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## EDITORIAL

THE 59th Annual Meeting of the Society was held at Westminster Chapel on 14th May, 1958, at 5.30 p.m. Fifty-four names were recorded in the attendance book. The Chairman, the Rev. R. F. G. Calder, was given a message of greeting to deliver to our corresponding society amongst the Congregational Christian Churches when he visited the United States this summer for the meetings of the International Congregational Council.

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The Rev. W. W. Biggs was welcomed to the dual offices of Secretary and Treasurer ; the Rev. E. W. Dawe and Mr. B. Martin were thanked for past services as Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

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With much regret the resignation of the Rev. C. E. Surman as Research Secretary was accepted. For twenty-one years he has constantly laboured in this onerous and essential post, answering many thousands of queries, and he has acquired a knowledge of our affairs past and present which is unrivalled. A minute expressing warm appreciation of his service was placed on record. Mr. Surman urged the Society to find a successor as soon as possible.

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Our President, Dr. W. Gordon Robinson, presented a paper reviewing the Savoy Declaration, this year being the tercentenary of the Conference. The paper appears in this issue by the President's kind permission. Those who are only able to read the paper will miss much of the charm and humour which decorated it when the author lectured ; however, both they and those who heard it will want to study it carefully in print and to consider its implications. The disappointing aspect of the meeting was that Dr. Robinson raised so many issues which would have repaid discussion and there was no opportunity to follow them, our time being so restricted. Mr. Surman ably expressed our gratitude to the President.

We are glad to welcome to the committee of the Society Mr. H. G. Tibbutt of Bedford, who contributes an article on the Cotton End Academy to this issue of our *Transactions*. It is hoped to publish at a later date some notes on students who were trained there. Mr. Tibbutt has also written a history of Roxton Congregational Church, which celebrates its 150th anniversary this summer.

Mr. Tibbutt has had the exciting good fortune recently to come across a collection of thirty-four letters by Sir Lewis Dyve to Charles I, written in 1646-7. They throw further light on the King's intrigues and Cromwell's position. They will appear this summer in a volume edited by Mr. Tibbutt entitled *The Tower of London Letter Book of Sir Lewis Dyve 1646-7* (25s.), obtainable from the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, Luton Museum, Wardown Park, Luton.

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The Rev. Herbert McLachlan, M.A., D.D., Litt.D., former principal of Manchester College and Editor of the *Transactions* of the Unitarian Historical Society, a member of our Society who took kindly notice of the work of our scholars, died in Liverpool on 21st February. He was 82 years of age. He will be remembered in particular for his monumental work, *English Education under the Test Acts*, and for his *Warrington Academy*. His son, Dr. H. John McLachlan, also a member of our Society, is minister of First Presbyterian Church, Belfast.

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We further regret the passing of the Rev. W. Eric Harding, M.A., B.D., the Rev. John Penry Thomas, the Rev. J. Oliver Stephens, B.A., B.D., and the Rev. Thomas William Mason, who collaborated fifty years ago with Dr. Benjamin Nightingale in *New Light on the Pilgrim Story*, and later wrote *The Triple Jubilee of the Essex Congregational Union* (1943).

## The Savoy Declaration of 1658 and To-day

**I**F you stand in the forecourt of the Savoy Hotel in the Strand you are standing on part of the much larger site of the old Palace of the Savoy. You will be reminded of some of its history by the commemorative plates which are set into the walls around. Centuries ago a palace rose sheer from the river and stretched back northward to the Strand. Here in the middle of the thirteenth century lived Peter, Count of Savoy, uncle of Eleanor of Provence who was the consort of Henry III. Here he entertained his many wards while he found noble and rich suitors for them. From him the Palace was named. Simon de Montfort, founder of the House of Commons, lived here. Here the Black Prince brought John of Valois, king of France, as prisoner of war. Here for nearly twenty years lived John of Gaunt and during his occupation of the Palace he was often joined at dinner by Geoffrey Chaucer who wrote many of his poems in the Palace itself. At the end of John of Gaunt's time it was attacked and destroyed by rebels under Wat Tyler. It became successively a convent, and a hospital, and "in the time of Oliver Cromwell was appropriated to the accommodation of some of the officers of the Court"<sup>1</sup>. It was then also reputed to be a rendezvous for Dissenters and for Continental Protestants<sup>2</sup>.

In this historic place three hundred years ago (in September-October 1658) the Independents met and drew up their Declaration, the tercentenary of which we may justly celebrate this year.

This meeting of the Independents at the Savoy has a long pre-history going back to the emergence of the Separatists in the middle of the previous century. This was freely claimed in the Preface to the Declaration :

For ourselves we are able to trace the footsteps of an Independent Congregational way in the ancientest customs of the Churches ; as also in the Writings of our soundest Protestant Divines and (that which we are much satisfied in) a full concurrence throughout in all the substantial parts of Church-Government with our Reverend Brethren the *old Puritan non-Conformists* . . . and we reap with joy, what they sowed in tears.

*Works of John Owen* (1826 edition by Thomas Russell), vol.i, Memoir of Owen by William Orme, p.176.

*The Savoy Declaration*, ed. by Albert Peel, 1939, p.15.

It will be sufficient for us, however, if we begin by noting that the Presbyterian ascendancy in religion in this country in the fifth decade of the seventeenth century had given way to an Independent ascendancy centred in the outstanding figure of Oliver Cromwell the Protector. The Presbyterians had met in the Westminster Assembly (which began in 1643) and in sessions which lasted for more than five years had worked out their *Confession of Faith*, their *Forme of Presbyterial Church Government*, and their *Directory for Public Worship*. At that Assembly the Independent point of view had been maintained with an energy out of all proportion to their numbers by eleven "Dissenting Brethren" of whom five (Philip Nye, Thomas Goodwin, William Bridge, Jeremiah Burroughs and Sidrach Simpson) set out their significant arguments in *An Apologeticall Narration* in 1654 and made their appeal for the kind of toleration which would find a place for Independency in any new national system of religion. There had been other previous attempts and there were other contemporary attempts to define the Congregational position<sup>3</sup>. Now with the proliferation of the many sectaries of the Commonwealth—Fifth Monarchy Men, Levellers, Diggers, Muggletonians, Ranters, Seekers, Familists and the like—the Independents felt a compulsion to state their position in doctrine and in polity. The Preface says :

We have sailed through an Aestuation, Fluxes and Refluxes of great varieties of Spirits, Doctrines, Opinions and Occurrences. . . . Men have taken the freedom (notwithstanding what Authority hath interposed to the contrary) to vent and vend their own vain and accursed imaginations. . . . Whence it hath come to pass, that many of the soundest Professors were put upon a new search and disquisition of such Truths, as they had taken for granted, and yet had lived upon the comfort of.

On May 25th, 1657, "The Humble Petition and Advice of the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses now assembled in the Parliament of this Commonwealth" was presented to Cromwell asking "that a Confession of Faith, to be agreed upon by your Highness and the Parliament, according to the rule and warrant of the Scriptures, be asserted, held forth, and recommended to the people of these nations"<sup>4</sup>. Whether this Petition evoked it, or whether the Independents made some other approach to Cromwell, is not clear but it is certain that it was with the consent of Cromwell, either freely or reluctantly given, that the Clerk to the Privy Council, Henry Scobell, invited the elders of the Congregational churches in and about London

<sup>3</sup> e.g., by Browne, Barrow, Greenwood, the London-Amsterdam and the Leyden churches, the writers of *An Apologeticall Narration*, John Cotton, Richard Mather, John Owen, John Rogers, etc.

<sup>4</sup> *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution*, ed. S.R. Gardiner, 1902, p.454ff. ; cf. B. Hanbury, *Historical Memorials relating to Independents*, 1844, vol.iii, pp.515ff.

to meet on June 21st, 1658 "at Mr. Griffith's". This was a preliminary meeting after which George Griffith, minister of the Charter House, sent out letters throughout the country to call pastors and elders to a meeting at the Savoy Palace on September 29th. In the meantime on 3rd September Cromwell had died. It must have been with some foreboding of what was to come upon them that two hundred delegates assembled from one hundred and twenty Independent churches.

In eleven days of conference, discounting the first day and two Lord's Days, they arrived at a unanimity which astonished themselves and gave them cause for thankfulness and for recognising "a great and special work of the holy Ghost" (The Preface). It would be more than interesting if we could discover the agenda which they worked out at "the first day's meeting, in which we considered and debated what to pitch upon" (*ibid*). What finally emerged from the assembly's deliberations was *A Declaration of the Faith and Order owned and practised in the Congregational Churches in England; Agreed upon and consented unto By their Elders and Messengers in Their Meeting at the Savoy, October 12, 1658*. It was published that same year.

It falls into three well-defined parts. First comes the Preface, attributed to John Owen, Independent minister, Dean of Christ Church and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford. It is lengthy, some have said verbose, yet it is well-ordered and cogently reasoned. It spoke of the need and nature of confessions of faith and of the events which led up to the formulation of this particular confession, and enunciated some lasting and important truths which are of continued relevance for all of us to-day. Next follows a Declaration of Faith which is largely modelled upon the Westminster Confession of 1645. There are some obvious and understandable differences, notably in the omissions of the articles concerning the calling in of civil magistrates to enforce ecclesiastical discipline, concerning church censures, and concerning the place of synods and councils\*. Thirdly comes a section "Of the Institution of Churches and the Order appointed in them by Jesus Christ" in a series of thirty articles or affirmations. Dale sums this up by saying :

These contain a full and authentic statement of the principles of the Congregational polity as held by the most illustrious Congregationalists of the Commonwealth—men of great theological learning, of keen and robust intellect, and of a deep and earnest spiritual life. They represent the results at which English Congregationalists had arrived after a hundred years of controversy. In substance, they are identical with the principles which Robert Browne and Henry Barrowe had maintained against Whitgift and

\* A Peel, *op. cit.*, pp.20f.

Cartwright, which John Robinson and Henry Ainsworth had maintained against Bernard and Bishop Hall; but the grave and protracted discussions of the Westminster Assembly, and the experience which had been gained of the practical working of Congregationalism in Holland, in New England, and in England itself during the preceding fifty years, as well as the great eminence of the men who met at the Savoy, gave to the 'Declaration' an exceptional value. In its fulness and precision it is, perhaps, the most admirable statement of the ecclesiastical principles of English Congregationalism<sup>6</sup>.

