an unparalleled license in this respect; that we could almost imagine his sole aim in writing some of the inimitable paragraphs with which he has favoured us, was to see how many uncouth terms and phrases he could crowd together in a given space, for the amusement of his readers.

"The text of this Sermon is James i. 15. "When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, &c." and to substantiate our preceding charge, we shall lay before our readers the following single extract, only premising, that if it be not thought sufficient, they may turn to almost any part of the Sermon itself, and read till they are convinced, which will certainly be the case before they shall have proceeded through many pages. To illustrate the progressive nature of sin, Mr. H. says,

If the character throws itself in any particular attitude, it is difficult to recover the natural posture; and though the singularity might arise merely from an accidental cause, yet it may require some lengthened process to rectify. Through the influence of habit, *feeling may strain it from its native scope, and the powers of the constitution be wrenched from their original sockets. The machinery of the mind, as it is first thrown into action, works through a roughness of wheel and stubbornness of spring, with jarring and confounding attrition; but when the action is continued, the philosophic chimera of perpetual motion is realized and confirmed.* And when habits are formed upon evil passions and principles, it is impossible to calculate on their mischievous extent. We have then to grapple, not merely with the strength of our depravity, *but with the disadvantages of a prepared barrier and circumvallation.* We have then to resist, not an enemy conscious of its injustice, but a commonwealth that relies upon precedent and is regulated by law. Ah! the will is always volatile to sin, why should we then fan its heats and accelerate its impulse? The mind always gravitates to evil, why then should we multiply its tendency by additional weight and bias? *Who would add momentum to an avalanche from the Andes, or wing with more cruel speed the bolt that hisses from the secret place of thunder?*

"We will not disguise that we have read the whole of this Sermon with extreme dissatisfaction, and some passages in it with strong feelings of indignation; nor that the preceding remarks were written in all the bitterness of disappointed hope. Perhaps some of our readers may think we should have treated Mr. H. with more gentleness on account of his youth and inexperience. To this we reply, that there are peculiarities connected with this case, which justify, and even require, the utmost severity of

criticism. It is not the exuberance of genius of which we complain, nor the flights of a warm and vivid imagination, which a youth of one and twenty could scarcely be expected to restrain: these faults would have much more easily admitted of palliation and excuse. But it is a wretched and pedantic attempt to appear a man of talent, by the complete sacrifice of every pretension to taste, and of every prospect of doing good to the souls of men. Had the Sermon been preached on an ordinary occasion, we might have been disposed to treat it rather more leniently; but it was delivered, as we have understood, in the presence of 10,000 persons. Surrounded by a multitude much larger in all probability than the preacher will ever be called to address again, a multitude who, in the affecting tragedy they had just witnessed, had seen the evil of sin exhibited in the most vivid colours—possessed of the finest opportunity that could offer for arousing their slumbering consciences, and directing them to the Saviour, with impression and effect—it was in these circumstances that Mr. H. chose to pronounce a discourse, unintelligible to most of his hearers, and to which the remaining few must have listened, if they could listen to it at all, with anguished feelings for the folly and deep culpability of the speaker.

“This, however, is not the whole amount of Mr. H.’s indiscretion. It might be supposed that ignorance and inconsideration had led to the preaching of this discourse; that being himself a young man of reading and information, he might not have been aware that the terms of art and science would place him above the comprehensions of his hearers. But we are grieved that he cannot have the benefit of this excuse. In that respectable seminary from which he so lately emerged, he must have been followed with remonstrance upon remonstrance; and he has no doubt received from estimable and venerable friends, to whose judgment he was bound to pay deference, many faithful and solemn assurances of the absolute necessity of a total change in his style of preaching. But it augurs very unfavourably of Mr. H.’s modesty and spirit, that not content with preaching, he has proceeded to publish and to issue, notwithstanding the remonstrances he must have received, edition after edition of the Sermon upon which we have thus animadverted.

“We have dwelt upon this unworthy production longer than we should have done, for the benefit of young preachers. How unaccountable soever the fact may be, we hear that Mr. H. is very popular in the neighbourhood of Leeds; and as popularity is a dangerous snare even to a well regulated mind, we have felt some little apprehension lest even his manner of preaching should produce imitators.

“We have no apology to offer Mr. H. for what he may deem the severity of our remarks. A sense of duty has impelled the whole of them. We wish he may profit by the general castigation he has received, and have only to add, in parting, “Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come to thee.”

It is not without amusement that after this we turned to the same *Review* for April 1850 (XXVII. 455-70) where sixteen pages are written round—we cannot say “about”—Dr. W. H. Stowell’s unsatisfactory *Memoir* of Hamilton. The reviewer tells us that genius sparkles in every page of Hamilton’s writings, that he was a man of noble qualities and commanding powers, whose life, character, and preaching must not be judged by ordinary standards. He admits that in him was a precocity calling loudly for restraint, which “was pampered by the excitements of the crowded chapel; the student character was lost in that of the youthful preacher, on whose eloquent lips enraptured congregations hung”. But “with all its excrescences, its redundancy, its violations of the rules and punctilios of that very arbitrary something called taste, what a grand, stately, in all senses

massive style was his! . . . [It] won for him . . . a position in the world of Nonconformity in all senses commensurate with the affluent genius which kind Heaven had committed to his care".