Dale does not speak for all observers and historians who have been sharply divided in their assessment of the value of the Declaration and especially of the Preface. Richard Baxter is stern in his condemnation of these Independents who "refused with sufficient perversity to associate with the Presbyterians (and the Reconcilers too), [and] did resolve to shew their proper strength, and to call a General Assembly of all their Churches". He accuses them of contradicting both St. James and St. Paul on faith and righteousness, of speaking one thing and meaning another, and says "in their Propositions of Church Order, they widened the breach, and made things much worse, and more unreconcilable than ever they were before"<sup>7</sup>. Those who helped to draw up the next great Declaration of Congregationalism (that of 1833) damned it with faint praise by calling it "though most orthodox, too wordy and too much extended for our purpose"<sup>8</sup>. G. H. Curteis in his Bampton Lectures of 1871 turns to the 1833 Declaration for a standard confession of Congregationalism, makes some cutting comment on the Independents and ignores the Savoy Declaration altogether<sup>9</sup>. Incidentally, Henry Bettenson in his widely-used *Documents of the Christian Church* (1944) which draws often upon Curteis, fails completely to notice any Congregational confession at all. H. M. Dexter criticised it as a symbol which "is vague as to the difference between Brownism and Barrowism, leaning towards the latter" and adds that its Preface seems over long and not over strong<sup>10</sup>. Williston Walker speaks of its "long and dreary preface" but for the rest of the document he describes it as "a brief, compact, and lucid presentation of the main features of Congregationalism" but breathing "the hazy atmosphere of theoretic and non-consolidated Congregationalism"<sup>11</sup>. W. A. Curtis gives a fair short summary but attempts no assessment<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> R. W. Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, 1906, pp.385f.

<sup>7</sup> *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, 1696, p.104. For discussions which followed see Orme's *Memoir of John Owen*, *op.cit.*, vol 1, pp.180ff.

<sup>8</sup> A. Peel, *These Hundred Years*, 1931, p.75.

<sup>9</sup> *Dissent in its relation to the Church of England*, 87ff.

<sup>10</sup> H. M. Dexter, *The Congregationalism of the Last 300 Years*, 1879, p.663.

<sup>11</sup> Williston Walker, *Creeeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*, 1893, pp.351-2.

<sup>12</sup> W. A. Curtis, *History of Creeeds and Confessions of Faith*, 1911, pp.321-2.

Since the first publication of the Declaration in 1658 there has been a number of editions and accounts of it. Those until 1893 are listed in Williston Walker<sup>13</sup>. More recently Albert Peel and Bernard Manning and Dr. J. S. Whale have issued editions which have done much to set the Declaration in its rightful place in our thinking.

However divided the historians may be and however ephemeral the immediate influence of the Declaration<sup>14</sup> there can be no doubt of the importance of the principles which it set forth, principles which are by no means out-of-date for Congregationalists. Dr. Nuttall has recently shown us that in the period 1640-1660 four principles are to be discerned which are the distinguishing marks of the Congregational way as practised by "Visible Saints". They are the principle of separation (exemplified in "Come ye out"), of fellowship ("Unto one another"), of freedom ("a willing mind"), and of fitness ("Be ye holy")<sup>15</sup>. These are all firmly stated in the Declaration which, of course, belongs to the period which Dr. Nuttall has in review. It is tempting to take these four and apply them to the Declaration. Instead we shall look at it rather in terms of four related topics and ask ourselves what it says about :

- the nature of a Congregational church ;
- the leadership of the church by Christ into more truth ;
- the Congregational attitude to creeds and confessions ; and
- the conception of toleration and its relation to ecumenicity.

### THE NATURE OF A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The third section of the Declaration ("Of the Institution of Churches and the Order appointed in them by Jesus Christ") breathes a true "high churchmanship" of which Congregationalists have often boasted and sometimes been neglectful. Here is no casual assumption such as we are sometimes prone to make that the Church is a voluntary society, a man-made organisation which we may "join" and from which we may resign. Let us refresh our minds with the words of the first affirmations which the Declaration makes :

By the appointment of the Father, all Power for the Calling, Institution, Order, or Government of the Church, is invested, in a Supreme and Sovereign manner, in the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head thereof.(1)

It is the same Lord Jesus, in the execution of His power who calleth out of the World unto Communion with himself, those

<sup>13</sup> *op. cit.*, pp.340-1. To this add A. Peel, *The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order*, 1939 ; B. L. Manning and J. S. Whale, *The Savoy Declaration* (a photographic reprint of Williston Walker, *op. cit.*, pp.367-408, 1939). The third part ("Of the Institution of Churches") was reprinted in *Trans. C.H.S.*, xi, pp.150ff.

<sup>14</sup> cf. H. M. Dexter, *op. cit.*, p.663 ; W. Walker *op. cit.*, p.352 ; A. Peel, *Savoy Declaration* p.22.

<sup>15</sup> *Visible Saints*, 1957, *ad loc.*

that are given unto him by his Father, that they may walk before him in all the ways of Obedience, which he prescribeth to them in his Word.(ii)

Those thus called (through the Ministry [of] the Word by his Spirit) he commandeth to walk together in particular Societies or Churches, for their mutual edification, and due performance of that publique Worship, which he requireth of them in this world.(iii)

To each of these Churches thus gathered, according unto his mind declared in his Word, he hath given all that Power and Authority, which is in any way needfull, for their carrying on that Order in Worship and Discipline.(iv)

Next comes the assertion that particular churches, appointed by the authority of Christ, are each the seat of the power which He communicates to His saints in the world(v) and that

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.(vi)

Is this a position which we ought to abandon? Dare we no longer make such an absolute claim that the only place where the authority and leadership of Christ is found is in the local church? Are we to confess that our fathers erred in thus boldly and uncompromisingly asserting the complete autonomy of each church and its competence under Christ? Are we moving away from a wrongheaded and narrow exclusiveness into a free acceptance of the supreme importance of church association? Are we right to assume as so many assume to-day, sometimes seemingly on merely arithmetical grounds, that the Holy Spirit who manifests Himself in the small gathering of the local Church Meeting must necessarily manifest Himself more richly in the larger assemblies of delegates from many churches? To put these questions is to beg the question. It is to fail to realise that Congregationalism has seldom said, and never said when it was true to its own best traditions and insights, that the local church is a law and a life to itself.

"Particular", that is, local churches do not live to themselves. Necessity had forced upon the Separatist churches a certain disunity. It was not possible in days of persecution to hold easy contact each with the others. The Preface speaks of this in memorable words :

We confess that from the first, every, or at least the generality of our Churches, have been in a manner like so many Ships (though holding forth the same general colours) lancht singly, and sailing apart and alone in the vast Ocean of these tumultuating times, and they exposed to every wind of Doctrine, under no

other conduct then (*sic*) the Word and Spirit, and their particular Elders and principal Brethren, without Associations among our selves, or so much as holding out common lights to others, whereby to know where we were. But yet whilst we thus confess to our shame this neglect, let all acknowledge, that God hath ordered it for his high and greater glory, in that his singular care and power should have so watcht over each of these, as that all should be found to have steered their course by the same Chart, and to have been bound for one and the same Port, and that upon this general search now made, that the same holy and blessed Truths of all sorts, which are currant and warrantable amongst all the other Churches of Christ in the world, should be found to be our Lading.

And so the ideal of association without magisterial interference is stated :

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. Besides these occasional Synods or Councils, there are not instituted by Christ any stated Synods in a fixed Combination of Churches . . . nor are there any Synods appointed by Christ in a way of Subordination to one another. (xxvi and xxvii).

We ourselves tend to speak of "voluntary association" when we describe this kind of polity. But the adjective fails to do justice to the conception. Our fathers affirmed, and we stand by their affirmation, that there is a constraint upon churches to come together in consultation and fellowship. It is a constraint from Christ that we do this, not a useful human device or an expedient safeguard against ecclesiastical solipsism. As in the church meeting of each particular church there is no subordination but only the guidance and the constraint of the Holy Spirit.

### **THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH BY CHRIST INTO MORE TRUTH**

What kind of people are the members of a church? They are those who walk with Christ and with each other and are led by Christ into ever fuller and richer truth and experience. The Declaration again speaks in classic terms :

The Members of these Churches are Saints by Calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their Obedience unto that Call of Christ, who being further known to each other by their confession of the Faith wrought in them by the power of God, declared by themselves, or otherwise manifested, do willingly consent to walk together, according to the appointment of Christ, giving up themselves to the Lord, and to one another by the Will of God, in professed subjection to the Ordinances of Gospel.(VIII)

Here is a reference to the Covenant basis of Congregational churches. From the time of Richard Fitz's church with its implied covenant<sup>14</sup> and of Robert Browne and Robert Harrison in Norwich whose church "gave their consent to ioine them selues to the Lord in one couenant & fellowshipp together, & to keepe & seeke agrement vnder his lawes & government"<sup>15</sup> a distinguishing feature of Independent churches was the covenant<sup>16</sup>.

A common feature of these covenants was the assertion that Christ will lead His people into more and more truth according as they are willing to walk with Him and with each other. "Walking together" is a phrase which occurs with great regularity ; it was a "walk" which would be increasingly enlightened by enlarged knowledge of God. The classic phrase is that of John Robinson as it is recalled in Edward Winslow's account of the "wholesome counsel" he gave to his church as they departed for New England in the *Mayflower*.

He put us in mind of our Church Covenant, at least that part of it whereby 'we promise and covenant with God and one with another, to receive what soever light or truth shall be made known to us from his written Word'. . . . He charged us before God and his blessed angels, to follow him no further than he followed Christ : and if God should reveal anything to us by any other instrument of his, to be as ready to receive it, as ever we were to receive any truth by his Ministry. For he was very confident that the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy Word<sup>17</sup>.

This same confidence is echoed, for example, in the covenant of Bury St. Edmunds church in 1648 :

We whose names are hereto subscribed do resolve and ingage by the helpe of the Spirit of God to walke in all the wayes of God

<sup>14</sup> cf. Champlin Burrage, *Early English Dissenters*, 1912 vol.i, pp.90ff., vol.ii, pp.13ff.

<sup>15</sup> cf. Burrage, *op.cit.*, vol.i, p.98 ; *Works of Robert Browne and Robert Harrison*, ed. A. Peal and Leland H. Carlson, 1953 p.422.

<sup>16</sup> cf. G. F. Nuttall, *Visible Saints*, pp.49, 74-81, 116-117, etc. for quotations from many such covenants in the years immediately preceding the Savoy Declaration.

<sup>17</sup> cf. E. Arber, *The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers*, 1897 pp.182f. ; H. M. Dexter, *The England and Holland of the Pilgrims*, 1906 p.587 ; cf. W.W. Fenn, art. "John Robinson's Farewell Address" in *Harvard Theological Review*, xiii, 3, pp.236ff.

So far forth as he hath revealed or shall reveall them unto us by his word<sup>20</sup>.

It is summed up in the last words of the Preface to the Declaration, Our Prayer unto God is, That whereto we have already attained, we all may walk by the same rule, and that wherein we are otherwise minded, God would reveal it to us in his due time.

It is good to think that in these last few years there has been a revival of the sense of covenant-relationship in our churches and that the neglect into which the covenant had fallen in the last century has been corrected. Many new churches have been formed upon covenants which have been carefully drawn up by those who have a sense of history and tradition so that the new covenants are within the stream of development ; other churches have taken over the "model" covenant suggested by the Congregational Union of England and Wales (which is by no means a good one) or have cobbled together their own somewhat contractual utterances.

In the covenant-grounded company of the church the quality of its members is important. They are, says the Declaration "Saints by Calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their Obedience unto that Call of Christ" (VIII, already quoted above). "Visible Saints" is the description by which they may be known. Among the Saints there are officers appointed by Christ—pastors, teachers, elders and deacons who are ordained with the "election and precedent consent of the Church". We have conflated pastors and teachers, and we have conflated elders and deacons in these days but we still insist that all members have their part to play in the life and evangelical witness of the Church. An emphasis which we still retain is that people other than ministers are "gifted and fitted by the Holy Ghost and when approved by the church give themselves up to the work of preaching". We have seldom spoken of "laity" as distinct from "clergy" or ministers. We have been able to preserve the sense of the oneness of the Body of Christ with its individual and several members and this is a truth which other branches of the whole Church are being driven to see and to re-examine to the great advantage of their life and the better balance of their theology. I could wish that we had time to consider the censures (XIX and XX) in the Declaration and to ask whether we have lost our grip upon discipline which was such an important feature of long ago. Enough now to say that the rule of Christ is still of paramount importance in His Church and that His people are to be saints and to be visibly saints.

<sup>20</sup> John Browne, *History of Congregationalism in Norfolk and Suffolk*, 1878 p.394f., corrected in article "Bury St. Edmunds' Church Covenants in *Trans.C.H.S.*, ii. pp.332ff. ; cf. G. F. Nuttall. *op.cit.*, p.79.

### THE CONGREGATIONAL ATTITUDE TO CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS

"We profess that the whole, and every particle of that Faith delivered to the Saints, (the substance of which we have according to our light here professed) is, as to the propagation and furtherance of it by *all Gospel-means*, as precious to us as our lives". So the Preface proclaims what Independents have always claimed that we are in the central tradition of the Christian Faith<sup>21</sup>. The charge often ignorantly levelled against us and sometimes foolishly allowed to go unchallenged that "Congregationalists can believe what they like" is fantastically untrue. The fact is that Congregationalists have never been unwilling to set down the outlines of their belief and to claim orthodoxy within the Reformed tradition.

The Preface begins by asserting that a Confession of the Faith may justly be called for and is indeed "so indispensable a due all owe to the Glory of the Sovereign GOD that it is ranked among the Duties of the first Commandment" and is "yoaked with Faith itself as necessary to salvation" by the Apostle Paul.

The most genuine and natural use of such Confessions is, That under the same form of words, they express the substance of the same *common salvation* or *unity of their faith*. . . and accordingly such a transaction is to be looked upon but as a meet or fit *medium* or *means* whereby to express *that their common faith and salvation*.

Thus Congregationalists have often been willing to draw up confessions of faith (for example in this country, in Robert Browne's *A Booke which sheweth*, the statement by Barrow and Greenwood entitled *A true Description out of the Word of God of the visible Church*, the London-Amsterdam *True Confession* of 1596, the *Seven Articles* of the Leyden Church in 1617, the *Savoy Declaration* itself, the statements of belief, often in the form of the Westminster Confession attached to many of the covenants of the middle of the eighteenth century, and the *Declaration* of 1833 adopted at the time of the beginning of the Congregational Union of England and Wales<sup>22</sup>).

Nevertheless, there is one important warning. Confessions, the Preface goes on to say, are

no way to be made use of as an *imposition* upon any: What ever is of force or constraint in matters of this nature, causeth them to degenerate from the *name* and *nature* of *Confessions*, and turns them from being *Confessions of Faith* into *Exactions* and *Impositions of Faith*.

<sup>21</sup> cf. The "Message to the Churches" of the Sixth I.C.C. in its *Proceedings*, 1949, p.2.

<sup>22</sup> cf. art. "Congregationalism and the Historic Faith" in *Congregational Quarterly*, **xxix**, iii, pp.202ff.

This protest against exalting confessions into creeds to which subscription is required has been a constant feature of Congregationalism. What the Savoy Declaration said was echoed in the Declaration of 1833 :

Disallowing the utility of creeds and articles of religion as a bond of union, and protesting against subscription to any human formularies as a term of communion, Congregationalists are yet willing to declare, for general information, what is commonly believed among them, reserving to everyone the most perfect liberty of conscience. . . . They wish it to be observed that, notwithstanding their jealousy of subscription to creeds and articles and their disapproval of any human standard, whether of faith or discipline, they are far more agreed in their doctrines and practices than any Church which enjoins subscription and enforces a human standard of orthodoxy<sup>23</sup>.

The Message to the Churches of the Sixth International Congregational Council says the same thing :

While Congregationalists do not require subscription to any man-made creedal statements, they have ever been loyal to the great doctrines of the Christian faith and have always claimed their place in the witness of the evangelical, reformed Churches<sup>24</sup>.

This attitude, of course, has its temptations and its dangers. We have tended to be willing to draw up confessions and then to be unwilling to trust or to use them, to be willing to state our faith but unwilling to ask believers specifically to subscribe to it. We are satisfied to make from church members no greater demand than that they confess their loyalty to our Lord and Saviour, adding to this only the corollary that they grow in His knowledge and in the fellowship of the church and are ready to walk with Him into realms of greater truth and light. And after all, the earliest and the then sufficient confession was "Jesus is Lord".

But have we maintained, and how do we maintain, the Faith? We assert, as they did in 1833, that subscription to creeds is no safeguard but rather the reverse. What do we substitute? The answer lies, as Bernard Manning saw in his assessment of the eighteenth century, in the reality of the church fellowship, the close bond between ministers and faithful church members each confronting the other with classical doctrine, the form of divine service, and the use of hymns which reminded worshippers of the catholic, apostolic evangelical faith and themselves acted as standards of faith<sup>25</sup>. We need to ask ourselves continually do they operate still?

<sup>23</sup> Preliminary notes to the Declaration, numbers 5 and 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Proceedings*, p.2.

<sup>25</sup> B. L. Manning, *Essays in Orthodox Dissent*, 1939 p.185.

### THE CONCEPTION OF TOLERATION AND ITS RELATION TO ECUMENICITY

The degree of toleration which is extended to members in matters of subscription to creedal statements is not confined within the narrow limits of each particular church. Toleration is envisaged as applicable to each church in its relation to each other church, to groups of churches over against other groups of churches, and to all churches which keep the faith in their relations with the State.

But toleration was difficult to conceive in the days before the Savoy Declaration and indeed afterwards. Elizabeth I, like her predecessors, had found it impossible to think other than in terms of uniformity within one inclusive state church and that uniformity enforced by the strictest sanctions. Any attempt to think of a church outside this was no less than treason as Barrow, Greenwood, Penry and the first exiles of Amsterdam found to their cost. James I is reported to have said that he would make men conform or else he would harry them out of the land. Charles I lost his head through intrigues which were rooted in this same theory and policy of intolerance. And then the Presbyterians of the 1640's played the same hand, in the words of the protesting Independent Jeremiah Burroughs "apprehending there is no medium between a strict uniformity, and a general confusion in all things"<sup>26</sup>. With Cromwell came the assertion of liberty and toleration and with him were Independents such as those who are quoted in chapter three of *Visible Saints*.

The Savoy Declaration gathers up the threads of this thinking upon toleration. It was of the essence of the Congregational position and not a mere expediency such as was the Declaration of Breda which contained Charles II's specious promise in 1660 of "liberty to tender consciences"<sup>27</sup> or the "gracious" Declaration of Indulgence of James II in 1687<sup>28</sup>. To urge that the Independents were for toleration because they saw no future for themselves otherwise than as a tolerated minority is to misread the situation and to do injustice to what the Independents had been saying consistently. Toleration was implicit in their thinking, explicit in many of their writings, and focused in the Savoy Declaration. This latter makes at least three important emphases :

1. That there should be toleration and co-operation between particular churches. We have already noticed that the Preface called attention to the singularity with which the various ships of the fleet had been forced to sail ; the delegates to the Savoy found to their joy,

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Peel, *Savoy Declaration*, p.12.

<sup>27</sup> Gee and Hardy, *Documents illustrative of English Church History*, 1914, pp.585ff.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, pp.641ff.

and even surprise, that they were in accord without having "held any correspondence together". Now they added

Accordingly one of the first proposals for union amongst us was, That there might be a constant correspondence held among the Churches for counsel and mutual edification.

But this correspondence and co-operation was to be upon no other basis than that of freedom in Christ. There could be no imposition of the determinations of any outside authority on churches or their officers<sup>29</sup>.

2. That there ought to be forbearance and toleration on the part of groups of churches towards groups of churches and on the part of the State to all such. This, the delegates claimed, is "our constant principle" and "we are not ashamed to confess it to the whole Christian world". The principle is stated in the Preface in these words :

Let this be added (or superadded rather) to give full weight and measure, even to running over, that we have all along this season, held forth (though quarrelled with for it by our brethren) this great principle of these times, *That among all Christian States and Churches, there ought to be vouchsafed a forbearance and mutual indulgence unto Saints of all persuasions, that keep unto, and hold fast the necessary foundations of faith and holiness, in all other matters extrafundamental, whether of Faith or Order.*

This should be a very great engagement upon the hearts of all, though of different persuasions, to endeavour our utmost, joyntly to promote the honour and prosperity [*sic.* of such a government which as ministers of the Gospel and as churches we are able to do] ; . . . as also to be peaceably disposed one towards another, and with mutual toleration to love as brethren, notwithstanding such differences : remembering as it's very equal we should, the differences that are between *Presbyterians* and *Independents*, being differences between fellow-servants, and neither of them having authority given from God or Man, to impose their Opinions, one more than the other.