Hamilton in his youth, this reviewer tells us, was exposed "to much hypercriticism which for a time endangered his success". One wonders whether he had in mind the strictures the *Eclectic* itself had printed thirty-five years, before, and whether he was expressing contrition, or alternatively, claiming that the *Eclectic* had some part in Hamilton's success!

A. P.

## Reviews

*The Noble Army of Congregational Martyrs.* By Albert Peel (International Congregational Council Publications; No. 1. Independent Press, London, and Pilgrim Press, Boston, 5s.). This is not a eulogy of underpaid ministers and their heroic wives, nor propaganda for the Home Churches Fund. It is a record of those of our way, who, in England, U.S.A., and the mission field, from Randall Partridge and his three companions who died in prison 1587-71 to Herbert Brokenshire and Robert Kennedy of the American Navy who were drowned in 1944, sealed their witness with their lives. Altogether here are over 160 names of those who were faithful unto death—"stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword", while "others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of blows and imprisonment." There are names that are familiar from Barrow to Alfred Sadd, many more, especially the long roll of the Malagasy, that will be new, but all alike are to be honoured. It was a happy thought of Dr. Peel's to inaugurate the literature of the forthcoming International Council with this tribute of piety. He has classified his register into appropriate groups, and wherever it is possible, by dint of research, supplied concise biographical notes. A little book to be cherished and to inspire.

*The Life of Alexander Stewart.* Printed for private circulation. And who was Alexander Stewart? To quote the title page, he was a "prisoner of Napoleon and preacher of the Gospel". And who wrote his life? Himself. And now his grandson, Sir Malcolm Stewart (son of Halley Stewart), has, with the collaboration of Dr. Peel, published it (for private circulation) and furnished it with a preface. Alexander's own journal has been given in full up to 1815 (he was born in 1790 in Kirkcaldy), and an abridgment of his story to his death in 1874. Readers of our *Transactions* will recall the story of his college years at Hoxton, as told by Dr. Peel, and then there was his long and distinguished ministry at Barnet. It is, however, the earlier narrative, of the lad who ran away to sea when he was 15 and at once fell into French hands, remaining a prisoner for ten years, that captivates the reader. The story of his wanderings from one place of incarceration to another, and of his varied adventures might have been written by Robert Louis Stevenson. Throughout the story we can read also the growth of a great soul. We can understand Sir Malcolm's pride in his grandfather's "patience, endurance, and determination, in his great physical and moral courage, and in his fight for freedom whether in prison or in the ministry", and we share his hope that "his example may be an inspiration and give heart to some fighting an uphill battle". We are glad to learn that the Sir Halley Stewart Trust is to send copies to Congregational ministers.

A. J. GRIEVE.

Mr. Vergilius Ferm, whose name always sounds too good to be true, has edited yet another composite book—*Religion in the 20th Century* (New York: Philosophical Library, \$5.00), in which twenty-seven writers describe "religion" from Hinduism and Jainism to "Ethical Culture" and "Reconstructionism": how many English readers, we wonder, will know that "Reconstructionism" is "dedicated to serve as a unifying force within Judaism according to its own naturalistic orientation"? We have to confess that most of the names were quite unknown to us, even that of Prof. Conrad Moehlman, whose selection "to represent the cause of liberal Protestantism was inevitable".

We have found it quite impossible to discover why certain "religions" were chosen, and on what basis space was allotted. We have Conservative Protestantism", "Liberal Protestantism", and the Society of Friends, but no mention of Baptists and Disciples, Congregationalists and Presbyterians. If you want to know about Mormonism or Baha'ism, Christian Science or Jehovah's Witnesses, these pages may help you, and the bibliographies suggest further reading. For Christianity, however, whatever be the truth about the other religions treated, space is given to the peripheral rather than the central.

EDITOR.

*A Church of the Ejectment.* In 1912 the Rev. Alexander Barber, then minister of the Stratford-on-Avon Church, published a serviceable account of the Presbyterian-Independent congregation in that historically-conscious town. The book has just been reissued by the church with a supplementary chapter on "The Early Days" in which Mr. Barber adds the result of a further 35 years' research and develops a thesis that the Stratford Dissenting Academy, perhaps begun by Joseph Porter of Alcester (who had oversight of the Stratford church from 1690), was sustained as a local "institution" over a period of some forty years. McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts*, says that at Porter's death (1721) his Alcester students went to Stratford, but p. 13 dates the Stratford academy from 1715, with John Alexander and John Fleming as tutors. But Alexander did not become minister at Stratford until 1724. The argument is, therefore, that his predecessor, John Letherland, must also have been a tutor. The dates for Fleming's pastorate do not square with the Bridgnorth records, where he is said to have ministered from 1726-40, and it seems more likely to be coincidental that three or four successive ministers were tutors than that anything in the sense of a continuing collegiate institution ever existed at Stratford. We have failed to find any record of students for the debatable period.