Williston Walker shrewdly comments that the chief merit of the Declaration "is its spirit of tolerance towards Christians of different beliefs—a tolerance as creditable as it was unusual in that age"<sup>30</sup>. Here is that "catholicity" of which we boast.

3. That *Schism* is a bogey-word designed to intimidate into conformity and that to define it properly is to rob it of its terrors. The Declaration claims that there is no just cause why any man should level

<sup>29</sup> Declaration, part III, XXVI.

<sup>30</sup> Williston Walker, *op.cit.*, p.352.

“the odious reproach of *Schism*” since differences were not “of contempt but of conscience” and were not wilful. True, many sad miscarriages, divisions, breaches, fallings off from holy Ordinances of God, have along this time of tentation. . . been found in some of our Churches.

These are to be deplored. And yet apparent unity can be purchased at too great a cost and with no certainty of final achievement. It may be both a denial of Christian liberty and a spurious facade which conceals inner division and rottenness.

Let *Rome* glory of the peace in, and the *obedience* of her children, against the Reformed *Churches* for their divisions. . . We all know the causes of their dull and stupid peace to have been carnal interests, worldly correspondencies, and coalitions. . . the principles of blind Devotion, Traditional Faith, Ecclesiastical Tyranny, by which she keeps her Children in bondage to this day.

Rome still insists that unity shall be uniformity and that uniformity shall be dictated by the Papal Curia. On the other hand, the Protestant and Orthodox Churches of the world are, for the most part, now gathered into the unity of the World Council of Churches without any exterior uniformity yet with a resolve to stay together and to move together into greater union. Congregationalists have not been unwilling to merge into united churches and to lose their immediate identity while at the same time contributing their own special insights to the whole. This is the way forward and our most urgent steps may be for Congregationalists and Presbyterians in this country to take. Meanwhile, as we work for and move forward into greater understanding and co-operation with others we do well to remind ourselves that there are differences to which the word *schism* is not applicable. Our heritage in Congregationalism has to be preserved and deepened, but charitably and tolerantly, if we are to bring our treasures into the great Church which shall yet come into being.

It is here that we are both justified and wise to recall the historic Declaration of three hundred years ago, that “brief, compact and lucid presentation of the main features of Congregationalism” (as Williston Walker describes it)<sup>11</sup>. Since those days, while retaining the main emphases of our witness, we have moved forward into a greater “correspondency” among churches and must still move. But we dare not forget the insistence of the Declaration upon the supreme headship of Christ over His Church, upon the true nature of the church as a covenanted fellowship of committed “saints”, and upon avowed tolerance towards all others within the Body of Christ.

W. GORDON ROBINSON

<sup>11</sup> *op. cit.*, p.351.

## The Attack on Nonconformists in Exeter after the Withdrawal of the Declaration of Indulgence

A RECENT and valuable book by G. R. Cragg: *Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution, 1660-1688*, (C.U.P.1957) has suggested (p. 21) with reference to the situation immediately after the Declaration of Indulgence had been withdrawn in March, 1673, that "Legally the licences had no validity, but the justices of the peace were undecided how to regard them, and for some time the nonconformists continued to enjoy a considerable measure of immunity." He gives as authorities for this statement Edmund Calamy's *Historical Account of my own Life*, and *The Note Book of Thomas Jolly*. Earlier writers on the subject have given a different verdict. H. W. Clarke's *History of English Nonconformity* Vol. 2, p. 93, reads; ". . . immediately upon the withdrawal of the Declaration persecution had been hotly renewed, to be fully maintained at its initial pitch up to about 1677". An earlier authority, Daniel Neal (*History of the Puritans*, 1796 edn., Vol. 4, p. 543) says "The revocation of the indulgence. . . let loose the whole tribe of informers. The papists being excluded from places of trust, the court had no tenderness for protestant non-conformists; the judges therefore had orders to quicken the execution of the laws against them."

Conflicting statements of this kind can only be resolved by collecting together detailed information from original records of the years 1673-5. A study of the orders of Exeter City Sessions fining persons for assembling in Conventicles reveals conclusively that here Neal and Clarke were quite correct, and the withdrawal of the Declaration of Indulgence was quickly followed by a savage renewal of persecution. There are 30 of these orders preserved in Exeter City Archives covering the period 1673-1687, and the first eight of them all concern the period 14th May to 11th August, 1673. These parchments bear examination in some detail.

The first is an order fining persons for assembling in a Conventicle at the house of John Palmer, merchant, in the Cathedral Close, on Wednesday, 14th May, 1673. Proceedings were clearly under the 1670 Conventicle Act, for the householder, John Palmer, and the preacher, Joseph Hallett, were both fined the statutory £20 each, while the remainder (five named and 30 unnamed) were fined 5s. each. Two of those cited by name, Anthony Mapowder and Isaac Burch (both brewers), had the fines of the 30 unnamed people imposed on them, and paid £4 each.

The second order refers to another conventicle held at the house of John Palmer on the 4th June. Again he is fined £20, and the minister,

this time George Trosse, the same. Five others are named and 50 others, too poor to pay, were said to have been present, their fines being imposed on three of the five named, Richard Crossinge, John Mayne, and John Starr.

The magistrates made two orders on 23rd of June, the first relating to a conventicle held at the house of Humphrey Bawdon in Holy Trinity parish on Sunday, 15th of June. Again the householder and the minister, Mark Downe, were fined £20 each. There were 29 other named persons in the list, and 60 more unnamed were present, of whom 20 were said to be insolvent and their fines added to those of people better able to pay. The other order concerned a conventicle at the house of John Boyland, fuller, on Sunday, 22nd June, Boyland and George Trosse are each fined £20, 36 other persons are named, and 40 others unnamed said to have been present. In this document Trosse is said to be unable to pay (this was the second fine of £20 imposed on him within a month) and his fine is divided amongst six of the others : Christopher Payne, butcher ; Hugh Abell, grocer ; Benjamin Arundell, merchant ; Daniel Skibbowe, fuller ; John Starr, merchant ; and Andrew Jeffery, fuller. The fines of 20 of those unnamed were likewise added to those others most likely to be able to pay.

The most comprehensive haul of the magistrates was made again at the house of John Palmer, on Wednesday, 25th June. Palmer and Joseph Hallett were both fined £20, but in the list of 43 other persons named in the order appear John Bartlett, John Hopping, George Trosse (all Presbyterian ministers), Lewis Stukeley and Thomas Powell (Congregationalist ministers). Hallett is unable to pay, and his fine is divided amongst John Pym, merchant ; Edmund Starr, grocer ; Abraham Trowte, merchant ; John Boyland, fuller ; Christopher Payne, butcher ; George Masters, butcher ; William Lobb, fuller ; and Richard Crossinge, merchant. Eleven persons have their fines doubled because it was their second offence.

The unfortunate but courageous John Palmer suffered for one more conventicle held at his house on Wednesday, 2nd July, when the preacher was John Hixe (more usually spelt Hicks). 36 more were named and fined, this time 18 for the second offence. The minister's fine this time was shared by John Pym, merchant ; Thomas Crispyn, fuller ; John Boyland, fuller ; Elizabeth Gibbs, widow ; Anthony Mapowder, brewer ; John Cheares, fuller ; John Barnes, innkeeper ; Joseph Pince, fuller ; and Abraham Trowte, merchant.

George Trosse was fined £20 for the third time for preaching at a conventicle held on 6th July at the house of Nowel Pearse, fuller. 14 others were mentioned by name, and 50 others said to have been present. The fines of 20 of these unnamed people were added to those paid by persons cited. Four of the 15 were guilty of a second offence.

Nowel Pearse suffered again for a conventicle held at his house on Monday, 11th August, but this time no minister appears to have been summoned by the magistrates. 30 others are named, 40 unnamed, of whom the fines of 15 were added to those cited. Eight second offences were recorded.

That the Nonconformists at this time did not suffer without making eloquent protest, nor without claiming that the King's licences remained valid, is shown by a document preserved amongst the earliest Minutes of the Exeter Assembly (the organisation of Presbyterian and Congregational ministers of Devon and Cornwall which met from 1655-59 and from 1691 onwards)<sup>1</sup>. It refers to the first case mentioned above.

On Monday last the 2d instant according to the Order of the Mayor & Justices of the City of Exon. Mr. Joseph Hallett & Mr. John Palmer appeared before them at the Guildhall (some hundreds of people being present) where it was sworne against them by two wittnesses produced by one Gould an informer that att Mr. Palmers house the said Mr. Hallet did preach, neare two hundred persons being present.

The said Mr. Palmer & Mr. Joseph Hallet pleaded in justification of the fact the King's Declaration & License which they desired againe & againe might be publickly read, but could not obtaine it. They much insisted upon the King's Authority which was (they apprehended) a sufficient warrant for what they did. But this argument could not be heard, the Mayor, Deputy Recorder, Justices & 3 lawyers more called in to their assistance telling the sayd Mr. Hallet & Mr. Palmer that the King had noe such Authority in matters ecclesiasticall, it being against an act of Parliament, to which after it had been answered, that in that very act of Parliament ecclesiasticall power was acknowledged to the King by a Proviso, & that his Majesty thereupon claimed it in his declaration.

They passed to another allegation, viz. that the King had Revoked the declaration & licenses by taking off the great seale & tho it was answered the privy seale & His Majesty's hand were still on, the great Seall being put on some months after & not long before the parliament sat, which the Deputy Recorder denied, yet would nothing availe. But still they denyed his Majesty's authority as to the Liberty hee granted & soe proceeded to Judge the Evidence against Mr. Hallet & Mr. Palmer to be a Conviction, & accordingly fined them soe that they are in howerly expectation of having there houses riffled & there Goods violently carryed away. Since which time warrants are graunted out against the sayd Mr. Hallett & Mr. Palmer for Twenty pounds each, & against

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by the kind permission of the Exeter Assembly.

five & thirty persons more & the Constables have bin several times  
endeavouring to take the distresses.

EXON., 14th June, 1673.

SYMON TROBRIDGE. JOSEPH HALLETT.  
AARON TOZER. JNO. PALMER.  
JOHN ROUS. ABRA. TROWT.  
J. DUGDAYLE. WM. POOLE.  
DAVID ROBINSON.  
GEO. CARY.

This is evidence enough that the Exeter magistrates, encouraged  
no doubt by Bishop Anthony Sparrow, who was not at any time  
favourable to Dissenters, used the powers of the 1670 Conventicle Act  
to the full in this 25th year of the reign of Charles II. It can also  
be shown that they profited by the very information provided by  
the Dissenters themselves, in the licences taken out under the Indul-  
gence. The preachers and householders fined the maximum penalty  
under these Orders were :—

Rev. Joseph Hallett. (Twice).  
Rev. George Trosse. (Three times).  
Rev. Mark Downe.  
Rev. John Hicks.  
John Palmer. (Four times).  
Humphrey Bawdon.  
John Boyland.  
Nowell Pearse. (Twice).

Hallett and Trosse were at this time the leading figures among the  
Exeter Presbyterians, and remained so until the end of their lives,  
Hallett living until 1689, and Trosse until 1713. Trosse came of  
an Exeter family, and had been active in the City since his private  
ordination in 1666, when the coming into operation of the Five Mile  
Act had temporarily silenced many of the older ministers. Joseph  
Hallett was a Bridport man, ejected from the living at Chiselborough  
in 1660, possibly arriving in Exeter about 1670. Both were licensed  
in 1672, as was Mark Downe, who had been ejected from St. Petrock's  
parish in 1662. John Hicks was not an Exeter man, but was well  
known in South Devon, having been evicted in 1662 from a curacy  
at Saltash, and had published anonymously and without licence in  
1671 a *Narrative* of the sufferings of local Nonconformists. He  
had been licensed as a Presbyterian minister at Kingsbridge in 1672,  
later removed to Portsmouth, and was executed in 1685 for taking  
part in the Monmouth Rebellion. He was definitely the type of man  
that Anglican magistrates throughout the country were pleased to be  
able to sentence in their courts. The houses of John Palmer, John  
Boyland, and Nowell Pearse were all licensed as meeting places in 1672,  
and all were men of some wealth. In the Exeter Hearth Tax records

of 1671, John Palmer's house in the Close was assessed on nine hearths, John Boyland's in St. John's parish on six hearths, and Nowel Pearse in the parish of Allhallows-on-the-Walls on five hearths. Not licensed in 1672, Humphrey Bawdon was assessed on ten hearths in Holy Trinity parish. At this time more than half the households in the City were assessed on two hearths or less, and it becomes clear that these men, although not of the inner circle of very rich merchants who governed the City, were comparatively well-to-do, and exercised some influence in the community through the men in their employ. It was at this type of citizen, those who were the financial backbone of the Nonconformist causes, that the Conventicle Act of 1670 was aimed, and so effectively used in Exeter in this year.

It should be noted that these prosecutions were all aimed at known Presbyterians. Stukeley and Powell, Congregationalists, had each been fined for attending the conventicle at John Palmer's house on the 25th June, 1673, but this was the small sum of 5s. each, of little significance to them. It was not until the following year that Congregationalists were fined heavily. Then Nicholas Eveleigh, whose house had been licensed in 1672 as a meeting place for a "Church of Christ in Exon" whose teacher was Lewis Stukeley, was fined £20 for a conventicle held at his home on the 18th January. The company was mixed Presbyterian and Congregational, judging by the 15 names cited. The only minister then present was Joseph Hallett, who was fined the usual 5s. for attendance. The hardest blow came on the 8th November, 1674, in connection with another conventicle held in Eveleigh's house. He and Stukeley were then each fined £20. 16 others were named, and 40 others said to have been present. The fines of 30 of these were distributed amongst those named, with the result that Henry Fitzwilliams, gent, of Holy Trinity parish, paid £2 5s., George Masters, butcher, £2 5s., and Andrew Raddon, clothier, £1 5s.

The conclusions to be drawn from these facts are that in Exeter, after the withdrawal of the Declaration of Indulgence, the Penal Laws against Dissenters were immediately enforced with more than usual zeal; that the informers and magistrates made use of their knowledge of licences taken out by the Dissenters while the Declaration was in force, and that they selected their victims with some care, choosing to strike first and hardest at those they considered to be the leaders amongst obstinate members of the community. The Presbyterians bore the greatest proportion of the suffering mainly because they greatly outnumbered the other Dissenters at this time, and possibly also because, their views being less extreme, it seemed that if discouraged enough they would be more likely to conform than the Congregationalists, Baptists and Quakers, who were considered to be quite irredeemable.

ALLAN BROCKETT.

## Matthew Wilks 1746-1820<sup>1</sup>

**B**Y any relevant standard Matthew Wilks was one of the most significant nonconformist ministers of his time. That more than 10,000 people witnessed his funeral procession from Moorfields Tabernacle to Bunhill Fields is some measure of his greatness. He shared actively in most of the great religious movements of his day. His influence contributed to the founding of the London Missionary Society, and other kindred organisations. The Rev. John Eyre and he were responsible for the launching of the *Evangelical Magazine*. Tirelessly active in religious affairs, he yet contrived to sustain his one and only pastorate for a period of 53 years, and was widely known as a field preacher and evangelist.

He lived his life in Georgian England. It was a time of unsettlement and transition ; of wars, victories and industrial revolution. In his youth the tide of religious revival was flowing strongly, but in his old age its force seemed spent. He derived his name from the circumstance that he was born on St. Matthew's Day, 1746, at Gibraltar where his father, an army officer, was stationed. Shortly after his birth the regiment moved to Ireland ; there Matthew spent his boyhood. On his father's retirement the family took up residence in Birmingham.

On leaving school he was apprenticed to a trade, his employers finding him quick to learn, honest and diligent. Whilst there is nothing to indicate a misspent youth, his spiritual pilgrimage began with a definite experience of conversion under unusual circumstances. In 1771 he was walking one day in the vicinity of West Bromwich, when through the open window of a private house he heard the voice of a preacher. Curiosity prompted him to stop and listen. The preacher was a local curate, the Rev. W. Percy, a man of strong evangelical convictions, who regularly conducted a service in this room. Such was the effectiveness of his preaching that the young apprentice decided there and then to give his life to Jesus Christ. It is an interesting fact that this same curate was later instrumental in the conversion of Matthew's brother Mark, who became a well-known Baptist minister, and of Miss Shenstone whom Matthew eventually married.

Percy became his firm friend and adviser, and seeing in him such appropriate gifts and qualities, was led to suggest the possibility of his becoming a minister. Matthew did not immediately respond, but after prolonged reflection, signified his willingness to go forward, and entered Trevecca College with a clear sense of call. It is said

<sup>1</sup> Authorities consulted :—*The Evangelical Magazine* (March, April, 1829) ; John Reynolds, *Diary* ; John Campbell, *Maritime Discovery and Christian Missions* (1840) ; John Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the L.M.S.* (1844) ; Archives of the L.M.S., by kind permission of the Librarian at Livingstone House.

that he was a brilliant student, and as a preacher showed exceptional promise.

Robert Keen, a manager of the late George Whitefield's two London chapels, chanced to hear him preach towards the end of his college course, and invited him to supply at the Tabernacle and Tottenham Court Chapel. This he did on a number of occasions with such acceptance that he was invited to become joint minister with the Rev. Torial Joss, whom Whitefield had designated as his successor. Matthew accepted, with due recognition of the responsibilities of this important call. Joss and Percy took part in his Ordination Service in 1775.

The new ministry began with many tokens of affection and high expectation. The young man's marriage to Miss Shenstone, cousin of the poet William Shenstone, proved to be a source of further strength and enrichment. She was admirably equipped to be a minister's wife, and they were devotedly attached to one another.

As a preacher he was solid, practical and scriptural. "He relied not upon flow of speech or splendour of illustration, but upon compressed and forcible truthfulness of his words." Such preaching made demands upon his listeners. Nevertheless, he achieved rapid success, and was soon preaching to crowded congregations with evident effect. There were many conversions. Those less able to appreciate the depth of his thought were arrested by his singularity of voice and manner, and by his droll sayings.

A long humorous poem from his own pen reflects a decline of popularity in his middle years. His successor, John Campbell, affirms that some at this time clamoured for his removal. But Wilks continued to speak of his two congregations as "the affectionate people". He did, in fact, regain his popularity. After several months' inactivity due to a broken leg, his return to the pulpit awakened widespread interest, and throughout his last ten years old and young crowded to hear him. He himself had matured and mellowed. His pulpit addresses were often astonishing, keeping his congregation alert with expectancy, wondering what idea would come next. He died in the zenith of his popularity.

Churches up and down the land invited him to occupy their pulpits. Like Whitefield before him, he frequently engaged in open-air preaching in the environ of London and elsewhere. With his spiritual sensitiveness and alert mind he became deeply involved in working out the implications of the Evangelical Revival. He became a national figure.

His portrait, showing him in middle life, gives the impression of a strong personality, determined and fearless. The handwriting in extant letters confirms this estimate. He was a well-built man, stern

and forbidding in appearance, but with a sympathetic and affectionate nature. He was a man of prayer whose devotions gained in depth and intensity with the experience of passing years.

No man could have lived so strenuously if he had not exercised a stern self-discipline. He would rise early so that he might have time for study and devotion. He believed in plain living and high thinking ; and if he sometimes appeared silent and gloomy, it was because he sought to conserve his nervous energy. He was vigorous and original in his thinking, expressing himself with great forcefulness ; in consequence he occasionally provoked antipathy. His quaint droll sayings were long remembered. He could be sarcastic, but he readily apologised if he felt he had gone too far.

Light is thrown on his character by the following incident. Walking one day in the neighbourhood of the Chapel, he saw two women angrily slanging one another. Wilks boldly intervened, and managed to separate them. One went on her way. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" he asked the woman who remained. "It was the other woman who started it," she retorted. "But you shouldn't have retaliated." "Human nature couldn't stand that woman's tongue," pleaded the woman. "But religion ought to have taught you better. Now what religion are you of?" He was taken aback when she answered, "I belong to the Chapel, sir. I'm a regular hearer of Mr. Matthew Wilks, and a splendid preacher he is." Accustomed to seeing him at a distance in gown and bands, she had not recognised him. Next Sunday he recounted the story from the pulpit, and looking pointedly in the direction of the free sittings, he said he wondered how many more of his hearers were capable of behaving like that.