There are one or two unfortunate literals in the supplementary chapter—O.D.M. for V.D.M., Rothwell for Rathmell, etc., but the work is well done and makes an interestingly readable story.

Dr. W. H. Chaloner's *Crewe Congregational Church, 1847-1947*, a 24 pp. brochure in commemoration of the opening of its first chapel a century ago, provides a useful chronicle of the work begun by Rev. William Silvester, one of the stalwarts of the early Cheshire Union, who accepted the challenge of the new railway centre created by the transference of workers of the Grand Junction Railway Company to a rural village. The church does not go back into the dark days of persecution and controversy, but faces the challenge and common ups and downs of the 19th and 20th centuries. The expedient (1881-2) of fixing a minimum charge of one penny per Sunday for each regularly occupied seat (discount terms, one shilling per quarter of 13 Sundays), is fresh, but the plaint that while the Brotherhood numbered

1,400 adherents, the Church membership was only 208 can be frequently paralleled elsewhere.

The Rev. William Stanyon's *Furthergate Congregational Sunday School, Blackburn, 1846-1947*, produced on paper that makes us envious, and with eight full-page illustrations to 24 pp. of type, is well set out, and the record makes a useful trilogy with Mr. T. Kilner's *Brief History of Furthergate, 1924*, and the Rev. F. L. Buxton's *These Ten Years, 1924-1934*.

*The Triple Jubilee of Congregationalism in Warrington*, by Mr. Joseph Hawthorn, deacon of Wycliffe Church and formerly sub-editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, a pamphlet in *pian memoriam*, recalls the story of Stepney (or Flag-lane) Chapel, long since disappeared, but the home 150 years ago of Warrington Congregationalists who seceded from Cairo-street Presbyterian Chapel on its movement into Unitarianism, and traces the history of the community now worshipping in Wycliffe chapel.

The *Transactions* of the Unitarian Historical Society (Oct., 1947), now edited by Dr. H. McLachlan, tell the Story of Walmsley Unitarian Chapel, by the Rev. F. Kenworthy, and of Dr. Thomas Nettleton, by the Editor, and an interesting commentary on early Presbyterian-Congregational differences in "The Gesture of the Minister at the Lord's Supper" by Rev. H. Lismer Short, together with a valuable Record Section.

The four quarterly issues of the *Proceedings* of the Wesley Historical Society for 1947 tell, *inter alia*, the story of Methodism in Manchester by the Rev. C. Deane Little. Methodist Statistics for 1838 claimed a total adherence of 377,815, said to represent a proportion of 1 in 35 of the population of England. The proportion in 1948 is . . . ?

*The Baptist Quarterly* for October, 1947, contains "Seventh Day Baptists in England" by Dr. W. T. Whitley, "The Baptist Union, 1897-1947" by the Rev. E. A. Payne, Dr. J. F. Carrington's account of a Congo Secret Society, an examination of Karl Barth's *Christengemeinde und Burgegemeinde* by the Rev. I. J. Barnes, and a beautiful tribute to Charles Brown by Mr. W. M. Wigfield.

C. E. SURMAN.

## Congregational Historical Society

### Accounts for Year Ending 31st December 1947

RECEIPTS				EXPENDITURE			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Balances brought forward from 1946—				Printing 1947 <i>Transactions</i> ... ..			52 5 0
Current Account ... ..	31	14	1	Editor's Expenses ... ..			1 10 0
Capital Account ... ..	93	16	0	Secretary's Expenses ... ..			6 6 7
			125 10 1	Speaker, Annual Meeting ... ..			1 11 6
Cash in Hand ... ..			7 18 4	Treasurer's Expenses ... ..			4 1 10
Subscriptions received during year—				Balances carried forward—			
Current Subscriptions ... ..	34	10	10	Current Account ... ..	15	1	10
Arrears .. ..	6	8	9	Capital Account ... ..	103	0	0
Advance .. ..	2	18	9				118 1 10
			43 18 4	Cash in Hand ... ..			3 16 6
Gift from Congregational Insurance Co., Ltd. ... ..			5 0 0				
Addition to Capital Account, Life Membership ... ..			4 4 0				
Interest on Investment ... ..			1 2 6				
			£187 13 3				£187 13 3

ROLAND H. MUDDIMAN, *Hon. Treasurer.*

The Society holds two shares of £25 each in North-West Building Society.

THE  
**Congregational Historical Society**

(FOUNDED 1899)

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- (b) HONORARY MEMBERS paying an annual subscription of not less than one guinea.
- (c) ORDINARY MEMBERS paying an annual subscription of five shillings.
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