Wilks had a keen sense of the stewardship of money. His stipend was never more than £200 per year, and during most of the time that his seven children were dependent upon him it did not exceed £100. Yet one half of his income was conscientiously devoted to Christian charities and the direct relief of the poor. It is on record that he subscribed £300 at one time to the L.M.S., besides innumerable smaller amounts in the course of the years. He was much concerned about the needs of poorer ministers, not only helping them himself, but in several instances persuading churches to treat them more generously. He was instrumental in the erection of twelve Almshouses adjoirng the Tabernacle, for poor and deserving widows. He opened Sunday Schools for religious instruction, and established a day school for 100 poor children, providing clothes for them as well as education.

Throughout his ministry he was specially concerned to help chil ren and young people to equip themselves to be useful and responsible citizens. A signal testimony to his influence is the fact that he inspired

an unusual number of young men to enter the ministry, devoting much time to coaching them. At one period no fewer than ten ministers in charge of churches attributed their call to his influence. He befriended John Williams, a young apprentice attending the Tabernacle; the future missionary of Erromanga records in his application to the L.M.S. that it was Wilks who set him thinking about missionary service. Wilks brought his name forward to the Examination Committee, and warmly commended him.

In *Fathers and Founders of the L.M.S.*, Dr. John Morison comments on Wilks' theological emphases. "With an attachment to the doctrines of election—effectual calling—justification by faith alone. . . and the final perseverance of the saints, he was a preacher of the most practical order. . . Never did he lose sight of man's accountableness. . . He knew how to wield the terrors of the law in a due subserviency to the proclamation of mercy. . . He could unfold the tenderness of the Great Shepherd . . . . He well knew how to bind up the broken in heart."

His growing conviction of the missionary task of the church constrained him to take a leading part in the founding of the L.M.S. The inaugural meeting was convened in the joint names of Eyre and himself. The Diary of the Rev. John Reynolds records:—

Nov. 5th 1794. About 3.0 o'clock Mr. Wilks called and requested me to meet some ministers at Baker's Coffee House. I promised and went. The meeting consisted of Mr. Bogue, Eyre, Wilks, Stevens, Love, . . . The object of the meeting was to form a Society for the preaching of the Gospel among heathen nations; to qualify and appoint missionaries for that important end, etc. Agreed nem, con.

As a foundation director, he regularly attended the monthly Directors' Meetings, and was appointed a member of the Examination Committee, where his judgment was highly valued, as this reference indicates:—

Nov. 23rd 1795 Went to the Committee at Broadbanks. A piece of intelligence brought by Wilks respecting a missionary candidate very awful. His character extremely suspicious. Three friends were deputed to go from the vestry to make enquiries. These were Waugh, Eyres and Wilks. They returned and reported, and their report confirmed Mr. Wilks' information. He is a man void of truth and honesty. A mere swindler.

Wilks was a shrewd judge of character. The Rev. G. Burder, in a funeral sermon quoted by the *Evangelical Magazine*, April, 1829, testified, "He had a remarkable insight into the human character. He knew much of human nature, and showed a penetration in discovering the dispositions of men beyond anyone I ever knew." His examination

of candidates for the L.M.S., was searching, though unorthodox. A young man whom he had been appointed to examine was requested to come to his home at 7 a.m. The candidate arrived punctually, but Wilks kept him waiting till ten before seeing him. Making no apology, he addressed the young man in sharp tones. "So you want to be a missionary? What put that idea into your head? Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?" The candidate replied modestly that he was sure he did. "What qualifications have you got? Can you read?" continued his monitor, putting a spelling book into his hand, and pointing to the lessons of the lowest class. "Can you write?" "Yes." "Let me see. Can you keep accounts, twice two, how many? Are! You are getting on. Four times five, how many? I shall tell the committee you'll do." At the Committee he recounted how he had examined the candidate. "I think he is punctual. He came at seven in the morning. I am sure he is patient; for I kept him waiting till ten. He's good tempered. He can stand a good many hard thumps. I insulted him over and over again. We have reason to believe he loves Jesus Christ. He wants to go. I say he'll do."

The first Valedictory Service took place at Sion Chapel on 28th July 1796, a crowded and enthusiastic congregation witnessing the commissioning of the first missionaries. Wilks and four others addressed the candidates five at a time before the Communion Rail in words that have since become traditional: "Go, our beloved brother, and live agreeably to this Divine Book."

The most notable of his missionary sermons was, by general consent, that preached before the Missionary Society in Surrey Chapel in May, 1812. The text, *Jeremiah 7. 18*, seemed unpromising to the crowded gathering, but as the preacher developed his theme its aptness compelled their attention, and moved them deeply. It was a trumpet call to a great missionary crusade. From his reference to "agents" came the idea of forming Auxiliaries.

Wilks was among those called to the first meeting convened with the object of forming the British and Foreign Bible Society. He shared actively in the formation of the Irish Evangelical Society and in his 81st year he had to act as secretary for several months. The beginnings of the Religious Tract Society owed much to his support. His interest in the social implications of the Gospel is evinced by the leading part he took in establishing the Female Penitentiary. His concern for political and religious freedom prompted him to campaign against Lord Sidmouth's ill-famed bill, and to share in the founding of the Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty. The Village Itinerancy Association originated in the mind of Eyre, but Wilks acted as honorary secretary for 25 years.

He seems to have enjoyed exceptional health but in the autumn of 1828 he began to be troubled by illness, and in the last months of his life was much pre-occupied with preparing John Campbell to be his successor.

In *Maritime Discovery and Christian Missions* Campbell recalls his first meeting with Wilks on the 3rd October, 1828. Campbell found the old man at a missionary meeting at the Chapel "sitting like some seer of old, with his hat on, and pulled over his face, and his long staff between his feet, grasped with both hands." He took Campbell's hand and held it for some time in silence. Then, with feeling and affection he said, "The Lord bless you." The aged pastor had engaged him to supply the two pulpits for several Sundays, and on the following Sunday the old man was too unwell to preach himself.

His wife had predeceased him in 1807. He had missed her greatly, but found consolation in his children and grandchildren. His last months were saddened by the closure of the Tottenham Court Chapel, unavoidable because of the impossible demands of the lessees. Campbell conducted the final evening service, attended by an immense congregation. At the end of the service the old pastor ascended the pulpit, and with visible emotion, announced the closing of the Chapel, inviting the congregation to meet in the Fitzroy Schools the next Lord's Day. He himself conducted the evening service and Communion at the Schools the following Sunday, but never preached again.

On the 29th January, 1829, his life quietly ebbed away. Just before his death he was told that John Campbell had accepted the pastorate, and his last words were "Thank God! God be praised! All is well."

Campbell conducted the funeral service on the 6th February in the Tabernacle, John Morison offered prayer, and the aged Rowland Hill gave the address. Hill insisted on offering prayer over the grave, but had to be supported. On the following Sunday memorial sermons were preached in the Tabernacle and Fitzroy Schools, and in many other churches up and down the land. In the words of Morison:—

"Were we to speak of the numerous charities he established, of the sanctuaries he reared, of the societies he instituted, of the tens of thousands he raised, of the multitudes of poor brethren he assisted, of the control which he exercised over the opinions and property of the wide circle in which he moved, the public would scarcely credit our report."

## The Cotton End Congregational Academy, 1840-74

**N**O early Dissenting academies flourished in Bedfordshire but in the 19th century the county had no less than three Congregational academies. Richard Cecil's Academy at Turvey (1829-38) was subsequently transferred to Chipping Ongar in Essex (1838-44) where David Livingstone was a student. The Bedford Seminary (1840-66) was under the direction of John Jukes and William Alliot. The Cotton End Academy under John Frost lasted from 1840-74. Whereas the Turvey and Bedford institutions were concerned chiefly with the training of missionaries, the Cotton End Academy trained men mainly for the Congregational ministry in England.

An account of the missionary students only of the Bedford Seminary appeared in an earlier number of these *Transactions*<sup>1</sup> and short illustrated articles on all three academies by the present author have appeared elsewhere<sup>2</sup>. The purpose of this article is to give an account of the Cotton End Academy and to identify the students who were trained there<sup>3</sup>.

John Frost, born at Kidderminster in 1808, was trained under Richard Cecil at the Turvey Academy and in 1832 accepted the pastorate of the church at Cotton End, four miles to the south-east of Bedford, where he remained until his death in 1878 ; in 1839 he was suggested as suitable for the pastorate of the English church in Madras but apparently he declined to go<sup>4</sup>.

It seems likely that in the late 1830's Frost trained an occasional student privately but from 1840 onwards approximately half of the students he trained at Cotton End were sponsored by the Congregational Home Missionary Society (founded in 1819) which was interested in training men to fill existing or new Congregational pastorates in England. Another academy used by the Home Missionary Society was that at Pickering in Yorkshire under Gabriel Croft, which was founded in 1837 but was shorter-lived than its Bedfordshire contemporary<sup>5</sup>.

A meeting of the Home Missionary Society Committee<sup>6</sup> on 1st September 1840 took note of Frost's readiness to 'carry out the scheme of education agreed to by the Board' and to train the Society's students provided that the number did not exceed four or six. The Committee meeting on 29th September noted Frost's readiness 'to board and

<sup>1</sup> xv, 33-44.

<sup>2</sup> *Bedfordshire Magazine*. Nos. 40, 41 and 42. (1957).

<sup>3</sup> At a later date it is hoped to do the same for the 90 or so students of the Turvey/Ongar Academy.

<sup>4</sup> L.M.S.E.C. 9. 12. 1839. 23. 12. 1839.

<sup>5</sup> Croft died in 1868 but his academy was discontinued in 1850 : see obit. C.Y.B. 1869.

<sup>6</sup> Hereafter referred to as 'the Committee in the text and H.M.C., in the notes.'

educate the Society's students at £40 *per annum*, which year is to be considered as consisting of 48 weeks, thus giving four weeks as a vacation, which it was expected should be in the Summer' and at the meeting on 20th October Dr. Matheson reported that having visited Cotton End he had seen the 'accommodations made for the reception of the students and considered them suitable and comfortable'.

So from late in 1840 onwards Home Missionary Society students arrived at Cotton End, after clearance by the Examination Committee which had interviewed them and considered their suitability for the work of the Society. Usually the Society's students went to Cotton End for a probationary period of three months, and if this was completed satisfactorily, stayed for a longer period of varying length according to their educational standard and progress<sup>9</sup>.

As the years passed Frost found that £40 *per annum* per student was not adequate and from time to time the Committee approved gratuities to him on account of the high cost of provisions: e.g. £25 was granted in June 1847, £10 in October 1854, and £25 in September 1866<sup>9</sup>.

Work at the Academy was disturbed in the Summer of 1853 by a typhus fever epidemic (from which either James or Joseph Williams, among the students was seriously ill)<sup>10</sup> and in 1863 on the recommendation of Dr. Barker of Bedford, the students had to start their Midsummer vacation in May because of an epidemic of diphtheria in the village (Ambrose Sherman Trotman, one of the students, was ill from the epidemic)<sup>11</sup>.

Early in 1865 a sub-Committee reported to the Committee on the future of the Cotton End Academy in view of the large Congregational training institutions at Nottingham and Bristol. The sub-Committee said that the training at Cotton End was satisfactory and recommended the continuance of the Academy. The report was adopted at a Committee meeting in May 1865 at which the Directors, hearing that some students who had trained at Cotton End and had become pastors 'had got into the habit of reading their sermons to an extent which had seriously interfered with their usefulness' requested Frost to caution his students against the practice 'and to use every means in his power to promote the acquisition of public and extemporaneous address'<sup>12</sup>.

In 1867 there were only four students at Cotton End but in November 1870 the Committee agreed that a long and analytical report of the

<sup>9</sup> It seems probable that the students were boarded out in cottages in the village as was the practice at the Turvey Academy.

<sup>10</sup> Home Missionary Society Minute Books at Memorial Hall, London. Frost also took some private pupils and on 4.1.1842 the Committee agreed that the Colonial Missionary Society could send a young man to him for education for colonial service.

<sup>11</sup> H.M.C. 8.6.1847. 3.10.1854 and 18.9.1866.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 9.8.1853.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 19.5.1863.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 23.5.1865.

students who had trained at Cotton End was 'highly satisfactory and very creditable to the tutor'<sup>13</sup>. By 1873, however, the number of students had sunk to two and the Committee recommended that the connection of the Society with Cotton End should be carefully considered by the Examination Committee<sup>14</sup>.

At its meeting on 21st October 1873 the Committee adopted the following resolutions, on the recommendation of the Examination Committee :—

The Committee gratefully acknowledge the good which has been done by the Institution through the divine blessing on the labours of Mr. Frost during the long period of 33 years in which it has been under his management, and when 69 men have been educated as Home Mission pastors, 50 of whom are still in the ministry, including 14 who are connected with the Home Missionary Society.

That as other institutions are now providing men for mission churches, and County Associations usually apply to them for agents, while the Home Missionary Society now makes no direct appointments to any of the stations with which it is connected, it is felt that the work of educating young men at the expense of the Society, in their new circumstances may be discontinued.

Frost was granted an annuity of £50 *per annum*<sup>15</sup> and the Cotton End Academy ended in Midsummer 1874 to the regret of Frost who in a letter of 3rd April 1874 to the Directors said that he had looked forward to continuing it for three or four years longer and then retiring<sup>16</sup>.

As his second wife Frost had married Caroline a daughter of Richard Cecil of Turvey, and when Frost himself died in 1878 at the age of 70 years, he was buried, in accordance with his own request, not at Cotton End but in the village cemetery at Turvey<sup>17</sup>. After Frost's death the Cotton End church had a Baptist pastor and by the end of the 19th century had ceased to be a Union Church and had become a Baptist one. The Cotton End church possesses a fine oil painting of Frost as a young man, a large photograph of him with a group of his students, and a large photograph of him in later life.

The total number of Students who trained at Cotton End has been variously stated. One of Frost's obituary notices says 127<sup>18</sup> and another 200<sup>19</sup> while Frost's list of 'students who have been admitted

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 16.7.1867. 22.11.1870.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 23.9.1873.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 23.6.1874. On Frost's death in 1878 the Society decided to make annual grants to his widow of £25 at Christmas and £13. 10s. at Lady day. H.M.C. 19.11.1878.

<sup>16</sup> H.M.C. 19.5.1874.

<sup>17</sup> *Obit.* C.Y.B. 1879.

<sup>18</sup> E.M. 1878. pp.778-780.

<sup>19</sup> *Obit.* C.Y.B. 1879.

to occasional fellowship with the church during their term of study' contains 127 names<sup>20</sup>. With Frost's list as a basis, an examination of the *Congregational Year Books* since 1846 (the first year of publication)<sup>21</sup>, the Minutes of the Home Missionary Society Committee<sup>22</sup> and the *Evangelical Magazine* produced a total of 136 students and it is possible to give the subsequent history of most of these.

Some students did not complete their course of study at Cotton End either because of ill-health (Coates, Hall and Wilson), inability to absorb instruction or to make progress (Berridge, Buckler and Mather) or incompatibility (Chalkley, and Phipson). Some students who entered the Congregational ministry subsequently left it to enter other denominations or churches (Bevis, Brooks, Butler, Cowan, Moore, G. C. Smith, Vaughan and Ward). Brownjohn, Bullivant and Rounce later went to U.S.A., and their subsequent careers are unknown. Ashton, Jones, Riordan, Rogers, Sleigh and Vivian became missionaries for the London Missionary Society. Cox, Marcus, Howden, Johnson, Kyte, Littlemore and Nicholls later became prominent in early Australian Congregationalism. Purdon, C. E. Z. Smith and Webb held Congregational pastorates in Canada, while Wookey laboured in Jamaica and died in New York.

Although most of the students studied only at Cotton End, some also went to other colleges either before or after their period there (*e.g.* Ashton, Butler, W.D. Mackay, Nelson, Riordan, Rogers, Saunders, Sleigh and Wookey) and some obtained degrees (Ashton, Nelson, G. C. Smith and Tomkins). Students or ex-students who died young included William Todd (who died at Cotton End where a tombstone to his memory is still to be seen) ; W. D. Mackay who died at Cheshunt College after leaving Cotton End ; Paul Rutter who died of typhoid at the age of 27 ; H. W. Scott who died of paralysis of the brain at the age of 32 and G. F. Warr who also died at the age of 32.

Then there were students such as Franks, Hoskin, Metcalf and Saunders who had one pastorate only, and William Tidd Matson whose hymns are still to be found in many hymn-books. Two entries in the Society's Committee Minutes relate to William Booth who nearly came to Cotton End, and later famous with the Salvation Army :

Mr. W. Booth. The application and the recommendation by Rev. W. S. Edwards<sup>23</sup> of Mr. W. Booth as a Candidate were submitted. It was agreed that he be requested to appear before the Examination Committee as soon as convenient. . . . Mr. Booth, Candidate. The Secretary reported that Mr. Booth had withdrawn

<sup>20</sup> List preserved by the Cotton End church.

<sup>21</sup> C.Y.B. 1901 contains a list of Congregational ministers deceased 1800-1900 : a list for 1901-1925 is in C.Y.B. 1926. It is only from 1902 onwards that C.Y.B.'s have biographies of living ministers.

<sup>22</sup> At Memorial Hall, London.

<sup>23</sup> Rev. William Spencer Edwards, a former C. E. Student, and at this time pastor of the City Road Church, London.

from being a Candidate for admission to Cotton End, disapproving of the manner in which the Committee had conducted his examination on the disputed doctrines of Arminianism<sup>24</sup>.

As the Home Missionary Society aided several Dorset churches, references to former Cotton End students are frequent in W. Densham and J. Ogle's *The Story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset* (1899).

The *Congregational Year Book* entries for Cotton End merely state that the subjects taught there were 'general' but fortunately the Rev. R. Ashton who, with the Secretary of the Society, conducted the usual Summer examination of the students, in his report to the Committee on 16th July 1867 listed the studies at Cotton End as including 'besides the common grammatical and literary exercises, which in some cases are indispensable, Theology, having Hodges' *Outlines* as the text-book, the Evidences of Christianity, Homiletics, Logic, Ecclesiastical History, the Roman Catholic and Puseyite dogmas and forms, the Greek New Testament' and the preparation and delivery of sermons. Hebrew was also taught, for J. P. Ashton 'after a few months' study of Hebrew with Rev. J. Frost of Cotton End, whose students he at the same time grounded in Greek' was accepted as a missionary of the London Missionary Society<sup>25</sup>, and another student, G. Bulmer, was so proficient at it that he was nicknamed 'The Rabbi' by his fellow students<sup>26</sup>.

Among books used for study at Cotton End were an atlas,<sup>27</sup> *The Biblical, Eclectic and British, Quarterly Reviews*,<sup>28</sup> Murray's *Grammar*, Taylor's *Outlines of Ancient History and Outlines of Modern History*<sup>29</sup>, and Dr. Davidson's *Biblical Works*<sup>30</sup>.

Fridays were spent by the students in house-visiting, in cottage meetings, and in open-air preaching in the village<sup>31</sup>. On Sundays the students preached in neighbouring villages and towns. For their supply at the Congregational Church at Potton 'they received from the people 10s. per Sabbath for their services, the whole of which was expended in the hire of horse and gig and. . . in consequence they had no remuneration to meet their personal expenses.' On Frost's reporting this the Society agreed to grant £19 10s. *per annum* or 7s. 6d. per Sabbath towards the costs of the students supplying at Potton<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Both entries are from H.M.C.5.10.1852. I am indebted to Brig. A. Carr, Salvation Army H.Q. (Publicity Dept.) for confirmation that these entries refer to the famous William Booth. See St. John Ervine. *God's Soldier. General William Booth*. (1934). i., pp.64ff. which, however, do not refer to the H.M.C. entries.

<sup>25</sup> Obit. C.Y.B. 1917.

<sup>26</sup> Obit. C.Y.B. 1881.

<sup>27</sup> H.M.C. 17.8.1841.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 3.2.1846.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 22.9.1846.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 6.7.1847.

<sup>31</sup> Report to Committee 16.7.1867.

<sup>32</sup> H.M.C. 22.9.1846. 17.11.1846. Cotton End students also helped at Sandy (*e.g.*, Beds. Union Report. 1845, pp.6,7): at Shillington from 1840-42 (See H.W. Cooper. *The Shillington Congregational Church 1825-1950* (1950). p.10) and at Stevington in 1860-61 (see H. G. Tibbutt. *Stevington Baptist Meeting. 1655-1955*. (1955) p.19.)

The Congregational Church at Roxton was also greatly helped by Cotton End students in the period after the resignation of Henry Winzar from the pastorate at Roxton in 1851. Five Cotton End students are named in the Roxton Church Book :—Joseph Williams who spent the week-ends at Roxton from December 1853 to December 1854 and took the services on Sundays ; Stephen Bater who did the same during the first six months of 1855 ; Thomas Moore, G. G. Howden and Samuel Jones also took services<sup>33</sup>. In January 1860 the Roxton church approached Frost, 'who has taken a great interest in our cause at Roxton for many years past, and enquired if he knew of a person disengaged who would be likely to suit our village and preach for us on approbation four successive Sabbaths'<sup>34</sup>. Frost suggested John William Rolls (a former Cotton End student) then at Halifax and wrote to him on behalf of the Roxton church, to which Rolls came in 1860 and remained until 1872.

In his letter to the Directors of the Home Missionary Society in 1874 Frost summed up his work at Cotton End in the following moving passage :

With unsleeping vigilance I have watched over the habits, the morals and the Christian character of every young man you have placed under my care. I have ever been most anxious that they should be deeply rooted and grounded in the belief and love of those great biblical and theological truths which are most surely received by us as a Christian denomination. Hence I have given no countenance to those novelties of opinion of which so many young preachers are so enamoured. In a word, brethren, I have done all in my power to prepare the young men for your special service and to keep before the mind of every one of them the idea that he had no other business in the world, but to pray, and study, and preach, and live in every place and in everything, for God and the good of men<sup>35</sup>.

In the Spring of 1878, the year in which he died, a number of Frost's old students invited him to a dinner in the Canonbury Tavern, Islington, London. After the meal, the Rev. W. Spencer Edwards, a former student, made a presentation to Frost of a timepiece as an expression of the affectionate regard and honour the students had for him as their friend and theological tutor<sup>36</sup>.

H. G. TIBBUTT.

<sup>33</sup> Roxton Church First Church Book pp.155-161.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* pp.167-169. See also H. G. Tibbutt. *Roxton Congregational Church 1808-1958.* (1958), pp.11, 12.

<sup>35</sup> H.M.C. 19.5.1874.

<sup>36</sup> *Bedfordshire Times and Independent.* 25.5.1878. p.8.

## REVIEWS

*The Welsh Saints* 1640-1660. By Geoffrey F. Nuttall (University of Wales Press, 10/6).

In March 1957 Dr. Nuttall was invited to give a course of lectures at the University of North Wales. Students of seventeenth century Puritanism will be glad that these studies have now been published, for in spite of their restricted range, they are very illuminating. Those who know his earlier works will not need to be assured that *The Welsh Saints* is an attractive book—it delights as well as instructs the reader—and they will find here that same meticulous accuracy and care for detail which we have learnt to expect from Dr. Nuttall.

The studies are concerned primarily with the characters, relationships, and influence of Walter Cradock, Vavasor Powell and Morgan Llwyd, three leaders of Welsh Puritanism of whom little note is taken by English historians, though 'there can be no doubt that Cradock was very widely revered in England as well as in Wales, at least by his fellow-Independents.' 'The neglect is particularly unfortunate in reference to radical Puritanism in the middle of the seventeenth century.'

The first study consists of a finely drawn sketch of what Dr. Nuttall calls the 'Brampton Bryan enclave', an area on the borders of Radnorshire, Herefordshire and Shropshire; this clearly illustrates the influence of Puritan squires. Here, the author believes, the Welsh Saints had a common geographical background. Making skilful use of contemporary writings, the author then proceeds to describe the faith and influence of Cradock, bringing out his attractively simple faith and his wide tolerance. His influence on Richard Baxter is noted, as also is the latter's later objection to Cradock's antinomianism—Cradock's 'deep-seated fear of legalism in religion' ran counter to the scrupulousness of some Puritans of the age.

Cradock was untouched by the millenarian hopes which influenced both Powell and Lloyd, but Dr. Nuttall defends them against the charge of being 'mere millenarians'. The winsomeness and deep piety of Llwyd are well illustrated, and his debt to the writings of Jacob Boehme, the German mystic, is clearly shown. Powell's personality is not so well sketched as is that of the other two 'Saints', perhaps because the author finds him less attractive.

The last study deals with the impact of Quakerism upon the Puritans of Wales, and Dr. Nuttall shows convincingly how the antinomian tendencies of Cradock, the millenarian tendencies of his two friends, and the spiritualizing tendency of both Cradock and Llwyd found expression in the thought of the Quaker missionaries, who won many converts in Wales, 'precisely at the time when the millenarians were finding their hopes dashed in the political sphere.'

In the main Dr. Nuttall is content to allow the 'Saints' to speak for themselves but his evident sympathy with the background (both geographical and spiritual), together with his discrimination in the selection of his material, has resulted in a book which is both attractive and rewarding. Those with no Welsh may be forgiven for wishing that the passages quoted from Morgan Llwyd had been translated in the text, with the original consigned to footnotes!

WILFRED W. BIGGS

*Sir Robert Walpole, Samuel Holden, and the Dissenting Deputies.* By Norman C. Hunt. (Oxford University Press, 1957, 4s.)

Dr. Hunt, Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, gave the eleventh Dr. Williams Lecture at the Library in October last year and this has been subsequently published.

The activity and inactivity of the Deputies' Committee is a fascinating study and Dr. Hunt presents the facts and argues his case with the clarity and urgency of a barrister in court. Holden and his colleagues were expected by many of their dissenting supporters to make themselves a nuisance to the administration until the liberties for which they struggled were granted. Holden and his city friends did not care to embarrass the government more than they could help and they had great difficulty in reining in their supporters. They did not succeed in persuading them that moderation was the best policy ; Holden was overborne and a campaign for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts mounted in intensity until decisively defeated in Parliament in 1736.

Holden was accused of betraying the dissenting cause, of conducting his committee negligently, of being the tool of Walpole. Dr. Hunt vindicates Holden's policy. He was a sincere Dissenter but at the same time a political realist. His management of the Dissenting Deputies was arbitrary at times and not above reproach by our standards, but after all, did not Dissenters choose him in the first place to lead them because of his business acumen and influence, which they thought would best further their cause ?



*An Essay of Accommodation.* Ed. by Roger Thomas. (Dr. Williams's Trust, 14 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1. 1957).

The *Heads of Agreement* (1691) between the London Presbyterians and Congregationalists are well-known. Mr. Thomas, the Librarian of Dr. Williams's Library, here brings to light a document which originated in the last years of Charles II's reign, when Dissenters, hard pressed in the atmosphere created by the 'Popish Plot', felt a common front desirable ; it served later as a basis for discussion, issuing eventually in the *Heads* of William and Mary's reign. It seems that John Owen himself was one of the London ministers who approved the *Essay* although Nathaniel Mather said he did not.

Mr. Thomas prints the texts of the two plans side by side and to this he adds a short introduction and some notes on the text. There are also parts of a letter of Isaac Noble, including the reference to Owen's views, together with the assertion that all the London ministers but two had expressed their approval.

There are striking linguistic similarities in several places between the two documents, revealing their genealogy, but the later one has a new emphasis on the educated ministry, more about Church discipline, and manifests deference towards the State. The *Essay*, however, proposes stringent measures against Churches which refused to listen to the voice of the Synod, even to severing all communion with them ; this is tacitly dropped by the *Heads*. A pointer in the direction of the Salters' Hall controversy appears in the section on 'Confession of Faith'. In the *Essay* the basis of membership is assent to the Westminster or Savoy Confessions or the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England ; this continues to be acknowledged in the *Heads* but is overshadowed by the confession that the Scriptures are 'the perfect and only rule of faith and practice'. Interesting discoveries of this kind will reward the student of this welcome study.

*Hoxton Square and the Hoxton Academies.* By A. D. Morris. (Privately printed. 1957.)

Those familiar with the history of Dissent will recognise in the name Hoxton a place very familiar to the ministers and students of the eighteenth century. They may yet be surprised to learn that Dr. Morris has traced as many as 25 dissenting ministers who lived at one time in its Square. They include Daniel Williams and Edmund Calamy in the early days, Thomas Gibbons, David Jennings and several other eminent Dissenters in later times. No. 1 Hoxton Square was occupied by 'Messrs. Parkinson and Son, surgeons'; one of the Parkinsons, James, was the first to identify and describe the disease which bears his name. Three dissenting Academies were at one time or another in the Square; there were also a meeting house, a coffee house and an inn.

The author's account is terse and factual but the story is fascinating enough to make one long to see a picture of this 'nonconformist cathedral close'.



*Prince Charles's Puritan Chaplain.* By Irvonwy Morgan. (Allen and Unwin, 1957. 21s.)

This biography of the puritan leader John Preston has bearings here and there upon the early Congregationalists, particularly John Cotton and Henry Burton. Cotton was instrumental in the conversion of Preston. Preston died too early (1628) for us to know whether Laudian policy would have driven him to the Congregational standpoint which Cotton adopted. The two were strong friends and collaborated in training a number of men for the ministry. Mr. Morgan's book is packed with materials and is not easy to read but the diligent student will gather much information concerning the unsuccessful struggles of the Puritans to gain ascendancy in the early seventeenth century.

JOHN H. TAYLOR.

Also received:

R. L. Hardie, *Brief Account of the Life of Norley Memorial Congregational Church, Plymstock*, 1957. (Pamph. 1s.)

Sydney A. Willis, *The Story of Plaistow Congregational Church, 1807-1957*.

Samuel Collins, *An Historical Outline of Bradfield and North Walsham Congregational Church*. 1957. (Pamph. 1s.6d.)

Victor Leach, *The First Hundred Years: A History of Congregationalism in Barrow-in-Furness*. 1958.

Walter Ansell, *Early Days of Nonconformity in Cheltenham*. 1957. (Pamph.).

D. H. Jones, *Halesowen Congregational Church, 1807-1957*. 1957.

Gareth Griffith & John J. Lambert, *Set on an Hill: New Bethel Congregational Church, Mynyddislwyn, Mon.* 1958. (2s.6d.)

E. G. Montgomery, *Milestones on the Pilgrim Way of Dursley Tabernacle Congregational Church, Founded 1710*. 1958.

~~Philip~~ M. Robinson, *The Smiths of Chesterfield*. 1957. (15s.)